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THE SOUTH AFRICAN MEETING OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION.

1. THE TOUR OF THE ASSOCIATION.

By Professor J. Y. SIMPSON, D.Sc.

(*With Illustrations.*)

To tell the story of the British Association in South Africa is to furnish an itinerary of nearly twenty thousand miles of wandering, and to furnish *résumés* of numerous papers of first-rate importance, dealing either with local problems of general interest or with the most recent advances in modern science. It is also to recount the lighter side of the most gigantic picnic ever organised, and unstintedly to shower praise on many officials at home and in the colonies who worked unsparingly to make the visit the unqualified success it ultimately proved to be. When one considers what was involved in the transport and provisioning of four hundred men and women, particularly in territory where even the settlers are still feeling their way, it would have been small wonder had there been failures or breaks-down to record. That nothing of any moment occurred is ample proof of the care with which every detail of the Association's progress through the country had been arranged; and if one or two aldermanic individuals have searched for and found grounds of complaint, it is principally due to the fact that they failed to recognise that place and position at British Association enterprises and functions bear no direct relation to a man's waist measurement.

The bulk of the official party landed off the *Saxon* on August 15th, and the same evening the business of the Association commenced. Three days were occupied in this way, after which a dispersal took place, with Durban as the rendezvous. Some went directly there by steamer, visiting Port Elizabeth and East London *en route*; others remained to take advantage of the excursions that had been planned in the neighbourhood of Cape Town; geologists moved off immediately and instinctively in the direction of the Karoo; a few selected the overland route, with its bird's-eye views of Cape Colony, the Orange Colony, a portion of the Transvaal, and Natal.

With regard to Cape Colony, it must be admitted that the region is at present passing through a severe economic crisis. Trade is generally seeking those ports that involve a shorter railroad journey to the dominating Transvaal. The bulk of the country is pastoral, yet, owing to the periodic, often years-long, droughts, farmers have sometimes been compelled to slaughter their lambs because of the insufficiency of food for them and for the sheep. For the same reason agricultural pursuits are hindered beyond a certain point, nor is there any prospect of irrigation on a scale comparable to that in India, simply because there are not the rivers. Locusts descend in clouds, and on the wheat-patch off which the farmer hoped to garner sixty bags, not a blade is left. Owing to rust, only two months' supply is being grown at present in place of a sufficiency for seven months; hence follows the need for importation, but the diffi-

culties of labour and of water are so great that the local farmers cannot compete with the imported grain. Worcester was the centre of viticulture on a large scale, but the Phylloxera has brought the industry into a very parlous condition, and it must be long before the local varieties have everywhere been grafted on to introduced American vines. As for stock diseases, their name is legion.

Much of this is patent even in the rapid view that was necessarily the lot of the British Association member; but, on the other hand, evidence was not far to seek of the success that has attended the Government endeavours to develop portions of the Karoo by boring for water, as at Matjesfontein, 195 miles from Cape Town, on the Western

FIG. 1.—On the Karoo.

Railway system, and Laingsburg, 18 miles further along the same route. Again, systematic campaigns have been planned against the locusts, and by means of spraying with arsenate of soda and other devices, the Agricultural Department, with the willing assistance of the farmers, has done much to reduce this evil, while every day fresh information is being gained as to the best manner of dealing with the various internal and external parasites that are the active causes of the horse and cattle plagues.

The Karoo once gained by way of the beautiful Hex River Pass, gives the impression of a vast waste; mile upon mile of light brown sandy soil, through which at points the bare rock shows, like a skeleton breaking through the tight-drawn mantling skin. And that same soil is little concealed by the very discontinuous growth of heath and shrubs

—mesembryanthemum and euphorbias for the most part, together with *Acacia horrida*. There is nothing to rest the eye; everywhere hard, straight lines even on the summits of the occasional kopjes, and a general feeling as if one were crossing some enormous Highland stony fallow field.

In and around Durban the Association had the opportunity of seeing something of a really British colony, as of the two industries that have done so much to make it commercially successful. Already 4000 acres are under cultivation to tea planters, while the sugar industry antedates the history of the country as a British colony, and is now capable of putting £600,000 worth of produce on the market annually, as also of giving employment to 8000 people. Of these, however, the great majority are

FIG. 2.—Marriage of Zulu Chief, Henley, Natal.

imported Indian coolies, who, together with those employed in other lines of service, now outnumber the 97,000 Europeans, and, being free, constitute something of an Indian peril. For by their industry, sobriety, and economical instincts they practically have all the smaller trade in their hands, while many of their number are rich both in money and in land as the result of business efforts on a grander scale.

On more than one occasion native war-dances were arranged for the entertainment of the visitors, and there are those of the over-sea party whose most vivid impressions were gained on the 25th of August, when at Henley, in the vicinity of Pietermaritzburg, the chiefs and representatives of these large tribes, who number collectively over 18,000 souls, gathered to do honour to the Governor of the colony, and take part in the wedding festivities of one of the chiefs. One of the illustrations

accompanying these notes represents a preliminary stage in the order of procedure, when the agent of the bridegroom, usually a brother or uncle, who has arranged the marriage and the amount of the marriage consideration or *obolo*, steps forward and, after a speech to the members of the tribe, shows his pleasure by performing a number of antics and evolutions: the bridegroom is seated on the ground in the centre of the circle. Certain customs usually observed at these tribal weddings are interesting, and might even appear to some Western minds worthy of imitation. Thus the visitors were credibly informed "that the mother of the bride, on no account whatever, may be present at the wedding; that if the bride is the eldest daughter of her father, he does not attend at

FIG. 3.—Native hut, Bellairs, Natal.

the wedding; that the bride may not look at the husband's father; that in many tribes the mother-in-law may not look at her son-in-law, nor may the son-in-law look at her." But, added our informant, "these usages vary, and are becoming more or less obsolete with the advance of civilisation."

Several opportunities presented themselves of seeing the native in his home, both in small country kraals and in the larger *stadts* that lie on the outskirts of most South African towns. It became evident that the native question is *the* South African problem. Each of the four colonies has its specific difficulties, but in every one there is this pressing matter in one form or another. The difficulty is increased by the fact that in each of the colonies the attitude of the white man towards the native differs, varying from the extreme Cape Colony position, where he

is given a vote, to, say, the Transvaal point of view, where he is not even allowed to walk on the pavement. A principal obstacle to the South African Federation is the present impossibility of agreeing on a uniform attitude to be observed towards the native. One thing, however, stands out clearly, and that is the necessity of teaching the Kaffir the dignity of labour, together with some regard not merely for his fellows, but for the land in which he lives.

The hours spent on the Natal battlefields in the course of the Association's progress towards Johannesburg are a source of very potent memories. The bare grave-strewn field of Colenso; the actual position of each of Long's guns marked by a stone only recently removed, as if men wished that the incident should be forgotten; the flat-topped Hlangwane deceiving everybody as it deceived Buller into thinking that it lay on the other side of the Tugela; the Boer trenches with the barbed wire still in place, nay, with the very pebble-filled tins still attached that would have rattled out the advent of the enemy; bullets and fragments of shrapnel lying around—it was all terribly real even after five years. As also Ladysmith, back of the hills, defended by a miracle, and for ever a source of inspiration to every one who regards the flag of his country with affection.

"Tell England, ye who pass this monument,
We, who died saving her, rest here content."

Such are the lines on a soldier's tombstone in the Wagon Hill cemetery.

In Johannesburg three days were spent in scientific session, but plenty of times and occasions presented themselves for making cursory examinations of the mining industry, and for inquiring into such a burning question as Chinese labour. There is little doubt that one great benefit of the Association's visit to South Africa lies simply in the fact that a number of intelligent British men and women were enabled to see vexed matters on the spot and obtain information at first-hand, which was bound profoundly to modify any preconceived ideas on such topics as the native question, the education question, and Chinese labour. With regard to the last point, many of us came unhesitatingly to the conclusion that, although an evil, it is yet at this stage a necessary evil. Further, it is the Transvaaler's question, and with him must rest the decision; for it is he who suffers, and it is he who also, whatever may be said to the contrary, will benefit by the presence of the Chinese labourer.

After the Johannesburg sojourn (in connection with which was a delightful visit to Pretoria), the Associationist found little rest for the sole of his foot. The bulk of the party went round by rail by way of Bloemfontein and Kimberley to Bulawayo: a few took the opportunity of seeing the country and the Boer at home by trekking direct to Mafeking. This meant a journey of five days by mule, wagon, or coach, over territory whose characteristic features changed daily, and finally blossomed out as "The Garden of the Transvaal" in the Marico district. Although there is still considerable dissatisfaction and bitterness amongst many

of the Dutch farmers—and that not altogether without reason—yet it is probable that the majority are well disposed if only they are sympathetically and fairly treated. Nothing seemed to be more clear than the wonderful success of Lord Selborne in a most difficult position, and it is sincerely to be hoped that he will be given every opportunity of completing the work which he has so auspiciously begun.

Bulawayo, founded on sentiment, is at the present moment finding in it poor sustenance. It was a Rhodesian idea to plant a town on the site of Lobengula's kraal, and so long as it remained the terminus of the railway, and the mining industry was in its initial stage of unjustifiable inflation, the place "boomed," but a day came when the

FIG. 4.—"Drift" on the road, Marico district, Transvaal.

railway passed beyond the town, since when it has been gradually retrogressing, although it is probable that the backward movement has now reached its limit. And in any case Bulawayo must ever be a place of pilgrimage, for in its vicinity lies the wonderful Matopo country in the middle of which Cecil John Rhodes is buried. The outlook known as the "World's View" is unique; as if one gazed upon the unswept workshop of creation, the place where the earth was fashioned in the days of old—ridge upon ridge of fantastically-shaped granitic masses lying about in strangest confusion.

Our Ultima Thule was the Victoria Falls, where, however, sufficient time was hardly allowed to gain a complete impression of this glory of Nature. Under the circumstances, however, this was perhaps unavoidable, and only served to deepen the intensity of the moments that

were available. The tropical vegetation of the river banks and islands, the clear and placid water above the Falls, the sudden frenzied leap into the mile-broad chasm, the tumult of the waters hidden in the impenetrable barrier of spray and spindrift rising hundreds of feet into the air, the beauties of the gorge, and a hundred other points of appeal—no man may easily reproduce them with pencil or with brush. We retraced our steps to Bulawayo. Thereafter some returned directly by Cape Town, while others, journeying east by Salisbury and Umtali, embarked at Beira. Thence, touching at Mozambique and Mombasa, where time only permitted a short but romantic run up the British East African Railway as far as Maseru, the eastern detachment of the Association suffered compulsory but not altogether unrewarded delay in the Suez Canal owing to the *Chatham* misadventure, eventually, however, with the loss of three days, reaching that country from which, when any inhabitant sets out, he somehow thinks of the day of his return.

2. GEOGRAPHY AT THE ASSOCIATION.

By THE EDITOR.

The official party of the British Association left Southampton on Saturday, July 29, and arrived at Cape Town after an uneventful journey on August 15. The same evening Professor Darwin delivered the first portion of his presidential address. Professor Darwin began his address with a comparison between Vasco da Gama's voyage and that of the Association, which is of some geographical interest, and may be quoted here. He said:—

“Bartholomew Diaz, the discoverer of the Cape of Storms, spent sixteen months on his voyage, and the little flotilla of Vasco da Gama, sailing from Lisbon on July 8, 1497, only reached the Cape in the middle of November. These bold men, sailing in their puny fishing-smacks to unknown lands, met the perils of the sea and the attacks of savages with equal courage. How great was the danger of such a voyage may be gathered from the fact that less than half the men who sailed with da Gama lived to return to Lisbon. Four hundred and eight years have passed since that voyage, and a ship of thirteen thousand tons has just brought us here, in safety and luxury, in but little more than a fortnight. How striking are the contrasts presented by these events. On the one hand, compare the courage, the endurance, and the persistence of the early navigators with the little that has been demanded of us; on the other hand, consider how much man's power over the forces of Nature has been augmented during the past four centuries.”

On the following day, August 16, the Sections met for the first time. The meetings of Section E were opened by the reading by the President, the late Admiral Sir W. J. L. Wharton, of his presidential address, reprinted in our October issue (p. 513). This was followed by a paper by Colonel Johnston, R.E., of the Ordnance Survey, on the work of the Survey. Colonel Johnston was followed by Mr. L. C. Bernacchi of the *Discovery*, who spoke on the work of the National Antarctic Expedition.