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THE NEW ANGLO-FRENCH FRONTIER BETWEEN THE NIGER AND LAKE CHAD.

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(With Map and Illustrations.)

ON the 29th of last May an agreement was finally arrived at between Great Britain and France in reference to the line of demarcation separating the respective territories of the two countries between the river Niger and Lake Chad, that is, between our own colony of Northern Nigeria and the French possessions in the Soudan. It will probably be remembered that this is not the first time that the boundary in question has been defined. By the Anglo-French agreement of August 1890 the frontier between the British and French spheres of influence was drawn from Say on the River Niger to Barrua on the western shore of Lake Chad "in such a manner as to comprise in the sphere of the Niger Company all that fairly belongs to the kingdom of Sokoto, the line to be determined by the Commissioners to be appointed."

As a matter of fact, this vague and unsatisfactory frontier was never "determined," and very different interpretations were given to it by British and French cartographers.

When the relative positions of the two countries in the Niger basin were under discussion in the years 1897-1898 a modification of the 1890 frontier was agreed to, and a Convention was signed in June 1898 after difficult and prolonged negotiations.

The modified frontier started a good deal lower down the Niger than the previous one had done (at Say), *i.e.*, at the mouth of a water-course called locally the Dallul Mauri. It ran along the median line of this watercourse for some way, and then followed the circumference of a circle of 100 miles radius with Sokoto as centre, after which it followed

certain lines of latitude for stated distances until it reached the western shore of Lake Chad.

It will be noticed that this frontier was a purely arbitrary one, and instead of following the natural features or the political divisions of the country, it followed a line which could only be determined on the spot by exact astronomical observations. Moreover, the precise limits of the spheres of influence of the two Powers were rendered still more uncertain owing to the fact that the position of the town of Sokoto had never



The market-place, Sokoto.

been accurately determined. As a matter of fact, no more precise line could at that time have been agreed upon owing to the scarcity of information available with regard to the region in question, as the latter had only rarely been visited by explorers.

But the principle of the agreement was this, that France was given a good route by which her possessions at Zinder and in the neighbourhood of Lake Chad could be conveniently reached from the Niger, and by which communication could be established between her Congolese territory and the French Soudan, while the integrity of the Sultanates of Sokoto, Katsena, Kano and Kukawa, which were recognised as having been placed under British protection, was respected.

However, when the French Government undertook the occupation of

the territory which had been consigned to it by the terms of the treaty, it was found that the only practicable route from the Niger to Zinder and Lake Chad (namely Say, Konni, Maradi, Zinder, Yo) lay almost entirely in British territory, whereas the French posts of Filingué, Tawa, Zinder, and N'Guigmi were separated from each other by wide waterless deserts.

Communication between these posts was prolonged for a considerable portion of each year by sinking a series of wells at intervals of about 15 kilometres along the route, but in the dry season even this water supply failed, and the permission of the N. Nigerian Government had to be sought for the passage of troops and convoys across British territory during the period when the only alternative route was closed. A certain amount of friction arose locally in consequence, and in order to terminate so irregular a situation a joint Commission (of which the present writer was a member) was appointed to survey and fix the 1898 frontier line.

This Survey, which extended along a line one thousand miles long, and which was spread over a considerable distance laterally in view of the possibility of further modifications of the frontier being made, lasted nearly two years, and proved to be an arduous task owing to the unhealthiness of the climate and the difficulties of transport; and, in addition, the Commissioners had to carry on their work with only a nominal escort, less than one hundred miles from Sokoto, which for some months after the commencement of the Survey was occupied by hostile armies of natives, who were eventually dispersed by a powerful military expedition from the south.

Before the completion of this Survey Great Britain and France had brought to a happy conclusion certain important negotiations which culminated in the Convention of April 1904, one article of which dealt with a modification of the 1898 frontier running between the Niger and Lake Chad.

By this time both Governments had precise information of the nature of the country through which the greater part of the old frontier ran; and in order to secure to France the route which she desired a theoretical modification of the frontier was agreed upon, whereby the position of the line was moved considerably to the south.

At the same time a special clause was added which stipulated that this new frontier should only be definitely fixed by a joint Commission on the spot, when the political divisions of the country could be studied, and the integrity of the lands belonging to the various tribes would be respected as far as possible. In accordance with this clause delegates appointed by the two Governments discussed the situation in October 1905, and again in April 1906, with the result that a final frontier line was agreed upon—still further to the south—which a Joint Commission has just been appointed to delimit.

The British Commissioner is Major O'Shee, R.E., who was recently entrusted with the demarcation of the Anglo-Portuguese frontier between Rhodesia and Mozambique, and the French Commissioner is Captain Tilho, one of the signatories in London of the new frontier,

and a member of the previous Niger-Chad Boundary Commission of 1902-1904.

The two Commissions meet on the Niger in December of this year, and in all probability they will have completed their work soon after the middle of 1907, as a very accurate geographical survey already exists of the whole of the country through which the frontier passes, and their chief work will consist in settling the conflicting claims of the various chiefs to villages and fields on or near the line. In brief, as the result of an extensive concession of territory to France, for which no doubt an equivalent has been received elsewhere, or, in goodwill, the French Government has secured a practical route at all seasons of the year from the Niger to Lake Chad *via* Bengu, Bei-Bei, Matankari, Konni, Chiberi, Maradi, Zinder, Gurselik, Kabi, and Yo. The frontier does not exactly follow this route, as if it did, a portion of the territory of the chiefs of Maradi and Zinder would fall within the British sphere.

Roughly speaking, the present frontier marks the southern limits of the Sahara. The territories traversed by it had remained unexplored from the time of Dr. Barth's travels in the early fifties until about the time of the Anglo-French agreement of 1890, since when a number of French expeditions have been despatched to this region.

On our side, owing to the hostility of the Emirs of Sokoto and Kano, the frontier districts have not been visited, excepting for a reconnaissance, which was carried out by Major Merrick, R.A., in 1902, and which extended from the Niger along the "Sokoto arc" as far as Maradi. The country itself is poor, sparsely inhabited, and practically waterless. Deep sandy tracks wind through the dreariest expanses of thorn bush. The latter is stunted (as are the few existing trees) and powdered with a deposit of fine grey sand. Only near the villages are there any signs of cultivation: these consist chiefly of fields of guinea corn and a kind of millet, with here and there small patches of the cotton and indigo plants. In certain of the villages, situated in neighbourhoods in which water is found near the surface of the ground, onions also are grown.

During the dry weather, *i.e.*, for one half of each year, the climate is comparatively healthy, excepting on the banks of the Niger and on the marshes bordering Lake Chad: but in the rains it is very unhealthy and is similar to that experienced throughout the year on the Coast. In the moist heat Europeans become anæmic and enervated, and almost invariably suffer from malarial fever, and often from dysentery.

In November the dry season commences, and the temperature rarely rises above 95° F. (in the shade) during the day, while at night it falls as low as 40° F.

The air is impregnated with fine dust borne by the Harmattan, an extremely dry wind, and owing to the haze thus caused it is often difficult to see objects only a quarter of a mile away, while at night the stars are often completely hidden, and even the moon is sometimes invisible.

In about March the temperature rises rapidly. The thermometer

sometimes registers a maximum of 115° F. in the day, while at night the temperature is often as high as 95° F.

May is the month of tornadoes, and these are often of extreme violence, though ample warning is always given of their approach. The air is breathless for an hour or two previously, and the heat of the sun is almost intolerable. Presently there is a stampede of natives running to the nearest shelter, and a mile or two away (generally to the north-east) the storm can be distinctly seen sweeping across the plain, its progress being marked by bushes and trees bent over almost horizontally by the wind, and a long line of churned-up sand. For a quarter of an hour the wind howls and plays havoc with every loose article left out in the open, and fine sand penetrates even "water-tight" tin cases. Later on, these sand storms are invariably and immediately followed by rain, which falls very heavily for a few minutes.

Following the tornado season come the regular rains, in which thunderstorms are frequent. These often provide a magnificent spectacle, and sometimes hang directly overhead for an hour at a time. Deafening peals of thunder occur almost simultaneously with the most vivid lightning flashes, and rain falls in torrents. The sandy soil becomes quickly saturated with water, and river beds which a few minutes previously had consisted of loose sand, feet deep, are now swirling streams capable of carrying a man off his feet and depositing him in some distant flooded hollow.

As the season advances the rainstorms decrease in violence and give place to steady downpours; the rainfall becomes smaller and smaller, and the dry season gradually sets in. Pools of water (tubkis) which had formed in shallow depressions of the ground—the temporary haunts of numbers of wild geese and duck—disappear, and no surface water is to be seen anywhere. Even the larger rivers, which throughout the whole of the wet season ran two or three feet deep, dry up, and the only water obtainable is from deep wells in or near the villages. These latter are usually found five or ten miles apart, but sometimes they are separated by forty or fifty miles of waterless "bush."

The great majority of the inhabitants of these regions are Haussas, who are subdivided into tribes according to the districts in which they live.

Generally speaking, the suffix "awa" added to the name of the district gives the tribal name of the inhabitants. Thus the people of Gober and its neighbourhood are known as Goberawa, though as a matter of fact this ancient town is more generally known at the present time as Chiberi.

The Mauris and Arewas, the inhabitants of the Dallul Mauri, are pagan Haussas of warlike disposition. Their villages are surrounded by strong timber stockades, outside which a ditch is often found as an additional defence. The stockades are a formidable obstacle in themselves, and they are sometimes rendered still more impenetrable by thorn bushes which are planted in the interstices.

Groups of villages, only two or three years ago, ranged themselves

in active hostility against other groups: battles, massacres and slave-raiding expeditions were frequent events, and no one ventured far outside the vicinity of his stockade unarmed. These tribesmen are armed with bows and arrows, spears and swords, all of local manufacture. The arrows are barbed, and are often poisoned, preparations from certain roots and berries being used for this purpose. The action of the poison is often very rapid, death ensuing only a few minutes after the infliction of the wound: but occasionally, when the poison has not been freshly applied, little harm results from it.



The Maradi river during the rains.

A certain number of the warriors, depending on the wealth of their chief, are mounted on horseback, and a cavalry charge delivered by two or three hundred of these savages is a stirring sight. On a given signal, made by beat of drum, the whole of the horsemen dash forward at top speed, regardless of order and spurring furiously, their white garments floating in the wind: above the thunder of hoofs and the tumult of hoarse cries, the clashing of their spears on their enormous white shields can be plainly distinguished, while close behind follows a dense rolling cloud of dust.

The poorest of the houses in the villages consist, roof and walls, of

woven grass matting supported on a framework of sticks; the chiefs' houses have mud walls, and, very rarely, flat mud roofs provided with a primitive system of rain-water drainage. Further east, towards Konni and Maradi, nearly all the houses are built of mud throughout, while the towns are encircled with strongly-built mud walls, ten to forty feet high,



Arewa warriors.

with a deep ditch outside. A few of the towns even have a double ditch separated by a ridge, whilst the walls of Kano are loopholed near the top and the gateways are built in deep recesses cleverly constructed and elaborately prepared for defence. Throughout the country the chiefs and a few of the headmen in most of the towns are Fulanis, and wandering Fulani herdsmen are sometimes met with in the bush driving their cattle from one grazing spot to another. There are a few scattered communities of Asbenawa (the "masked Tuaregs" of the desert) resid-

ing in the country: one of these is to be found at Azarori, and their king, an important chief, is called the Mullul. Another Asbenawa settlement is established just to the north of Chiberi. These Tuaregs are divided into two classes: the upper class is nomadic for the most part, and in the wet season members of it retire into the desert with their camels (which cannot live through the rains), and barter their loads of guinea corn for the salt and dates which they obtain from the inhabitants of the oases. The lower class of the Tuaregs resides in the villages and



The great wall of Kano.

occupies itself in cattle breeding and in agricultural pursuits. The Tuaregs possess a magnificent military spirit, and they excel in the use of the spear and sword at close quarters. In addition to the ordinary long crusader sword of the country, they generally wear on the left arm a second and shorter sword, the scabbard of which is provided with a leather bracelet which is sewn to it near the hilt, and through which the wrist is passed. Descended originally from fair-skinned forefathers (even now they boast that they are white men) they have mixed considerably with the black peoples whom they have conquered from time to time; but they still retain the aquiline features of their ancestors

with their chivalry and pride of race. At the time that the present writer was in that neighbourhood, the Mullul, previously referred to, collected some bands of fighting men, and, in settlement of an old quarrel, attacked and sacked the fortified town of Chara, putting nearly all its inhabitants and those of the surrounding villages to the sword. This, too, in spite of the fact that the Chara people were greatly superior in numbers and were fully prepared. About a thousand of them fell in this battle, while the Tuaregs lost but five or six men. A French officer who



A Tuareg from Asben.

was in command of the military post of Buza at that time, reported having seen one of the victims lying dead on the ground with his head cut clean through like a melon by a Tuareg sword. The Tuaregs prize the women of their own race greatly, and are often influenced by their advice in council.

Eastwards of Maradi, and between it and Lake Chad, the country is divided into the three great sultanates of Zinder, Kano and Kukawa. The two former are said to be by far the most populous and fertile districts between the Middle Niger and the Nile; and in addition to the vast supplies of guinea corn and millet that are raised, great quantities of potatoes, cotton, tobacco, tomatoes, indigo, melons

and dates are also produced. Cattle, sheep, goats, and donkeys are found in considerable numbers, while weaving is one of the principal occupations of the inhabitants. The rise of the principality of Zinder has been a most remarkable and rapid one. Only sixty or seventy years ago it was a small tributary dependency of the Sheikh of Bornu. A few successful wars enabled it to not only declare its independency, but also to extend its suzerainty over all the neighbouring states, until at the present time it has an area about equal to that of Greece, while its population numbers half a million. It owes its prosperity largely to the fact that until recently vast caravans from Tripoli and other Mediterranean ports passed through it on their way to Kano. But the trade that was carried on in this manner in former years is now being rapidly killed by the establishment of commercial stations on the Benue and Lower Niger; and in all probability when the proposed railway from the coast to Kano is eventually constructed, Zinder will lose still more of its prosperity in favour of Kano. Kano is by far the most important and populous city of the Central and Western Soudan, of which it is also the commercial centre. Its vast and picturesque market-place is one of the sights of Africa; but a detailed description would not be in place here, besides which it has been fully described by travellers in the last year or two.

Eastward of Machena, and to the north of the river Yo, the country is flat and almost bare of vegetation and cultivation. Gurselik is the chief town and the inhabitants extract large quantities of salt from the ground by a process of infiltration. The salt industry is a most remunerative one, and in exchange for the product all the necessities of life are obtained. In some of the villages in the district, however, a certain amount of land is cultivated, the people resorting to the extraction of salt in the dry season only. Further east, and extending almost to Lake Chad itself, is the desert of Mir, which is 120 miles wide, and in which there are few water-holes, known only to hunters, and but one oasis. Between the river Yo and Kukawa only fifteen years ago a number of flourishing towns existed, but the whole country has since then been devastated by Rabah and his followers, and now presents a melancholy aspect. Kukawa itself did not escape, and this beautiful and great city became a mass of blackened ruins. However, now that peace has been re-established in these regions there are signs of returning prosperity, and the capital of Bornu is already in course of being rebuilt.

Lake Chad itself has an area of 7000 square miles, and it is equal in extent to the combined areas of Caithness, Sutherland, Ross and Cromarty, Nairn, Elgin and Banff. Of the lake itself no very definite survey has yet been made, nor indeed, owing to the marshy nature of the country in its vicinity, and the extent to which its area is affected by floods, has it any very definite boundaries. This uncertainty of outline is more marked on its east than on its west side, and a large portion of the area of the lake is occupied by shallow lagoons and dried-up canals connecting them. There are only two open sheets of water of any considerable extent, and these are separated from one another,

and are the basins into which the rivers Yo and Shari empty themselves. Judging from the accounts of early explorers it would appear that the lake has lost one-third of its area by evaporation in the course of the last fifty years. Possibly the Harmattan wind which prevails in this part of Africa for one-half of the year is responsible for the decreasing area of the lake, partly by reason of the evaporation caused by its extreme dryness, and partly also owing to the quantities of sand—especially on the east side—which it deposits, and which form islands of constantly increasing size. The waters of the lake are shallow, averaging between two and six feet in depth, and in no place has a sounding of more than twelve feet been yet obtained. The lake contains quantities of fish, and there are also numbers of hippopotami, alligators and turtles. Game abounds in the vicinity, elephants, giraffe, rhinoceros, pigs and antelopes all being found in considerable numbers. The islands of the lake are well populated, though many of the inhabitants of the archipelago have been probably driven there temporarily by slave-raiding marauders. They carry on a large trade with the people of Bornu in dried fish, and also in cattle in which they are especially rich. Until recently these herds were the objects of frequent raids on the part of the Tubus, the inhabitants of the country to the north of the lake; but the latter did not always enjoy the fruit of their rapacity in peace, as they in their turn sometimes fell victims to the Tuaregs, the “kings of the desert.”

ZIMBABWE:

A RE-STATEMENT OF ITS PROBLEM, AND A SOLUTION.

By A. H. HARLEY.

THE hypotheses of Science have long been taken up into our intellectual life; its methods are now being applied to all our interests. Out upon Nature, in upon himself turns man's inquisitive spirit accumulating a limitless material, but meaningless till submitted to the classification that passes with us for knowledge. Fain would he regulate destinies: not so elusive are the secrets of the eternity behind him, before his imagination the world may yet stand in the first blush of its youth. But into the effort to rehumanise the impersonal past, and to read a history in fossil or fragment must be adopted those methods of “organised common sense” that relate and classify, and treat only the irrational as inexplicable. Their application hails the advent of specialism, before which a science breaks up into departments, and one man's authority is particularised.

Half a century ago Archæology was defined by Sir Charles Newton as “the science of all the human past.” Since then the range has been found too wide. The historian for his researches has appropriated the literary documents from the mass of materials, but more than enough remains, and few students will dissent if, with Mr. Hogarth, we define