

SOUTH AFRICA.

BY
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SOUTH AFRICA.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

IT was in April of last year, 1877, that I first formed a plan of paying an immediate visit to South Africa. The idea that I would one day do so had long loomed in the distance before me. Except the South African group I had seen all our great groups of Colonies,—among which in my own mind I always include the United States, for to my thinking, our Colonies are the lands in which our cousins, the descendants of our forefathers, are living and still speaking our language. I had become more or less acquainted I may say with all these offshoots from Great Britain, and had written books about them all,—except South Africa. To “do” South Africa had for some years past been on my mind, till at last there was growing on me the consciousness that I was becoming too old for any more such “doing.” Then, suddenly, the newspapers became full of the Transvaal Republic. There was a country not indeed belonging to Great Britain but which once had been almost British, a country, with which Britain was much too closely concerned to ignore it,—a country, which had been occupied by British subjects, and established as a Republic under British authority,—now in danger of being reconquered by the native tribes which had once peopled it. In this country, for the existence of which in its then condition we were in a measure responsible, the white man there would not fight, nor pay taxes, nor make himself conformable to any of these rules by which

property and life are made secure. Then we were told that English interference and English interference only could save the country from internecine quarrels between black men and white men. While this was going on I made up my mind that now if ever must I visit South Africa. The question of the Confederation of the States was being mooted at the same time, a Confederation which was to include not only this Republic which was so very much out of elbows, but also another quiet little Republic of which I think that many of us did not know much at home,—but as to which we had lately heard that it was to receive £90,000 out of the revenue of the Mother Country, not in compensation for any acknowledged wrong, but as a general plaster for whatever little scratches the smaller community, namely the Republic of the Orange Free States, might have received in its encounters with the greater majesty of the British Empire. If a tour to South Africa would ever be interesting, it certainly would be so now. Therefore I made up my mind and began to make enquiries as to steamers, cost, mode of travelling, and letters of introduction. It was while I was doing this that the tidings came upon us like a clap of thunder of the great deed done by Sir Theophilus Shepstone. The Transvaal had already been annexed! The thing which we were dreaming of as just possible,—as an awful task which we might perhaps be forced to undertake in the course of some indefinite number of months to come, had already been effected. A sturdy Englishman had walked into the Republic with five and twenty policemen and a Union Jack and had taken possession of it. “Would the inhabitants of the Republic like to ask me to take it?” So much enquiry he seems to have made. No; the people by the voice of their parliament declined even to consider so monstrous a proposition. “Then I shall take it without being asked,” said Sir Theophilus. And he took it.

That was what had just been done in the Transvaal when my idea of going to South Africa had ripened itself into a resolution. Clearly there was an additional reason for going. Here had been done a very high-handed thing as to which it might be the duty of a Briton travelling with a pen in his hand to make a strong remonstrance. Or again it might be his duty to pat that sturdy Briton on the back,—with pen and ink,—and hold his name up to honour as having been sturdy in a righteous cause. If I had premeditated a journey to South Africa a year or two since, when South Africa was certainly not very much in men's mouths, there was much more to reconcile me to the idea now that Confederation and the Transvaal were in every man's mouth.

But when my enquiries which had at first been general came down to minute details, when I was warned by one South African friend that the time I had chosen for my journey was so altogether wrong that I should be sure to find myself in some improvised region between two rivers of which I should be as unable to re-pass the one as to pass the other, and by another that the means of transit through the country were so rough as to be unfit for any except the very strong,—or very slow; when I was assured that the time I had allowed myself was insufficient even to get up to Pretoria and back, I confess that I became alarmed. I shall never forget the portentous shaking of the head of one young man who evidently thought that my friends were neglecting me in that I was allowed to think of such a job of work. Between them all they nearly scared me. Had I not been ashamed to abandon my plan I think I should have gone into the city and begged Mr. Donald Currie to absolve me from responsibility in regard to that comfortable berth which he had promised to secure for me on board the Caldera.

I have usually found warnings to be of no avail, and often to be illfounded. The Bay of Biscay as I have felt it is not much rougher than other seas. No one ever attempted to gouge me in Kentucky or drew a revolver on me in California. I have lived in Paris as cheaply as elsewhere; and have invariably found Jews to be more liberal than other men. Such has been the case with the South African lions which it was presumed that I should find in my path. I have never been stopped by a river and have never been starved; and am now, that the work is done, heartily glad that I made the attempt. Whether my doing so can be of any use in giving information to others will be answered by the fate of my little book which is thus sent upon the waves within twelve months of the time when I first thought of making the journey; but I am sure that I have added something worth having to my own stock of knowledge respecting the Colonies generally.

As I have written the following chapters I think that I have named the various works, antecedent to my own, from which I have made quotations or taken information as to any detail of South African history. I will, however, acknowledge here what I owe to Messrs. Wilmot and Chase's "History of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope,"—to the "Compendium of South African History and Geography," by George M. Theal, as to which the reader may be interested to know that the entire work in two volumes was printed, and very well printed, by native printers at Lovedale,—to Mr. John Noble's work, entitled "South Africa, Past and Present,"—to Messrs. Silver and Co.'s "Handbook to South Africa," which of all such works that have ever come into my hands is the most complete; and to the reprints of two courses of lectures, one given by Judge Watermeyer on the Cape Colony, and the other by Judge Cloëte "On the Emigration of the Dutch

Farmers.” I must also name the “Compendium of Kafir Laws and Customs” collected and published by Col. Maclean, who was at one time Lieut.-Governor of British Kafraria. Were I to continue the list so as to include all the works that I have read or consulted I should have to name almanacks, pamphlets, lectures, letters and blue books to a very great number indeed.

I have a great deal of gratitude to own to gentlemen holding official positions in the different Colonies and districts I have visited, without whose aid my task would have been hopeless. Chief among these have been Captain Mills the Colonial Secretary at Capetown, without whom I cannot presume it possible that the Cape Colony should continue to exist. There is however happily no reason why for many years to come it should be driven to the necessity of even contemplating such an attempt. At Pieter Maritzburg in Natal I found my old friend Napier Broome, and from him and from the Governor’s staff generally I received all the assistance that they could give me. At Pretoria Colonel Brooke and Mr. Osborn, who were ruling the Dutchmen in the absence of Sir Theophilus Shepstone, were equally kind to me. At Bloemfontein Mr. Höhne, who is the Government Secretary, was as cordial and communicative as though the Orange Free States were an English Colony and he an English Minister. I must also say that Mr. Brand, the President of the Free States, though he is Dutch to the back bone, and has in his time had some little tussles with what he has thought to be British high-handedness,—in every one of which by-the-bye he has succeeded in achieving something good for his country,—was with me as open and unreserved as though I had been a Dutch Boer, or he a member of the same political club with myself in England. But how shall I mention the full-handed friendship of Major Lanyon, whom I found administering the

entangled affairs of Griqualand West,—by which perhaps hitherto unknown names my readers will find, if they go on far enough with the task before them, that the well-known South African Diamond Fields are signified? When last I had seen him, and it seems but a short time ago, he was a pretty little boy with a pretty little frock in Belfast. And there he was among the diamonds carrying on his government in a capital which certainly is not lovely to look at,—which of itself is perhaps the most unlovely city that I know,—but which his kindness succeeded in making agreeable, though not even his kindness could make it other than hideous.

These names I mention because of the information which I have received from their owners. What I owe to the hospitality of the friends I have made in South Africa is a matter private between me and them. I may however perhaps acknowledge the great courtesy which I have received from Sir Bartle Frere and Sir Henry Bulwer, the Governors of the Cape Colony and Natal. As to the former it was a matter of much regret to me that I should not have seen him on my return to Capetown after my travels, when he was still detained at the frontier by the disturbances with Kreli and the Galekas. It was my misfortune not to become personally acquainted with Sir Theophilus Shepstone, who unhappily for me was absent inspecting his new dominion when I was at Pretoria.

I must express my hearty thanks to Sir Henry Barkly, the late Governor of the Cape Colony, who had returned home just before I started from London, and who was kind enough to prepare for me with great minuteness a sketch of my journey, as, in his opinion, it ought to be made, giving me not only a list of the places which I should visit but an estimate of the time which should be allotted to each, so as to turn to the best advantage the months which I had at

my disposal. I have not quite done all which his energy would have exacted from me. I did not get to the Gold-fields of the Transvaal or into Basutoland. But I have followed his guidance throughout, and can certainly testify to the exactness of his knowledge of the country.

My readers will find that in speaking of the three races I found in South Africa, the native tribes namely, the Dutch and the English, I have attributed by far the greater importance to the former because of their numbers. But I fear that I have done so in such a way as not to have conciliated the friends of the aborigines at home, while I shall certainly have insured the hostility,—or at any rate opposition,—of the normal white men in the Colonies. The white man in the South African Colonies feels that the colony ought to be his and kept up for him, because he, perhaps, with his life in his hand, went forth as a pioneer to spread the civilization of Europe and to cultivate the wilds of the world's surface. If he has not done so himself, his father did it before him, and he thinks that the gratitude of the Mother Country should maintain for him the complete ascendancy which his superiority to the black man has given him. I feel confident that he will maintain his own ascendancy, and think that the Mother Country should take care that that ascendancy be not too complete. The colonist will therefore hardly agree with me. The friend of the aborigines, on the other hand, seems to me to ignore the fact,—a fact as it presents itself to my eyes,—that the white man has to be master and the black man servant, and that the best friendship will be shown to the black man by seeing that the terms on which the master and servant shall be brought together are just. In the first place we have to take care that the native shall not be subjected to slavery on any pretence or in any of its forms; and in doing this we shall have to

own that compulsory labour, the wages for which are to be settled by the employer without the consent of the employed, is a form of slavery. After that,—after acknowledging so much, and providing against any infraction of the great law so laid down,—the more we do to promote the working of the coloured man, the more successful we are in bringing him into his harness, the better for himself, and for the colony at large. A little garden, a wretched hut, and a great many hymns do not seem to me to bring the man any nearer to civilization. Work alone will civilize him, and his incentive to work should be, and is, the desire to procure those good things which he sees to be in the enjoyment of white men around him. He is quite alive to this desire, and is led into new habits by good eating, good clothes, even by finery and luxuries, much quicker than by hymns and gardens supposed to be just sufficient to maintain an innocent existence. The friend of the aboriginal would, I fear, fain keep his aboriginal separated from the white man; whereas I would wish to see their connexion as close as possible. In this way I fear that I may have fallen between two stools.

In regard to Kreli and his rebellious Galekas,—in regard also to the unsettled state of the Zulus and their borders, I have to ask my readers to remember that my book has been written while these disturbances were in existence. In respect to them I can not do more than express an opinion of my own,—more or less crude as it must necessarily be.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY DUTCH HISTORY.

OUR possessions in South Africa, like many of our other Colonial territories, were taken by us from others who did the first rough work of discovering and occupying the land. As we got Canada from the French, Jamaica from the Spaniards, and Ceylon from the Dutch, so did we take the Cape of Good Hope from the latter people. In Australia and New Zealand we were the pioneers, and very hard work we found it. So also was it in Massachusetts and Virginia, which have now, happily, passed away from us. But in South Africa the Dutch were the first to deal with the Hottentots and Bushmen; and their task was nearly as hard as that which fell to the lot of Englishmen when they first landed on the coast of Australia with a cargo of convicts.

The Portuguese indeed came before the Dutch, but they only came, and did not stay. The Cape, as far as we know, was first doubled by Bartholomew Diaz in 1486. He, and some of the mariners with him, called it the Cape of Torments, or Capo Tormentoso, from the miseries they endured. The more comfortable name which it now bears was given to it by King John of Portugal, as being the new way discovered by his subjects to the glorious Indies. Diaz, it seems, never in truth saw the Cape but was carried past it to Algoa Bay where he merely landed on an island and put up a cross. But he certainly was one of the great naval heroes of the world and deserves to be ranked with Columbus. Vasco da Gama, another sailor hero, said to have been of royal Portuguese descent, followed him in 1497. He landed to the west of the Cape. There the meeting between Savage and Christian was

as it has almost always been. At first there was love and friendship, a bartering of goods in which the Christian of course had the advantage, and a general interchange of amenities. Then arose mistakes, so natural among strangers who could not speak to each other, suspicion, violence, and very quickly an internecine quarrel in which the poor Savage was sure to go to the wall. Vasco da Gama did not stay long at the Cape, but proceeding on went up the East Coast as far as our second South African colony, which bears the name which he then gave to it. He called the land *Tierra de Natal*, because he reached it on the day of our Lord's Nativity. The name has stuck to it ever since and no doubt will now be preserved. From thence Da Gama went on to India, and we who are interested in the Cape will lose sight of him. But he also was one of the world's mighty mariners,—a man born to endure much, having to deal not only with Savages who mistook him and his purposes, but with frequent mutinies among his own men,—a hero who had ever to do his work with his life in his hand, and to undergo hardships of which our sailors in these happier days know nothing.

The Portuguese seem to have made no settlement at the Cape intended even to be permanent; but they did use the place during the sixteenth and first half of the next century as a port at which they could call for supplies and assistance on their way out to the East Indies.

The East had then become the great goal of commerce to others besides the Portuguese. In 1600 our own East India Company was formed, and in 1602 that of the Dutch. Previous to those dates, in 1591, an English sailor, Captain Lancaster, visited the Cape, and in 1620 Englishmen landed and took possession of it in the name of James I. But nothing came of these visitings and declarations, although an attempt was made by Great Britain to

establish a house of call for her trade out to the East. For this purpose a small gang of convicts was deposited on Robben Island, which is just off Capetown, but as a matter of course the convicts quarrelled with themselves and the Natives, and came to a speedy end. In 1595 the Dutch came, but did not then remain. It was not till 1652 that the first Europeans who were destined to be the pioneer occupants of the new land were put on shore at the Cape of Good Hope, and thus made the first Dutch settlement. Previous to that the Cape had in fact been a place of call for vessels of all nations going and coming to and from the East. But from this date, 1652, it was to be used for the Dutch exclusively. The Hollanders of that day were stanch Protestants and sound Christians, but they hardly understood their duty to their neighbours. They had two ideas in forming their establishment at the Cape;—firstly that of aiding their own commerce with the East, and secondly that of debarring the commerce of all other nations from the aid which they sought for themselves. It is on record that when a French merchant-vessel was once treated with hospitality by the authorities at the Cape, the authorities at home brought their colonial dependents very severely to task for such forgetfulness of their duty. The Governor at the time was dismissed for not allowing the Frenchman to “float on his own fins.” It was then decided that water should be given to Europeans in want of it, but as little other refreshment as possible.

The home Authority at this time was not the Dutch Government, but the Council of Seventeen at Amsterdam, who were the Directors of the Dutch East India Company. For, as with us, the commercial enterprise with the East was a monopoly given over to a great Company, and this Company for the furtherance of its own business established a depôt at the Cape of Good Hope.

When therefore we read of the Dutch Governors we are reading of the servants not of the nation but of a commercial firm. And yet these Governors, with the aid of their burgher council, had full power over life and limb.

Jan van Riebeeck was the first Governor, a man who seems to have had a profound sense of the difficulties and responsibilities of his melancholy position, and to have done his duty well amidst great suffering, till at last, after many petitions for his own recall, he was released. He was there for ten sad years, and seems to have ruled,—no doubt necessarily,—with a stern hand. The records of the little community at this time are both touching and amusing, the tragedy being interspersed with much comedy. In the first year Volunteer Van Vogelaar was sentenced to receive a hundred blows from the butt of his own musket for “wishing the purser at the devil for serving out penguins instead of pork.” Whether the despatch devilwards of the purser or of Van Vogelaar was most expedited by this occurrence we are not told. Then the chaplain’s wife had a child, and we learn that all the other married ladies hurried on to follow so good an example. But the ladies generally did not escape the malice of evil tongues. Early in the days of the establishment one Woüters was sentenced to have his tongue bored, to be banished for three years, and to beg pardon on his bare knees for speaking ill of the Commander’s wife and of other females. It is added that he would not have been let off so lightly but that his wife was just then about to prove herself a good citizen by adding to the population of the little community. In 1653, the second year of Van Riebeeck’s government, we are told that the lions seemed as though they were going to take the fort by storm, and that a wolf seized a sheep within sight of the herds. We afterwards hear that a dreadful ourang-outang was found, as big as a calf.

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