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**IMPRESSIONS
OF SOUTH AFRICA.**



IMPRESSIONS OF SOUTH AFRICA

BY
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"THE AMERICAN COMMONWEALTH," ETC.

WITH THREE MAPS

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TO
THE COMPANION OF MY JOURNEY

PREFACE

As I have explained in the introductory chapter the scope and plan of this volume, I need do no more here than acknowledge the assistance which I have derived in the historical part of it from two or three books, and especially from the treatises of Mr. Theal, a diligent and careful writer who has done much for the annals of his adopted country. I have also been aided by the interesting lectures on the Emigrant Boers in Natal of the late Mr. Cloete, and by the lucid and judicious "Historical Geography of the British Colonies" (vol. iv.) of Mr. C. P. Lucas. No special reference seems needed to the other works I have consulted, except to Mr. Noble's very well executed "Official Handbook of the Cape and South Africa."

I have to thank Sir Donald Currie and the Castle Mail Packets Company for the permission kindly given me to use the maps in the excellent "Guide to South Africa" (published by them) in the preparation of the three maps contained in this volume; and I trust that these maps will prove helpful to the

reader, for a comprehension of the physical geography of the country is essential to a comprehension of its history.

The friends in South Africa to whom I am indebted for many of the facts I have stated and views I have expressed are too numerous to mention : but I cannot deny myself the pleasure of returning thanks for the genial hospitality and unfailing kindness which I received in every part of the country.

As I have been obliged to correct the proofs of this book at a distance from all books of reference, I ask indulgence for any minor errors which may be discovered in it.

JAMES BRYCE.

September 13, 1897.

INTRODUCTION

IN the latter part of the year 1895 I travelled across South Africa from Cape Town to Fort Salisbury in Mashonaland, passing through Bechuana-land and Matabililand. From Fort Salisbury, which is only two hundred miles from the Zambesi, I returned through Manicaland and the Portuguese territories to Beira on the Indian Ocean, sailed thence to Delagoa Bay and Durban, traversed Natal, and visited the Transvaal, the Orange Free State, Basutoland, and the eastern province of Cape Colony. The country had long possessed a great interest for me, and that interest was increased by studying on the spot its physical character as well as the peculiar economic and industrial conditions which have made it unlike the other newly settled countries of the world. Seeing these things and talking with the leading men in every part of the country, I began to comprehend many things that had previously been obscure to me, and saw how the political troubles of the land were connected with the life which nature imposed on the people. Im-

mediately after my return to Europe, fresh political troubles broke out, and events occurred in the Transvaal which fixed the eyes of the whole world upon South Africa. I had not travelled with the view of writing a book ; but the interest which the events just mentioned have aroused, and which is likely to be sustained for a good while to come, leads me to believe that the impressions of a traveller who has visited other new countries may be useful to those who desire to know what South Africa is really like, and why it makes a noise and stir in the world disproportionate to its small population.

I have called the book "Impressions" lest it should be supposed that I have attempted to present a complete and minute account of the country. For this a long residence and a large volume would be required. It is the salient features that I wish to describe. These, after all, are what most readers desire to know : these are what the traveller of a few weeks or months can give, and can give all the better because the details have not become so familiar to him as to obscure the broad outlines.

Instead of narrating my journey, and weaving into the narrative observations on the country and people, I have tried to arrange the materials collected in a way better fitted to present to the reader in their natural connection the facts he will desire to have. Those facts would seem to be the following :

(1) the physical character of the country, and the aspects of its scenery ; (2) the characteristics of the native races that inhabit it ; (3) the history of the natives and of the European settlers, that is to say, the chief events which have made the people what they now are ; (4) the present condition of the several divisions of the country, and the aspects of life in it ; (5) the economic resources of the country, and the characteristic features of its society and its politics.

These I have tried to set forth in the order above indicated. The first seven chapters contain a very brief account of the physical structure and climate, since these are the conditions which have chiefly determined the economic progress of the country and the lines of European migration, together with remarks on the wild animals, the vegetation, and the scenery. Next follows a sketch of the three aboriginal races, and an outline of the history of the whites since their first arrival, four centuries ago. The earlier events are lightly touched on, while those which have brought about the present political situation are more fully related. In the third part of the book, asking the reader to accompany me on the long journey from Cape Town to the Zambesi Valley and back again, I have given in four chapters a description of the far interior as one sees it passing from barbarism to civilization—its scenery, the prospects of its material development, the life which its

new settlers lead. These regions, being the part of the country most lately brought under European administration, seem to deserve a fuller treatment than the older and better-known regions. Three other chapters give a more summary account of Natal, of the Transvaal gold-fields, of that model republic the Orange Free State, and of Basutoland, a native state under British protection which possesses many features of peculiar interest. In the fourth and last division of the book several questions of a more general character are dealt with which could not conveniently be brought into either the historical or the descriptive parts. I have selected for discussion those topics which are of most permanent importance and as to which the reader is most likely to be curious. Among them are the condition of the natives, and their relations to the white people; the aspects of social and political life; the situation of affairs in the Transvaal in 1895, and the causes which brought about the Reform rising and the expedition of Dr. Jameson; and finally, the economic prospects of the country, and the political future of its colonies and republics.

In these concluding chapters, as well as in the historical sketch, my aim has been to set forth and explain facts rather than to pass judgments upon the character and conduct of individuals. Whoever desires to help others to a fair view of current events must try not only to be impartial, but also to

avoid expressing opinions when the grounds for those opinions cannot be fully stated ; and where controversy is raging round the events to be described, no judgment passed on individual actors could fail to be deemed partial by one set of partizans or by the other. Feeling sure that the present problems will take some time to solve, I have sought to write what those who desire to understand the country may find useful even after the next few years have passed. And, so far from wishing to champion any view or to throw any fresh logs on the fire of controversy that has been blazing for the last two years, I am convinced that the thing now most needed in the interests of South Africa is to let controversies die out, to endeavour to forget the causes of irritation, and to look at the actual facts of the case in a purely practical spirit.

Altogether apart from its recent troubles, South Africa is an interesting, and indeed fascinating, subject of study. There are, of course, some things which one cannot expect to find in it. There has not yet been time to evolve institutions either novel or specially instructive, nor to produce new types of character (save that of the Transvaal Boer) or new forms of social life. There are no ancient buildings, except a few prehistoric ruins ; nor have any schools of architecture or painting or literature been developed as yet. But besides the aspects of nature, often weird and sometimes beautiful, there are the

savage races, whose usages and superstitions open a wide field for research, and the phenomena of whose contact with the whites raise some grave and gloomy problems. There are the relations of the two European races—races which ought long ago to have been happily blended into one, but which have been kept apart by a train of untoward events and administrative errors. Few of the newer countries have had a more peculiar or more chequered history; and this history needs to be studied with a constant regard to the physical conditions that have moulded it. Coming down to our own time, nowhere are the struggles of the past seen to be more closely intertwined with the troubles of the present; nor does even Irish history furnish a better illustration of the effect of sentiment upon practical politics. Few events of recent times have presented more dramatic situations, and raised more curious and intricate issues of political and international morality, than those which have lately been set before us by the discovery of the Transvaal gold-fields and the rush of nineteenth-century miners and speculators into a pastoral population which retains the ideas and habits of the seventeenth-century. Still more fascinating are the problems of the future. One can as yet do little more than guess at them; but the world now moves so fast, and has grown so small, and sees nearly every part of itself so closely bound by ties of commerce or politics to every other

part, that it is impossible to meditate on any great and new country without seeking to interpret its tendencies by the experience of other countries, and to conjecture the rôle it will be called on to play in the world-drama of the centuries to come. I have sought, therefore, not only to make South Africa real to those who do not know it, and to give them the materials for understanding what passes there and following its fortunes with intelligence, but also to convey an impression of the kind of interest it awakens. It is still new: and one sees still in a fluid state the substance that will soon crystallize into new forms. One speculates on the result which these mingled forces, these ethnic habits and historical traditions and economic conditions, will work out. And reflecting on all these things, one feels sure that a country with so commanding a position, and which has compressed so much history into the last eighty years of its life, will hold a conspicuous place in that southern hemisphere which has in our own times entered into the political and industrial life of the civilized world.

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