

**SOUTH AFRICA. A
GLANCE AT
CURRENT CONDITIONS
AND POLITICS**

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South Africa. A Glance at Current Conditions and Politics by J. H. Balfour Browne

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BY

J. H. BALFOUR BROWNE, K.C.

ETC.

AUTHOR OF "THE NEW FISCAL POLICY"

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PREFACE

My professional work has carried me to many places in England, and even, upon occasion, to Scotland and Ireland, but never until recently invited me to visit any of our colonies. In 1904, however, a professional engagement made it necessary for me to go to South Africa, and the opportunity that visit would afford me of studying some of the Colonial questions—which are now really Imperial questions—on the spot, was one of the reasons which made me take upon me the burden of the business and tediousness of the voyage. While in the Colonies I had exceptional opportunities of seeing a good deal of the life of some of them, and of making myself acquainted with Colonial opinion.

There are at the present time many urgent political problems presented to South Africa for practical solution, and to any one who is interested in the great social and State questions at home, these have an interest which is beyond that which attaches to the comparative anatomy of national organisms. In the human frame "each part calls the furthest, brother," according to George

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Herbert, and so it is with the trunk and limbs of this great Empire. There is between these a "private amity." We see that politicians at home are eager to make capital out of the political attitude of our Colonies, and perhaps that is the more easily accomplished if the politicians are ignorant of the real aspect of current Colonial events, and of the real trend of current Colonial opinion. The chance of making myself acquainted with these was eagerly accepted; and the jottings—for they are little more—that I made, mostly on the homeward-bound ship, are printed in the following pages. I kept my eyes and ears open. I was the recipient of opinions and views, and after seeing what was to be seen, and hearing what was to be said, I have attempted to give my own opinion of all that I learned—if that is not too pompous a word—in the following miscellaneous pages.

J. H. B. B.

LONDON,
February, 1905.

SOUTH AFRICA

A GLANCE AT CURRENT CONDITIONS AND POLITICS

I

I THOUGHT to cheat winter as the swallows do by going south, and far south, at the time when November puts a cowl of fog on England. No one can, I think, go six thousand miles away from home, six thousand nautical miles—for “we always reckon in nautical miles,” as the captain, every inch “a salt,” says—without having regrets. It may not be so when you are very young, for with youth novelty is everything, and hope is not to be gainsaid. But with age it is very different. To the old, hope has no such magnificent promises to hold out. The old have deep anchor-roots of habit; the slow growth of years and the breaking of these makes old hearts sore. I had almost hoped that in the balance sheet against these regrets I might be able to place the incomparable advantage of getting away from England at its worst and darkest—when the sky wears masks, when the days are sullen or rancorous; but it was not to be. I left on a November day which

was as sane as a spring *débutante*. The trees had not lost all their leaves, and those that remained were more like flames than leaves, so bright did the yellows and crimsons look in the mellow sunlight. But there could be no thought of turning back. Where imagination had pointed I was bound to go, and so from the ocean pier, which had another bluff of people on it, and was a-flutter with handkerchiefs and noisy with good-byes, we sailed slowly down Southampton water. And was my old heart quite unmoved? Not quite. Then the regrets surged up. The inscrutableness of the whole thing now twanged of fate, and the orange-tawny light of the west was fading out into darkness, and the darkness seemed to fill me too. But although November was not so dark as was its wont, and although the clouds which usually loll in England at that season were now high up in air when I turned my face southwards, there was another atmosphere which was gloomy enough. It was only a fortnight before our going that the tardy Baltic Fleet had waged unequal war with our Hull fishing-boats, and now we sailed in the red wake of that murderous navy. Some of those who had booked passages by the R.M.S. — did not sail with us. Ah, their timidity made us think ourselves heroes! I saw one gentleman strut as if he remembered Drake and Hawkins. The captain promised that we should see something of these highwaymen ships — a promise which blanched the faces of some mothers who had their babies on board. But, notwithstanding