

**DIARY OF A TRIP TO  
SOUTH AFRICA ON R.M.S.  
TANTALLON CASTLE**

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Diary of a Trip to South Africa on R.M.S. Tantallon Castle by David S. Salmond

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**DAVID S. SALMOND**

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SOUTH AFRICA ON R.M.S.  
TANTALLON CASTLE**



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# Diary of a Trip to South Africa

ON

R.M.S. TANTALLON CASTLE.

BY

DAVID S. SALMOND, *CE*

GLASGOW.

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SECOND EDITION. NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS.

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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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THE following pages appeared first in the columns of the "Arbroath Herald." This explains their many local allusions. They were written during the fatigue and excitement of travel. This fact may bespeak leniency with reference to literary and other blemishes. However, the vividness of first impressions noted on the spot may afford some compensation.

Beyond the addition of a few notes, the pages appear almost unaltered in this second edition.

Mr Gladstone, on perusal of pages 109 to 111, a few months before his death, wrote as follows to the author:—"I am glad to see you approved of a policy which I pursued amidst much obloquy, but have never repented of."

Current events add pathetic interest to recollections of a trip to the Transvaal, made shortly before the unfortunate events of the last days of 1895 and the first of 1896.

GLASGOW, August 1899

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*Tantallon Castle, East Lothian.*

## Diary of a Trip to South Africa.

R.M.S. "TANTALION CASTLE,"

THURSDAY, 4th April.

**S**OME friends, including Rev. Mr Norwell and Mrs Norwell, met us on board this magnificent ship at Blackwall, London, this evening to bid us good-bye. My wife and I have got a spacious cabin. At seven o'clock we sat down to a splendid dinner in the gay and beautiful saloon. Decorated in light yellow and gold, and upholstered with a purple-looking satin and bright crimson leather the place looks like a fairy palace. About 120 can conveniently dine at once. We are much struck with the splendid service. Our ship goes off early to-morrow morning.

**South Africa and the Castle Line.**

Now that the world is talking about South Africa, it is hard to realise the position of the country a quarter of a century ago—almost as difficult as it is to imagine what South Africa may be twenty-five years hence.

Diamonds were discovered as early as 1867, but their existence at Kimberley was not suspected until 1870. Two years later the city, which afterwards became one of the wonders of the world, was little more than a large and disorganised camp.

In 1870 Prince Alfred, now Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, performed the opening ceremony at the Cape Town docks, and in 1872 responsible government was granted to Cape Colony.

In that year it may be said that the history of modern progress in South Africa commenced, a progress so dependent upon the support and interest of the Mother Country, that the tale could not be told without constant reference to the gradual development of the means whereby communication was first made possible, and eventually brought to its present high state of efficiency.

The Castle Line commenced operations early in 1872 with the "Iceland" and the "Gothland," both vessels of about 1400 tons.

The charge for carrying letters at that time was 1s per half-ounce, and the contract time between England and Cape Town thirty-seven days. The Union Steamship Company held the monopoly of the mail service, but an extension of their contract by Mr Robert Lowe, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, met with so much opposition that the House of Commons refused to ratify it, and the Union Steamship Company's rights were allowed to expire in 1876.

In the meantime the Cape Parliament made an allowance to the Castle Line for the carriage of letters, and granted an additional bonus of £100 per diem for delivery of the same within the stipulated period of thirty-seven days, a concession which resulted in a gain to the Company of £1000 per voyage.

When the postal contract was renewed in 1876, the mail service was equally divided between the Castle and the Union Lines, an arrangement ever since adhered to. The charge for letters has now been reduced to 2½d per half-ounce (it will shortly be still further reduced to a penny) and the contract time to nineteen days.

From 1873 to 1876 the Castle Fleet consisted of two vessels, with an aggregate tonnage of 2800 tons. At the present moment, with the completion of the "Carisbrook Castle" and the "Braemar Castle," it consists of seventeen vessels, with a total tonnage of about 100,000 tons. Boats of 10,000 tons each are being added this year to the fleet.

The policy which has added so large a contingent to our mercantile marine has been simple in the extreme. From first to last the wish of the managers has been to organise a fleet of uniform speed and safety, to meet the requirements of their customers in every possible manner, and to perform their engagements faithfully. Those who have served others so well have known how to choose servants for themselves, and it can be confidently asserted that no more honourable body of men exists than the officers, sailors, and employés of the Castle Company.

Before concluding the annals of the Castle Company, mention must be made of an event unparalleled in the history of any other line.