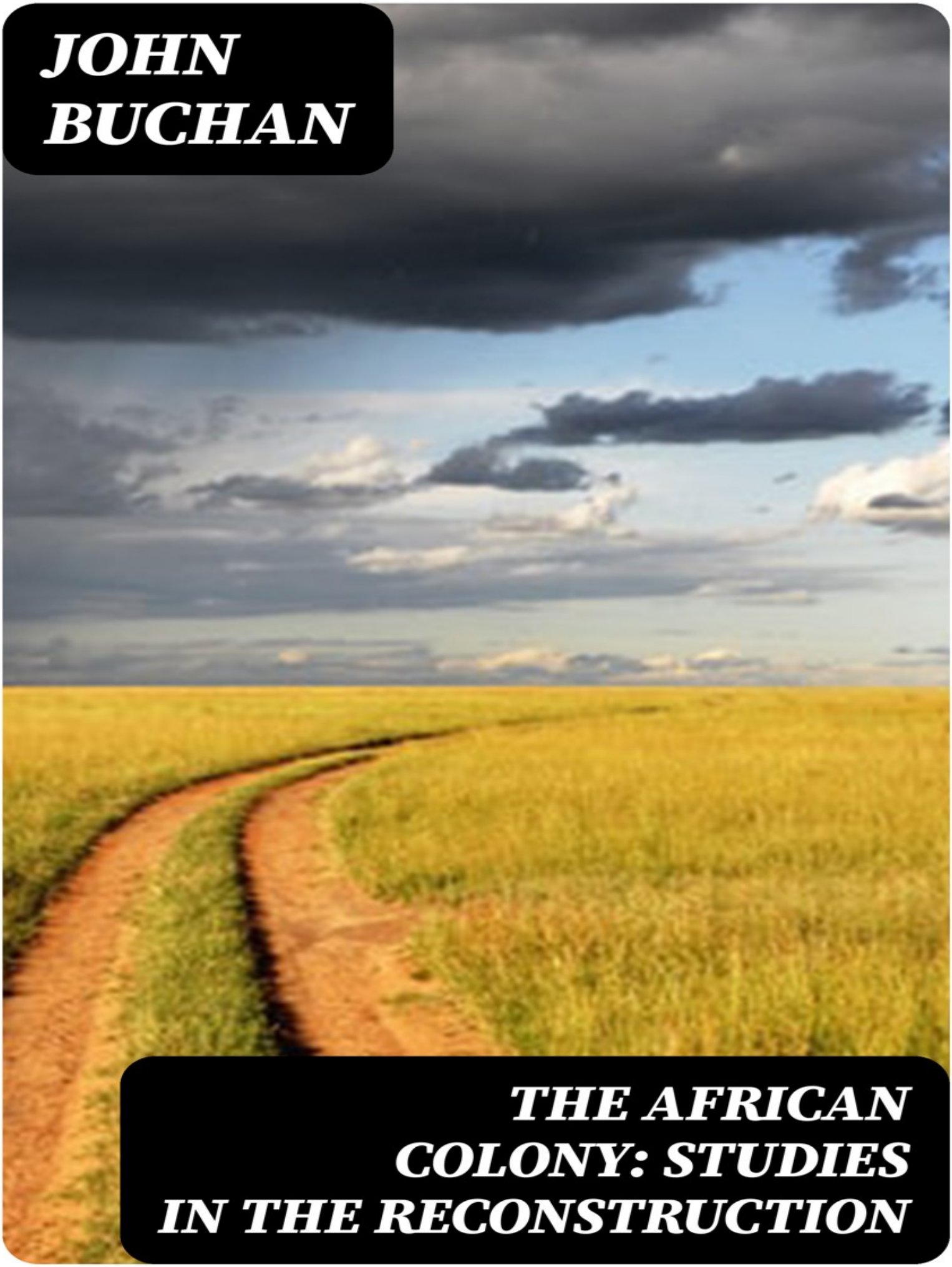
JOHN BUCHAN



THE AFRICAN COLONY: STUDIES IN THE RECONSTRUCTION

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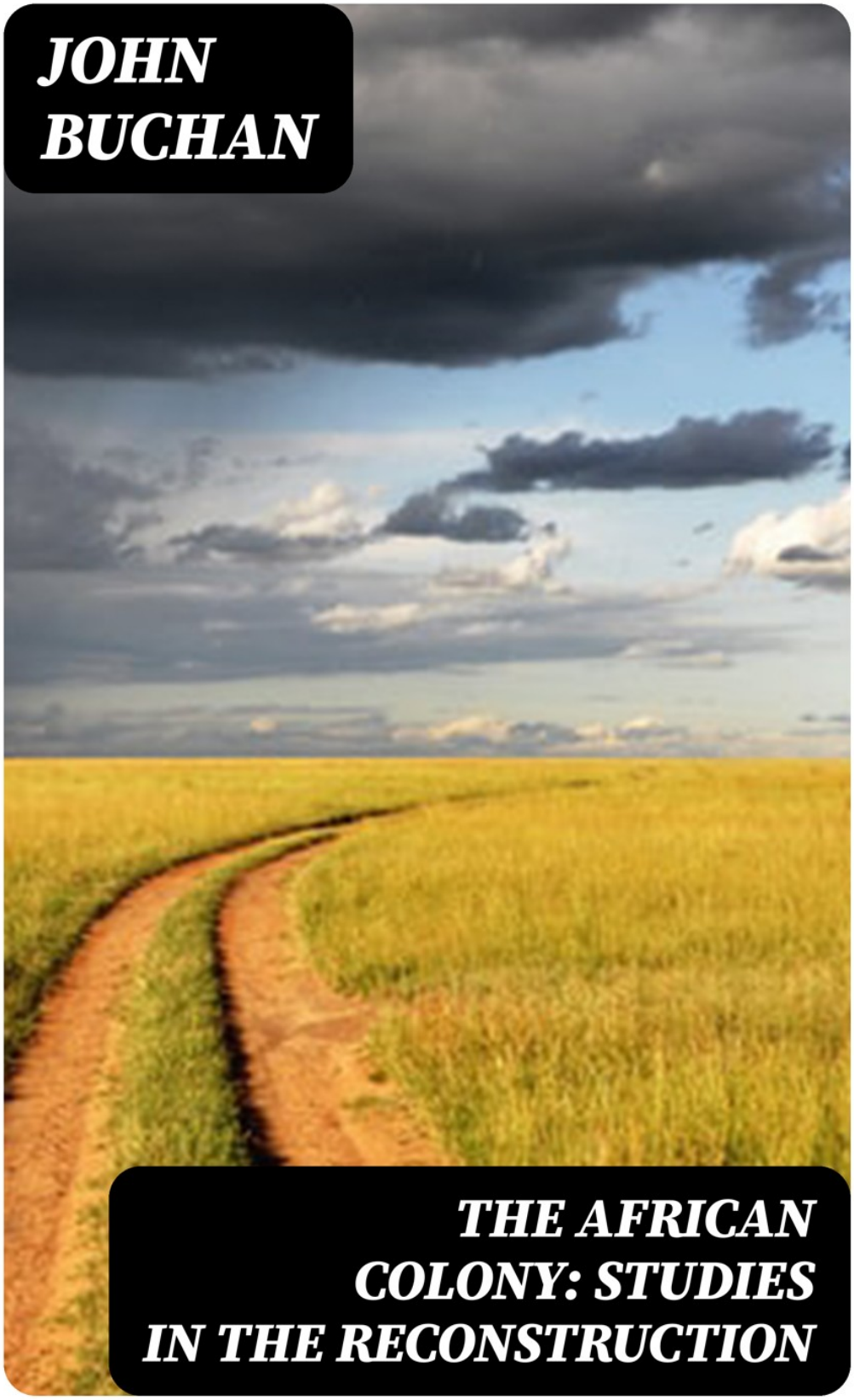

THE AFRICAN COLONY: STUDIES IN THE RECONSTRUCTION

John Buchan

The African Colony: Studies in the Reconstruction

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INTRODUCTORY.

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On the last day of May 1902 the signature at Pretoria of the conditions of peace brought to an end a war which had lasted for nearly three years, and had among other things destroyed a government, dissolved a society, and laid waste a country. In those last months of fighting some progress had been made with the reconstruction—at least with that not unimportant branch of it which is concerned with the machinery of government. A working administration had been put together, new ordinances in the form of proclamations had been issued, departments had been created and the chief appointments made, the gold industry was beginning to set its house in order, refugees were returning, and already political theories were being mooted and future parties foreshadowed. But it is from the conclusion of peace that the work of resettlement may fairly be taken to commence. Before that date the restrictions of war limited all civil activity; not till the shackles were removed and the civil power left in sole possession does a fair field appear either for approval or criticism.

It is not my purpose to write the history of the reconstruction. The work is still in process, and a decade later it may be formally completed. Fifty years hence it may be possible to look back and discriminate on its success or failure. The history when it is written will be an interesting book. It will among other matters deal with the work of repatriation, one of the most curious and quixotic burdens ever borne by a nation, and one, I believe, to which no real parallel can be found. It will concern itself with the slow and

difficult transference from military to civil government, the renascence of the common law, the first revival of trade and industry, the restitution of prisoners, and the return of refugees—all matters of interest and novel precedents in our history. It will recognise more clearly than is at present possible the problems which faced South Africa at the time, and it will be in the happy position of judging from the high standpoint of accomplished fact. But in the meantime, when we have seen barely eighteen months of reconstruction, history is out of the question. Yet even in the stress of work it is often sound policy for a man to halt for a moment and collect his thoughts. There must be some diagnosis of the problem before him, the end to which his work is directed, the conditions under which he labours. While it is useless to tell the story of a task before it is done, it is often politic to re-examine the difficulties and to get the mind clear as to what the object of all this strife and expense of money and energy may be. Ideals are all very well in their way, but they are apt to become very dim lamps unless often replenished from the world of facts and trimmed and adjusted by wholesome criticism.

Such a modest diagnosis is the aim of the present work. I have tried in the main to state as clearly as I could the outstanding problems of South African politics as they appear to one observer. I say “in the main,” because I am aware that I have been frequently led against my intention to express an opinion on more than one such problem, and in several cases to suggest a policy. I can only plead that it is almost impossible to keep a statement of a case uncoloured by one’s own view of the solution, and that it is better to give frankly a judgment, however worthless, than to allow a bias to influence insensibly the presentation of facts. For such views, which are my own, I claim no value; for facts, in so far as they are facts, I hope I may beg some little attention. They are the fruit of first-hand, and, I trust,

honest observation. Every statement of a case is, indeed, a personal one, representing the writer's own estimate rather than objective truth, but in all likelihood it is several degrees nearer the truth than the same writer's policies or prophecies. South Africa has been in the world's eye for half a century, and in the last few years her problems have been so complex that it has been difficult to separate the permanent from the transitory, or to look beyond the mass of local difficulties to the abiding needs of the sub-continent as a whole. Colonial opinion has been neglected at home; English opinion has been misunderstood in the colonies. It may be of interest to try to estimate her chief needs and to understand her thoughts, for it is only thus that we can forecast that future which she and she alone must make for herself.

Every one who approaches the consideration of the politics of a country which is not his own, and in which he is at best a stranger, must feel a certain diffidence. On many matters it is impossible that he should judge correctly. What seems to him a simple fact is complicated, it may be, by a thousand unseen local currents which no one can allow for except the old inhabitant. For this reason an outside critic will be wrong in innumerable details, and even, it is probable, in certain broad questions of principle. But aloofness may have the qualities of its defects. A critic on a neighbouring hill-top will be a poor guide to the flora and fauna of the parish below; but he may be a good authority on its contours, on the height of its hills and the number of its rivers, and he may, perhaps, be a better judge of the magnitude of a thunderstorm coming out of the west than the parishioner in his garden. The insistence of certain South African problems, familiar to us all, has made any synthetic survey difficult for the South African and impossible for the newspaper reader at home. We have forgotten that it is a country with a history, that it is a land

where men can live as well as wrangle and fight, that it has sport, traditions, charm of scenery and weather; and in its politics we are apt to see the problems under a few popular categories, rather as a war of catchwords than the birth-pangs of a people. I have attempted in the following pages to give this synthesis at the expense, I am afraid, of completeness of detail. It is my hope that some few readers may find utility even in an imperfect general survey as a corrective and a supplement to the many able expositions of single problems.

The title begs a question which it is the aim of the later chapters to answer. South Africa is in reality one colony, and it can only be a matter of years till this radical truth is formally recognised in a federation. But some explanation is necessary for the fact that most of the book is occupied with a discussion of the new colonies and with problems which, for the present, may seem to exist only for them. At this moment the settlement of the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony is the most vital South African problem. On their success or failure depends the whole future of the sub-continent. They show, not in embryo, but in the strongest light and the clearest and most mature form, every South African question. On them depends the future wealth of the country and any marked increase in its population. They will be forced by their position to be in the van of South African progress, and to give the lead in new methods of expansion and development. We are therefore fortunate in possessing in the politics of these colonies an isolated and focussed observation-ground, a page where we can read in large clear type what is elsewhere blurred and written over. I do not suppose that this fact would be denied by any of the neighbouring colonies; indeed the tendency in those states is to manifest an undue interest in the affairs of the Transvaal, and to see often, in matters which are purely local, questions of far-reaching South African interest. On

the ultimate dominance of the Transvaal opinion naturally differs, and indeed it is a point not worth insisting on, save as a further argument for federation. If South African interests are so inextricably intertwined, it is clearly desirable to have a colony, whose future is obscure but whose wealth and power are at least potentially very great, brought formally into a union where each colony will be one unit and no more, rather than allow it to exist in isolation, unamenable to advice from sister states and wholly self-centred and unsympathetic. It is sufficient justification for the method I have employed if it is admitted that the Transvaal question is the South African problem in its most complete and characteristic form.

A word remains to be said on the arrangement of the chapters. I have tried to write what is a kind of guide-book, not to details, but to the constituents of that national life which is now in process of growth. The reader I have had in mind is the average Englishman who, in seeking to be informed about a country, asks for something more than the dry bones of statistics—*l'homme moyen politique*, who wants a *résumé* of the political problem, some guide to the historical influences which have been or are still potent, an idea of landscape and national character and modes of life. He does not ask for a history, nor does he want a disquisition on this or that question, or a brief for this or that policy, but, being perfectly competent to make up his own mind, he wants the materials for judgment. The first part consists of brief historical sketches, dealing with the genesis of the three populations—native, uitlander, and Boer. The history of South Africa, with all deference to the learned and voluminous works of Dr Theal, can never be adequately written. Her past appears to us in a series of vanishing pictures, without continuity or connection. I have therefore avoided any attempt at a consecutive tale, as I have avoided such topics as the War and the negotiations

preceding it, and treated a few historical influences in a brief episodic form. In the second part the configuration of the land has been dealt with in a similar way. A series of short sketches, of the class which the French call "*carnets de voyage*," seemed more suitable than any attempt at the work of a gazetteer. I am so convinced of the beauty and healthfulness of the land that I may have been betrayed into an over-minute description: my one excuse is that in this branch of my task I have had few predecessors.

The third part is highly controversial in character, and is presented with grave hesitation. Many books and pamphlets have informed us on those years of South African history between the Raid and the Ultimatum, and a still greater number have discussed every phase and detail of the war. Another book on so hackneyed a matter may seem hard to justify. It may be urged, however, that the question has taken a wholly different form. Of late years it has been complicated by a division of opinion based not only on political but on moral grounds, an opposition in theories of national duty, of international ethics, of civic integrity. South African policy before the war and during the actual conduct of hostilities was by a considerable section of the English people not judged on political grounds, but condemned or applauded in the one case on moral pretexts and in the other on the common grounds of patriotism. The danger of making the moral criterion bulk aggressively in politics is that the criticism so desirable for all policies is neglected or perfunctorily performed. Matters which, to be judged truly, must be tried by the canons of the province to which they belong, are hastily approved or as hastily damned on some wholly alien test. But with the end of the war and the beginning of civil government it seems to me that this vice must tend to disappear. Whatever our judgment on the past, there is a living and insistent problem for the present. Whatever the verdict on our efforts to meet the problem, it

must be based on political grounds. We are now in a position to criticise, if not adequately, at least fairly and on a logical basis. But the old data require revision. The war has been a chemical process which has so changed the nature of the old constituents that they are unrecognisable in a new analysis. I am encouraged to hope that a sketch of the political problem as it has to be faced in South Africa to-day will not be without a certain value to those who desire to inform themselves on what is the most interesting of modern imperial experiments. It is too often assumed in England that the real difficulties preceded war, and that the course of policy, though not unattended with risks, is now comparatively clear and easy. It would be truer to say that the real difficulty has only now begun. I shall be satisfied if I can convince some of my readers that the work to be done in South Africa is exceedingly delicate and arduous, requiring a high measure of judgment and tact and patience; that it is South Africa's own problem which she must settle for herself; and above all, that while the result of success will be more far-reaching and vital to the future of the English race than is commonly realised, the consequences of failure will be wholly disastrous to any vision of Empire.

To my friends in South Africa I owe an apology for my audacity in undertaking to pronounce upon a country of which my experience is limited. Had I not always found them ready to welcome outside criticism, however imperfect, when honestly made, and to hear with commendable patience a newcomer's views, however crude, I should have hesitated long before making the attempt. I have endeavoured to give a plain statement of local opinion, which is expert opinion, and therefore worthy of the first consideration, and, though there are phases of it with which I am not in sympathy, I trust I may claim to have given on many matters the colonial view, when such a view

has attained consistency and clearness. But my chief excuse is that while local opinion is still in the making, and politics are still in the flux which attends a reconstruction, the outside spectator may in all modesty claim to have a voice. It may be easier for a man coming fresh to a new world to judge it correctly than for those ex-inhabitants of that older world on whose wreckage the new is built.

PART I.

THE EARLIER MASTERS

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CHAPTER I.

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PRIMITIVE SOUTH AFRICA.

There are kinds of history which a modern education ignores, and which a modern mind is hardly trained to understand. We can interest ourselves keenly in the first vagaries of embryo humankind; and for savagery, which is a hunting-ground for the sociologist and the folk-lorist, we have an academic respect. But for savagery naked and not ashamed, fighting its own battles and ruling its own peoples, we reserve an interest only when it reaches literary record in a saga. Otherwise it is for us neither literature nor history—a kind of natural event like a thunderstorm, of possible political importance, but of undoubted practical dulness. Most men have never heard of Vechtkop or Mosega, and know Tchaka and Dingaan and Moshesh only as barbarous names. And yet this is a history of curious

interest and far-reaching significance: the chronicle of Tchaka’s deeds is an epic, and we still feel the results of his iron arguments. The current attitude is part of a general false conception of South African conditions. To most men she is a country without history, or, if she has a certain barbarous chronicle, it is without significance. The truth is nearly at the opposite pole. South Africa is bound to the chariot-wheels of her past, and that past is intricately varied—a museum of the wrecks of conquerors and races, joining hands with most quarters of the Old World. More, it is the place where savagery is most intimately linked with latter-day civilisation. Phœnician, Arab, Portuguese, Dutch, and English—that is her Uitlander cycle; and a cynic might say that she has ended as she began, with the Semitic. And meantime there were great native conquests surging in the interior while the adventurer was nibbling at her coasts; and when we were busy in one quarter abolishing slavery and educating the Kaffir, in another there were wars more bloody than Timour’s, and annihilation of races more terrible than Attila ever dreamed of. We see, before our faces, “the rudiments of tiger and baboon, and know that the barriers of races are not so firm but that spray can sprinkle us from antediluvian seas.”

To realise this intricate history and its modern meaning is the first South African problem. No man can understand the land unless he takes it as it is, a place instinct with tradition, where every problem is based upon the wreckage of old strifes. And to the mere amateur the question is full of interest. The history of South Africa can never be written. The materials are lost, and all we possess are fleeting glimpses, outcrops of fact on the wide plains of tradition, random guesses, stray relics which suggest without enlightening. We see races emerge and vanish, with a place-name or a tomb as their only memorial; but bequeathing something, we know not what, to the land and

their successors. And at the end of the roll come the first white masters of the land, the Dutch, whom it is impossible to understand except in relation to the country which they conquered and the people they superseded. We have unthinkingly set down one of the most curious side-products of the human family as a common race of emigrants, and the result has been one long tale of misapprehension. It is this overlapping of counter-civilisations, this mosaic of the prehistoric and the recent, which gives South African history its piquancy and its character. It is no tale of old populous cities and splendid empires, no story of developing civilisations and conflicting philosophies; only a wild half-heard legend of men who come out of the darkness for a moment, of shapes warring in a mist for centuries, till the curtain lifts and we recognise the faces of to-day.

Two views have been held on the subject of the present native population. One is that it represents the end of a long line of development; the other that it is the nadir of a process of retrogression. The supporters of the second view point to the growing weakness of all Kaffir languages in inflexions and structural forms, while in the Hottentot-Bushman survival they see a degeneration from a more masculine type. It is impossible to dogmatise on such a matter. Degeneration and advance are not fixed processes, but recur in cycles in the history of every nation. The Bushman, one of the lowest of created types, may well be the original creature of the soil, advancing in halting stages from the palæolithic man; himself practically a being of the Stone Age, and prohibited from further progress by an arid and unfriendly land, and the advent of stronger races. Of the palæolithic man, who 200,000 years ago or thereabout made his home in the river drifts, we have geological records similar to those found in the valleys of the Somme and the Thames. On the banks of the Buffalo at East London, in a gravel deposit 70 feet above the present river-

bed, there have been found rude human implements of greenstone, the age of which may be measured by the time the river has taken to wear down 70 feet of hard greenstone dyke.[1] From the palæolithic it is a step of a few millenniums to the neolithic man, who has left his relics in the shell-heaps and kitchen-middens at the mouth of the same stream—who, indeed, till a few generations ago was an inhabitant of the land. The Bushman was a dweller in the Stone Age, for, though he knew a little about metals, stone implements were in daily use, and, with his kinsmen the Pigmies of Central Africa, he represented a savagery compared with which the Kaffir races are civilised. It is his skull which is found in the shell-heaps by the river-sides. He was a miserable fellow, a true troglodyte, small, emaciated, with protruding chest and spindle legs. He lived by hunting of the most primitive kind, killing game with his poisoned arrows. He had no social organisation, no knowledge of husbandry or stock-keeping, and save for his unrivalled skill in following spoor and a rude elementary art which is shown in the Bushman pictures on some of the rocks in the western districts, he was scarcely to be distinguished from the beasts he hunted. A genuine neolithic man, and therefore worthy of all attention. In other lands his wild contemporaries have gone; in South Africa the elephant, the rhinoceros, and the buffalo survive to give the background to our picture of his life. He himself has perished, or all but perished. The Dutch farmers hunted him down and shot him at sight, for indeed he was untamable. His blood has probably mixed with the Hottentot and the Koranna; and in some outland parts of the Kalahari and the great wastes along the lower Orange he may survive in twos and threes.

Originally he covered all the south-west corner of Africa, but in time he had to retire from the richer coast lands in favour of a people a little higher in the scale of civilisation. The origin of the Hottentots is shrouded in utter mystery, but we

find them in possession when the first Portuguese and Dutch explorers reached the coast. They, too, were an insignificant race, but so far an advance upon their predecessors that they were shepherds, owning large herds of sheep and horned cattle, and roaming over wide tracts in search of pasture. They had a tribal organisation, and a certain domesticity of nature which, while it made them an easy prey to warrior tribes, enabled them to live side by side with the Dutch immigrants as herdsmen and house-servants. The pure breed disappeared, but their blood remains in the Cape boy, that curious mixed race part white, part Malay, part Hottentot. Both Bushman and Hottentot, having within them no real vitality, have perished utterly as peoples: in Emerson's words, they "had guano in their destiny," and were fated only to prepare the way for their successors.

For the rest the history of primitive South Africa is a history of the Bantu tribes but for one curious exception. In the districts now included in the general name of Rhodesia, stretching from the Zambesi to the Limpopo, we find authentic record of an old and mysterious civilisation compared with which all African empires, save Egypt, are things of yesterday. Over five hundred ruins, showing in the main one type, though a type which can be differentiated in stages, are hidden among the hollows and stony hills of that curious country. Livingstone and Baines first called the world's attention to those monuments, and Mr Bent, in his 'Ruined Cities of Mashonaland,' provided the first working theory of their origin. Since that date many savants, from Dr Schlichter to Professor Keane, have elaborated the hypothesis, for in the present state of our knowledge a hypothesis it remains. In those ruins, or Zimbabwes, to use the generic Bantu name, three distinct periods have been traced, and a fourth period, when it is supposed that local tribes began to imitate the Zimbabwe style of architecture.

The features of this architecture are simple, and consist chiefly of immense thickness of wall ornamented with a herring-bone, a chess-board, and in a few instances a diaper pattern, enclosures entered by narrow winding passages, and in some cases conical towers similar to the Sardinian *nauraghes*. The discoveries by excavation have not been many, mainly fragments of gold and gold-dust, certain bowls of soapstone and wood ornamented with geometrical patterns and figures which may represent the signs of the zodiac, some curious figures of birds, stone objects which may be *phalli*, and rude stones which may be the sacred *betyli*. It is difficult to judge of the purpose of the buildings. Some suggest forts, some temples, some factories, some palaces: perhaps they may be all combined, such as we know the early Ionian and Phœnician adventurers built in a new land.

From the remains themselves little light comes, but we have a certain assistance from known history. In early days, before the Phœnicians came to the Mediterranean seaboard, their precursors, the Sabæo-Arabians or Himyarites of South Arabia, were the great commercial people of the East. There was undoubtedly a large trade in gold and ivory with Africa, and all records point to somewhere on the Mozambique coast as the port from which the precious metal was shipped. The only place whence gold in great quantities could have come is the central tableland of Rhodesia, from which it has been estimated that the ancient output was of the value of at least 75 millions. The temple of Haram of Bilkis, near Marib, as described by Müller, has an extraordinary resemblance both in architecture and the relics found in it to the Great Zimbabwe. According to Professor Keane, the Sabæans reached Rhodesia by way of Madagascar, and he finds in the Malagasy language traces of their presence. Ophir he places in the south of Arabia, the emporium to which the gold was brought for distribution;

Tarshish, the port of embarkation, he identifies with Sofala; and he finds in Rhodesia the ancient Havilah. Others place Ophir in Rhodesia itself. According to the Portuguese writer Conto, Mount Fura in Rhodesia was called by the Arabs Afur, and some see in the names of Sofala and the Sabi river a reference to Ophir and Sheba. Etymological proofs are always suspicious, save in cases like this where they are merely supplementary to a vast quantity of collateral evidence. When the Phœnicians succeeded to the commercial empire of the Sabæans, they took over the land of Ophir, and to them the bulk of the Zimbabwes are to be attributed. Those later Zimbabwes and the Sardinian *nauraghes*, which are almost certainly Phœnician in origin, have many points of resemblance. The traces of litholatry and phallic worship are Phœnician, the soapstone birds may be the vultures of Astarte, and the rosette decorations on the stone cylinders are found in the Phœnician temple of Paphos and the great temple of the Sun at Emesa.

Such are a few of the proofs advanced on behalf of a hypothesis which is in itself highly probable.[2] It is not a history of generations but of æons, and we cannot tell what were the fortunes of that mysterious land from the days when the Phœnician power dwindled away to the time when the Portuguese discovered the gold mines and framed wild legends about Monomotapa. The most probable theory is that the old Semitic settlers mingled their blood with the people of the land, and as the trade outlets became closed a native tribe took the place of the proud Phœnician merchants. In the words of Mr Selous, “the blood of the ancient builders of Zimbabwe still runs, in a very diluted form, in the veins of the Bantu races, and more especially among the remnants of the tribes still living in Mashonaland and the Barotsi of the Upper Zambesi.” The Makalanga, or Children of the Sun, whom Barreto fought, were in the line of succession from the Phœnicians, as the Mashonas are

their representatives to-day. In Mashona pottery we can still trace the decorations, which are found on the walls of the Zimbabwes: the people have something Semitic in their features, as compared with other Bantu tribes; they know something of gold-working, a little of astronomy, and in their industries and beliefs have a higher culture than their neighbours. Their chiefs have dynastic names; each tribe has a form of totemism in which some have seen Arabian influences; and in certain matters of religion, such as the sacrifice of black bulls and the observation of days of rest, they suggest Semitic customs. So, if this hypothesis be true, we are presented with a survival of the oldest of civilisations in the heart of modern barbarism. The traveller, who sees in the wilds of Manicaland a sacrifice of oxen to the Manes of the tribe, sees in a crude imitation the rites which the hook-nosed, dark-eyed adventurers brought from the old splendid cities of the Mediterranean, where with wild music and unspeakable cruelties and lusts the votaries of Baal and Astarte celebrated the cycle of the seasons and the mysteries of the natural world—

> “Imperishable fire under the boughs
> Of chrysoberyl and beryl and chrysolite
> And chrysoprase and ruby and sardonyx.”

When the Portuguese first landed in East Africa the chief tribe with which they came in contact was the Makalanga in Mashonaland, ruled by the Monomotapa. But before their power waned they had seen that nation vanquished and scattered by the attacks of fiercer tribes from the north, particularly the Mazimba, in whose name there may lurk a trace of the Agizymba, a country to which, according to Ptolemy, the Romans penetrated. For the last four centuries native South Africa has been the theatre of a continuous *völkerwanderung*, immigrations from the north, and in consequence a general displacement, so that no tribe can

claim an ancient possession of its territory. We may detect, apart from the Mashonas, three chief race families among the Bantus—the Ovampas and people of German South Africa; the Bechuanas and Basutos; and the great mixed race of which the Zulus and the Kaffirs of Eastern Cape Colony are the chief representatives. All the groups show a strong family likeness in customs, worship, and physical character. As a rule the men are tall and well-formed, and their features are more shapely than the ordinary negro of West Africa or the far interior. They have a knowledge of husbandry and some skill in metal-working; they have often shown remarkable courage in the field and a kind of rude discipline; and they dwell in a society which is rigidly, if crudely, organised. The Custom of the Ancients is the main rule in their lives, and such law as they possess owes its sanction to this authority. The family is the social unit; and families are combined into clans, and clans into tribes, with one paramount chief at the head, whose power in most instances is despotic, as becomes a military chief. In some of the tribes, notably the Bechuana-Basuto, we find rudiments of popular government, where the chief has to take the advice of the assembled people, as in the Basuto *pitso*, or, in a few cases, of a council of the chief indunas. The chief's authority as lawgiver is absolute, but his judgments are supposed to be only declaratory of ancient custom. Socially the tribes are polygamous, and sexual morality is low, though certain crimes are reprobated and severely punished. The prevailing religion is ancestor-worship, joined with a rude form of natural dæmonism. The ordinary Bantu is not an idolater like the Makalanga, but he walks in terror of unseen spirits which dwell in the woods and rivers,—the ghost of his father it may be, or some unattached devils. Ghost feasts are made at stated times on the graves of the dead; and if the ghost has been whimsical enough to enter the body of an animal, that animal must be jealously respected. Each tribe has its totem—the lion, or

the antelope, or the crocodile—from which they derive their descent, one of the commonest features of all primitive societies. There seem traces of a vague belief in a superior deity, who makes rain and thunder and controls the itinerant bands of ghosts—a great ghost, who, if properly supplicated, may intercede with the smaller and more troublesome herd. But abstractions are essentially foreign to the Bantu mind, and his modest Pantheon is filled with the simplest of deities.

No priesthood exists, but it is possible for a clever man to learn some of the tricks of disembodied spirits and frustrate them by his own skill. In this way a class of sorcerers arose, who dealt in big medicine and strong magic. They profess to make rain and receive communications from the unseen, to cure diseases and give increase to the flocks, to expound the past and foretell the future. This powerful class is jealous of amateurs, and does its best to remove inferior wizards; but they are always liable to be annihilated themselves by a powerful chief, who is more bloodthirsty than superstitious. Undoubtedly some of these sorcerers acquire a knowledge of certain natural secrets; they become skilled meteorologists, and seem to possess a crude knowledge of hypnotism. They are also physicians of considerable attainments, and certain native remedies, notably a distillation of herbs, which is used for dysentery in Swaziland, have a claim to a place in a civilised pharmacopœia. This rough science is the only serious intellectual attainment of the Bantu, outside of warfare. They have a kind of music which is extremely doleful and monotonous; they have a rude art, chiefly employed in the decoration of their weapons; but they have no poetry worthy of the name; and their only literature is found in certain simple folk-tales, chiefly of animals, but in a few cases of human escapades and feats of sorcery. The lion is generally the butt of such stories, and the quick wit of the

hare and the knavery of the jackal are held up to the admiration of the listeners.[3]

Such are the chief features of Bantu life, and so lived the natives of South Africa up to the early years of last century. But about that time a certain Dingiswayo, being in exile at Cape Town, saw a company of British soldiers at drill, and, being an intelligent man, acquired a new idea of the art of war. When he returned to his home and the chieftainship of the little Zulu tribe, the memory of the soldiers in shakos, who moved as one man, remained with him, and he began to experiment with his army. He died, and his lieutenant Tchaka succeeded to the command of a small but well-disciplined force. This Tchaka was one of those born leaders of men in battle who appear on the stage of history every century or so. He perfected the discipline of his army, armed it with short stabbing spears for close-quarter fighting, and then proceeded to use it as a wedge to split the large loose masses which surrounded him. It was a war of the eagle and the crows. Neighbouring tribes awoke one morning to find the enemy at their gates, and by the evening they had ceased to exist. A wild flight to the north began, and for years the wastes north and east of the Drakensberg were littered with flying remnants of broken clans. All the great deeds of savage warfare—the killing of the Suitors, the fight in the Great Hall of Worms, Cuchulain's doings in the war of the Bull of Cuailgne—pale before the barbaric splendours of Tchaka's slaughterings, the Zulus became the imperial power of South-East Africa, and their monarch's authority was limited only by the length of his impis' reach. By-and-by his career of storm ceases. We find him ruling as a severe and much-venerated king, arbitrary and bloodthirsty but comparatively honest; a huge man, with many large vices and a few glimmerings of virtue. He was succeeded by his brother, the monstrous Dingaan, who was soundly beaten by the Boers in one of the most heroic battles in history; he

in turn gave way to his brother Panda, a figure of small note; and the dynasty ended with Cetewayo and the blood and terror of Isandhlwana and Ulundi.

After Tchaka the man who looms largest in the tale of those wars is Mosilikatse, the founder of the Matabele. The Zulu conquests placed terrible autocrats on the throne, and the marshal who incurred the king’s displeasure had to flee or perish. To this circumstance we owe the Angoni in Nyassaland and the empire of Lobengula. About 1817 Mosilikatse with his impi burst into what is now the Orange River Colony, driving before him the feeble Barolong and Bechuana tribes, and established his court at a place on the Crocodile River north of the Magaliesberg, where a pass still bears his name. He began a career of wholesale rapine and slaughter, till, as Fate would have it, he came in contact with the pioneers of the Great Trek. Some hideous massacres were the result, but he had to deal with an enemy against whom his race could never hope to stand. The Boers, under Uys and Potgieter, drove him from his kraal, impounded his ill-gotten cattle, and finally, in a great battle on the Marico River, defeated him so thoroughly that he fled north of the Limpopo and left the country for ever. From the little we know of him he was a cruel and treacherous chief, inferior in strength to Tchaka, as he was utterly inferior to Moshesh in statesmanship. But the men he led had the true Zulu fighting spirit, and in the Matabele, under his son Lobengula, we have learned something of the warriors of Mosilikatse.

A throne which, as with the Zulus and their offshoots, had no strong religious sanction, must subsist either by continued success in battle or a studious statesmanship. Tchaka is an instance of the first; Moshesh, the founder of the Basuto power, is a signal example of the second. The Basutos were driven down from the north by the Zulu

advance, and found shelter in the wild tangle of mountains which cradle the infant Orange and Caledon rivers. Moshesh, who had no hereditary claim to a throne, won his power by his own abilities, and on the mountain of Thaba Bosigo established his royal kraal. The name of the “Chief of the Mountain” is written larger even than Tchaka’s over South African history, and to-day his people are the only tribe who have any substantive independence. Alone among native chiefs he showed the intellect of a trained statesman, and a tireless patience which is only too rare in the annals of statesmanship. The presence of French missionaries at his court gave him the means of instruction in European ways, and he was far too clever to have any prejudice against so startling a departure from the habits of his race. He watched the dissensions of the rival white peoples, and quietly and cautiously profited by their blunders. He made war against them as a tactical measure, and after an undoubted victory increased his power by making a diplomatic peace. He left his tribe riches and security, and the history of Basutoland since his day is one long commentary on the surprising talents of its founder. How far the credit is his and how far it belongs to his advisers we cannot tell; but we can admire a character so liberal as to accept advice, and a mind so shrewd that it saw unerringly its own advantage. There is none of the wild glamour of conquest about him, but there is a more abiding reputation for a far more intricate work; for, like another statesman, he could make a small town a great city—and with the minimum of expense.

With the death of Moshesh the history of South Africa becomes almost exclusively the history of its white masters. It is an old country, as old as time, the prey of many conquerors, but with it all a patient and mysterious land. Civilisations come and go, and after a millennium or two come others who speculate wildly on the relics of the old. In some future century (who knows?), when the Rand is

covered with thick bush and once more the haunt of game, some enlightened sportsman, hunting in his shirt after the bush-veld manner, may clear the undergrowth from the workings of the Main Reef and write a chapter such as this on the doings of earlier adventurers.

[1] An interesting sketch of the palæolithic remains in South Africa is contained in two essays appended to Dr Alfred Hillier's 'Raid and Reform' (1898).

[2] The chief authorities on this curious subject are Mr Bent's 'Ruined Cities of Mashonaland,' Dr Schlichter's papers in the 'Geographical Journal,' Professor Keane's 'Gold of Ophir,' and Dr Carl Peters' 'Eldorado of the Ancients.' Mr Wilmot's 'Monomotapa' contains an interesting collection of historical references from Phœnician, Arabian, and Portuguese sources; and in 'The Ancient Ruins of Rhodesia,' by Messrs Hall and Neal, there is a very complete description of the ruins examined up to date (1902), and a valuable digest of the various theories on the subject.

[3] There is an account of Bantu life in Dr Theal's 'Portuguese in South Africa.' The same author's 'Kaffir Folk-lore' and M. Casalis' 'Les Bassoutos' contain much information on their customs and folk-lore; while Bishop Callaway's 'Nursery Tales of the Zulus,' M. Jacottet's 'Contes Populaires des Bassoutos,' and M. Junod's 'Chants et Contes des Baronga' and 'Nouveaux Contes Ronga' are interesting collections of folk-tales.

CHAPTER II.

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THE GENTLEMEN-ADVENTURERS.

The world's changes, so philosophers have observed, spring from small origins, though their reason and their justification may be ample enough, and exercise the learned for a thousand years. A sailor's tale, a book in an old library, may

set the adventurer off on his voyages, and presently empires arise, and his fatherland alters its history. The world moves to no measured tune; everywhere there are sudden breaks, paradoxes, high enterprises which end in smoke, and pedestrian beginnings which issue in the imperial purple. All things have their ground in theory, and by-and-by a dismal post-mortem science will discover impulses which the adventurer never dreamed of. Few lands, even the most remote, are without this variegated history, and the crudest commercial power is built up on the *débris* of romance. South Africa, which is to-day, and to most men, a parvenu country, founded on the Stock Exchange, has odd incidents in her pedigree. Eliminate all the prehistoric guesses, strike out the Dutch, and the Old World has still had its share in her fashioning. Europe may seem only yesterday to have finally sealed her conquest, but she has been trying her hand at it for five hundred years. And the result of the oldest struggle has been a curious story of failure—often heroic, seldom wise, but always fascinating, as such stories must be. It is associated with one of the smallest, and to-day the least enterprising, of European peoples; and it has issued in Portugal's most notable over-sea possession. Every nation has its holy land of endeavour—England in India, France in Algiers, Russia in Turkestan. Such was South Africa to Portugal; much what Sicily was to the Athenians, the place linked with all her hopes and with her direst misfortunes.

Happily the adventure was not without its chroniclers. The Dominican friar, dos Santos,[4] has sketched for us the empire at its zenith, and de Barros, the Portuguese Secretary for the Indies, has piously narrated its beginnings. But the matter-of-fact histories disguise the real daring of the exploit. The chivalry of Europe in its most characteristic form was carried 8000 miles from home to an unknown land; civilisation of a kind, a Christian church, a code of

honour, the rudiments of law and commerce, and the amenities of life, were planted on a narrow malarial seaboard by men who had taken years in the voyage, and had scarcely a hope of return. It is said that a great part of courage lies in having done the thing before, but there was no such ingredient in the valour of those adventurers. Risking all on a dream, they set off on their ten-year excursions, holding an almost certain death as a fair stake in the game. The tenth who survived set themselves cheerfully to transform their discoveries into a national asset. They colonised as whole-heartedly, if not as wisely, as any nation in the world. And in spite of the narrowest and most pragmatic of cultures, they proved themselves singularly adaptable. The Portuguese gentlemen, for whom the Cancioneiros were sung, became Africans in everything but blood, adopting a new land under their old flag, and doing their best to Christianise and colonise it. It was not their fault that the unalterable laws of trade and the destinies of races shattered in time the fabric at which they had laboured.

In 1445, the year in which Diniz Dias is reported to have rounded Cape Verd, the Portuguese were the most daring seamen in Europe. Dwelling on a promontory, they naturally turned their eyes southward and westward, when peace and a moderate wealth gave them leisure for fancies. Those were the days of the foreglow of the Renaissance. Constantinople had not yet fallen, but the spirit of inquiry was abroad, and a fresh wind had blown among scholastic cobwebs. The Church had her share in the revival. A belated missionary, or, as it may be, commercial, zeal stirred the ecclesiastical powers. Fresh lands might be won for the Cross, and fresh moneys to build new abbeys and endow new bishoprics. The merchants of Lisbon and Oporto saw gold in every traveller’s tale, and gladly risked a bark on a promising undertaking. There lived, too, at the time a