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Toronto, February, 22, 1894

Reality vs. Romance.*

One of the most interesting, and in its bearing on mis-
sions, one of the most important of recent books, is
"Romance versus Reality in South Central Africa."

Its interest for Canadians will not be lessened when
it is noted that its author is Dr. James Johnston, who
was for some years a student of medicine in Toronto,
and whose face and voice were familiar in many of the
pulpits in Western Ontario. Indeed, several of these
congregations furnished no inconsiderable sum of money
for the equipment of this African expedition. Dr.
Johnston is a Scotchman, still rather under middle age,
who has spent a number of years as a missionary (unde-
nominational, apparently), among the negroes of Jamaica.
While so engaged the impression forced itself upon his
mind that Christian negroes, such as those attached to
his mission, might prove a valuable factor in carrying
on missionary work among their fellow negroes who
still remain in the Dark Continent. It was his proposal
that they should be employed, not as leaders in pioneer
work, but as assistants, especially in such work as
building, and that in the long run their adaptation to
the climatic conditions of the country, and their racial
relationship to the natives would fit them for further
service. For the purpose of testing this project, as well
as to gratify a long cherished desire to visit Africa, the
expedition described in this book was undertaken. The
author defrayed his own expenses, but received contri-
butions from various sources to meet the expense of
taking with him the six young Jamaicans, who were to
be left at different mission centres, for the purpose of
determining the value of such services as they could
render.

Entering Africa from the west coast at Benquela he
travelled eastward, visiting Bishop Taylor's self-sup-
porting Mission at St. Paul de Goanda, the Mission of
the English Brethren at Garaugauze, the American
Board's Mission at Cilumi, the Canadian Congregational
Mission at Cisamba, and several stations of the French
Protestant Mission in the Valleys of the Liambai and
Zambesi rivers. Leaving the Zambesi near the Victoria
Falls, he pushed southward across the Kalahari desert,

* "Reality versus Romance in South Central Africa," by James
Johnston, M. D., with fifty-one full-page photogravure illustrations
from photographs by the author, and map indicating route traversed.
Toronto: the J. W. Gage Co. (Ltd.) 1893.

to Khama's country, where he spends several weeks at
the court of this Christian King, whose people he found
suffering from an epidemic of fever, in the relief of which
his medical skill proved of value; then northward through
Matafeli-land, Masnena-land, Manica-land, and the Por-
tuguese settlements, until he reaches the Zambesi again.
Then up the Shire to the Church of Scotland Mission at
Blantyre and the Free Church Mission at Bandawe.
Then down the river again to the mouth of the Zambesi
at Zanzibar.

Dr. Johnston, speaking of himself, sums up his jour-
ney as follows:—"During a period of twenty months
he crossed South Central Africa, travelling four thousand
five hundred miles mostly on foot, and alone so far as a
white companion is concerned—passing through numer-
ous hostile and savage tribes, traversing areas hitherto
reported too pestilential for exploration, surmounting
natural obstacles which have been represented as insur-
mountable, and penetrating regions where no white man
had ever gone before. In all that long journey he never
once found himself prompted to fire a shot in anger, or
compelled to do so in self-defence against a human
being; while he can say what perhaps no other man who
has crossed Africa can—that of the many native carriers
who travelled with him he did not lose one by death.
He saw with the eyes of the agriculturist, the geologist,
the naturalist, the hunter, the trader and the physician,
as well as those of the missionary, subordinating all
personalities and preconceptions to an impartial effort
at collecting correct data about everything, and under
all circumstances."

The impression given by a perusal of Dr. Johnston's
book is that he has given an independent and reliable
account of what he saw; he has given his reasons for
the conclusions he reached, and each one of his readers
may study these and accept the result or not, according
as the evidence strikes him.

Among the main conclusions reached in regard to
mission work may be enumerated these:—

After speaking of his disappointment at not finding
more openings for the suitable employment of the negroes
he took with him, he says of himself, "This has in no way
weakened my former conviction that, provided white men
with sympathy for, and tact in dealing with the coloured
race are forthcoming to enter the unbroken and fallow
fields of the interior, the services of the Jamaican's in
manual labour, as builders, planters, etc., would be found
invaluable. In a short time their aptitude for acquiring
the language would fit them for itinerant evangelists,
while their colour would give emphasis to their words,
beyond even those of the white teacher, for whom, as
the number of concession-hunters, and speculators in-
crease, a marked prejudice in the native African mind
grows stronger year by year. It is to be noted, how-
ever, that every one of the six Jamaican's gave up his
place, and returned within a few months after being left
by Dr. Johnston.

Some half dozen places which lay in our author's
track are mentioned as offering excellent opportunities
for the opening of the mission work among the natives.
Among the more promising seem to be those in Gorou-
gaza which is quite accessible from the east coast, and
is in a fertile territory with a numerous and altogether
unevangelized population.

Pioneer missionary work ought to be done by men
alone. There is no place for women and children in the