

THE ROMANCE OF THE COLONIES

Of British insular colonies there is one that has a literary and scientific interest as the home of Bernardin de St. Pierre's "Paul Virginia," and the scene of that author's most fruitful labors as a naturalist. We mean the Isle de France, or as it is now called, Mauritius. A still more illustrious name is associated with another island on the other side of Africa, St. Helena, the scene of the first Napoleon's exile and death. The settlement of that little island is strangely connected with a story of cruelty, illustrative of laws and manners happily of the past. Early in the 16th century, a Portuguese gentleman who had offended the fierce Albuquerque, or had committed some crime which brought him within range of the arbitrary laws of that adventurer, had been mutilated and sent home from India in disgrace. As the vessel in which he was returning was on its way northward, after rounding the Cape, the unfortunate man, Fernandez Lopes, begged to be set ashore on St. Helena, which had been discovered a few years before. The captain compassionately acceded to his request, and his friends having sent him out supplies by the next vessels bound for Goa, he labored hard at reducing a part of the island to cultivation, so that some years later when the Portuguese Government pardoned him and ordered him home, he left behind him many evidences of his toil and skill. The live stock and fruits of his raising were used for years for the refreshment of the ships that called there. In 1645 the Dutch took possession of St. Helena, but after a struggle that lasted for a quarter century or more, it remained in possession of the British East India Company until 1833, when it was given up to the Crown. At that time Major-General Middleton, of the soldierly family of Sir Frederick, was in command of it. The history of the Cape of Good Hope (first called Cabo dos Tormentos or Cape of Storms) is eventful enough. Like many another region, the names of which bear witness to generations of struggle, this colony was seized by British East India Company ships in the name of King James long before any attempt was made to colonize it. That was in 1620—a year of mark in American colonization. But as no attempt was made at settlement for thirty years, the Dutch, under John Anthony Van Riebeck, determined to found a colony there. It was not until the French revolutionary wars that England's attention was again directed to it, and in 1795 General Sir James H. Craig (a name not unknown in Canada) became its first British Governor. Having been restored in 1802, it was again taken in 1806, and has been British ever since. What between the Boers and the natives and Cecil Rhodes, South Africa has been a pretty troublesome possession, but its history, of which we know too little, has not lacked features of interest.

The coast of East and West Africa, for a varying distance inward, have a history that dates back to from three to five centuries before Christ. Their commercial and more lamentable relations with modern Europe began early in the 16th century—the Spaniards, Portuguese, Dutch, Danes, French and English building strong forts at points often fortified by nature. Just before the Queen's accession, Montgomery Martin wrote that of the colonies of England few surpassed those of West Africa in moral, commercial and political interest. He gives a most detailed account of them, mentioning, in connection with Sierra Leone, the transfer from Nova Scotia of the Jamaica maroons, and the homes provided for them in Freetown—the scenery, public works and social condition of which he describes with considerable enthusiasm.

The romance of Greater Britain has been in our day the fertile theme of some able writers—Haggard, Stevenson, Kipling, Conrad, Becke, Parker, "Ralf Boldrewood," and ever so many others. India, the West Indies, Australia, have long been familiar ground to the novel reader. The

continent of Africa has been traversed in all directions under the guidance of the writer of fiction. Joseph Conrad has found a mine of romance in the islands, great and small, of the Indian Ocean. Malaysia and Burma have lately been discovered by the same class of explorers, and civilized and uncivilized. Polynesia has proved one of the richest bonanzas for the authors, publishers and readers of imaginary adventures. One of the pioneers of this class of fiction, Mrs. Brooke, chose for the stage of her love drama the Quebec of the years immediately following the conquest. Since her time (1,45-1,89) the field has greatly enlarged, while those who cultivate it have multiplied beyond reckoning.—*Montreal Gazette*.

A RECORD YEAR.

The chief feature of interest in the Board of Trade returns, issued on June 1st, is the large import of wood that took place during the month. On May 31st the total imports for the five months of the year was 993,628 loads of sawn and hewn, which received an access during last month of 897,272 loads, bringing the total for the six months up to 1,891,900 loads. Let us see how this compares with last year. Then the import up to May 31st was 1,012,166 loads, on June 30th, 1,802,052 loads, the increase for the last-named month representing 789,886 loads, being 107,386 less than that of last month. Though the June import has, as stated, been a heavy one, it is chiefly caused by the large shipments from Canada and the United States, as well as the Russian, Baltic ports—the supply from Sweden and Norway during the six months being less than the corresponding period of 1896 by 129,622 loads. It is not surprising that the six months' import from Scandinavia should be less than that of last year, as the navigation opened a month later; but during the last four weeks goods have been pouring in from the Baltic ports, and, though the month's trade from that direction is abnormally large, it has not equalled that of June, 1896, by 8,282 loads of sawn wood and 30,574 loads of hewn. The increase during June of sawn wood from British North America has been 198,890 loads.

At present the heavy Atlantic arrivals have turned the scale in favor of the present year by 89,848 loads. The exports of foreign timber give an increase of 1,148 loads for June, but on the six months' trading is short of last year's business by 1,859 loads. As will be seen, the total shipments for the half year of Canadian goods are nearly double what they were last year, and the United States have also considerably exceeded last year's supply, both sawn and hewn.—*London Timber Trades' Journal, 17th July*.

INSURANCE ON DISTILLERIES.

A discussion has arisen between several publications in the United States on the subject of fire insurance rates charged on distillery establishments in that country. Bonfort's *Wine and Spirit Circular* thinks them too high, while the *Insurance Herald* of Louisville, thinks differently. The former refers to the "extortionate rates" charged for insurance on distilleries. In the course of this discussion the *Herald* has quoted the *Chronicle* fire tables for 1896 on distillery fires for twelve years, to the end of 1895. These figures show that in twelve years there were 178 fires in distilleries, involving an aggregate property loss of \$4,155,349 and an aggregate insurance loss of \$2,751,001. The *Herald* had not at the time it used these figures received the volume for 1897, wherein the aggregate property loss on this class of risk is brought up to \$4,242,024, and the aggregate insurance loss amounts to \$2,868,961. From the reply to the *Herald* by the *Circular* we extract the following:

"For twelve years the aggregate insurance loss at the distilleries of the United States is placed at \$2,751,001. Now, why didn't the *Herald* tell us whether this was the loss on distilleries or on distilling

warehouses, elevators, cattle sheds, barrels, grain and whiskies? The *Chronicle* says these losses were from 178 fires. If it refers to distilleries only, then the point against us is a good and strong one, but if it refers to all losses on buildings, whiskies, etc., then the statement strengthens our demands for lower rates."

The *Herald* says the reason why it did not tell the *Circular* that the loss quoted was on distilleries alone was because it did not know; but such is the fact. In tabulating the figures, distinction is made wherever possible in every case. There is no summary for a number of years given of fires in warehouses (liquor) because the number of fires in this class of risk are comparatively few, but they are available from 1890. Thus the aggregate property loss for six years to the end of 1895 was \$201,569, and the aggregate insurance loss to the end of the same period amounted to \$132,335. In 1896 the loss was unusually heavy. The property loss for the year amounted to \$601,985, and the insurance loss was \$522,735. The total loss on this class of risk, distinct from distilleries, for seven years ending December 31, 1896, amounts to \$803,554 in property loss and \$655,070 in insurance loss. The other risks mentioned by Bonfort's are kept separate from distilleries, but they are bunched with elevators (grain), cattle and cattle sheds and warehouses (barrel), regardless of the business for which they are intended, so that the figures do not bear on the discussion beyond that they are carefully separated from fires in distilleries.

FIRE-PROOF WOOD.

At Hurlingham, on July 3rd, the British Non-Inflammable Wood Company gave an exhibition designed to demonstrate the security against fire of buildings constructed of timber treated by their process. The test was conducted on much the same lines as the trial which took place at Millbank in May, before the officials of her Majesty's Office of Works, and which was witnessed by the Prince of Wales. For the purpose of the experiment, two buildings, about 11 feet square and 30 feet in height, had been set up near the ornamental water. They were similar in all respects, except that one was made of "treated" timber, and the other of ordinary timber. Each was furnished with a chimney, for the purpose of creating a strong draught and facilitating combustion. Outside the little houses, on the windward side, was piled fire-wood and shavings, which were set on fire simultaneously. In five minutes the building of ordinary timber was well alight, and in about half an hour it had been reduced to ashes. But the other structure remained intact, save for the charring of the woodwork on the side exposed to the direct action of the flames. A further test had meanwhile been applied by igniting a pile of shavings and faggots inside, but again the effect was merely to char the wood, which did not break into flame. Indeed, a box made of the "treated" wood, which had been placed in the midst of the ignited firewood, was afterwards drawn out practically uninjured, and the souvenirs of the occasion which it contained were distributed to the spectators.—*Ins. Review*.

PINE DOORS.

United States and Canadian joiner manufacturers are working hard to secure as much as they can of the English trade in pine doors, and they are now quoting these goods at lower prices than Swedish deal doors. The present stock of pine doors, both in London and Liverpool, is, we understand, fairly light, but there is a considerable number on the way, a good many of which are to fill orders. The inventive genius of the American manufacturers is displayed in some of the special lines that are now being placed on the market in the form of improved doors with secret tenons, and window sashes, shipped in "knock-down" form to be fitted together on this side.