

BIRDS OF SPRING.

Birds! what wondrous songs you sing
All day long in the old elm tree,
Flooding earth with melody,
Birds of spring!
Joyous burst of song, that dies
Suddenly, as swift you rise
On the wing.

Wise old birds who thrilled the north.
With their lays in times of yore,
Learned from birds their mystic lore,
By the froth
Of the mountain streams they heard
Secret marvels by each bird
Babbled forth

When the southland monarch
Council-throned, with dire fears vexed,
And the soothsayers perplexed,
Portents great
Sought they from the birds that flew
Overhead, from them they drew
Words of fate.

Ah! what raptures boat and blend
Underneath those wings of gold!
Could I like the seers of old
Comprehend!
Could I but translate your lays
Wondrous songs I'd sing—like days
Without end.

Strange old legends come again—
As a chant from lips unseen
Sends through gothic arch and screen
Its refrain—
Legends of the crossbill good,
And the Christ upon the rood
Stretched in pain.

Deity that rules above
The wild wastes of sea and flame,
To men's eyes revealed became
As a dove,
Teaching in that gentle guise
Greatest strength, but signifies
Tendrest love.

Hark!—I hear a mystery float
Through all life—a meaning thrills—
Love! the breath that swells and trills
From your throats,
By the poet soul is best,
The divine sweet riddle, guessed
Of these notes.

Poets! birds of spring! in sooth
All the seasons are your spring,
All your songs are presaging
Of the truth—
Of the beauty that shall bloom
When this world shall resume
Its lost youth.

South Africa and Her Colonies.

BY LIEUT. GEN. BESSET, C. B.

Your Grace, Members of the Institute, Ladies and Gentlemen,—Having been invited to give an address on the subject of South Africa and her Colonies, I have not hesitated from doing so, although I am quite sure there are many in this room more competent than myself. I will, however, endeavour to give a short account of the country with which I have been so long associated.

I propose dividing the subject under consideration into three epochs, viz. the past, the present, and the future; and I shall propose to give a brief account of each of the four Colonies—the Cape, Natal, the Orange Free State, and the Trans Vaal Republic.

I will not refer to the first discovery of the Cape of Good Hope, in 1486, for that is a matter of history, as is also that the Colony was first founded by the Dutch in 1652—a small settlement extended gradually, until the frontier reached the great Fish River.

In 1796 the Cape was taken by England, given back to the Dutch, in 1803, and retaken in 1806, since which time it has been a dependency of the British Crown. The area of the Colony is about 350,000 square miles, divided into thirty-three electoral districts, with a population of about 600,000 which gives a proportion of about two individuals to the square mile. The inhabitants may be roughly divided as follows: Euro-

pean, 155,000; Hottentots, 80,000; Kaffirs, 110,000; other coloured races, 139,000. In British Kaffraria, a province lately incorporated into the Colony, there are about 8,000 Europeans and 80,000 Kaffirs.

The first British settlers proceeded to the Cape of Good Hope in 1820, and from that date the country has advanced to its present great prosperity. These early settlers had great privations to endure, but that indomitable pluck and perseverance which always accompanies an Englishman prevailed, and they are now reaping their reward.

In fifteen years the settlers had increased their flocks and herds, and were living in comparative prosperity; when, in 1835, a Kaffir war broke out, which devastated the whole of the frontier districts.

Sir B. D'Urban was at the time Governor of the Colony, a far-seeing and humane statesman. The Kaffirs were punished, and in a measure conquered, for they had not up to that time become possessed of fire arms, or aware of their own power. Their country was taken possession of up to the Kie River, under the name of the Province of Queen Adelaide, and held by military occupation; had this been continued, the Kaffirs would have been civilized years ago.

Unfortunately, this policy was not approved by the Home Government, and the country was given back to the Kaffirs, the Governor recalled, and a Lieutenant-Governor sent out, with power to make treaties. Not only was the Province of Queen Adelaide abandoned, but a tract of country between the Fish and Keiskama Rivers, heretofore kept neutral, was also relinquished to the Kaffirs.

These concessions were taken as weakness on our part, and were the cause of the two great Kaffir wars which followed. I cannot here help relating that one of the military posts abandoned in the neutral territory above alluded to, which had cost £60,000, fell to the possession of the Kaffir chief, Maccommo, who immediately sold it "as it stood" to a trader for two cows, valued at the outside £5.

The Lieutenant-Governor, acting under the influence of the "Philipino party" then dominant in England, made "treaties" with the Kaffirs most unjust towards the frontier farmers. The Kaffirs are the greatest cattle robbers in the world, and these treaties held out a premium for them to steal: for instance, a farmer was not allowed to claim compensation for losses of cattle unless he could prove that an armed herd was with them at the time they were stolen; and if he saw his own cattle in Kaffirland, with his own "brand mark" on them, he could not recover them unless he proved that he traced the "spoor" from his farm, and handed it (the spoor) over to the authorities on the border of Kaffirland.

These and similar conditions were most unjust to the Colonists, and was one of the causes which led to the emigration of the Dutch into the interior of Africa. Another cause of discontent was the liberation of their slaves—not so much from the act itself, but from the injudicious manner in which it was done. The slaves were valued by English Commissioners far below their real value, they were paid for by drafts payable in England, and there was then little or no circulating medium in the Colony; the consequence was that the Dutch had to part with their drafts for one tenth of their value.

This portion of the Cape inhabitants became so dissatisfied with the English Government about this period (1836-7) that they formed into bands, and passed over

the Colonial frontier to the North, became the pioneers of the vast continent of South Africa, and the names of the leaders of these bands will ever be memorable in the annals of that portion of the world—viz. Pieter Retief, Gert Maritz, Peit Uys, Potgieter, Pretorius, Erasmus, &c.

The history of these people after leaving the Colony, their wanderings in the wilderness with their flocks and herds, their primitive habits and customs, and their battles with the natives, would record facts more thrilling than many a romance.

After the war of 1835, the Colonists again prospered until another Kaffir war broke out, in 1846-7, when the frontier districts were a second time reduced to poverty and desolation. During this war, Kaffirland, up to the Kie River, had to be re-taken possession of, and, after peace was proclaimed, held by a military force. A third war broke out in 1850, which lasted for three years, and cost this country over £3,000,000 of money. These wars were most ruinous to the country, and nothing but the perseverance of the Anglo-Saxon race could have overcome such disasters.

Since the war of 1850-1853 there has been no collision with the natives of the Cape Colony, and it is to be hoped that such a general understanding will be come to in South Africa, on native policy, as will make them matters of the past.

Before proceeding to the present prosperous state of the country, it might be well for me to give a short sketch of the Kaffirs themselves, although little is yet known of their early history or origin beyond mere tradition.

The Kaffir tribes, under the name of Amaxosas, inhabited the country between the great Fish River and the Umtata River, where they join the Abatembo, or Tambookee tribes, these again join the Amapondas, who extend eastward along the coast until they amalgamate with the Zulus in Natal. From 60 to 100 miles inland from the sea there is a range of mountains, running east and west, which divides these several tribes from the races of the interior.

The numbers of the coast tribes inhabiting the country between the Cape Colony and Natal may be put down something as follows:—

The Amaxosas, or Kaffirs	about 250,000
The Tambookees, or Abatembo	" 100,000
Minor Independent Tribes	" 50,000
The Amapondas or Faku's People	125,000

Making a total of near..... 525,000

As I said before, the origin of these races is yet a matter of conjecture; the Amapondas and Tabookees were no doubt the Aborigines of Natal before Chaka drove them out of that country. But the Kaffirs claim a separate history, and by their traditions are said to have sprung from a chief named Xosa, from whom they take their name: their descent is thus carried back for twelve generations—viz. Xosa, Tabawe, Newangu, Sikomo, Togu, and Geonde—from whom again sprang the present divided tribes, according to the accompanying genealogical table.

This "three" brings the Kaffir nation down to the present day; but some of the old chiefs have died since I left the Cape in 1867, and have been succeeded by their sons. It will, I fear, with all I have before me, take up too much time to go into the laws and customs of these people; suffice it to say that many of them are curious and interesting, and throughout bear a Jewish or Hebrew type. I have, since leaving South, visited North Africa, and observed