

count of their stewardship ; if they fail to do this, their inheritance will probably be absorbed by those who prove themselves more capable administrators. The Congo State, under Belgian control, occupies the fertile basin of the second largest river system in the world, once the bed of an inland sea. It is still in the initial stages of development, but steady progress may be expected, now that a railway has connected the coastal lowlands with the Congo River above the rapids which render it unnavigable as it descends from the interior plateau to the Atlantic through a channel from four to eight miles in width. The future of the Congo State may be great, but for the present the British and French possessions are of more general interest.

The sphere of Great Britain lies mainly in South and East Africa, and includes the greater portion of the subtropical lands which are favorably situated for European settlement. It is fortunate for Great Britain that her occupation began thus at the south, whence the natural line of expansion was along the elevated axis of the continent, whose general direction is north-east, towards the shores of the Red Sea. Commencing with a modest colony at the Cape of Good Hope, which was ceded by the Dutch in 1814, her boundaries gradually extended by ordinary processes of growth, including Natal and Zululand on the coast, and Bechuanaland on the north. The sudden appearance of Germany on the stage of African affairs in 1884 hastened the apportionment of such parts of the continent as were not already under European influence, and Great Britain's African frontier was pushed rapidly forward. Although the great acquisition, known as Rhodesia or Charterland, has only recently come under her flag, a railway already penetrates many miles into the heart of the country, which five years ago was under the rule of barbarous tribes. Its boundaries skirt the western shores of Nyassa, one of the lakes which form so remarkable a feature of East Africa, and touch the southern point of the long, narrow Lake Tanganyika, on which navigation is free to all nations. Two hundred miles beyond the northern point of this lake lies Uganda, a district of British East Africa, bordering on the great Victoria Nyanza, the source of the White Nile and second only to Lake Superior among inland fresh-water seas. Thence along the Nile the British power predominates without interruption through the Sudan, the scene of Lord Kitchener's recent overthrow of the Dervish forces, and through Egypt, which is virtually under a British protectorate.

A British railway "from Cairo to the Cape" was regarded not long ago by sensible people as an extravagant fancy, conceived in the brain of an enthusiast. Large sections of such a railway, however, already exist in North and South Africa, and a space of only 500 miles in the centre of the continent separates the British territories in which it can be constructed when commercial necessities or the protection of the country demand it. The surface of this wide belt of land varies greatly. There are desert spaces in the south and west, infertile lands where cattle raising is the only profitable agricultural industry, mining districts awaiting development, the famous diamond fields of Kimberley, lowlands in river basins and on the coast, where the prolific soil breeds malarial disease, but the greater portion, south of the Sudan, is on a plateau of moderate elevation, sufficiently watered, where the climate permits white races to make a permanent home and produce the necessities of life.

Quite different are the British settlements in West Africa. These lie in the basin of the river Niger, where the climate is tropical, and the elevation above the sea is comparatively low. This region has so often proved fatal