

SOMETHING ABOUT THE TRANSVAAL.

In several previous issues of THE CHRONICLE, reference has been made to the mineral wealth of the Transvaal, and statistics have been given showing the extraordinary increase in the output of the gold-fields during the last few years. Recognizing that the attention of all English-speaking people is now rivetted on Pretoria, we gladly cull from a sketch of the Transvaal Republic, published with an admirable Atlas issued by the Equitable Life Assurance Society, some additional useful information concerning the South African Republic.

The country is mainly a plateau, from 3,000 to upward of 4,000 feet in altitude, studded with isolated mountains and longer or shorter mountain ranges running in various directions. It is also perfectly bare except for occasional forests in the more sheltered parts and the lower valleys, but only in the latter has the timber any economic value; elsewhere the trees are mostly small, thorny mimosas, few fit even for fuel. The principal rivers are the Vaal and the Limpopo, the country has no great inland lakes, seas or rivers. The rivers of the interior have but little water in winter, but in summer, the wet season, these unimportant streams become roaring torrents. There is but little variety in the landscape. Much of the country is a vast barren solitude, wholly lacking the rugged beauty of parts of Natal and other countries of South Africa. The streams of Natal, unlike those of the Transvaal, abound in magnificent waterfalls, which are beautiful at all seasons. The climate of the country, as a whole, is excellent, varying from temperate through semi-tropic to tropic as we advance from south to north. In the northern region, called the Bosch Veld, summer is warmer and winter colder than in the region between the Vaal River and the Magaliesberg, known as the High Veld. Winter in the Transvaal is the dry season.

The Republic has an area of 119,139 square miles, of which only about 50,000 acres are under cultivation. The farms number 12,245, and of these 3,636 belong to the government, 1,612 to outside owners and companies, and the rest to resident owners and companies. The agricultural products of the country are not sufficient for the wants of the people, and it is claimed that if it were not for the mines there would not be one white man to a square mile over the whole country. While, as a whole, the Transvaal is an arid and barren country agriculturally, the Boers are a pastoral and not an agricultural people; and during a large part of the year the herbage of the plains affords good pasturage for their flocks. The State Almanack for 1898 gives the white population as 345,397—males 137,947, females 107,450; natives, 748,759; total population, 1,094,156.

The wealth of the Transvaal lies in its minerals, and in this respect the country is, without exception, the richest of all the settled States of South Africa. Of the numerous minerals known to exist within the country gold is by far the most important, the produc-

tion of the South African Republic placing it among the leading gold-producing countries of the world. The oldest gold fields are in Lydenberg, where gold has been mined since 1869; but the most important and productive fields are those of Witwatersrand, located on a ridge thirty miles due south of Pretoria. The ridge simply designated as the Rand borders the districts of Pretoria and Heidelberg and extends west into Potchefstroom. Gold was discovered on the Rand in 1885. Mining operations began before the close of the year, and in July, 1886, a portion of the region was proclaimed a public gold field. To-day the Rand gold mining district is the most productive in the world, the yield of gold having grown, year by year, with extraordinary rapidity. More than eleven-twelfths of the gold mined in the country is now produced on the Witwatersrand. Of the minor gold fields the most productive at present are the De Kaep fields, in the eastern part of the country, in the Lydenberg district, which have been worked since 1882; output of the fields in 1897 was 50,942 ounces. The total value of the gold production of the Transvaal, from 1884 to and including 1897, has been \$269,000,000. The output of the mines for 1897 was 3,289,720 ounces—3,034,678 ounces were from the Rand—valued at about \$57,300,000.

Until the discovery of the diamond and gold mines South Africa was practically an unknown country in the commercial world. In 1880 the total estimated value of the exports from the South African Republic was given as between \$2,000,000 and \$2,500,000, and of the imports, \$5,000,000. In 1897 the value of imports on which dues were charged had increased to \$67,800,000, while the total imports were estimated at \$107,575,000. The exports are chiefly gold, wool, cattle, hides, grain, ostrich feathers and ivory. In the official reports, among imports, clothing, machinery, railway material, iron wire, plates, etc., are the leading items. While the commercial interests of the United States in South Africa are of recent growth, yet that country has outdistanced competitors who have been long interested in the field, and now occupies second place among the nations that have trade relations with South Africa. So rapid has been the increase, the value of the exports has several times more than doubled in a single year. The superiority of certain American manufactured products, especially mining machinery, has been largely instrumental in securing these results. The value (official) of the exports from the United States to South Africa, in 1895, was \$5,000,000, by 1897 they equaled \$16,000,000, and in 1898 the value was estimated to be \$20,000,000. Since the official reports give only direct shipments, the above figures by no means represent the entire exports, as a large percentage of the American goods are sent to South Africa through London firms and do not appear in those reports. Beside American mining machinery, which is found wholly or in part in every mine on the Rand, as well as in the Kimberley diamond mines, steel rails, electrical appliances, agricultural machin-