

THE TRANSVAAL IN 1908

QUEER FEATURES OF FARMING IN THE LAND OF THE BOERS.

Special Correspondence.

PRETORIA.—This letter is to be about the Transvaal. The state has been big in the eyes of the world for the past half dozen years. It seems small and poor when one travels over it. I entered it from Cape Colony at Fourteen Streams above Kimberley, and came thence by rail through Johannesburg on my way here. The distance is a little farther than from New York to Washington, and it is about an equal distance from Pretoria to the east where the Portuguese territories begin. I am just about 300 miles or so south of the boundaries of Rhodesia.

These figures give you some idea of the area of the country. The Transvaal is about twice as big as Illinois or Iowa. It is high, dry and comparatively barren, and some of it seems almost a desert. On my way here I rode for miles without seeing a house, and all along the way from Kimberley to Johannesburg there are no towns of large size. The whole country has a white population less than that of the city of Minneapolis, and including the blacks, who number three times the whites, it has not as many people as Philadelphia.

The biggest town in the Transvaal is Johannesburg. It has 150,000, and of these less than 90,000 are white. Pretoria has 35,000 and only 25,000 whites. Both towns claim more, but these are the official figures and they include every one, negroes, English and Boers.

MILLIONS IN MINES.

The great importance of the country is in its mines. It leads the world as to gold, and it bids fair to do so as to diamonds. I had already written of the Premier mine, which produced the Cullinan diamond, the biggest ever discovered. It lies within 13 miles of this city, and it has turned out \$25,000,000 worth of precious stones in the past four years. There are other diamond mines nearby, and there are also copper mines of the Rand, which lie within a few miles of Pretoria. Their product is greater than that of any other region. They have added more than 900 million gold dollars to the world's supply in the last 20 odd years, and they are now yielding more than \$20 million a year. Of this I shall write more when I visit Johannesburg.

FARMING IN SOUTH AFRICA.

The chief importance of the Transvaal, outside its mines, is as a stock-raising country. The land is high and beautiful and the climate is fitted for white men. The most of the country lies 4,000 or more feet above the sea. It is a vast tableland, composed of great rolling plains, crossed here and there by low ranges of mountains. A great part of the country is covered with scrubby brush, but much of it is semi-barren and so scantily watered that the grass grows up in the color. The seasons here are just the opposite of ours. The winter is from April to September, and the summer from October to March. The winters are cold, dry and bracing. The summers are hot, with some rainfall to temper the heat.

So far only a small part of the land has been taken up. There are something like 75,000,000 acres in the Transvaal, and the registered farms number only 12,000. The average size of a farm is 6,000 acres, or nearly 10 square miles to each farm.

The most of the farmers are Boers, who cultivate only a small part of their land, and either graze the remainder or let it out to the native Kaffirs, who plant it in little patches of from one to five acres. The chief crops raised by the negroes are corn and millet. They farm under the direction of the owner, and as a rule give him half of the harvest. All farming, however, is slovenly done, and that notwithstanding the demand is good. The Transvaal is now importing farm produce of \$15,000,000 per annum, and the main supplies for the gold mines come in from abroad. I have seen the prices of Pretoria and Johannesburg lying before me. Chickens are bringing 25 cents a pound, butter 60 cents a pound, and eggs are selling from 75 cents to \$1.25 a dozen. Milk is worth 18 cents a quart, and tobacco, unmanufactured, 12 cents per pound.

As to grain, it is sold in bags of different capacities. Barley is put up in bags of 100 pounds, and sells at \$3 per bag, or 3 cents a pound. Rye brings over 2 cents a pound, oats 2 cents, and kafir corn almost 1 cent, while Indian corn brings 2 cents per pound. This means that rye and corn each bring \$1.12, and that barley and oats bring, respectively, 96 cents and 64 cents per bushel, which is far more than they sell for, even at the highest in our part of the world.

SOME SOUTH AFRICAN PESTS.

These prices are largely due to poor labor, lack of transport and insect pests. One of the chief pests is the locust, which sweeps over the country in swarms of great magnitude. I have ridden through miles of such swarms on the cars. At times the locusts are so thick that they almost hide the sun. The air is filled with flying beetles, with sparkling white wings, and one looks on and on, seeing nothing but locusts as far as the eye can reach. Looking down along the sides of the train the ground is covered with these crawling insects, and you can notice them in front of the engine.

The locomotive seems to be sweeping them apart like a snowplow, and this work continues for miles and miles as the train goes on. Sometimes they are so many that the wheels of the cars, going over them, crush them beneath the rails, and the rails thereby become greased and the wheels roll around without catching.

At some of the stations I have stepped out of the train and scooped up a handful of locusts. They look just like our grasshoppers and are probably the same sort of insects as those which almost ruined Kansas and Nebraska some years ago.

When the locusts come they eat almost every green thing. The grass disappears and the sheep and cattle perish for want of food. At present the different governments are paying a certain price for locust destruction. The farmers receive 50 cents per bag of 200 pounds, and in Natal locust eggs are bringing 12 cents a pound. The eggs are laid in cocoons, and it is estimated that it takes 40,000 eggs to make one locust. They will last for years without hatching, so that, although the locusts are killed, a new crop may come forth again and again from the dormant eggs.

The African natives are all fond of locusts. They eat them, and I am told that the Boer farmers frequently use dried locusts for chicken feed, paying as high as \$1 per bag for them. Another trouble, that the farmers have in many regions is the drought, and there are also cattle fevers and other diseases.

AGRICULTURE SINCE THE WAR.

Since the Boer war new interest has sprung up in agriculture, and the government is now doing all it can to open up the country and to improve the conditions of the farmers. It has already established experimental farms in several places, and it is trying to better the livestock. Many new plants are being introduced, the tobacco industry has been encouraged, and experiments are being made on cotton. A South African Agricultural college is now proposed, and Gen. Botha is said to favor it. He says that agriculture and mining are the two brothers of the Transvaal and that they must work together, hand in hand, for the benefit of the country.

NO PLACE FOR POOR MEN.

Notwithstanding these figures I do not advise Americans to come here expecting to make money in farming. This is hardly a poor man's country. The native labor of the farms is made up of Kaffirs, who receive from \$10 to \$15 a month, including their board and lodging. White men cannot do the black man's work without losing caste, and the farmers would rather not have white men to do such work. The line between the white and the black is carefully drawn and the white fears that his race will lose caste if he employs his own people to do the rough labor.

Even the government, anxious as it is to have settlers, does not advise men without capital to come to South Africa. In a little book of information for the benefit of emigrants I see it stated that it is necessary for an experienced farmer to have from \$20,000 to \$30,000 if he wishes to start into stock raising in the Transvaal. The price of land varies according to the soil, water and nearness to market. Farms on the high veldt with certain amount of land irrigated, can be purchased from \$2.50 to \$10 per acre. In the lower country, known as the bush veldt, the prices are considerably lower. Nearest towns the land is high, and where there is plenty of water the prices are much above those I have mentioned. The government advises that a farm should be at least 2,000 acres in size for stock raising and not less than 3,000 where the country is poor. It desires

Agriculture Since the War—New Experimental Farms—The Terrible Locusts—Stock Farming and its Profits—A Look at Pretoria—In The Footsteps of Kruger—A Word About Gen. Botha.



CHURCH STREET, PRETORIA.

Photographed for the Deseret News by Frank G. Carpenter.

small cultivators who will do mixed farming and truck farming. Such men should have from \$1,500 to \$2,000 each, and they should be prepared to work with their own hands.

THE CAPITAL OF THE TRANSVAAL.

I am writing this in Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal and the seat of government of this new English state. It was, you know, the headquarters of the Boer government, the home of Kruger and the pivot of anti-England during the great war in South Africa.

In going over the country now one sees the ruins of the recent struggle except some dismantled forts and an occasional monument put up to the soldiers. The square stone block-houses which were erected to guard the railroad between here and Johannesburg are still in evidence. But that is all.

The population is everywhere now composed of both English and Boers. The crowds on the streets are made up of both nations, and the families are marrying and giving in marriage. Within a stone's throw of my hotel is the parliament house, where the British and Boers sit together, and where the Boers, notwithstanding their defeat, are in the majority. It is a Boer who is the premier, Gen. Botha, who led the Boer armies, now rules the Transvaal, and he, with a cabinet largely of his own race, directs the policy of the state and, to a considerable extent, dictates its laws.

The parliament of today is held in the government buildings which were erected by President Kruger in the early nineties at a cost of about \$300,000, and the Palace of Justice, another magnificent building, was commenced by the Boer government before the outbreak of the war, although it was not completed until after peace was declared.

A DUTCH TOWN.

Notwithstanding this, the Pretoria of today is a Boer town. Its people are more Dutch than English. There are Dutch signs over the stores, and the bookshops have many Dutch books. One hears the people talking in Dutch as he goes along the streets, and the farmers in the country about are almost altogether Boers. It is the Dutchmen who still own most of the lands, and their long teams of oxen may be seen going through the city or standing in the market places just as they did when Paul Kruger ruled.

Pretoria was laid out by the Boers and built by them. It is a little over 50 years old, and it is named after President Pretorius, who founded it. It lies in a valley formed by a small tributary of the Crocodile river, and it has grassy hills on every side. The streets cross one another at right angles. They are wide and well paved, and in many places shaded with willows, which were set out as fence posts and grew into trees. Most of the houses are of Dutch architecture. Nearly every little home has a garden about it, and the whole town is full of flowers and fruit.

Of late years the business section of the city has grown, and it now compares favorably with any town of its size in the United States. It has good stores, a street car line, electric lights, a public park and a zoological garden. It has a museum, a library of 24,000 volumes, social clubs, cricket and foot ball grounds and a theater and an opera house. It has a half dozen churches, and among them the Popper Church, where President Kruger sometimes preached.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF KRUGER.

Indeed everything about the city still bears Kruger's marks. The house in which he lived is here, and his bones lie under a plain monument out in the cemetery. I went down the other afternoon and looked at the home of the former Boer president.

It is a plain one-story building, situated on the principal street, with a garden about it. It is not much better than that of many a clerk in the United States. Kruger was supposed to be rich, and statements have been made concerning the millions which he sent to Holland during the Boer war. These stories are denied at Pretoria and the truth seems to be that the Boer president came out of the war comparatively poor as far as money was concerned. His wealth was mainly in farms, which he had divided among his relatives before the war began. While the struggle was raging he lent something like \$250,000 in cash to his government to keep the soldiers in his government in the field, and this was paid for in the money of that government, which is now worthless. He also lent about \$70,000 additional, which, I believe, was in the hands of Gen.

Botha at the time the war closed. This was offered to the British, but they refused it and the money still forms a part of the Kruger estate. It is said here, that Kruger was not a money lover or money grubber, and that he cared more for his country than his fortune.

A WORD ABOUT GEN. BOTHA.

I understand that the same is true

of Gen. Louis Botha, the present ruler of the Transvaal. He is a Boer in the full sense of the word, but he believes in the building up of South Africa, and is doing all he can to further the interests of the united races. Gen. Botha was noted as a statesman before the war began. He entered politics early and was a member of the first volksraad and a leader of the progressives of the Boer

republic at that time. He left his position and went into the army as a private, and by sheer force made his way from rank to rank until he became commander-in-chief. One of his greatest battles was that of Colenso, where he fought Gen. Buller and his 12,000 men with a Boer force of 2,000 and defeated them. It was after that fight that Kruger made him commander-in-chief of the Boer forces, and it was largely due to him that the army held out as long as it did, making one of the bravest campaigns ever known in the annals of war. FRANK G. CARPENTER.



KERMIT ROOSEVELT TO PHOTOGRAPH PRESIDENT'S BIG GAME

Kermit Roosevelt, the youngest son of the president, will be the only person to accompany Mr. Roosevelt on his proposed trip to Africa for big game. Kermit bears the name of his mother, who was Miss Edith Kermit Carow, of New York. He is a lively youngster, and his tricks with tame mice and pet snakes with solemn statesmen visiting his father at the White House have amused the nation. He is quite expert with his camera, and is expected to take photos of many of the interesting things seen and done by President Roosevelt throughout the trip. He has been learning how to use his big camera under difficult conditions, and is studying up the fauna and flora of Africa.

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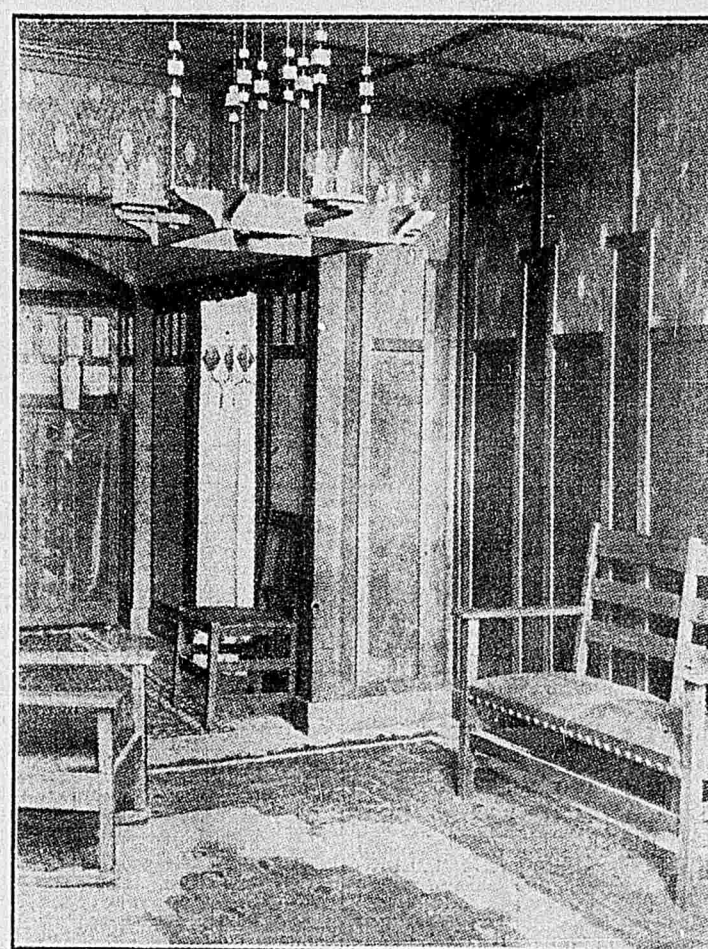
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