



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 30, 1926.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
West African Development.—I.	613
Cotton and Food. By Dr. W. Lawrence Balls, F.R.S.	616
Modern Aspects of Evolution. By Prof. Henry Fairfield Osborn, For. Mem. R.S.	617
Mind and Matter. By E. E. F. d'A.	618
Our Bookshelf	619
Letters to the Editor :	
The Recurrence of Magnetic Storms.—Dr. H. Deslandres, For. Mem. R.S.	621
Science and Psychological Research. — Sir Oliver Lodge, F.R.S.	622
The Naming of Wild Hybrid Swarms.—Dr. L. Cockayne, F.R.S., and H. H. Allan	623
Early Egypt and the Caucasus.—Miss G. Caton-Thompson and Miss E. W. Gardner	624
The Occurrence of Helium and Neon in Vacuum Tubes.—Prof. E. C. C. Baly, F.R.S., and R. W. Riding	625
The Canadian School of Prehistory in France.—Dr. H. M. Ami	626
Living's Fire-Damp Indicator.—Prof. C. V. Boys, F.R.S.; The Writer of the Note	626
The Imaginary Roots of Equations.—Dr. H. C. Pocklington, F.R.S.	627
Spatial and Time Relations in Dreams.—Arthur E. Bostwick	627
The Influence of General Electron Displacement on the Reactivity of Conjugated Systems in the Molecules of Carbon Compounds.—Prof. R. Robinson, F.R.S.	627
The Discovery Expedition. By Dr. Stanley Kemp, N. A. Mackintosh, and A. C. Hardy	628
City and Guilds (Engineering) College	632
Obituary :	
Mr. G. W. Lamplugh, F.R.S. By Sir A. Strahan, K. B. E., F.R.S.	634
Dr. Paul Kammerer	635
News and Views	637
Our Astronomical Column	641
Research Items	642
The Skin Constrictor (Psychogalvanic) Reflex. By Prof. R. J. S. McDowall and Dr. H. M. Wells	644
Fuel Research.	645
University and Educational Intelligence	646
Contemporary Birthdays	647
Official Publications Received	647
Diary of Societies and Public Lectures	647
Recent Scientific and Technical Books	Supp. v.

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West African Development.

I.

THE Hon. W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore, the present Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, is tireless in his pursuit of truth—so tireless that he might be suspected of regarding the machine-phrased memoranda emanating from local governments dealing with their particular problems in the same light as a member of Parliament regards the average answer to a parliamentary question. He has evidently set himself the task of knowing and making known the potentialities of the peoples and the countries for which Great Britain has assumed responsibility in the tropics. In 1922 he accompanied the present Viceroy of India on his tour of the West Indies and British Guiana. In 1924 he was appointed chairman of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry to East Africa. At the beginning of this year he set out on a tour of the four British West African territories, the report on which has just been presented to Parliament (Cmd. 2744; 3s. 6d. net).

This report, for which Mr. Ormsby-Gore is alone responsible, will commend itself to scientific workers as an objective survey of the facts to be faced and the problems to be solved in regard to the development of tropical Africa. He has the qualities of a statesman rather than those of a successful politician. He shares certain preconceptions with many of us. He has an abiding faith in the capacity of his fellow-countrymen to create an Empire Commonwealth, a belief in the right of the British nation to exercise a tutelage over the backward races until they no longer need our powerful protection to safeguard themselves against themselves or other peoples, or our guidance in conserving and developing their material resources. But he allows neither his preconceptions regarding our mission, nor his political convictions, to warp his judgments.

Faced with the inexorable facts of African native communities, their tribal or communal ownership in land, communal production, communal obligations in respect to essential services, Mr. Ormsby-Gore has the courage to draw logical conclusions. He realises, as Rivers realised and Morel realised, that our meat may be poison to peoples in a less advanced stage of development. "There can be no common definition of progress, no common standard for all mankind." The paths to the highest attainments need not be along parallel lines. Man's special functions in the universal scheme of things must differ with dissimilarities in race, environments, and inherited institutions. In spite of the shrinkage of the world, these dissimilarities persist and must be recognised, particularly by the white race which has been enabled, by its amazing command over material forces, to bend other races to its will. Before

transplanting our laws, our customs, our institutions, our processes, among alien peoples and on alien soil, we should take heed lest we destroy much that is intrinsically valuable. We cannot legislate for every section of humanity as if it were cast in the same mould.

There are tremendous responsibilities implied in our trusteeship of the African native. Our duty to him and to the world does not end by making him a more efficient instrument for the development of the natural resources of his country. We have to safeguard him against the evils arising from a catastrophically sudden contact with our so-called modern civilisation. Our aim should not be to evolve Europeanised Africans, but to enable Africans to build up their own civilisation based upon all that is best in their culture and traditions.

The task confronting our administrators demands much patience, much tact, and a ripe understanding based upon knowledge born of intensive study of the peoples. We cannot afford to send out our administrators like "little children stumbling in the dark." They must be equipped for their task lest they destroy faster than they build. There is now a wealth of accumulated experience and knowledge at our command in our schools of anthropology. It is this which Mr. Ormsby-Gore wishes to enlist in the service of the British administration in tropical Africa.

"If we are to succeed in our duties towards these peoples as rulers or as missionaries, or as instruments for their advance or civilisation, we must study them objectively and base our policy on real understanding acquired not only from personal contact, but from scientific study of their mental and moral characteristics, of native law and customs, of native history, language and traditions. Native methods of agriculture, native arts and crafts, should be examined scientifically before any attempt is made to supersede what we find existing."

The above quotation is a prelude to a delightful chapter on the indigenous population. The rest of the report is dull in comparison. In the small compass of twelve pages are summarised the results of much reading and still more careful observation. In them is to be found more information most attractively presented of the West African natives, their traditional forms of government, their languages, their forms of religion, their special characteristics, than it is usual to find in several volumes. It is almost Wellsian in style. With zest the author repeats the description by a Mohammedan ruler in Northern Nigeria of an English court of law as a place where "two professional liars appear to prevent the judge from ascertaining the truth." If this is the usual conception held of our legal system by Mohammedans, it is obvious that any attempt to supersede theirs, where judicial and executive

functions are combined, would lead to considerable friction.

While the East African tribes have so far no aptitude for trading, and consequently are at the mercy of Indian, Arab, and Syrian middlemen, the West Africans have in their midst a negro tribe, the Hausas, who carry on itinerant trading and have created trading centres throughout Nigeria and the Gold Coast. The Yorubas, another negro tribe, have solved the problem of town-dwelling in a way which should commend itself to our own city-dwellers. They are both farmers and townsmen. They live in great towns—Ibadan contains 250,000 people—and go out daily to cultivate their holdings, some so far as ten to twelve miles from the city. None would interfere with his neighbour's crops. They are as sacrosanct as the fruit of the apple trees planted by German municipalities along their main roads.

Just as in East Africa, in the mountain fastnesses, there are remnants of tribes like the Wachagga and the Bagishu scattered among the Bantu and the Nilotic races, so in West Africa there are remnants of the Bauchi tribe, a primitive pagan people—still, it is alleged, addicted to cannibalism—scattered among the virile and intelligent Moslem tribes of Northern Nigeria. The Bauchi have protected themselves against attack by building heavy stockades hedged with the poisonous euphorbia shrub and cactus, and the use of poisoned arrows. They live in isolated communities, each of which has its own dialect, and are not yet accustomed to wearing clothes. Of the Ashantis we are told that they are organised in a quasi-feudal system, and even their land system is strikingly parallel to that which obtained in Britain in medieval times. The king himself, the Omanhene, has not only a council of barons to advise him, and if they consider necessary, to dethrone him, but also his position is rendered more delicate by a council of women headed by the Queen-Mother, who, being elected to the office, exercises parental authority without necessarily having had the responsibility of giving birth to the king. She is almost invariably a political power to be reckoned with.

The existence of an English-speaking African population raises special problems both in their relations with government and with the vast mass of their fellow Africans in the interior. They have sprung up through long contact with European traders on the coast, and by the creation of settlements for freed slaves from the Americas. Unlike the French, who encourage it, we definitely dislike the assimilation of our culture, our outlook, and our social habits by people of a different race; the nearer they approximate to us in these respects the wider becomes the gulf between them and us. Mr. Ormsby-Gore states the problem, but he gives

no indication of a definite policy to be pursued, contenting himself with saying that the relations between the races must be based on mutual respect and understanding. It would be well if we faced the fact that the natives are rapidly becoming suspicious of the motives underlying the social exclusiveness of the English-speaking whites. It is notorious that many of the natives in Northern Rhodesia are forsaking British territory for work in the Belgian Congo, preferring the absence of racial discrimination among the Latin whites to the comparative freedom they enjoy under British rule. We cannot afford to be content with the expression of pious sentiments regarding mutual respect and understanding. We must have a definite policy, one that is intelligible and does not affront the intelligence of the better educated natives, who are capable of exercising considerable sway over their fellow-tribesmen: otherwise we shall create an ever-widening gulf between ourselves and the black races which can never be bridged.

British policy with regard to the administration of the native races has its parallel in the policy of the average captain of industry in a European industrialised state towards the workers in industry. Every material inducement is offered to enable the workers to produce more and to produce better in order that they may live fuller, more contented lives, yet one thing is lacking: neither rulers abroad nor rulers in industry at home are prepared to share the control which they monopolise; and in denying the peoples concerned a progressive share in the control of the machinery of government or of industry, they are wounding their self-esteem and progressively widening the breach between races and between classes.

So far in Africa, Great Britain has not determined to share the highest authority with members of the subject races. We are prepared to delegate authority; we are prepared to permit and even to bolster up a system of indirect rule under our supreme authority; we are not prepared to relinquish control for guidance. Whatever benefits we may have bestowed upon the Africans, therefore, will be regarded by them as being actuated by no higher motive than self-interest or as more subtle means devised for their exploitation. Every new road, every new railway, every new plant-product introduced, every new process, however necessary they may be if the potential resources of these vast territories are to be developed, increases the complexity of the African's life and sounds the death-knell of many of his institutions, habits, and customs. His needs increase and he has to work harder than ever. The transitory delight in the new gives way rapidly to an infinite regret for the loss of the old. Discontent is the parent of suspicion, and the suspicion can only be allayed by fitting him for the assumption of full responsibility.

Education is the only means by which the natives can be fitted to assume responsibility and adjust themselves deliberately to their special environment, and to adjust the environment itself to the changing conditions brought about by impact with the modern world. Mr. Ormsby-Gore has an abiding faith in the efficacy of education as an instrument of progress. He realises that in West Africa at least there is no possibility of creating an English colony. The personnel of the technical services, therefore, must be largely in the hands of the natives themselves, who look to the Europeans for guidance only in the initial stages of development. The chief needs of the country are education services which must supply well-trained natives for medical, sanitary, veterinary, agricultural, and other technical services. They will also have to meet the growing demand for native administrators. The basis of all education must be the primary school system, and it will be the greatest mistake to limit the provision of education to the favoured few. Mr. Ormsby-Gore is probably right in condemning a large number of the small bush schools which flourish throughout the territories, but it would seem to be a mistaken policy to close down any type of school catering for the native communities and selected by themselves for the satisfaction of their appetite for education, before the governments are in a position to satisfy the needs of the natives by the adequate provision of better schools. Our motives in suppressing the one without creating another to take its place would not be understood.

Mr. Ormsby-Gore's picture of the standard of teaching in the schools in West Africa makes somewhat depressing reading, and is certainly a reflection upon the capacity of the administration, the directors of education, and the missionaries. Where any system exists, education has been subordinated to the task of cramming African children for the Oxford and Cambridge junior and senior local examinations and the University of Durham pass degree. The majority of text-books in use in the various schools he considers to be unsuitable. Some of the elementary English reading books in use have been long obsolete in Great Britain. In respect of text-books and readers the schools in West Africa under British administration fall far short of those in use in the neighbouring French colony. Children had a parrot-like knowledge of the names of places in England, but no knowledge at all of the geography of West Africa. Many of the books used dealt with words and objects entirely outside the experience of the African children.

It is evident from the description of what purports to be an education system in West Africa, that education has been entrusted to people without any conception of

the true purpose of education or any ideas of modern educational methods. Much is hoped for from the newly created Prince of Wales College at Achimota in the Gold Coast Colony, but it is evident that profound changes will have to be made in the personnel of the advisory committees on education and the education staffs themselves if any effective progress is to be made. What is needed are directors of education and staffs who are professionally trained to be alive to the potentialities of education, to the paramount need for elasticity in the treatment of educational problems, to the importance of psychology as a factor in educational training, and to the need for continuous experiment and research in educational method. With ignorance at the helm, education degenerates into mere instruction, its aim is confined to fitting persons for predetermined tasks, and the wider aim is unfulfilled of fitting them to live fully and to accept the responsibilities of citizenship, the basis of which is ungrudging service to the community. Mr. Ormsby-Gore is disappointingly silent on this aspect of education.

Cotton and Food.

The Cotton-Growing Countries, Present and Potential: Production, Trade, Consumption. International Institute of Agriculture, Rome. Pp. xxxvi+317. (London: P. S. King and Son, Ltd., 1926.) 12s. 6d. net.

STUDENTS of the cotton industry were placed under a lasting obligation to the author of "The World's Cotton Crops" when it was published in 1915, and a grasp of the subject thus became available to any reader. The details of cotton-growing interests collected in that book gave internal evidence of the labour required to make an effective compilation by single-handed effort; the form of the book gave a reality and unity to the subject which a bald compilation must lack. It was too much to expect that Prof. Todd would be able to keep his book up-to-date, so that the action of the International Institute of Agriculture in producing the memoir now before us is doubly welcome, both as an authoritative statement of facts and as a supplementary volume to be shelved for reference beside "The World's Cotton Crops."

The present memoir amplifies an earlier publication on the same subject which the Institute issued in 1922. As its title indicates, the fact of a small production does not exclude a country from its pages, so that unexpected information can be derived from them; several acres of cotton grown successfully near Budapest in 1924 may be cited. It is not the function of such a compilation to balance critically the information

derived from one country against that from another; this must be left to those who use the facts provided, in which they are assisted by a useful foreword. Such users will be well advised to bear this limitation of function in mind, for in many countries the full potentiality can never be made commercially effective, on account of such restrictions as are imposed by unevenly distributed rainfall, by the area available for irrigation, or by the irrigation available for the area.

The information given for eighty-one geographical localities, including the United States and Liberia, Egypt and Fiji, India and Barbados, is arranged to show so far as practicable the authorities quoted, data of area and crop, local geography and chronology of the crop, botanical and entomological information, together with merchanting particulars, including local manufactures.

Returning from the details which are the chief constituent of this volume, we may with advantage look more carefully at the interesting foreword. Amongst other things to which it directs attention is the stimulus given to cotton growing of late years by the high prices which resulted from short crops in the United States; this stimulus is very evident in some of the tables, where new countries continually appear from 1922 to 1925. It also directs attention to the probability of a continued fall in price from those stimulating levels, and to the consequent repetition of that vicious circling movement so familiar in cotton supply and demand. The foreword leaves the topic at this stage, for it is by such presentation and discussion of facts as this memoir provides that the radius of the vicious circle may be contracted. It is, nevertheless, quite possible that the ostensible circle is in reality part of a spiral, and that the whole cotton industry is entering upon a transition phase, from which it will emerge as a smaller and more highly specialised producer of high quality goods. The years during which short-time working has lately been practised may not be ephemeral, and the fact of such prolonged short time may not be a mere incidental consequence of post-War disturbances; it may be part of a coming shrinkage. While the significance of the artificial fibres as a cause which has begun to contribute to such shrinkage may be open to discussion, there can be little question that the supply of cotton will very soon be liable to direct competition through the rivalry of food crops.

The world's food demands were brought to the notice of the public by Sir Daniel Hall's recent address at the British Association, and there is an admitted probability that these demands will equate to the available known resources within a few generations; the situation will rectify itself, of course, by moving