

Today's Geography



SOUTH AFRICA: COUNTRY OF DIAMONDS, SAVAGES, AND HARDY PIONEERS

The Union of South Africa recently attracted world attention by a negative vote on the proposal to secede from the British empire. It should not be a strange country to Americans.

With its vast areas taken over from aborigines; with thousands of its white settlers massacred by savages, but with others, undaunted, pressing on in their prairie schooners ever farther into the interior of an unknown continent; with a gold rush winning a new empire; and possessed today of a stubborn race problem, South Africa, half way around the world from us, has in its history, chapters which we know by heart. New Yorkers can find an even closer tie to the residents of Cape Town in the fact that the sites of both ports, now almost priceless, were bought from savage landlords for a few handfuls of gaudy trinkets.

In one respect, however, the carving out of what is now the Union of South Africa is without its parallel in the development of the United States. In South Africa the strife of two white peoples for control has been an all important factor. For about a century and a half the Dutch had possession of Cape Town and the small area surrounding it which harbored all the whites in South Africa. The Napoleonic wars transferred possession to England, and in 1806 the English assumed a final control which many of the Dutch inhabitants resented. In 1836 many of the Dutch farmers or "boers" began trekking into the interior with the intention of settling beyond English influence. When Englishmen followed them they trekked farther. Finally, beyond the Orange river they founded the Orange free state, and beyond the Vaal river, the Transvaal republic.

First diamonds and then gold were discovered in the new states. They brought great prosperity to the Boer republics, but they brought many outsiders as well; and the presence of these finally led to the Boer war as a result of which the republics came into the possession of Great Britain.

Aside from the war-torn republics and monarchies of the last few years, the Union of South Africa is one of the youngest of the important countries of the world.

The territory of the Union occupies the whole southern and southeastern tip of Africa in a wide strip extending about 250 miles inland from the Indian ocean. Its area lacks only 25,000 square miles of reaching the half million mark.

Toward the inner edge of the territory of the Union are the world's greatest diamond mines, where earth sufficient to fill thousands of cars is screened yearly for the sake of a peck or two of diamonds. But the few handfuls of diamonds exported in 1913, the last year before the World war, were worth more than fifty million dollars and exceeded in value the combined value of the many shipments of wool, ostrich feathers, hides and coal that sailed away from South Africa the same year.

Some 200 miles to the northeast of the diamond country are the gold fields. In their midst is the gold-belt, wonder city of Johannesburg, metropolis of South Africa. After the discovery of gold in the eighties the city sprang up almost overnight. Though at first it was the usual unlovely mining camp, soon substantial structures were erected, and it now ranks, with its well paved streets, fine buildings, and beautiful parks, with the leading cities of Europe, America and Australia. It has about the same population as Denver, Colorado, and Providence, R. I.

COMMON CARRIERS—AND A FEW NOT SO COMMON

Tractors are crawling over the snow-covered fields of northern Greenland carrying the supplies of the Lane Koch expedition. This novel use of a new-born vehicle recalls that some of the oldest transportation methods still are employed in regions whose civilization is older and higher than that of the Greenland Eskimo.

The ox cart still serves the Southern "darky" in North Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama, as well as in other portions of the South, as his coach and four for the Sunday "go-to-meeting." During the week the stolid beast plows tobacco and cotton fields. In India bullocks hitched to a wagon with an ornate bee-hive shaped or elongated covering, not unlike the picturesque tobacco schooner, convey the Burmese man and his family along the road to Mandalay. Nor does this animal cease being a means of transportation upon his skin and use it as a float or raft on which they cross the rivers.

In arctic regions and in Alaska particularly the dog has rendered mankind inestimable assistance. Today he is the means by which letters, parcels and provisions reach the snow-bound inhabitants of the interior. The reindeer also plays an important part

in the transportation system of Alaska.

The dog is the Belgian peasants' close friend, drawing the truck and milk wagons in many towns.

One of the quaintest wagons of the schooner type now in use is drawn by camels through the streets of certain towns in India. That country affords a variety of conveyances and conveyors among which even the most blasé of novelty seekers might find something to interest him—the humped ox, the horse, the donkey, the camel, the elephant and the human being carrying a long pole across his shoulder to which his burden is slung.

The back of man bears the burden in China. And so the chain of burden-bearers goes around the world, with the elephant of Siam that piles the native teak, the carabao that thrashes the rice of the Philippines, the man who propels the palanquin, the Jirikisha, and lately, the "Jirikomobile" of Japan, the trotting ox of Ceylon, the splendid horses of Arabia, the saddle ox of Central Africa, and the



The West China Jitney.

camel of the Sahara and Central Asia, to the llama of the high Andes, the ubiquitous automobile, and the homely but utilitarian little burro of Mexico, Central and South America. Thousands of these last named little animals daily tread the trail leading from the lowlands to the city of La Paz, delivering in the capital of Bolivia practically everything the city gets from the outside world. Patiently, too, the burro has trailed its way through history, from a period in the Holy Land older than that in which Joseph and Mary fled from Herod's slaughter of the innocents, thence to Northern Spain and across to America with the Spanish explorers and colonizers.

THE LONG, LONG TRAIL OF THE GYPSY

Now that the weather is becoming mild again, some fine day you will discover a camp of gypsies near your door-step, and wonder where in the world they came from. The world has been wondering for many a century whence the original gypsies came.

George Borrow relates that the first gypsies made their appearance in Moldavia in 1417, and no one seems to be very certain in regard to their place of origin. The original 3,000 increased to formidable proportions in a century or two, and Maria Theresa and Joseph II tried to civilize them, with no success.

In the early days each little band had a captain whom they honored with the title of count. To secure the coveted position this leader had to be valiant and courageous in the pillaging expeditions for food and sagacious and crafty enough to settle their disputes. For this he was allowed a third of anything that the band stole.

Despite their marauding tendencies, and their more or less contemptuous attitude toward people not "of the blood," they have a code of morals which contains many excellent requirements. A true gypsy must not have a quarrelsome disposition, and he never reveals the secrets of the brotherhood. Though they make the rest of mankind their lawful prey, they are capable of great sacrifices for each other. They pledge themselves never to marry out of their own sect, nor will they teach their language to anyone not a gypsy by blood or adoption.

Their daredevil spirit perhaps has had a passing influence on most of the countries in which these wanderers have lived. At least England is accredited with having contracted her love of horse racing from them, and they are nearly always to be found among her jockeys and in attendance upon her Derbys.

Pretending a knowledge of the metaphysical and dabbling in fortune telling have always been within the province of the gypsy women. They have claimed that they could witch away troublesome ailments of the heart and have compounded queer love philters which instead of imbuing the unfortunate taker with a steadiness of aim with his love arrows, have poisoned his digestive tract.

But they realize the monetary value of the myth concerning their ability to divine the future, and have since the beginning of their history capitalized it. In Spain where a large proportion of the race now lives, travelers say that they find neatly whitewashed caves lighted by electricity, and that even gypsy royalty will caper and career around in fantastic dances for the coins of a casual visitor.

HOW AN ISLAND WAS DESTROYED BY A NATURAL INFERNAL MACHINE

Recent volcanic activity in Hawaii serves to emphasize the fact that the Pacific, one of the great "safety-valve regions" of the earth, is seldom free from an outpouring of molten materials. Many of the islands of this largest ocean are of volcanic origin. Great streams of lava went up first in

one part of the Pacific then in another.

One of the greatest regions of volcanic disturbance has been in and near the island of Java, in the southwestern corner of the Pacific, where that body of water meets the Indian ocean.

Volcanic-made in the first place, and constantly being remade by them, Java has more volcanoes than any area of its size in the world. Estimates of the active and extinct craters range from 100 to 150. Everywhere in Java, in the huge crater lakes, in fissures that now are river beds, even in ancient temples, half finished when interrupted by some fiery conflagration, are evidences of cataclysmic forces—such turbulent forces as now are in continuous hysteria in the Valley of the Ten Thousand Smokes in Alaska, and break their crusted surface cage intermittently in Java.

The "treacherous Klot," as the natives call it, all but wiped out the town of Britan, but even its devastation, as reported to the state department, was mild compared to the violent upheaval of Krakatoa in 1883. Then mother nature turned anarchist and planted a gargantuan infernal machine on the doorstep of Java.

Krakatoa is a little island in the Sunda strait, between Sumatra and Java. Australians, as far from the explosion as New York is from El Paso, heard the terrific detonation; more than half the island was blotted out, parts of it were flung aloft four times as high as the world's highest mountains, and to touch bottom below the water's surface where most of the island had been, henceforth required a plumb line twice as long as the height of the Washington monument. Skyscraper waves flooded adjacent islands and rolled half-way around the earth. Every human eardrum heard, though it may not have registered, the air waves as they vibrated three or four times around the earth.

Krakatoa levied a smaller toll in human life than Klot, because of its isolation, and many of the 35,000 deaths from Krakatoa's eruption were at far-distant points by drowning.

An eruption anywhere on the island means disaster, for Java, about equal in area to New York state, supports a population greater than the combined populations of the Empire state and the four other most populous states in the Union—Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio and Texas.

In the native folklore are innumerable stories of the earth opening up to swallow a dancing girl. Such tales betoken another physical feature of the island fraught with human tragedy. Not only has it steaming vents, spouting geysers, sulphur lakes, but great chasms open and close, and they have been known to swallow villages.

TEMPLE STONES THAT MAY BECOME HEARTH STONES

Cable reports recently stated that Harborough Rocks, one of the best-known of the so-called "Druid Circles" of England, would be broken up and used by a company for building homes.

The reports bring to mind what might be termed the "fight for survival" of the monuments and works of art of past ages against the activities of later generations.

During the dark ages priceless marble statues by Praxiteles and other Greek masters of sculpture were burned to make lime. In northern Africa and Asia Minor, in numerous places where classical ruins are found, beautifully chiseled stones—physical symbols of "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome"—have been built into the uncouth huts of the natives. The smaller stones from "Druid Circles" and "avenues," lying on the surface of the ground, ready quarried, have long fallen prey to near-by peasants in all the countries in which they occur. Even the Stonehenge, on Salisbury Plain, England, famous as the greatest of the supposed Druid temples and one of the most striking of the uninscribed monuments of the world, has not entirely escaped the hand of the vandal. The larger monoliths are too massive for easy removal, but some of the smaller stones have disappeared and are reported to have been built into bridges and mill dams of the adjacent countryside.

Relatively small stone circles and parallel rows of monoliths known as "avenues," are numerous in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. They also are found in numbers in western Europe, especially in France, and to a lesser degree in northern Africa, and in southern Asia as far east as India. Among them, however, the comparatively few great groups stand out prominently. Stonehenge differs from most of the other circles in the great size of the upright stones, and in the fact that massive lintels are placed from upright to upright, forming trilithons. The placing of the concentric circles and outlying marker stones of Stonehenge in such a way that its axis points practically to the rising sun on the longest day of the year—the summer solstice—has led to general acceptance of the theory that this was a temple for sun worship.

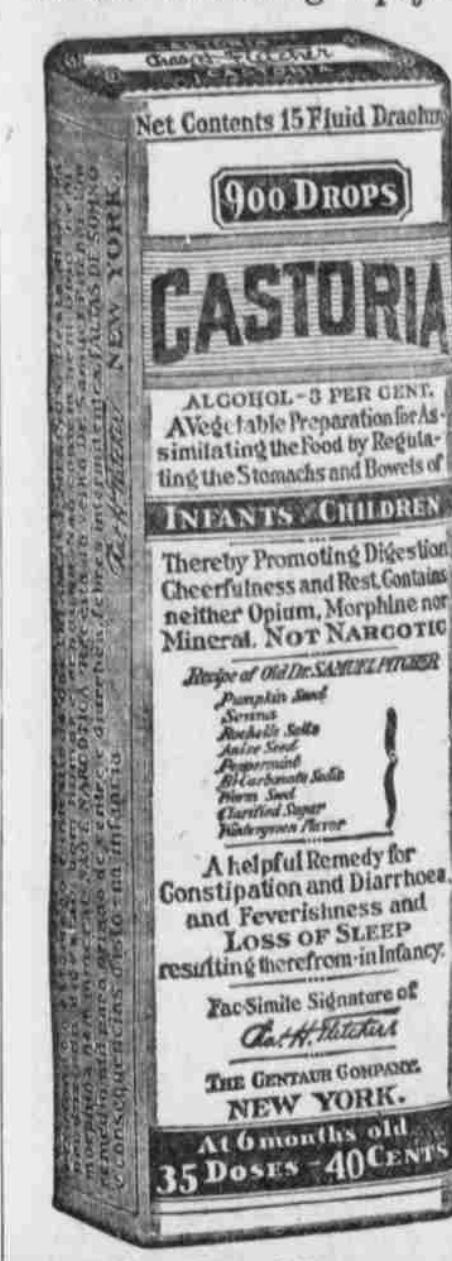
Because of an astronomical change which slowly shifts the apparent point of sunrise at successive summer solstices, it has been possible to compute the date of the building of Stonehenge as approximately 1650 B. C. It is believed that the smaller circles and the avenues and other monuments of great stones belong to approximately the same period, which is the late Neolithic age. While the larger circles like the Stonehenge and Harborough Rocks doubtless are temples for sun worship and human sacrifice, it is believed that the smaller groups of stones mark burial places.

Why Castoria?

YEARS ago Castor Oil, Paregoric, Drops and Soothing Syrups were the remedies in common use for Infants and Children; Castor Oil so nauseating as to be almost impossible and the others all containing Opium in one form or another, but so disguised as to make them pleasant to the taste, yet really to stupify the child and give the appearance of relief from pain.

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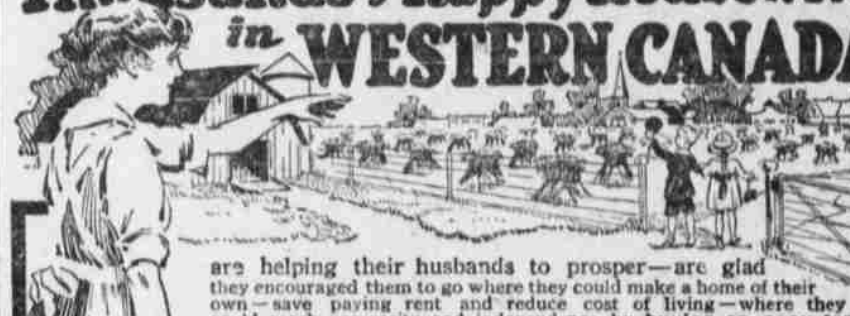
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