

NOTES ON NATAL:

AN OLD COLONIST'S BOOK

FOR
NEW SETTLERS

EDITED BY

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THE NORTHERN COASTLANDS.

COUNTY OF VICTORIA.

THE following chapters form the first of a series of papers written with the view of making known to persons interested in the Colony, both resident and non-resident, the natural industrial and social conditions of the several districts of Natal. They are the truthful record of personal observation, and personal impressions, and the leading aim of the writer has been to present as faithful a picture as possible of the present state of the country.

CHAPTER I.

RETROSPECT.—THE UMGENI.—SEA COW LAKE.—UMGENI COMPANY'S ESTATE.—UMTATA ESTATE.—LABOUR.—YIELD OF SUGAR.

Twenty years ago the industrial history of Natal may be said to have had its beginning. Before the year 1850 agriculture in this colony was confined to the growth of a little wheat by the Boers, and of a fair quantity of maize by the natives. Cotton culture, it is true, had been attempted at New Germany, but had only succeeded in proving that the soil of the country was suitable to the staple, without at the same time proving that its production would be remunerative. Cattle yet grazed, fat and sleek, upon our pasture lands as they had done for centuries past, but sheep had yet to be acclimatised, and horsebreeding as an enterprise was wholly in embryo. A few coffee

bushes were bearing berries in the garden of a private householder of Durban, and a small patch of sugar cane was being planted by Mr. Morewood, at Compensation. Several thousands of British immigrants were in course of transmigration to these shores, and it is the final results of their toil, their energies, their enterprise, and their perseverance, which I have now to describe.

At that time Victoria county—the region north of the Umgeni—was less known to the colonists at large than Queensland is now. The district had so far no name, nor any territorial identity. The “cotton lands” allotted, or set apart for “Byrne’s immigrants,” were in this direction, and under that vague and generic name we understood the locality which I am now traversing. A region of wild and trackless bushland; of unbridged rivers, and unscarped hills; of forests thronged by wild beasts, and of grasslands dotted over with kafir kraals,—such was the county of Victoria twenty years ago.

Bearing this picture of the past in our minds, let us proceed to view the realities of the present.

The traveller northward naturally turns his horse’s head as much due north as possible. Over the windy and sand-swept “flat”—a hideous synonym for the English word “plain,”—we follow the track of the locomotive as far as the Umgeni. Slight change—save in the iron road—does that “flat” show during the last ten years. One or two new cottages skirting the road side; one or two old cottages gone to ruin; a thicker sprinkling of houses on the circumjacent Berean hillslopes; fewer oxen grazing amidst the thick marsh grass of the “vley;” no improvement in the texture of the road one has laboriously to traverse—these are one’s passing observations. Beyond the river we see near the sea the green heave of the sugar fields belonging to the estate of the late Mr. Greig; and higher up the hill other homesteads, with patches of bananas, arrowroot, and capsicum. Two years ago the now disused road which turns to the eastward was a

favourite point of access to the neighbouring county,—now the ford is all but deserted, and the occupation of the ferryman is gone. The reason we find, in the level rails beside us, and in the cheap but serviceable bridge which spans the river in place of the handsome structure swept away by the flood of 1868.

Were these notes not intended to be strictly descriptive I should pause to point out how strongly the experience of this Umgeni railway testifies to the practicability, on financial grounds, of a line to Verulam. Slack though the season is in a productive sense there are signs of activity about the iron-shed miscalled a station, while the long chain of trucks laden with stone for the Harbour Works from the adjacent quarry looks progressive and business-like.

At this time of the year, when the river is low, and the sands of its bed are but lightly covered with the clearest of water, the charge of 3d. at the toll-gate opposite is apt to seem unusually annoying. And yet no money, all things considered, should be paid more cheerfully. Not on account of the money wasted through engineering carelessness on the destroyed bridge, but because this modest edifice is a standing proof that it is possible under the pressure of a great emergency, to bridge a wide and troublesome river with great rapidity and at a small cost.

Mr. Allen’s temperance hostelry, lacks the cheerful aspect it wore, ere the useless provisions of a silly law compelled its owner to strip the bottles from his shelves and to put in their place the rows of harmless ginger pop that figure there. With the irrepressible enterprise of a stirring man, however, mine host has filled his stables with mules, wherewith he now runs three times a week a ’bus to Verulam.

A pleasant bit of road is that which skirts the northern shore of the Umgeni. We have Mr. Buttery’s arrowroot grounds, and Mr. Bishop’s sugar plantation with his modest mill behind us. Up the valley where the main road meanders the black flue of Mr. Chick’s little mill shows itself. Further on M. Phillippe’s distillery is passed, and the sluggish river takes a great

turn northward, enclosing the Springfield "flat," in its sweep. Cane and maize still prevail throughout this alluvial plain—one of the earliest homes but least successful scenes of sugar-planting. This tract of ground has undergone as many vicissitudes as a Natal colonist. It has grown forage, potatoes, maize, and sugar, by turns. The old mill-house, which was at one time so famous a feature of our coastlands, the only one of its kind, except Mr. Jeffels', in the colony, looks deserted and in a rather low way, but on the hills beyond we see the coffee plantations at Tyrrell's Tor, and the Berea, notably among the latter being Mr. Hartley's estate of Everton, whose residence from this distance looks of imposing proportions, and wears an almost baronial aspect.

Between the Umgeni bridge and the Umgeni sugar-mills the river flows sleepily on one side, and on the other the hill side skirts the winding road, now breaking off into little woody vallies, and now rising up in ferny walls of rock. Soon the road reaches the plain again and you ride briskly between fields of China cane, whose thin, tall, reedy stems, seem thicker and higher than usual. There are not many flat pieces of ground upon our coastlands, and the value of those that there are is diminished considerably by their liability to frost. Still, the rarity of any large breadths of deep alluvial soil renders these exceptional localities in great request. Mr. A. B. Kennedy to whose unremitting energy and unabated persistency, the success of this estate is attributable, has placed under cane all the available flat land on this side of the river. These plantations he has intersected by broad roads, wide enough to present an effectual barrier against the advances of fire. As the road nears the mill it passes below a small village of coolie houses where coolies are still making merry. The work-bell sounds as we pass and the labourers troop forth again to their afternoon labour.

At the proprietor's house, which crowns a hill overlooking the estate and the river, the distant hills and the sea, we are hospitably received by Mr. Oliver Tootal. This gentleman acts under Mr. R. S. North,

who, during Mr. Kennedy's absence, is responsible for the efficient working of the estate. Mr. North happens to be in town to-day, but under Mr. T.'s guidance let us proceed to make a tour of inspection round this—the largest, and in some respects most interesting—estate in the colony.

But first let us explain, for the benefit of distant readers, that the Sea Cow Lake estate takes its name from the small sheet of water, called by courtesy a lake, which, reed-grown, rests in the shadow of the bushy hills around. This little mere derives its title from no figure of speech, as to this day a family of seacows have their home in its still waters. There have been occasional raids made against these creatures, but they still remain to give a flavour of savageism to the most highly cultivated district of the colony. The estate has been a gradually formed one, having absorbed neighbouring properties. Mr. A. B. Kennedy, its original creator and proprietor, had, like the rest of our pioneer-planters, uphill work for many years. In 1865, however, he went home and formed there the small company now known as the Umgeni Sugar Company, to which the property now belongs. Mr. Kennedy still retained the management, and after his return the result of enlarged capital was soon apparent in the vigorous extension of operations.

There are now on this estate 1050 acres under cane and 150 acres under coffee; 300 acres of the former are planted for the first time. The latter, however, is but a subsidiary enterprise, sugar-planting being the main stay of the undertaking. There are employed on the estate about 242 coolies and about 300 kafirs. This is a smaller gang than has been employed in times past, as many as 800 and 900 having at one time been employed, when the ground which is now covered with rustling cane, and the roads which now traverse the steep and winding declivities of the estate, were under the picks and spades of labourers. The old mill, whose opening we recorded at the time in these columns, is near the house, and has been considerably improved of late years—a vacuum pan,

among other alterations, having been added. When I say, however, that the cultivated portion of the estate is six miles long from end to end, it will be seen that this mill, being almost at one extremity, is too far for convenience or economy from the remoter fields. A new, second mill, is therefore to be erected higher up the river, and Mr. Kennedy is now superintending at home the arrangement of the machinery, which will include every improvement devised by modern science, and recent experience. The changes likely to be effected by the halving of the sugar duties are sure not to be lost sight of in the preparation thereof.

Of the 1050 acres now under cane there will probably be from four to five hundred to crush this year, and it is hoped—if frost should not interfere—that a crop of 700 tons may be obtained. The canes so far look large and well, and the prospect for the winter seems excellent. Last year, owing to the ravages of flood and frost—as severe as can well be experienced—the estate only produced about 270 tons of sugar, against 506 tons the year before. A few figures as to the cost of labour on this estate may be useful. The wages of the kafirs will average 9s. for thirty days; and the wages for coolies will average 13s. per month; but this will be reduced in a short time, as the free coolies now get only 12s. per month; and as soon as the time of the assigned coolies has expired, there will be very few above 12s. The coolies are paid once in two months; the kafirs once a month. The former are found to be very handy at the mill, to be good cane cutters, and very useful in making drains and roads; but the kafirs are found best for ordinary field work. The food of both kafirs and coolies amounts to somewhere about the same as their wages.

In looking at the large number of kafirs employed, it must be borne in mind that the greater number of them have been, and are, employed in clearing and preparing new land for future cultivation.

Let us now begin our ride round the estate. It lies picturesquely along the river, and like most Natal

surfaces is boldly undulating. Steep, however, as are some of the hills, their slopes are all cultivated, even where the angle of ascent seems so sharp as to make me wonder what kind of being found foothold strong enough to use the hoe. The whole estate is cultivated by hand. No ploughs are used. Hoeing here, as in many other localities, is found preferable. As we advance the valley closes in, the hills on the other side increase in height, and the roads get steeper and more tortuous. Our Colonial Engineer might take a lesson in roadmaking from Mr. North's performances on this estate. There are more than *eighty* miles of *made* road here. Most of these roads are escarpments cut out of the sides of the hills, and in some cases hard rock has had to be moved by blasting. At one point the road winds round a cool and shady gorge. Dark mossgrown rocks rise overhead; no sunlight ever enters here, and this sweet spot, therefore, opening to the river flowing pleasantly below, is the favoured haunt of picnics. Soon after we rise, and skirt the edge of a precipice, 300 feet high, with the river at our feet. Again we traverse a causeway, thrown over a ravine, of solid hewn stone, by which the two estates are, in point of fact, connected. The amount of skill and labour, economically yet efficiently expended in road-making, is quite astonishing, and shows clearly enough that the managers believe in the Roman principle of subduing and of holding countries.

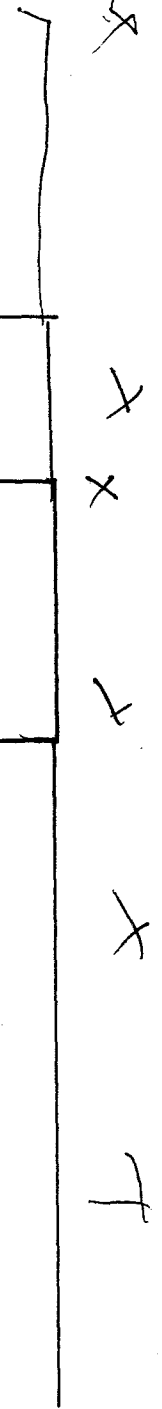
At this point the group of houses connected with what is known as the "new estate" is seen. "Plenty of superintendence," I was told, is one of the leading principles of management. There are five or six intelligent white overseers who are responsible for the taskwork of the coloured labourers. Although our presence was unexpected, all were found cheerfully and hard at work. Comfortable quarters are provided for the European employés, and in the mill an English engineer is in charge. As we proceed all traces of cultivation on the other side of the river are left behind. The scenery becomes very picturesque. On the other side a hill-flank clothed with bush, untrodden by man,

rises abruptly to a height of five or six hundred feet. Now the wooded barrier is broken by a gorge guarded by white precipices, gleaming though their russet garb of tree and shrub. Now the hills on our side rise to a yet higher altitude, and we can trace out through the bush that covers them the straight line that marks the inland boundary of the estate. A broad road cut through the bush traverses the estate to its end, where the river turns again, coming towards us over a rapidly falling bed of rocks, among which the stream foams confusedly. The evening shadows are falling over the near Inanda hills, and adding a new charm to the varied tints around. Agriculture amongst such scenery becomes almost romantic, and its toils must surely to an intelligent eye be less oppressive when spent amidst these rocks and woods, these deep valleys and shaggy hills. As we wend our way back by a less definite road the varieties of colour in the scenery grow very remarkable. Here for the first time in Natal I notice true autumnal tints. Some of the native trees in this valley wear this season warm and ruddy hues, which contrast beautifully with the darker foliage of the prevailing bush, and the brighter green of the cane-fields.

Two tons an acre have often been obtained from China cane on this estate. Inoculation is rigorously enforced, and every measure is taken to prevent contamination, by fences and regulations. Snakes are very common and mischievous: but since the last fatal accident, every overseer is armed with the necessary remedies. Altogether, a visit to the Sea Cow Lake estate well repays a visitor, and gives him a better idea of the sugar-producing capabilities of the colony. It is most satisfactory to be able to add, finally, that as much as 22 per cent. has been returned on capital expended, in one favourable year, and that even on last year's operations, when flood and frost did their worst, a dividend will, it is hoped, remain for the shareholders. Here, therefore, we have a visible example of what energy and enterprise can accomplish, when backed by adequate capital.

The road onward passes through an interesting estate known as Tor Vale, formerly the property of Mr. S. Crowder, jun., but now in the hands of the Natal Land and Colonisation Company, and under able management. It was very interesting to see growing here, in flourishing condition, side by side, China grass, coffee, and cotton. The latter was bearing, and the bolls looked numerous and well filled. Regretting my inability to make an inspection of so pleasing a property, I rode on to the well-known Umtata Estate, whose spreading canefields almost abut on those of the Umgeni Company. This estate was formed some twelve years ago by our townsman, Mr. John Millar, who disposed of it to Mr. P. Ferreira, of Maritzburg. It has from that time been under the able management of Mr. Aling Osborn. The property is now in the hands of the Natal Plantations Company, represented in this colony by Mr. Traill Christie; and as adequate capital will at last be forthcoming, Mr. Osborn will be able to give full effect to the results of his long practical experience, and great natural intelligence.

The Umtata Estate faces, so to speak, to the northward. It is famous for the depth and richness of its soil, in many places, where the constant cropping of well-yielding cane testifies to the excellence of the land. By the end of this year there will be 600 acres under cane. From the house the eye ranges over nothing but cane in the immediate foreground, and a ride along the broad roads abounding everywhere discloses many patches of remarkable fineness. The outlines of the land are much less bold than those of the Umgeni Estate, and bush is less prominent in the landscape. Mr. Osborn has obtained the altogether exceptional yield of one lb. and ten ounces of sugar from a gallon of juice; one lb. five ounces being the average. Some planters can scarcely believe this. Mr. Osborn attributes it to generous liming and high boiling. In sugar-making there is room, of course, for a wide diversity of treatment, and each planter will, necessarily, have his peculiar theories and his favourite



hobbies. Experience and observation have convinced Mr. Osborne that in these two principles rests much of what may be secret in the success of sugar-making. We remember to have heard the same remark made many years ago by several planters in Mauritius.

An estate that has been worked for eleven years must obviously begin to show signs of exhaustion. The wonder is, looking at the heaviness of the crop, that so much land should have borne successive cropping so well as is the case on many plantations. Mr. Osborn, however, does not oppress his land. He leaves large fields to fallow, under dholl, chiefly. As an instance of the richness of the soil hereabout may be named the fact that from certain patches four tons an acre have been obtained. From one field of five acres 21 tons of sugar were got one season. Trash is burnt, and not ploughed in, Mr. Osborn having found that the only apparent result of doing this, was to spoil the yield. Formerly canes were planted seven feet apart; now they are planted five feet; although on this point no absolute rule can be laid down. About 200 to 250 hands are employed at the Umtata; Mr. Osborn prefers Natal kafirs to Basutos and coolies; especially as the latter, since they became free of assignment, are much more insolent than they used to be. It is admitted everywhere that the coolies have not improved in their manners by coming here, though how the tendency is to be met one cannot see. Basutos, though strong and muscular, are lazy and less trustworthy than our natives. Their honesty is less than questionable, and their disposition to leave suddenly in a body without reason given, is prejudicial to the interests of their employers.

The mill at the Umtata is the same that was erected ten years ago by Mr. Millar. It was made by Abernethys, of Aberdeen, and still works well. The chimney has lately been added to considerably. Close by is a large enclosed reservoir or tank, where the head waters of the little Umtata stream, are collected and sheltered from impurity. This arrangement is of more importance than may appear at first sight. Not

only is an abundant supply of water secured at all times, but the health, and consequently the working power, of the labourers, are improved thereby. The boiler is also fed with pure water. On many estates the pool from which the water used is taken is rendered impure by the megass, and other refuse, allowed to rot in it. The acids thus created have a most injurious effect on the iron plates, eating them away, and making accidents probable.

Mr. Osborn has found it answer better on the whole to make a low, rather than a high class of sugar, and the reasons he gives for this preference seem very sound and conclusive; you can get more out of the cane for one thing. Apropos of this we may mention a rather amusing mistake lately made by a journalist when describing the process of sugar-making on an estate near Durban, where he said he found a dirty looking compound, looking more like guano than anything else. Now in the first place guano is a light-coloured, not a dark substance, and, therefore, the comparison fails, but the writer of the article in question failed yet more egregiously in the display of superior knowledge. The dark-looking substance, instead of being overboiled sugar as he took it to be, was really fifth sugar, the last residuum of the tanks, and it said much for the sugar planter's patience and energy that he should have succeeded in turning out a marketable article out of what many planters would reject. I remember seeing in Mauritius once, a quantity of vile-looking skimmings, not fit apparently for hog-wash, but the proprietor said he should yet convert it into a low class sugar. Let nothing be lost—that should be the maxim of a sugar planter. Let all that is extractible be got out of the cane to the last ounce. Fifth sugars must necessarily be dark and forbidding in look though none the less saleable for certain purposes. Doubtless with a reduction of duties a change in modes of manufacture will become expedient, and the sugar planter will henceforward be able to compete more successfully with the refiner.

In leaving Mr. Osborn's hospitable roof I am glad

to bear testimony to the practical energy of that gentleman, who will probably under the new regime succeed in working his estate as it deserves to be. The abundance of broad roads, some planted with trees, was an especially noticeable feature. These are not only a great safeguard against fire, but much facilitate agricultural operations

The Inanda hills close in the view to the westward of this estate, and in front stretches northward the long, cane-clad sweep of the Umhlanga valley.

CHAPTER II.

THE UMHLANGA VALLEY. — MR. ISABELLE'S. — MR. SHIRE'S. — COOLIE PLANTERS. — UMHLANGA COMPANY'S ESTATES. — TRENANCE.

THE valley of the Umhlanga is little known even to many persons who live in its immediate neighbourhood. It lies off the main road. Travellers from the Umgeni to Verulam catch only glimpses here and there of the plantations which clothe this basin. No conception of the state of agriculture there can be formed by persons who do not diverge from the beaten track. Let me confess that ten years had elapsed since I had last visited this particular corner of Victoria county, and the changed aspect of the land struck me at every turn.

The Great Umhlanga, as that modest stream is pretentiously called, has less to do with this basin than the Little Umhlanga, which is a tributary of the Umgeni, and the feeder of Sea Cow Lake. This stream, so insignificant in dry weather, so fast and turbulent after a storm, drains a large extent of country for its size, and its waters are getting more and more polluted by the refuse of the plantations along its banks. The traveller must be prepared to cross its bed frequently, as it winds about most crookedly and crosses your path constantly.

As we ride eastward again through the Umtata

cane-fields several startled duikers bound along the road. These animals find comfortable cover in the plantations, but are less destructive than the monkies, which at one estate I visited show a fondness for cane and a capacity to steal it, which suggest the idea that development is still going on in that species, and that the ranks of our race may yet be reinforced by further accessions of ape-life. Mr. Osborn's fields at one point touch those belonging to the estate of the late M. Isabelle, whose property we are now traversing. The last time I was here there was no cane save Mr. Shire's visible in this locality, and where now are ranged the coolie houses stood the house occupied by the Rev. A. W. L. Rivett. Now Mrs. Isabelle's residence embedded in trees, crowns the top of a rise near the mill, which is planted below in a wide free space with plenty of breathing room around it. M. Collard, the highly intelligent manager, has been only two years in the colony, but he brought with him from Mauritius a lifetime of experience in the art of sugar making. There are about 400 acres under cane on this estate—the whole of its area in fact—and the manager's chief complaint is that he has not new fields to cultivate. The men he employs are mostly coolies, with whose management he is necessarily most familiar, but he detects many important differences in the mode of treatment adopted respectively at the Mauritius and here.

The millhouse is one of the very few in Natal where one can see the whole operation of cane-crushing and sugar-making carried on under one roof. M. Collard has pulled down all partitions, and standing in front of the engine—a beautiful machine by the way—the eye takes in at a glance, battery, coolers, wetzels, centrifugals, and drying house. In Mauritius this plan is preferred on most of the best estates. The mill could probably do more work than the present requirements of the estate necessitate, and is fully equal to turning out three tons a day. M. Collard goes in for producing a high class sugar by means of the wetzel pan, and does not despair of turning out by

Dr. Icery's process an article equal to that now made in Mauritius. He showed us some samples from that island of extraordinary purity and brilliancy of grain. Not far from the mill is the distillery, where an excellent spirit is made. Many people consider a still to be the necessary complement of sugar making, and we believe there is no doubt as to its being a remunerative form of enterprise.

Close to this estate is Mr. T. Duff's store and plantation. This is one of the earliest settlements in this locality. Mr. D.'s father will be remembered with great respect by many of my readers. His son now has a snug little plantation of 25 acres, which he crushes at Mrs. Isabelle's mill. Mr. Mullins, another neighbour, has also 25 acres, which he also crushes at Mrs. Isabelle's or Mr. Shire's mills. These instances of independent cultivation are valuable, as serving to show that sugar cane can be grown to pay by small growers, crushing at other men's mills. A yet more interesting fact is written upon the face of a bushy hill over the river, where several patches of cane and coffee are now being cultivated by coolie lessees, who are themselves at work on the neighbouring estates.

A few minutes' ride over a bit of open ground—the only non-cultivated batch I shall traverse between the Umgeni and Kahts's Kop—brings us to a veteran establishment. The steep pitch of its roof is familiar of old. Heavy-laden orange and other fruit trees bury the house in a leafy environment. This is the late Mr. Shire's estate, now being managed by the energetic son of that pioneer colonist. The house stands in the centre of the plantation. All round spread the cane-fields. This estate has not passed scatheless through its many years of existence. In the valley below both frost and fire have devastated the fields, and caused terrible loss to the owner. These serious calamities, however, have not interfered with the progress of the enterprise, or the perseverance of the proprietor. The frost-bitten land is still in many parts covered with cane, though new land is being planted on all sides. Already there are 470 acres under cane. Before the

year is out another 150 acres, much of which is already turned up, will be planted.

The reason Mr. Shire is re-planting the flat despite its liability to frost is because he prefers the less positive risk to the more certain peril of drought which is felt less in the hollows, where the ground is moist, than on the drier hill sides. Drainage does something to diminish the probability of frost, but no means of irrigation exist to benefit the hills. This valley is comparatively free from bush, as compared with many other localities, and drought is severely experienced at times. Mr. Shire is doing his best to supplement nature by planting trees everywhere about the estates. Already the dark lines of trees skirting the cane-fields show pleasantly in contrast. I forgot how many thousand trees, principally the *bois noir*, Mr. Shire said had been planted out. There is reason to believe that these trees will be of value as a means of attracting rain, and of nourishing moisture in the soil. They are also a safeguard against fire, and a source of fuel for future years. This question of tree-planting is one well deserving the attention of all planters.

The mill on this estate was erected under the superintendence of Mr. Albert Robinson, to whom the colony owes the steam tug and the Point railway. It was the scene of an unfortunate explosion the other day, caused by a defect in the planning of the furnace. As much as $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons of sugar have been made per day at it. A new battery, formed of the old fashioned circular pans, is being erected in place of a square arrangement originally provided. The square pans are found to diffuse the heat much less equably than the round ones. Mr. Shire employs about 200 kafirs, and has no difficulty about labour. He prefers Natal kafirs as workmen, but thinks a mixture is preferable. All the food required for these people, or most of it, is grown on the estate. This year 1200 muids of sweet potatoes and 450 muids of maize have been grown for the use of the labourers. The experience of this estate goes to show that one ton per acre is a fair average production, and if a crop of 200 to 250

tons is obtained this year, the proprietors will be satisfied.

Lungsickness has proved very mischievous in this neighbourhood, and severe losses have been recently experienced from this cause. Mr. Shire inclines to the belief that inoculation only serves to propagate the disease, and that a strong combination and severe measures might succeed in stamping out the scourge, as it has been stamped out in European countries.

Not far from Mr. Shire's may be seen a compact little estate belonging to Mr. Watson, who has 50 acres under cane, and is erecting an ox-power mill. This is another instance of what industry can effect without much aid from capital. The more one sees and hears of agriculture in this colony the more convincing becomes the evidence that capital, though essential to large operations, is not the primary requirement in enterprises of a less extensive character. Perseverance and practical aptitude will go far where a man is content with small beginnings and with gradual improvement, to make up for the want of money.

This estate enjoys a greater extent of spare land for pasturage than most of its neighbours. Little could its venerable proprietor foresee, when he acquired the farm 20 years ago, that by the time his son attained to years of manhood it would form so enviable a property. Some of the new land that is being broken up lies as far from the sea probably as any sugar plantation on the coast, except, perhaps, Mr. Forbes'. Behind the hills that close in the prospect westward and at their feet, spreads the Inanda location—a vast depression, walled in by precipices hundreds of feet high, and water-worn into innumerable hills and gullies, the bed of the Umgeni being its central vein. But I shall have more to say of these singular localities hereafter. From certain points the iron roof of the Inanda Mission Station may be seen. Here the Rev. D. Lindley, father of the American Mission, has lived and laboured among the natives around for nearly thirty years past. His station presents a thriving aspect. The houses of the natives are comfortable and substantial; the church

is a commodious edifice; the large building used as a seminary for the higher instruction of native students, is a large gabled structure. It would not be right to pass by a settlement which was in existence before a sod was turned in the county.

Near Mr. Shire's house, on a commanding rise, is a little church, and near it a graveyard, where several handsome monuments testify to the regard with which the residents cherish their dead. From this point we look round and see nothing but sugar cane. There in the distance, are the fields near Mr. Smerdon's mill which we shall have to visit on our return, together with the yet further plantations of the "Saccharine" Estate. In both cases the canes look splendid. We now ride continuously along roads skirted by cane plantations. The "Phoenix" is the first estate and not far from it are those belonging to the Umhlanga Valley Company. The first is the one formed by to our late fellow-colonist, Mr. Wilson. The plantations here are fenced in, and the appearance of the country is so completely saccharine, that one is forcibly reminded of the Mauritius. Down below on the left near the Umhlanga, are Mr. Binns' house and mill "Sunderland." That gentleman was absent from the colony when we passed, but the estate was being ably managed, in his absence, by Mr. Johnson. Large breadths of freshly-ploughed land are noticeable. This mill is especially interesting, as having the only concreter, so far, at work in the colony; but I reserve further comment upon these properties in order to do more justice to the enterprise and achievements of the energetic co-proprietor and manager.

Trenance all but joins Sunderland. From a hill between, one gets the best view obtainable of the Umhlanga Valley, and of the plantations that cover it. In no other part of the colony has man so completely transformed nature, and to so wide an extent turned the wilderness into wealth-bearing land. In this valley alone, taking the main road as boundary, there must be not less than 4000 acres under cane, excluding the Umgeni Sugar Company's acreage.

The estate we are now traversing may fairly be considered one of our older plantations. From the first it has continued under the same management—that of Mr. Richard Acutt and his two energetic sons. There are 400 acres under cane, and if present appearances are realised, there may be a crop of 300 tons. But with regard to the estimates of yield, it is impossible to speak with any degree of certainty. Such calculations are liable to modification by so many causes that they are comparatively untrustworthy. Although some of the soil about here appears inferior to the rich chocolate loam met with in some other places, it nevertheless bears well—as much as two tons an acre having been often obtained,—and the remark is often made that old theories about the fitness of particular soils and localities for particular kinds of cultivation, have been quite upset by later experience.

The mill at Trenance occupies a roomy fabric, and was in first-rate order, paint and cleansing having done their work everywhere. A disc pan is in operation as well as wetzels, and is found to work well. The engine is a perpendicular one of considerable power, and gives great satisfaction. Mixed labour is employed, and though no difficulty has yet been experienced, the possibility of pressure is apprehended. Syringa trees are plentifully planted along the roads, and already show out well. I was glad to find an estate that has weathered some vicissitudes, giving such excellent promise, and reflecting so much credit upon the family management. Mr. Acutt is fortunate in having the co-operation of his two eldest sons, Messrs. Leonard and Courtenay Acutt, who are notable proofs that Natal can produce good sugarplanters as well as good sugar.

We shall have to return to this district again. Meanwhile let us ride on to Verulam, ere darkness closes in. The view of this basin is charming in the evening lights, which rest upon the bushy brows of the hills around Ottawa, while the valley below in its brighter garb is wrapt in shade. On our way we pass Mr. Jee's plantation and mill, which stands higher

in the world than mills usually do. Mr. Jee was one of the earliest planters who proved that cane will ripen as well on the hill tops as in the hollows, and all his cane, or the best part of it, grows at some elevation. It is pleasant to find another pioneer, and so worthy a one, still in possession. Long may he continue so.

CHAPTER III.

VERULAM.—UMHLOTI VALLEY.—MISSION STATION.—THE GRANGE.—REDCLIFFE.—FENTON VACY.—OAKFORD.—MESSRS. REMNANT AND POLKINGHORNE.—TONGAAT.

KAHTS'S Kop—worthily named after one of our Natalian fathers—is one of the most conspicuous features of our coastlands. Not that this hill can boast any pre-eminence in point of height, as the altitude of its conical crest is exceedingly modest. It stands by itself, however, and is a notable landmark in the prospect. A semaphore placed on its summit could communicate by signal with Reit Valley on the one hand, and the Bluff on the other, while Cowie's hill and the high lands above Pinetown may be seen in another direction.

A fair expanse of view is that which meets the eye from this point at sunrise on any fine morning. Immediately below stretch the cane-fields of Mr. Barr's plantation, covering the ground as far as the river, near which the dark chimney may be seen emerging from the mist which veils the course of the Umhloti. In the foreground, on the left, is the rounded hill at the entrance of the village, laid out most tastefully as a cemetery, with winding walks, and rows of young trees, the sweetest resting place of the departed in the colony. Just beyond are the houses of the village, above which rise the pointed gables of the Wesleyan Church, whose architectural merits are sadly marred by the substitution of a meaningless fleur de lis for the appropriate cross, upon the four corners of its lofty roof. The broad sluggish river winds below, towards the sea, a dazzling glimpse of which is seen where the hills recede at its

Mr. Turner also believes that hill rice will prove a valuable resource upon the coast, and in time become a large food staple.

Descending once more into the valley we are not long in passing the cotton fields and homestead of Messrs. Saner and Stephenson. These gentlemen were absent at the time and I am unable, therefore, to do adequate justice to their achievements as successful cotton growers. It is well known, however, that their experience bears highly favourable testimony to the remunerative character of the enterprise. At this point the valley of the Umhlanga spreads into a small undulating plain surrounded by hills more or less cultivated.

Mr. A. Wilkinson's wellknown estate, Ottawa, almost adjoins its neighbour, and its cane fields cover a large portion of the valley at this point. Nothing could be finer than some of the cane we passed. There are about 200 to 250 acres under cultivation and to crush this year. The mill, situated near the river, was in course of re-construction at the time, the enterprising proprietor having brought back with him from England a vacuum pan which will be the fourth erected in Natal. Close by is the distillery celebrated throughout the colony for the fine quality of rum it has now for many years produced. Mr. Wilkinson is one of our pioneer distillers, and has machinery capable of a large output of spirits. Both coolies and kafirs are employed upon this estate which is probably one of the most systematically managed and successful in the country.

Here we re-enter the main road once more, and shall henceforward follow the route most familiar to travellers in Victoria country. To the right as we turn our faces towards Durban spread the wide plantations of Trenance and Sunderland. A small coolie village has lately been formed here. The little wigwam-like dens of these people, with their accompanying patches of garden ground, skirt the road and form a new social feature. A few fowls and a cat seem to be part of the family circle in all.

CHAPTER IX.

SACCHARINE HILL ESTATE.—CAPTAIN SMERDON'S.—MR. LISTER'S.—SPRINGVALE.—MR. EDMESTONE'S.—MR. HARRISON'S.—MR. LOGAN'S.—AVOCA.—MR. JACKSON'S.—EFFINGHAM.—DR. EDIE'S.—MR. CHICK'S.

PART of the Saccharine Hill Estate may be seen from Ottawa,—cane-fields, covering the top of a hill where, twelve years ago, no one would have thought for a moment of growing cane successfully. In point of fact few localities can boast richer soil, or show finer cane, than may be found here. Mr. Stephen Gee was the founder of this estate about fourteen years ago, and it is distinguished as being the first plantation at which the possibility of growing cane on the tops or upper slopes of hills was demonstrated. From the high density of the juice the estate derived its name. It is now chiefly in the hands of Mr. A. W. Evans, and for a year past has been ably managed by Mr. W. H. Peddie, one of our most experienced planters. Under that gentleman's superintendence the area of the fields has widely extended so that not only has the little valley of deep rich red soil, skirting the road, been ploughed and fenced, but the land up the hill on the other side has also been clothed with what are now luxuriant plantations. There are 380 acres altogether under cultivation here, and of these 180 are to crush; 120 acres are to be planted this year, and 80 acres are left to fallow. A new mill is being erected where crushing will begin about six weeks hence. Mr. Peddie is a believer in high cultivation; ploughs, re-ploughs, and sub-soils his fields; and sees the results of such treatment in the quick and strong growth of plant cane. Some of the fields on this estate have been fourteen years under cultivation, and begin to want the rest they are now getting. Under the new management the land is first ploughed as deeply as one of Gavin's largest iron ploughs can go, is again followed in the same furrows by a plough of similar size, is then harrowed, and

afterwards planted with rape which in due time is ploughed in. During the past year the estate has been enclosed by a ditch and sod wall, and new dwelling houses erected for manager and workmen. A new mill house and engine are also being put up, one of Howard's new steam boilers for the saving of fuel being employed. There is also a still at work, and experience shows that this is a very useful accessory. A large piece of land adjoining the estate has lately been acquired, and will be brought under cultivation next season. 90 and 100 coolies and Amatonga kafirs do the work of the plantation; and when we look at the length of solid fencing that has been done, and at the state of cultivation throughout the estate, to say nothing of other improvements, one cannot but feel that this estate is likely, under such able management, to prove worthy of its name.

Passing the humble little Saccharine Hotel, we can canter easily over "Smerdon's Flat," a level stretch of land sinking westward for a mile or two and fringed towards the east with bush. A fine free view of the country inland is obtained from this point, and many a time have I seen the tall cliffs of the Inanda mountains standing sharply against the morning sky, or bathed in the blue haze of evening. Towards the end of this little plain, spreads Captain Smerdon's sugar plantation—one of the earliest in Victoria County, and still, I am glad to say, under the management of its pioneer proprietor. Some seventeen years ago, when the house was being erected, a grand elephant hunt took place here. A herd of these huge animals emerged from the bush behind and came close to the house, to the great excitement and discomposure of all then present. Now the advances of cultivation leave little chance of such wild encounters. The soil on this estate produces in many parts magnificent cane, and this year there are some splendid specimens of luxuriant growth. About 400 acres are under cane, and of these about 170 will be to crush this year. If appearances are realised,—and both here and at the Saccharine frost seldom does mischief,—a crop of 300 tons may be expected. The average yield per acre has been $1\frac{1}{2}$ tons. Here as else-

where certain patches will yield much more than others, but the general result is as stated. This estate is very economically managed as regards labour, eighty hands being employed in all, half being coolies and half kafirs. This fine estate is a mixture of bushland, rich open soil, and pasturage.

For about two miles after passing Smerdon's Flat the road winds up and down through a wooded country, without any evidences of life or cultivation, except the former be represented, as it often is in the early morning, by a large tribe of monkeys who have their home here. After a sharp turn we come face to face with Mr. Lister's well-known estate—Red Hill. This is one of the very earliest coffee plantations in this county, and has long been scanned by the admiring eyes of all passers by. From the long residence on the brow of the hill lines of orange trees sphered with golden fruit radiate downward, while on a higher hill behind the same dark lines are seen continued, with coffee planted between. Though slow-growing, oranges form a permanent and effectual breakwind. Whether they do not take too much out of the soil is another matter. In earlier years the proprietor made £300 a year from fruit alone here. Latterly the 70 acres which form the coffee plantation have naturally enough showed signs of exhaustion. As kafir mealie gardens existed here before the first white resident pitched his tent on the spot, this circumstance is not surprising. Thirty years' cropping of different kinds, corn, fruit, and coffee, is enough to impoverish any soil, and Mr. Lister is a firm believer, as are all experienced planters, in the necessity of manure. Perhaps the heaviest crops of coffee per acre, ever picked in Natal came off this plantation in former years. More than half a ton has been averaged off a portion of the ground. During Mr. Lister's absence in Europe the plantation passed into other and inexperienced hands, and on his return he found it less productive than it had been. I have no doubt now that the experience of the original proprietor is being brought to bear actively in the resuscitation of the soil, and in improved cultivation, that this beautiful estate will realise once more its early

reputation. In a valley behind the house Mr. Lister has convenient arrangements for hulling and preparing the coffee.

Immediately adjoining Red Hill, is Springvale, formerly the property of Mr. W. H. Acutt, but now in the possession of Mr. Gooch. It was laid out by Mr. Brown, of Reit Vallei, and does infinite credit to his power of arrangement. He has found a worthy successor in the present resident manager, Mr. Anderson, who kindly took us over the estate, which may be cited as being perhaps at this moment the prettiest and most compact plantation in the county. Nothing can exceed the luxuriant growth of the bushes, nor did my inexperienced eye perceive many of those blanks which are the vexation of the planter. All the available lands, 150 acres, are under cultivation, and 100 are in bearing condition. The trees are planted with great regularity, and as the shape of the estate is long and somewhat narrow, you see the plantation to great advantage as it sweeps over the hill. Thirteen tons had already been picked, but many of the trees were still loaded with cherry, and if the crop should realise appearances there will be 25 tons to pick altogether. Mr. Anderson comes across the borer occasionally in different trees and cuts them down. He prefers the north-westerly aspect to others. Although so late in the year (July 29) when I was there, the trees were loaded still with cherry and were full of wood. This late ripening seems a peculiarity of the present season, and is due probably to the protracted rains. Evidences of winter could be seen in the withering effect of cold southerly winds,—the greatest enemy coffee has to fear in Natal. Coming as they do at the coldest season of the year, and at a time when the tree is exhausted by its growth of leaf, wood and berry, these gales leave their traces in brown and shrivelled leaves.

The buildings and machinery here are on a scale of much completeness. Each barbecue is separate and has a little storehouse of its own. The huller is of wood and iron and cleans effectually a ton a day. A supply of water for the pulping is obtained by a pump. Singular care is observed in the preparation of coffee for the

market. In the storehouse several women were at work sorting the beans, after they had gone through the sizer. Not only are they sized, but all irregularities are picked out by hand afterwards. This process is called "garbling," and adds £3 per ton to the cost of production. The beans are then packed in boxes holding 200 lbs. each. These packages cost 6s. 6d. This mode of packing adds about £2 extra to the cost per ton, as compared with bags. It is supposed, however, that the improved condition in which the coffee reaches the market after all these processes compensates for the enhanced cost by better prices. Last year £72 per ton was realised for the crop.

45 coolies, 11 women, and four or eight boys, with eight kafirs, form the labour supply. The former have been entirely fed with hill rice grown on the estate, planted between the rows of young coffee plants. This experiment has been most successful. From thirteen stalks, the product of thirteen grains, Mr. Anderson picked 1 lb. of rice. About one ton and a quarter per acre was the yield, and the entire crop gathered was $8\frac{3}{4}$ tons. Coffee trees more than three years old could not bear, however, this additional strain upon the soil, as they need all its strength for bearing purposes. There is no difficulty in growing this valuable crop, and the coolies prefer the rice thus gathered to that imported. If our farmers in the midlands can but produce this crop, a valuable resource will be placed within their reach.

At the highest point of this estate a charming lawn has been levelled and prepared for the residence, which I hope the proprietor will one day erect. This estate has been fortunate in having lately been under the general superintendence, as Mr. Gooch's agent, of Mr. F. W. B. Louch, who brings to bear both agricultural and commercial experience.

Almost within a stone's throw of Springvale, and just opposite Mr. Lovatt's homely but very welcome half-way hostelry we reach an estate which is being formed under the auspices of Mr. J. D. Ballance, and under the energetic management of his relative, Mr. Edmestone. This plantation is only two years old

as yet, and the 50 acres of coffee are scarcely in bearing condition. A more immediate return will be obtained from 50 acres planted with cotton. A few hundred yards further on, at the other side of the steep valley, spreads the flourishing coffee plantation of Mr. Harrison, the greater portion of which lies unseen from the main road on the slopes behind the last coast ridge.

This estate is interesting, as the work of a settler who came fresh from England without any previous agricultural training, or any specific knowledge of tropical conditions. Seven years ago Mr. Harrison pitched his tent here, prepared, with his family, to battle manfully with all the difficulties and privations that are incidental to the colonist's career. He can point with just pride to the results of his labours. Around and behind his house stretch 120 acres of coffee, more or less in bearing condition; 20 more are to be planted, and then new operations will cease. Next year the plantation will be in full bearing order. 13 tons have been gathered already, and about three more are expected. 50 coolies and kafirs suffice to keep this estate in order; 30 alone being employed at this time in pruning, in the efficacy of which Mr. Harrison is a great believer. Some want of labour is already experienced here, and the difficulty on this point, since the coolies' engagements ran out, is sensibly increasing. "Free coolies," or those who are not hired for lengthened terms, are much less manageable and trustworthy than the assigned ones.

Walking through the fields, although the season was late, I was impressed by the apparent vigour and healthiness of the trees. Mr. Harrison is much puzzled however, by a remarkable blight which here and there seems to fall on particular patches, causing the trees to wither away and die, although when cut down they grow again. There are no signs of any borer or other insect plague at work. "Is it lightning, or what is it?" the proprietor asks. Can any one assign a cause for this arbitrary effect of unknown agencies? Mr. Harrison considers that at first too much of the

original bush was burnt. Now the large logs are left to rot in the ground, and stumping has gone out of vogue. The cost of clearing his first fields was £5 an acre. Now he considers he could clear ground for coffee at £2 10s. an acre. He prefers orange trees for break winds, as, though they grow slowly, they last well, and present a substantial barrier; and, like others, he finds the north-westerly aspect best. His soil is red, and strong as the vigour of his trees testifies. He considers that from 150 to 200 acres of coffee is as much as any one man can successfully keep in order.

The buildings are commodious and substantial. Formerly the parchment coffee was dried in zinc-bottomed trays, of which 100 remain as evidence of that obsolete system. As they cost about ten shillings each, they are in reality more costly, and infinitely more troublesome than the tarred barbecues which now take their place. In the store the piles of coffee ready for market did one's eyes good. Mr. Harrison sold his coffee early in the season for £50 a ton. He has a good crop of mealies. The pulper is an imported one by Gordon. It performs a double operation, cutting the cherry before it passes to the grater, which by being pegged inside possesses unusual strength. The large low tanks behind will hold 9000 lbs. of cherry. Mr. Harrison uses stone hullers. Buying in town a pair of French millstones, which were difficult of sale, he re-sold one for the price of the pair, and split the other in two, making a pair of crushers out of it. As wood and iron hullers are usually employed it is worth noting that these stones do their work particularly well, and remove both parchment and silver-skin more effectually than the old-fashioned wooden wheels.

From a hill behind the house the eye ranges over a wide stretch of cultivated land stretching as far as the old bush road to Verulam. To the right we see the Messrs. Logan's plantation of 100 acres, all under cultivation; 25 to 30 being in bearing. From their house a magnificent view of the sea, the Bluff, the anchorage, and of the Inanda mountain, is obtained.

In the early morning when the dew yet hangs on the leaves, and the bush which closes overhead, is filled with the notes of birds, a ride along this rarely traversed road is a true enjoyment.

During the last flood a landslip occurred on Mr. Harrison's plantation, carrying bodily down to the main road about an acre of coffee. The gash made in the soil gives one a good idea of its depth. On the point of yield Mr. Harrison believes that 30 tons from 100 acres is a fair average yield so far as Natal is concerned. Coffee, he says, is the thing for any man who wants to make a home, and to follow a pleasant pursuit without any expectation of clearing a fortune. It requires patience, and a regular annual expenditure of capital, until bearing fairly sets in. He has most successfully cultivated hill rice, and found it made capital forage. As a resource for farmers in the midlands he considers it of great importance, saying with much justice that coffee planters have enough to do with their own avocation, and can well enough afford to leave the growth of food-stuffs to their fellow-colonists up-country.

The estate of Avoca, so well known to all travellers in Victoria, almost adjoins the estate. It has passed through so many vicissitudes and managements that data derived from its experiences would be apt to mislead. Mr. A. Cooley is now the active and enthusiastic manager. There is a large acreage under coffee, but the yield for reasons which it is needless to explain, and which have nothing to do with the soil and locality, both being unexceptionable, has not yet been satisfactory. There is reason both to hope and believe that the history of this beautiful estate will be brighter in the future than the past.

We now cross the road, above which rises Mrs. Simons' house of call, gaze with interest on a modest religious edifice, where service is held weekly on the most catholic principle of unsectarianism, and wind up and along the hill for about a mile until we reach Effingham, the coffee plantation of Messrs. Wheeler and Haddon, and the residence for some years of the

latter gentleman. We have here almost emerged from the more bushy coast belt and overlook the Umhlanga Valley. There are 80 acres planted with coffee, from which a crop of 5 tons has been picked this year. Although the trees in many parts, owing to their having been planted in grass land, do not look so well as those in the more sheltered hollows, where a growth of bush had previously enriched the soil, Mr. Melliss, the intelligent manager, has every confidence that time only is wanted to develop the bearing capacities of these fields. It is not, he says, mere wood and early blossom, which indicate the permanent qualities of a plantation. Slow growth is usually the precursor of lasting vigour. We have seen how even rich bushland gets exhausted in a few years and trees cease to bear. If these more open lands are liberally treated with time and manure, it is believed by many experienced persons that they will prove in the long run satisfactorily productive.

Mr. Melliss has planted coffee in Ceylon, and can therefore compare notes with that island. After four years' experience here he has formed a very favourable opinion of the capabilities of Natal as a coffee-producing country. Shelter from the cold winds of winter he regards as the chief requirement. The borer gives him no trouble. When he finds it in a tree he thrusts a pointed but flexible piece of wire up the passage made by the insect, until the intruder is pierced and destroyed. By this ingenious method he stops the mischief and saves the tree. He has also made very cheaply an original description of huller, formed of stone concrete, cast in a mould by himself. These crushers are three feet and a half in diameter, and do their work well. The pulper is down by the river side below, where the Little Umhlanga flows deeply and sluggishly between banks of reeds. This machine is one of a novel kind, having instead of a grater a serrated disc which peels off the pulp with much rapidity and efficacy at the rate of 10 to 12 cwt. an hour. Mr. Melliss's ingenuity is here shown in an arrangement by which "light" cherry, or cherry

which has no bean inside it, is floated away from the disc. 23 hands, of both races, are employed here. Broad roads are also laid out, so as to render communication with all parts of the estate easy and regular. It seems to me that true wisdom is shown in this, as the roads if planted on either side afford breakwinds which must so far exhaust the soil as to render the loss of a row or two of coffee a matter of slight importance.

As we look westward from Effingham towards a southern edition of "Mount Pisgah," the eye rests on Dr. Edie's plantation, beautifully situated on the heights overlooking Sea-cow Lake. There are here about 30 acres under coffee. The lake receives the waters of the Little Umhlanga, and communicates by a reedy swamp with the Umgeni. It lies calmly amongst its hills, and one cannot but hope that the day when its aboriginal inhabitants—its family of hippopotami—shall cease to give a living interpretation of its name—may be far distant.

By pursuing a winding lushpath we are not long in arriving at Mr. Coleman's plantation, a promising estate of new creation. Our next stage, however, is Mr. Jackson's, lying on the right hand side of the road as we go towards Verulam. There is a splendid sweep of coffee land visible here; the rows running at right angles, unbroken by a road, in dark luxuriance. 120 acres of bushes in an advanced condition bear witness to the proprietor's energy and to the excellence of the bushland which has been reclaimed. Mr. Jackson has picked a crop of about 25 tons this year, and his store is crammed with coffee in various stages of readiness for the market. He uses one of Gavin's pulpers, and finds it work well. The huller is an imported one, turned by hand power, and differing remarkably from the ordinary system. A horizontal stone below revolves against an upper sphere of India rubber,—the whole arrangement not taking up much more space than a common maize mill. It does its work well and costs about £30. Near the store a large pile of rotting manure gave us evidence of Mr.

Jackson's conviction that the free use of manure must be a leading article in the coffee planter's creed. He allows the drainage from the pulper to run into this heap, and the result, though somewhat inodorous, is full of rich promise for the trees.

I had here an opportunity of inspecting Mr. Jackson's little tea plantation—a small patch it may be—but very encouraging as a proof that this shrub grows easily and luxuriantly on our soil. The leaves are regularly prepared and used with satisfaction by the consumers. It is interesting to find tea growing in the midst of coffee, and a sugar plantation within eye-shot; while cows grazing below show that the only other requisite element is not wanting. Mr. Jackson is about erecting a new residence on a height behind, overlooking the ocean, and therefore called Sea View. He is the lord of the manor hereabout, and owns a large tract of valuable land. The labour question he considers a pressing one, being himself chiefly an employer of coolies.

Just before we left I saw swaying about high above the coffee trees on the opposite hill-side a number of tall appearances, resembling the bare stems of trees, coming towards us. These proved to be ostriches, of which noble bird Mr. Jackson has a family of ten. They are quite tame, and came direct to their night's roost with wonderful rapidity. Easily fed and managed, they seem to thrive in our climate and are not useless as the consumers of weeds. Here was a bit of Savage Africa imported into our last picture of Victoria county.

And so we wind down this little valley again along the familiar road, until Mr. Chick's new mill-house, dispels a pleasant recollection of more primitive times. Beyond, above the steep flank of the escarpment, are seen Mr. Buttery's coffee fields, where pines are still allowed to grow unchecked between the rows. Rumour says that the proprietor has got a famous return from these same pine plants in past years, and therefore one need not wonder at the somewhat depressed aspect of the coffee trees.

Immediately above the bridge rises a steep hill, on

the top of which Mr. Buttery resides. Here we have around us the results of labour expended through many years by a hard-working and indomitable colonist. Mr. B. has often been a victim by flood, fields of arrowroot planted by him near the riverside having been destroyed at different times by floods. Now, however, most of his operations are conducted on the hill side, where he grows pines, coffee, arrowroot, and bananas. He has, I believe, at times made a respectable income from the first alone, the nearness of the railway to the Point, affording special facilities for shipment. But it is as an arrowroot grower that Mr. B. has been most successful, and his well-earned prosperity is only another proof of what can be effected on the coastlands of this colony by persevering industry. I also owe apologies for not having noticed at the right place the flourishing estate of Mr. Godden, near Mount Moreland. Here we have arrowroot cultivated on a scale of unusual magnitude. This worthy colonist possesses a farm of 1200 acres, not far from Mr. Blamey's sugar plantation. Last year he turned out a crop of from 20 to 30 tons of arrowroot, manufactured by means of extensive steam machinery. I understand that as high a yield of this commodity as a ton per acre has been obtained. It is satisfactory to find that this staple still supplies a source of income to so many old colonists. Fourteen or fifteen years ago it was grown on all sides, to such an extent that the prices obtainable at home ceased to remunerate. Since then, however, prices have improved; the farina is put to more numerous uses, and our planters have brought to bear in its preparation better appliances, and greater knowledge.

Immediately the Umgeni bridge is crossed, a road not long formed turns off along the foot of the hills towards the sea. A few houses, most picturesquely situated, crown these heights, and from the windows a magnificent expanse of sea and land is seen. If we keep to the road it brings us at last to Prospect Hall, a sugar estate established many years ago by a pushing colonist—now, alas! dead—Mr. A. Gleig. It is now being worked for the proprietors by Mr. T. W. Lamport, formerly manager at Merebank and Reunion. No

plantation lies so near to the sea as this. It sweeps up from the water's edge, almost to the crest of the littoral ridge in continuation of the Berea range, which skirts the shore northward. From the outer anchorage this fair expanse of cane is a very prominent object. The extraordinary yield obtained from cane grown here proves beyond a doubt that these bushy hills, with their light sandy loam, are well suited to sugar, and already movements are in progress whereby at least one large sugar mill will be established at a point some miles further on. As there are thousands of idle acres, covered with nothing but bush, and tenanted only by bucks and monkeys, stretching to the northward, the scope thus opened out for the extension of sugar cultivation, within easy reach of Durban, is obviously considerable.

Mr. Lamport works this estate with great system. Last season the area of cane crushed was 68½ acres, from which a crop of 81 tons was obtained. This season, up to the middle of February, 27 acres crushed have yielded 114 tons, a most exceptional average of more than three tons per acre. Such a yield from so large an extent of land, has probably never elsewhere been equalled, nor could it have been looked for from other than virgin soil. There are still 21 acres to crush, but it is calculated they will be worth 70 tons. Next season 78 acres of ratoon, and 58 acres of plant cane, in all 133 acres, are to crush. The crop is estimated at 350 tons, but this, of course, is subject to the usual contingencies. Most of the land is out of the reach of frost. The working staff consists of a manager, engineer, 33 coolies, and 45 kafirs. The crop for 1872 will probably be the same as 1871. These returns are so exceptionably favourable, that although it would be unfair to withhold them, it would be no less unsafe to accept them as the basis of any generalisations regarding sugar planting in Natal.

Once more the Umgeni flows before us, and the Berea rises beyond; the locomotive is seen puffing on the other bank, and the toll bar stretches in front. We have at last reached the end of our journey through this beautiful and progressive county. Whatever

general conclusions I may have to draw from observations of tropical agriculture in Natal will come more appropriately after the Southern Coastlands have been inspected. Meanwhile let me remark that whatever vicissitudes its pioneer settlers have undergone, whatever disappointments they have borne, whatever losses they have sustained, no unprejudiced eye can scan the evidences of industrial enterprise in Victoria county, without being impressed by the vigour and intelligence of its planters, and by the fair promise which their works afford of a prosperous future.

THE SOUTHERN COASTLANDS.

WARD No. 2, COUNTY OF DURBAN.

[Before beginning this second series of "Notes on the Colony" it is as well to explain that the district about to be described consists of Ward No. 2, Durban county, and the division of Alexandra. The mid-section of our coastlands, lying beyond the Berea, and including the districts of Clare, Sydenham, Cato Manor, Pinetown, and New Germany, forms the subject of a distinct series.]

CHAPTER X.

DESCRIBED 200 YEARS AGO—CLAIRMONT—COEDMORE—
NORTHBANK—WOODVILLE—MERE BANK—REUNION—
MR. ATKINSON'S—ISIPINGO—STATISTICS OF THE
WARD.

Nearly two hundred years ago the country lying somewhat to the southward of the port of Durban was thus described in quaint yet genial and hearty language, by certain mariners who were cast by shipwreck on its shores. They say that "there are standing waters, but many rivers with plenty of fish and full of sea cows. There is no want of elephants, rhinoceroses, lions, tigers, and leopards. Many kinds of large and small centipedes, toads and frogs abound. Elands, harts, redboks, together with crocodiles, are numerous. Geese, ducks, pigeons, red and brown partridges, pheasants and *pauws* or wild turkeys are abundant, as also are crested cranes, many birds and all kinds of fish. The country is full of negroes who cultivate three sorts of corn, as also calabashes, pumpkins, water melons, and beans much resembling the European brown beans;