

## TRAVEL AND SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA.

By F. C. SELOUS.

[Addressed to the Members at the Memorial Hall, Saturday, March 4th, 1893,  
at 7-30 p.m.]

MR. SELOUS began with a brief reference to the change that has taken place in the facilities for communication between Cape Colony and the interior in the twenty-two years that had elapsed since first he began his travels in Africa. At that time there was only one short line of railway connecting Capetown with the village of Wellington. Now, as they all knew, a great change had been effected. Very early in his travels he got to Matabeleland, and there met the great chief Lo Bengula, of whom much has recently been heard. At that time the chief of the Matabele country was a man about 45 years of age. He was strongly built and already becoming very corpulent. His manner of taking his food was striking. The meat was brought to him in an immense trough, with a huge carving knife and fork. He would take the fork, stick it into a large lump of meat, hold it up on the end of the fork and put it in his mouth. The piece that he had in his mouth he would cut off with a carving knife close to his lips. In this manner he would go until he had eaten a great quantity of meat. His visitors had to help themselves out of the trough either with pocket-knives or with their hands. When he told Lo Bengula that he wished to stay in his country for some time to shoot elephants, the chief turned away laughing and said, "Oh, you are only a boy; the elephants will drive you out of the country." However, young though he then was, the elephants did not drive him out of the country, and for three years he kept at the wild life of elephant hunting. He did not at that time do anything in the way of road-making or maps. Some time later, in the Barotse country, he spent some months hunting elephants and other large game, the meat of which the people consumed for food, and he could see that on that account his visit was a very welcome one. It was in the year 1874, and subsequently in 1877, and again in 1879, that he witnessed the very curious phenomenon of the rising of the waters of the Chebe during the dry season. In 1879 particularly he took notice of the rise, and found that the water rose gradually from May to the 23rd of September, and as during that time the weather was getting hotter day by day and no rain was falling, he could not understand the cause of the phenomenon, for during all that time all

the other rivers of South Africa kept falling until the rain began again. It naturally occurred to him that possibly the rising was due to the sun melting the snow on the hills from which the river was fed, but on looking into the matter he found that that explanation was not tenable. In 1875 he returned to England, but very soon got tired of English life, and a few months later he returned to South Africa and at once made his way into the interior. In the compass of an hour's lecture it was impossible to give a detailed account of all his travels, so he would pass over several of his journeys and proceed to tell something about Mashonaland. It was in 1878 that he first travelled over the high open downs on which the town of Salisbury now stands, and between that time and the latter end of last year he spent ten years of his life in that country. During those ten years he travelled over every portion of the Mashona plateau, and besides made several journeys into the Zambesi Valley and also to the east coast. He mapped out the country in a rough way by taking compass bearings, and by sketching from the hill tops the courses of the innumerable rivers and streams. On one of his hunting expeditions in Mashonaland in the year 1880 he had for companion Mr. J. S. Jameson, who recently lost his life under very sad circumstances when left behind on the Congo during the progress of the Emin Relief Expedition. During that year he traced the course of the Umfuli River to its junction with the Sanyati, proving conclusively that it did not run into the Zambesi independently, as represented on all the maps published up to that date. They might like him to give them a few particulars with regard to the present state of Mashonaland. Until the time when the British flag was planted at Salisbury on 11th September, 1890, Mashonaland was an almost uninhabited country, unknown perhaps even in name to the great majority of Englishmen. Since that time a great and wonderful change had taken place. Townships had sprung up, not on paper as many people would wish them to believe, but in actual fact, as many good substantial brick buildings had been put up not only by the Chartered Company, but by private citizens; roads had been made through the country. For more than a year Salisbury had been connected with the rest of the world by telegraph, and in two of the townships well-printed weekly papers were now published. He wished he could have brought one or two copies of the papers to show them, because these would have given them a better idea of the development of the country than almost anything else. In spite of anything that had been said by interested or disappointed people, there could be no doubt that there had been a steady development of Mashonaland ever since the first occupation of the country, and he felt certain that the foundations had been laid for a rich and prosperous British colony. From what he had read and from

what he knew, he would say that the climate of Mashonaland was one of the finest in the world. On the high plateau there was not such a thing as a warm night the whole year round. In the winter time the nights were bitterly cold. The absence of heat was no doubt due to the great altitude of the country, for the whole plateau was very high, rising in some places to a height of 5,000ft. to 6,000ft. above sea level; but it was also due to some extent to the fact that it was the highest land in South-eastern Africa, and therefore caught the cool winds that blew from the Indian Ocean. It was never as hot on the plateau in Mashonaland as it was in Kimberly or Pretoria, or even in Capetown, although all those places were much lower in altitude than Mashonaland. As regards the health of the country, of course, as in all new countries within the tropical area, there was a certain amount of fever in the rainy season; but experience had shown that fever was mainly due to exposure under unhealthy conditions. He called it an unhealthy condition to lie out all night with your head in a gutter in a rainy night, and that was a condition often met with in Mashonaland. Of course he was far from saying that all who contracted fever did so through their own fault. But in a new country, as they must understand, a man must be much exposed. If he was energetic he travelled about the country, and with the rain falling and the rivers full he was likely to suffer from exposure, and thus he would catch fever. But the experience obtained at Salisbury had shown that with more comfort there was very little fever indeed. During the first season in Salisbury, when the people were living in small huts, they suffered more or less from fever; but last year, right through the rainy season, nine people out of ten escaped the fever. The very few women there were in the country enjoyed excellent health. Mrs. Pascoe, the wife of Major Pascoe, of the Salvation Army, told him that she and her four children looked as healthy as children possibly could. In Matabeleland, which lay in the same climatic conditions, he had seen some strong, healthy families grow up. He thought there was no doubt whatever that Mashonaland was a country in which Europeans would retain their vigour and grow up a strong and healthy race, and of course it must be a country of that kind to become a British colony. Of course the development of Mashonaland depended to a great extent on the rapid development of the gold industry. He did not pretend himself to know much about gold, but he felt sure that it was an absolutely proved fact that the gold reefs of Mashonaland were very rich. The last paragraph of a letter he had received from Dr. Jamieson, the able administrator of the country, read thus: "Gold exceeding all our expectations, and we are going to go all right." Such a sentence from a man like Dr. Jamieson meant a great deal, as

it did not express a hastily formed opinion, but a conclusion arrived at after two years of observation. Dr. Jamieson was not at all of a sanguine temperament; he was a very shrewd, long-headed Scotchman. With regard to his travels in South Africa generally, Mr. Selous said that he had visited many places that had never been visited by a European, and he had seen many strange peoples, including some who wore no clothing at all except a quill stuck through the ear. He had never had any armed force with him at all, and usually travelled with a few unarmed followers, from five to ten in number. He had nearly always been in the power of the natives, who might have murdered him with the greatest ease. Yet he never received any ill-treatment at their hands, and, with the exception of having to resist a little petty extortion, he had never had any difficulty with them. This referred to the whole of his twenty years' travelling in South Africa, with the exception of one particular occasion. The occasion referred to was in 1888, when in the dead of the night an attack was made on his camp by the Mashukulumbwe, who were incited to the attack by some rebel Barotse. He concluded his lecture with a thrilling description of the attack, of his escape without his rifle and almost without clothing, his swim across the river, the assistance given to him by the Barotse rebel chief Sikabenga, and his ultimate safe return, after enduring great hardship, to his waggon at Panda-ma-tenka.

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**A Railroad to Nowhere.**—There is a railroad in Manitoba that starts from Winnipeg, runs forty miles north—or, rather, it stays, for it doesn't run—and goes to seed, on the prairie. The rails are rusty, and the ties are grass-grown. When they began to build that road the objective point was Hudson Bay, but it looks as if it would never get there. Readers may recall the project for shipping wheat from Dakota, Manitoba, and Assiniboia to England, by way of Hudson Bay, the grain to be carried overland to Fort York, at the mouth of the Nelson, there to be transferred to steamers and sent eastward over the bay, through Hudson Strait, and across the Atlantic. One of the most prominent railroad men in Canada, who was here a few days ago, and who, in case of its extension, will have a good deal to say about its management, spoke to this effect: "I presume the road will be built; they wouldn't have laid forty miles of rails for nothing; but I don't take much stock in the Hudson Bay part of it. I can tell you for a fact that it will be pushed for about two hundred and thirty miles—as far as the rapids of the Saskatchewan, just above where that river empties into Lake Winnipeg, for, between here and there, it is mostly good grain country, and the road will help to build it up; but beyond the Saskatchewan it is a wilderness, with poor soil, and the frost stays in the ground most of the year. The scheme for navigating Hudson Bay is one of the wildest ever projected, and if the people in it knew what they were talking about they would have dropped it long ago. The St. Lawrence is far north enough to start ocean steamers from. To go through Hudson Strait, ships reach 63° north—about the latitude of Lichtenfels, in Greenland. Beside the short summers and the floating ice, there is an insurmountable obstacle to navigation in the wide compass variations, making it necessary to sail by sun and stars, at least in iron ships. And where are you in a fog? The magnetic needle shifts 60° in going from one side of the bay to the other, and it has a dip of 40° out of the horizontal."—*Goldswaite's Geographical Magazine, March-April, 1895.*