

MINISTERS AND CHURCHES

Hartland P. O.,
Paulpietersburg,
Natal, So. Africa,
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Dear Friends:

This a. m. while reading in "A Hundred Years of Missions," I was much impressed with the amount of interesting matter and information it contained and wish to pass some of it on to you at home who have a heavy load to carry and often wonder about many things in Africa that you would like to know a little more about.

It is indeed a large land and Natal is a big place.

When you remember we are just under 3,000 ft. elevation, are working among the Zulus, one of the Bantu tribes, and are in semi-tropical country the information below given will help you to understand some of our conditions better.

We have in the summer an exceedingly hot day followed by the next which is so cold we are reminded of our winter. Then we may have a few cloudy days, cool and comfortable, followed by a scorching day or two and ending in a bad hail storm accompanied by terrific lightning and a torrential down-pour. But after all that everybody who has lived here thinks it is well named, "Sunny Africa," and loves the country.

This African Continent constitutes the greatest of all mission fields. That is, it covers by far the largest area, though both China and India contain a much larger population. Besides, no such vast spaces can elsewhere be found upon the face of the earth, so wholly enshrouded in intellectual and moral darkness so dreadfully dense. For to the midnight of utter ignorance, and superstition and beastly vice, is added the, if possible, darker midnight of extreme barbarism and savagery. Negro, Hottentot, Bushmen have long been synonyms for the lowest conditions in which humanity is ever found. And to crown all, it was in this most benighted and wretched quarter of the globe that the slave trade wrought its horrors and desolations. And, therefore, though for these and other reasons possessing peculiar claims upon Christianity for help, Africa supplies the mission field which is difficult and discouraging beyond any other.

After Asia, the Dark Continent is much the largest of the six. The length is not far from 5,000 miles from North to South and the width is not much less. The number of square miles of surface is estimated to be 12,000,000 or about one-fourth of the land surface of the globe. Asia covers some 17,000,000 sq. miles, and the two Americas together nearly the same. The United States added to Australia would be only half as large as Africa alone, while Europe is only a pigmy by comparison, is only one-third as large, containing but 4,000,000. As the most striking as well as the most unfortunate physical feature is found in the fact that the extensive coast line is so nearly unbroken, is indented by so few bays, and hence affords so few harbours. In this particular the neighbouring continent to

the north is at the farthest removed. For while the circumference of the one measures but 15,000 miles the other is longer by 4,000 miles, though the area is only one-third as great. It follows from this that Africa is the most inaccessible of the earth's great land spaces. While it is true that no good roads exist between the borders and the remote central portions, and the jungles are dense, all travel must be on foot and all carrying is done on the backs of men and though the tsetse fly is deadly to horses and cattle and the fever almost as deadly to those of foreign birth, and cannibal tribes abound, yet the serious absence of safe anchorage and of streams navigable from the ocean far inland, supply the chief reason for the long neglect under which the perishing millions have lain. As to general contour the surface has often been compared to that of an inverted saucer. Next to the sea is everywhere a low lying rim, which at no great distance back rises to mountain ranges, and these enclose a boundless plateau. The mean elevation is greater than that of either Europe or Asia in spite of their Alps and Hymalayas. The altitude of South Africa averages 2,000 feet and of the north central portions about 4,000. The plateau is loftiest in the region of the great lakes. Between the two Nyanzas, in a distance less than 100 miles, the descent is 2,300 feet, or from 3,800 to 1,500. The highest mountain summits are found to the east of the lakes, Kilimanjaro and Kemia, rising to 19,328 ft.

Africa has four great river systems which, taken together, comprise a large part of the area of the continent. The Kongo carries by far the greatest volume of water to the sea, though the Nile is the longest. Next follow the Niger and the Zambesi, with the Orange not so very far behind. Rising either in the great lakes, or in the general region of the four streams one flows northward to the Mediterranean, two empty their floods into the Atlantic and two other ends in the Indian Ocean. But these and all lesser rivers, and for precisely the same reason, are absolutely worthless for navigation between the outside world and the vast interior. The bulk of their course is upon the elevated central plateau, from which they must descend to sea—level and besides must break through the mountain barrier which for about the entire circumference separates the interior from the coast plain. And so, for a long distance during the lower part of their course, rapids and waterfalls abound. Thus the Nile has its three cataracts and its Murchison and Ripon Falls farther towards its source, the Kongo has 250 miles of broken navigation, the Zambesi has its Victoria Falls, etc., etc. Three immense areas are found within which no streams make their way to the ocean. One is the famous Sahara, which stretches from the Nile to the Atlantic, and from the Mediterranean to the Sudan, and covers something like 4,000,000 square miles, about one-third of the entire continent, or a space as large as Europe. Another lies about Lake Chad, and a third about Lake Nyami.

The remarkable lake system found in East Central Africa constitutes one of the

leading physical features, a collection of bodies of fresh water surpassed or equalled nowhere except in our own country, and with our own Superior greater than the greatest of the number. Victoria Nyanza has an area of 30,000 square miles to Huron's 20,000, and Tanganyika has an area of 10,000. One other characteristic feature may be mentioned. Stretching ten degrees north of the Equator and ten degrees south, and entirely across the continent, say 1,000 by 2,500 is a forest great and terrible. Proceeding north or south from this, a broad stretch of open park-like country is entered and this again shades off into boundless pastures, both towards the desert and the Cape. Next in order lie barren regions, Sahara and Kalaharin, with only the slightest rainfall, and finally, whether in the Barbary States or in the southern portions, agricultural lands are found. It will be noted that the equator crosses Africa at no great distance below the center, and hence the bulk of the continent is intertropical. The climate is so deadly to the unacclimatized on account of the extreme heat, taken together with the dense forests, and the exceedingly heavy rainfall.

As to the population, how large it is, nothing whatever is certainly known. All statements made concerning this matter are at best but guesswork, and estimates differ by several score of millions. Thus it has been common to set the figure as high as 300,000,000, while others would diminish the sum by half. . . . Dividing the whole into sections, we may give the result roughly as follows: North Africa, 20,000,000, the Sahara region 3,000,000, North-tropical 35,000,000, and South Africa 5,000,000.

It will be profitable to take note of some of the principal divisions existing among the population as to race. According to the common apprehension all native born dwellers in Africa, are negroes than which nothing can be further from the fact. At the north are found millions of Moors, Berbers, Arabs and Turks and at the north east other millions of Copts, Nubians and Abyssinians; the latter sufficiently black, but by no means negroes. The genuine Ethiopian is marked by woolly hair, a flat nose, thick lips, a receding forehead and projecting jaw, a flat foot and long heel and his home is found only in the Soudan or North Central Africa, to the north of the Kongo, to the west of the great lakes. This part of the continent is most thickly inhabited, and contains nearly half of the population. Further south dwell the great Bantu race, their habitat extending from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. Beyond these lies the country of the Bushmen, the Kaffirs and the Hottentots, who differ radically from all the rest. Dr. R. N. Cust, an excellent authority, gives the number of African languages 438, with 153 dialects in addition.

If the population be divided according to religion, about 1,000,000 are Jews dwelling largely in the Barbary States. Of Christians there are some 800,000, of whom less than one-third are Roman Catholics, found mostly in Algeria and the Portuguese settlements in Angola and Mozambique; something over one-third