

(October 27, 1914.)

The German Colonies in South Africa

By SIR HARRY HAMILTON JOHNSTON, G.C.M.G.*

AT a special meeting of the Club, held on the 27th October, Sir Harry Hamilton Johnston said:

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Canadian Club,—As you see when I stand up, I am a very insignificant person, and I am afraid I have not a very strong voice, so that some sitting at the end of the room may hear me only very imperfectly, which is why I shall try to speak as distinctly as possible, even if it may seem rather affected.

I am, of course, at the present day rather an extinct volcano. (Laughter.) Nearly all my energy has expended itself largely, first of all, in exploring, creating and placing on a substantial footing a considerable part of the Empire in Africa. And the founding of this Empire has led me far afield. For I have had to go to that great Empire of India for soldiers. I have had to visit most of the countries of Europe to assist in deliberations as to frontier delimitations. I have also had to go to the United States in connection with African affairs. I was born in a suburb of London. It may be the tameness of such suburbs which leads not a few of the boys and girls born in their placid tree-girt houses to deeds of "derring do;" and implants a longing to see the equator, the north pole or the south pole, or other scenery quite unlike the uninspiring surroundings of our greatest city.

I began to take great interest in Africa when quite a small boy. My father drew my attention to the deeds of Livingstone, and encouraged me to read Livingstone's works. From these I conceived a great desire to go out to Africa; but being smaller than I am now (laughter), and not supposed to be very strong in health, my family, much as they indulged me, rather frowned upon projects which would carry me beyond the Mediterranean basin. However, I managed to go out to Africa—north and west and east, and in course of

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time my work as an explorer obtained for me an appointment in the African consular service. Thus I became concerned from the early 'eighties with the first beginning of the German colonies in Africa. My first intimation as to German colonial schemes was rather curious. Traveling with Lord Mayo, son of a great Viceroy of India, in the Kunene country (Southern Angola) belonging to the Portuguese (we were in Boer wagons, hired from Boer pioneers) one day, under the fierce sunshine, our Boer driver in a laconic way pointed out something lying on the desert, which he opined was a white man. And so it was, a German traveler, who had been sent out to make inquiries and conclude treaties with some chiefs. Something had happened to his caravan, he had lost his way, and was dying of thirst. We picked him up, and enabled him to proceed on his way. This was the beginning of the German attempt to get a foothold in Southwest Africa. (Laughter.) A perfectly legitimate aspiration.

Well, down to the 4th of August last I should have made my story take quite a different direction. Even down to the 4th of August I was called at home a pro-German, so much have I been associated with the Germans in Africa, so much have I studied in Germany, so heartily have I appreciated the lasting good in the German nature. But in those days I confess I was rather rampant Imperialist, and regretted extremely the rather halting policy of the Cape Government, which enabled this man's treaties to be made—I have long since forgotten his name,—and the German missionaries and German traders to settle under the German protectorate in Southwest Africa. I mention the German missionaries, for the Germans have as much right to declare a protectorate in that region and to plant colonies, as we have. Their civilization took a very sensible form among the Hottentots and Damaras. Many of the descendants of the first German missionary settlers have drifted into Cape Colony, and are loyal to their British citizenship. Germany has done some good in Southwest Africa, impressing the white man's rule upon the native population of Hottentots and Bantu negroes in that region, who before German intervention were fighting each other to the verge of extermination.

As regards my dealings with them in East Africa:—My first undertaking in Equatorial East Africa was called after the modest fashion of those days, a "scientific expedition." (Laughter.) I had had an apprenticeship in natural science. I had traveled previously with Lord Mayo in Angola and with Stanley on the Congo. I had returned with some know-

ledge of African languages. In East Africa my first journeys were directed to the exploration of Mt. Kilimanjaro. When my scientific work was accomplished I hoisted the British flag here and there (laughter) and made treaties with the African chiefs, helped in this by the great influence of the Sultan of Zanzibar, who had known Livingstone, and was very friendly with Sir John Kirk. I strayed from science into the field of political geography because the Germans, under Dr. Peters, Count Pfeil, and other pioneers, had entered East Africa south of Kilimanjaro, and secured by treaties a large area of country for German exploration. But I was somewhat mortified after my return to find that to please the German Emperor we had surrendered this mighty snow-capped mountain, Kilimanjaro, on which I had founded a station and hoisted a British flag. It is permissible to hope that as one result of this war, which has been absolutely forced on us, Kilimanjaro may pass once more under the British flag. (Hear, hear.)

As regards East Africa in general, though they acquired this Snow Mountain they lost much worth having in East Africa, a region which is divided into healthy and unhealthy districts. More by accident than design, we got the healthy districts, and the Germans the unhealthy. (Laughter.) So that at the present day, without any particular pushing on our part (laughter) there are now eight thousand thoroughly healthy, well-to-do, British settlers going on the unoccupied land of that region; but there are only, I am told, about one thousand Germans in that vast area of German East Africa, which contains something like 385,000 square miles.

My next journey was to the other side of Africa to the Kamerun and the Niger delta. Germany was anxious to get the Niger basin, which had been explored by Germans (mostly in British pay). But France also claimed Nigeria in the west, and in 1884-5 Great Britain has established her claims to control Eastern Nigeria.

When I talk about "colonizing" such parts of tropical Africa, I do not mean that white men take the place of the natives. On the contrary Britain has done all it could to foster the land-holding of the native population. Our reward for keeping the peace has come in the trade, which has increased by leaps and bounds. Since all these regions have come under the British flag, trade is equally open to foreign enterprise. We cannot at least be accused of making a selfish use of our Empire in tropical Africa.

After my return from East Africa, in 1885, the late Lord Salisbury who had read some of my writings on Africa, had appointed me to a double post, that of Vice-Consul in Southern Nigeria and Vice-Consul in the Kamerun.

Here, I am afraid, I became for a time somewhat of a thorn in the side of the Germans; for to use one of their similes, I was as active as a flea, and in their opinion not much larger (laughter) and I hopped about the debatable lands between the Niger and the Cameroons River making treaties and planting flags on unclaimed territory in a way that exasperated the slower moving Germans. (Laughter and applause.) However, I managed at last to come to a friendly understanding with them, and our later relations were really pleasant. I was three years Vice-Consul in the Kamerun; then I was sent to the other side of Africa as a Consul, to try to solve serious problems on Lake Nyasa, where Arab leaders were carrying on a vigorous slave trade, in spite of the remonstrances of a British trading company and several missionary societies; they were, in fact, devastating the whole lakes region to an almost inconceivable degree. Amongst others of the British volunteers who checked their ravages was Sir Frederick Lugard, now Governor-General of Nigeria, a man who has written his name largely in colonial annals. There was some intention on the part of the Germans to send a force across from the sea coast to take possession of the north end of Lake Nyasa, the region between Nyasa and Tanganyika. My second problem therefore was to get into these regions before the Germans. It was also necessary to forestall the Portuguese, because they also were desirous of extending their empire. These three problems I managed to solve. Fortunately, having a knowledge of the Swahili language (then much spoken on the west coast of Lake Nyasa) I was able to discuss the situation with one of the Arab chiefs who had not joined in the rebellious slavers' war against the British because of his reverence for the memory of Livingstone. (Applause.) Another personage whom he held in high esteem was Queen Victoria. (Applause.) I met this Arab, with no arms, and only accompanied by fifteen negro porters. I am afraid I traded a little upon the chief's extreme reverence for Queen Victoria, by allowing him to believe, rather than by suggesting, that I was a distant connection of hers. (Laughter and applause.) His impression arose from the name the porters had given me: *Mwana Kwini*. "Mwana" means "son," and "Kwini" stood for Queen Victoria throughout East Africa, the Queen

being considered to be in some sense the "mother" of the British people. This appellation in those days was often applied to the rare Englishman who traveled in the interior. I told this Arab, therefore, that Queen Victoria wished to see the slave trade put an end to; that if he pleased her in this, she would never forget it, and would write him a letter to say so, and he would be handed down in history as a man who helped to free Africa from the slave trade. This impression induced him to give me four hundred soldiers, and with these I went to the other end of the region to conclude peace. My different expeditions (which included three other Englishmen) came back with treaties which made British Central Africa as we see it to-day. The Germans offered no serious opposition to this project, though Bismarck had sent a telegram asking our government that "Consul Johnston might be stopped at the 11th degree of south latitude." Lord Salisbury's 1890 agreement with Germany settled all these African ambitions, and after that I worked with the Germans as a comrade and friend, and received from them similar help and regard. When some Arabs came one time to crush me, the Germans came to my support, and placed at my disposal the very steamer we captured the other day on Lake Nyasa. Had not the Germans helped me then, I might have had a different story to tell, and perhaps not have been here to tell it.

In Uganda, also, my work was carried on harmoniously with the German officials of the adjoining territory of German East Africa. In later years I have studied much in Germany the sciences connected with Africa, and have striven (as my writings will bear witness) to bring about a good understanding between Germany and Great Britain in matters of colonial expansion. Down to a few weeks before the outbreak of this war, it is believed that Great Britain had come to an understanding with Germany which would have enabled her to extend her possessions or concessions in Southwest Africa, and even in the Congo basin. When this war began, Germany was mistress of 1,100,000 square miles of Africa, and she was turning several of her African possessions to a profitable use. They furnished her trade with and opened new markets for German goods. But somehow or other Germans in the mass held back from colonizing their own territories in German Africa. For until the war, the total of German colonists (in 1,100,000 square miles) was under 24,000; while at that time there were probably 100,000 Germans in the whole of British Africa. (Applause.)

But to do the Germans justice, they maintained the principle of free trade quite as well as we have done in their African possessions; and British traders made a very good second to the German traders in the development of German Africa. (Applause.)

Now to pass to other regions than Africa. The Germans had managed to secure those islands that England might well have taken, in Oceania. They had annexed the northeast portion of New Guinea, which they renamed Kaiser Wilhelm Land. The great Archipelagoes east of New Guinea had been discovered by the great navigator and pioneer Captain Cook, who had called two of the largest islands New Britain and New Ireland. For these names the Germans substituted New Mecklenburg and New Pommern. The largest group of islands was called the Bismarck Archipelago. Germany took advantage of our being in a rather critical position in international affairs to secure from us consent to her annexing the Archipelago of Samoa. This has since the war passed under the British New Zealand flag. (Applause.) The final result, at any rate of these operations, was that Germany obtained nearly 100,000 square miles in New Guinea and in the Pacific islands.

Here, however, she dealt fairly with British commerce. As you know, she also acquired from China on leasehold, Kiao Chau, on the plea of protecting German missionaries. We have no right to sneer, as we acquired Hong Kong for a similar reason, because of attacks on British missionaries and on British shipping. Germany, however, fortified the capital of this region—Tsing Tao—with the design of becoming the dominant power in the China seas.

Finally, to her was conceded by Britain, Russia, and France that important sphere of influence in what remains of Turkey in Europe and Turkey in Asia. Through the good will of Great Britain and the desire to give Germany a place in the sun for the development of trade and for her redundant population, Great Britain took the lead in regard to encouraging the Baghdad Railway, and used her influence with France and Russia to secure for Germany very important concessions in Asia Minor and Mesopotamia: altogether about 400,000 square miles.

In one way or other, by yielding possessions we had already occupied or by withdrawing opposition we have enabled Germany and Austria to dominate not far short of 2,000,000 square miles. It is quite untrue, as some German writers have stated, that Germany got only the waste, neglected and

worthless regions of the world. Look at Southwest Africa: it certainly has a good deal of desert, but that is found to be full of valuable minerals and diamonds. Nor did we yield it cynically believing it worthless, because our own discoverers and geologists had revealed to us, before the German occupation, specimens of its mineral wealth such as cobalt, gold, and diamonds, also phosphate deposits, and coal; in short, Southwest Africa though arid was rich, and the aridity could be dispelled by boring and sinking artesian wells. And I hope that the control of this region will be taken over by us from Germany in the settlement which we shall exact from Germany.

You have read to-day of the struggle in the Kamerun. That is also a valuable region, of some 290,000 square miles, abounding in tin, valuable oils, and rubber on the coast, while cattle and horse-breeding flourishes in the districts of the interior. Then, again, German East Africa has begun to attack British East Africa before we even decided to go to war ourselves. German East Africa, as I reminded you, is less healthy than British East Africa; but the native population, going on for 8,000,000, is industrious, and will turn out valuable food and vegetable products for the world's use.

Now there can be only one conclusion to this war, so far as German oversea possessions are concerned; they must cease to be German. (Hear, hear, and applause.) I don't say those words in any narrow-minded, dog-in-the-manger spirit, but because we have learned that each one of the German colonies has been made the basis for craftily-planned attacks on the possessions of powers hitherto friendly. (Hear, hear.) Never again can we trust the German spirit in view of this war of ravage. Therefore, though we may leave Germany in Europe as intact, in regard to the regions mainly inhabited by Germans, though we may clip very little off real German territory, we must insist,—and you in Canada must back it up, in case we at home become weak-kneed or sentimental (for there is always an inclination on our part to be influenced by pity), we must insist that none of these great territories beyond the seas shall remain under German political control. (Applause.) And finally, when we have made this change, and this will be perhaps the most difficult pill for you to swallow,—we must likewise insist upon the policy that these territories taken from Germany shall remain as fully open as before to German trade and colonization: it would be going athwart those principles with which the British Empire is inevitably bound up to adopt any other attitude. (Applause.) There is

nothing to be gained for the good future of the world by exterminating or making desperate seventy millions of hard-working people, many of them, I firmly believe, not in sympathy with this war. (Hear, hear.) I maintain there must be some door of repentance kept open for Germany and Austria, and they must once again be allowed to colonize these regions if they wish to develop them, but they must do so under the British and not under the German flag! (Long applause.)