

For the Empire's Sake.

LEAVES FROM THE DIARY OF A PREMIER ON TOUR.

Beyond acknowledging his indebtedness to wireless telegraphy, the editor does not feel at liberty to disclose the source of the interesting communication which follows, the securing of which is perhaps the most remarkable "scoop" yet made in the history of New Zealand journalism.

Hull, August 23.—The naval review was the closing act of the Coronation drama. The midnight Royal salute was the signal for visitors to pack their traps and get back to their homes. On Tuesday evening, when sauntering in the vicinity of Buckingham Palace, a favourite resort of mine, I could not help remarking on the suddenness with which the King's guests had taken themselves away and those fine lines of Kiplig came into my mind—

"The triumph and the shouting cease,
The captains and the Kings depart,
Still stands the ancient sacrifice."

So appropriate they seemed to me; the captains and the Kings all gone, and myself standing there all alone, and feeling quite old after all I have sacrificed for the Empire. It is not often that I suffer from depression or feel lonely, but that evening I was far from myself. I would have dropped in on the King if he had been at home, but he was away in the yacht. I experienced quite a sense of relief when I saw approaching me the genial Lewanika, of Barotseland. Under ordinary circumstances I would barely have noticed him, for the foolish fellow, quite unintentionally, of course, raised an awkward laugh against me the other day by remarking, at Lady Dash's "At Home," that he and I were the only two savage monarchs present. He was evidently under some absurd impression that because I represented New Zealand I was a Maori chief. On Tuesday, however, I was too lonely to remember that against him, and, after all, he is always a King, so I greeted him affably.



"AREN'T YOU COMING WITH US, SEDDON?"

"When you go home to your country, Massa Seddon?" enquired he.

I always feel annoyed when folks ask me that stupid question, but I graciously covered my impatience and explained that I was waiting for certain things.

"Oh," says he, with a barbaric grin, "I know, you mean same as Massa Barton has got."

It was foolish of me to feel vexed with the savage, for he meant no harm, but I had just had a disagreeable interview with Barton in reference to the same subject earlier in the afternoon. He (Barton) came into my room in the hotel to say goodbye, as he was leaving early next morning for Australia, via Canada. His portmanteau was in his hand, and, laying it down on the floor he asked, with affected surprise,

"Aren't you coming with us, Seddon?"

"No," says I, "I'm afraid I can't get away quite yet."

"Oh!" says he, with a beastly smile, and added, "Well, I suppose we may consider the feast all over now, though, I say, old man, you don't seem to have had your dessert yet?"

He laughed at his joke till I thought he was going to have a fit, but became suddenly serious when I says:

"There's some, Sir Edmund, that have got more than their desserts."

"That may be," snarls he, "but at least they got it at the table, they're not stopping behind to pick up the seraps."

"It isn't everybody that would be satisfied with a measly knighthood, Barton. You're a modest soul," was my reply.

"It wasn't everybody that was offered it," he rejoins.

"No, Barton, there were bigger things a-going than that. What would you say to a baronetcy, if it had been offered you?"

"I would have said, 'Give it to Seddon, he wants it more than I do.'"

"There you would have been wrong, Sir Edmund Barton, K.C.M.G.," says I, very softly and deliberately, "because Mr Seddon was offered it and refused it."

"You mean, he says he was offered it and refused it. We've all heard that yarn, Dick, my boy, but it won't wash; no, it won't wash, Dick. You may cable it as a rumour to New Zealand, if you like, and they may swallow it, but it doesn't go down here." And before I had time

to say a word he grabbed his traps, said "ta-ta," and was gone.

... Left for Hull the same night. Just when I was on the point of getting ready for my journey one of those wretched newspaper men waited upon me. He wanted an interview. It seems that Mr Stead's statement giving currency to a rumour of my intention to become leader of the Labour party in South Africa has created a great deal of comment and speculation, and the reporter came to me to learn the truth. He showed me a copy of a paper containing Stead's remarks. I affected not to have seen them before, far less to have heard anything of the rumour to the effect that I was impressed with the need of a strong statesman in South Africa and meant to offer my services; and the enquiring reporter got no satisfaction out of me. I told him in my most oracular tones that "Time would prove," whatever that means, and that "nobody is justified or authorised to say that I will renounce New Zealand and live at the Cape." And that is literally the case. I thought to have been able by this time to announce my plans for the future, but I am as unsettled as ever. I don't know what I shall do. It all depends on circumstances which I am expecting to eventuate every day. To the private ear of this diary alone can I confide the disappointment which I feel over the result of my visit to the Old Country. My hopes have not been realised. Heaven forbid that I should say anything disloyal, but the King is most unsatisfactory. I can't make him out. However, I am not going to despair, and shall extend my stay here for some time yet, under one pretext or another, to see what turns up. As to the South African idea, it has certainly been present in my thoughts very frequently, but I never gave Mr Stead any authority to say that I contemplated the Cape as my future sphere of action. I have the clearest recollection of everything that passed between us on the two occasions on which he courted an interview with me. On the second our conversation was of such a kind that neither of us is likely to forget it, for we came to high words and parted on no very friendly terms. The Editor of the "Review of Reviews" is a masterful man; and so am I; and it was a case of Greek meeting Greek when we met. We spoke of many things, New Zealand and my labour legislation among others, and then the talk drifted away to South Africa, as was to be expected. I could not help twitting Stead with his pro-Boer leanings; and his reply was characteristic of the man. "My dear Mr Seddon," says he, "you quite misread me." Whatever I may have said or written in favour of the Boers belongs to the past. Like yourself, I must not be judged by my bygone utterances. But to prove to you that I am no pro-Boer, let me ask you whether you have ever heard of me being long identified with any movement that did not pay. Review my long career, my Tribune of Modern Babylon period, my Spook stage, my ideal newspaper epoch, and you will find that, though an idealist before all things, I have never allowed my commercial instincts to be obscured or my financial schemes to be imperilled by sentiment or idealism. I could not possibly be an active pro-Boer now, for the simple reason that as a commercial speculation there is nothing in pro-Boerism."

I admitted the force of his argument.

"Many people," he continued, "cannot understand my character, but I think that you, having so much in common with me in that respect, will." No, I am no pro-Boer, Mr Seddon, but I am a pro-African, as I believe you to be. Although the late Mr Rhodes did not think fit to allot me the task of carrying out his wishes, the aims that he cherished have always been mine too, and now that he is gone, I would gladly devote what talents and energy Heaven has vouchsafed me to carry to a successful conclusion the work he inaugurated. I have my ideal of what Africa might become. It is a high ideal, I admit, but not necessarily one impossible of attainment. But it requires a man of very rare qualifications to direct the destinies of the country. I enjoy unrivalled advantages for discovering such a man, for I am on terms of personal and more or less confidential communication with the Cardinal Secretary of State at the Vatican, with the Procurator General of the Holy Synod, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Don Leno, the Czar of all the Russias, the President of the Hayti Republic, the successor to the Mahdi, the Kenniff Brothers—in fact, with all the most notable and influential people of the day, and in all that wide circle I know of no man fitted to realise my ideal. A man with the wisdom of Socrates, the character of Marcus Aurelius, and the genius of Napoleon, is needed, and where shall we find that trinity of qualities embodied in one man? I am well aware that I do not possess them myself, but with all my faults and shortcomings and no one is more painfully conscious of them than myself—I am perhaps the one individual who comes nearest to that perfection we are seeking after. I say it modestly. I

I can do a bit of this sort of thing myself, and before he had got out more than the first word of his next sentence I had got the floor and held it.

"What troubles you," says I, "has been troubling me, too. As you say, I am a pro-African, and have my ideal as to the future of that great country. But I experience almost the same difficulty that you do about getting a suitable man to direct and guide the fortunes of the country. I have a pretty wide experience of men. I am in personal and more or less confidential communication with Mr Witheford, Mahutu, the King, and Prince of Wales, E. M. Smith, King George of Tonga, Clement Wragge, P. R. Dix, and, indeed, all the most notable and influential people of the day. In all that wide circle I have only discovered one man who would fill the billet, and he unfortunately fills another. He might be persuaded to throw up the latter, however, if sufficient inducement offered. Mind you, Mr Stead, I don't say that he would, but he might."

"You surprise me, Mr Seddon," says Stead, "I had not believed there was another man in the world save the one I myself suggested who would be competent for the position, and I am inclined to question it now. Do you know the gentleman you speak of so

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