

NATAL AND THE NATIVES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE TRIBUNE."

Sir,—The tone and language of your leader "Order Among Natives" are a disappointment to many, who, like myself, admire the ability with which THE TRIBUNE is conducted, and who had hoped that the fairness of its views would be commensurate with the vast sphere of its influence. Such sensational phrases as "the slave-driver," "the black man to work in chains," "to encourage them their kraals and crops are destroyed," cannot be justified even by the necessarily meagre cables to hand from Natal; while your statement that "we shoot him to show him that he is nothing of the kind"—i.e., "not one of us"—is nonsense, and wicked nonsense. You know that the natives were shot because they were murderers. There have never been slaves in Natal, and therefore "the black man" "in the good but rough old days" had no occasion "to work in chains." The "kraals and crops" of the tribe were not destroyed—only the huts and crops of the criminal natives. This highly-coloured language is doubtless taken literally enough by many of your readers, and it is much to be regretted that THE TRIBUNE should have condescended to cater for that section of the community which craves for horrors.

As the Superintendent of Education in Natal from 1876 to 1903, I may claim a degree of acquaintance with the Colony and its people which justifies me in protesting against your insinuations of ill-treatment of the native population. Since 1843, when Natal became a British Colony, the natives have fully enjoyed "peace, protection, and salutary control," and have been law-abiding and contented. The various chiefs feel that they are the lieutenants of the Governor, who is supreme chief, and their influence is all on the side of law and order. It is true that the natives have not the franchise, but they are directly represented by the responsible Ministers in Parliament and by the members of the Upper House—the Legislative Council.

The poll-tax, which is said to be the cause of the present unrest, is levied on all whites and on all Indians, but on only those natives who do not pay hut-tax. The mischievous teaching of emissaries of the Ethiopian Church is no doubt the primary cause of this outbreak. The prompt action and the even-handed justice

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ROBERT RUSSELL.

[The cablegram explicitly stated that the kraals and crops of the natives implicated were destroyed. Such wholesale destruction of property is not a civilized method of punishment. Those shot were not said to be murderers, but merely to have been "concerned in the attack on the police." We said that the poll-tax was a substitute for the slave-driver on evidence derived from those who advocate it as a means of compelling natives to work. We made no allegation as to the present or past existence of slavery in Natal. Before reading us a lecture on moderation our correspondent would do well to restrain his own language.—ED. TRIBUNE.]

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