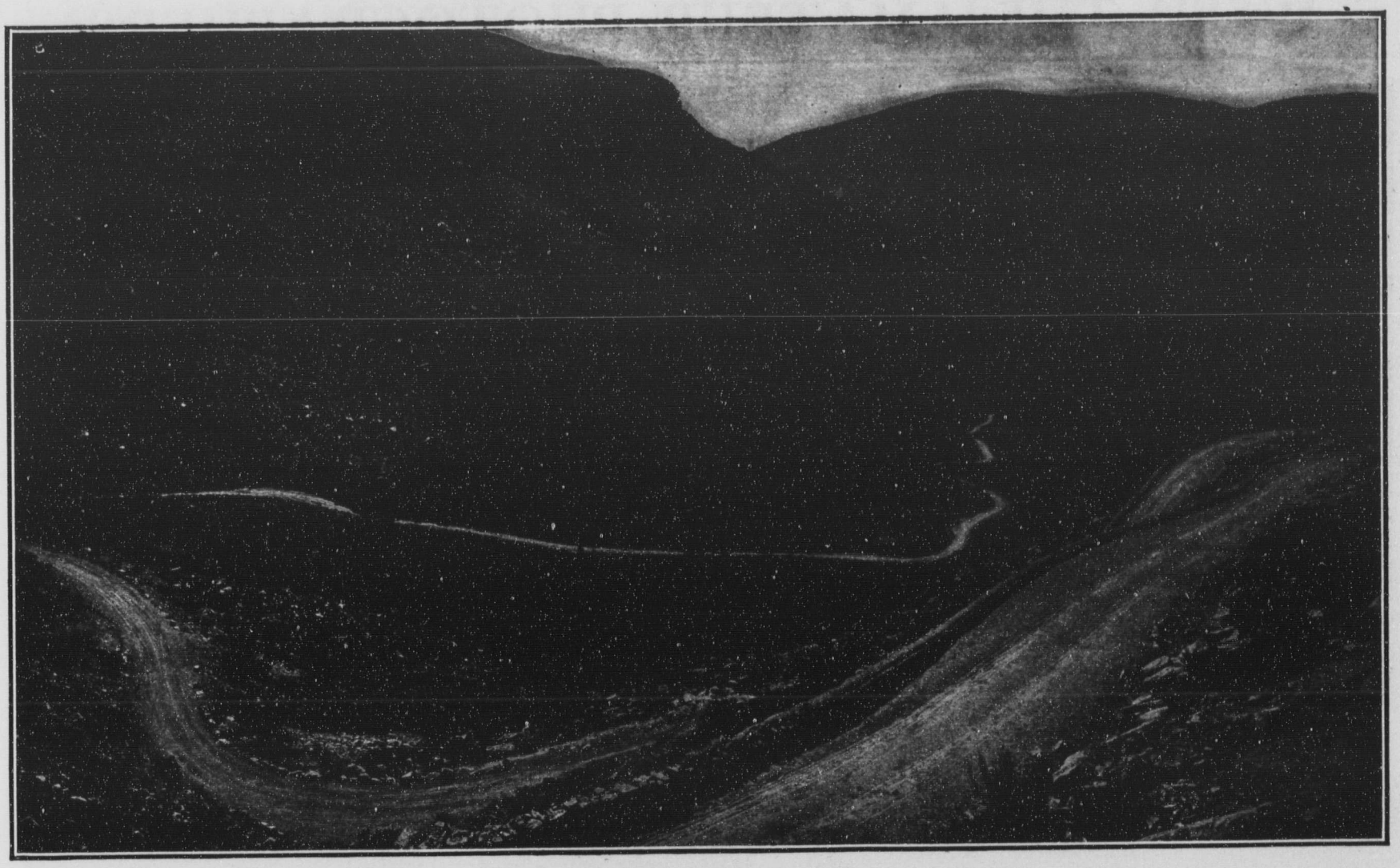


A STRIKING scene near Rondebosch, Cape Colony, showing the hand of man in the transformation of the rugged countryside into the semblance of old-world civilization. These roads are in a country regarded as almost savage.

GOOD ROADS IN AFRICA

BRITISH thoroughness in the matter of road making is exemplified wherever the English are supreme in Africa. As good roads are not to be found in many sections of the United States, notwithstanding so-called American progress.

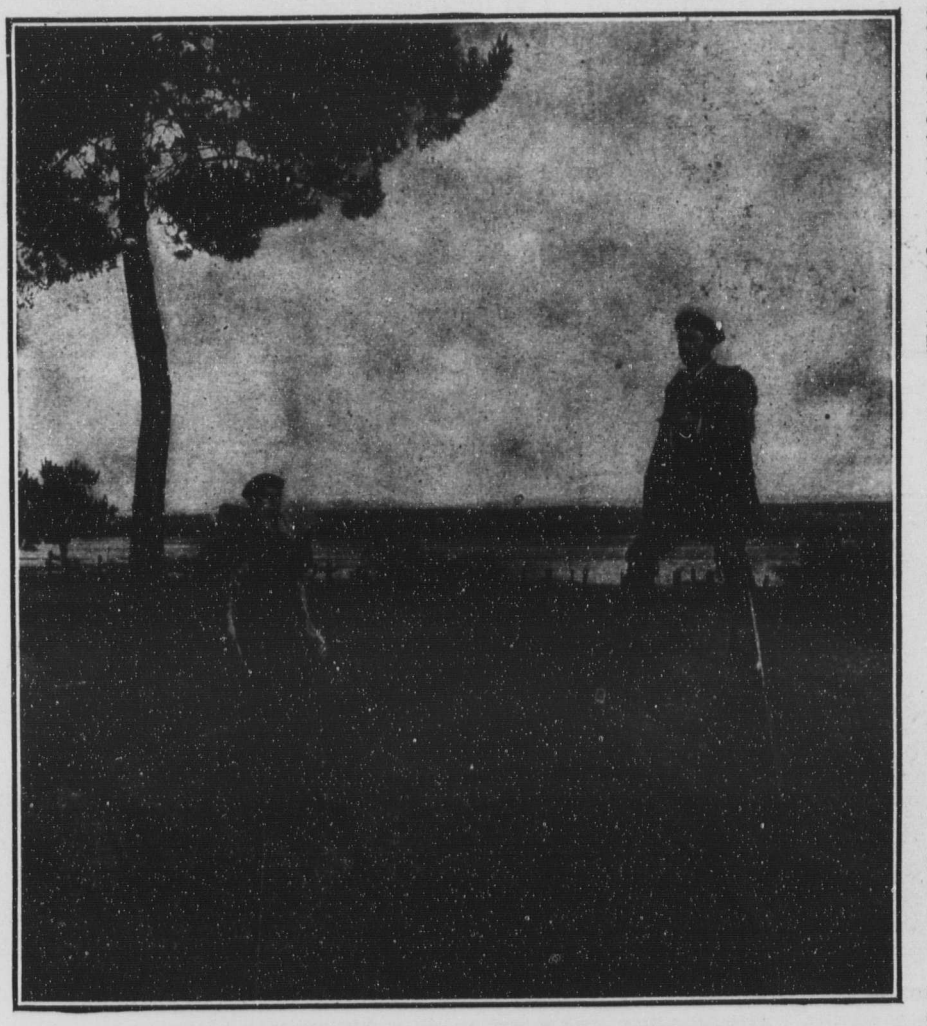
THE STILT-WALKING SHEPHERDS OF FRANCE

THERE is a district in France where the people are "up in the air" most of the time. This is not slang; it is truth; more than that, it is necessary. For the nature of the soil is such that they have to walk on stilts. In the Department of Gascony there are great level plains covered with stunted bushes of dry heath, and these waste lands have a soil that is so muddy that the slightest rainfall makes them practically impassable by ordinary methods of pedestrianism. As the poor people of Gascony have to go about their work just the same, they have, accordingly, become a stilt-walking people, and men, women and children are to be seen at all seasons of the year high up in the air on their stilts, trudging through waste lands, carrying their baskets and bundles. The stilts they use are about six feet long.

The shepherds of Landes all go on stilts, and they think little or nothing of being perched up from daylight until evening, with their feet on a level with a man's head. The shepherd is provided with a stout staff with a flap, which makes a comfortable seat when turned down. On this he quietly sits and watches his flock, and at the same time knits or spins with a distaff fastened to his girdle. There is a rest to support the foot, with a stirrup and a strong strap, and, higher up, a band of leather holds the top of the stilt firmly to the leg, somewhat below the knee.

Some of the stilts are made especially for fancy walking and tricks, and the man mounted on them is gifted as with seven-leagued boots, for he can cover the ground at a great rate, often traversing as much as eight or ten miles an hour. The lower end of the stilt, which touches the ground, is usually capped with a sheep bone to strengthen it.

The old shepherds, often accompanied by their wives, children and even grandchildren, mounted on diminutive stilts, wear shaggy, sleeveless sheepskin coats and gaiters. They also wear the beret, a kind of tam-o'shanter, and in the old days carried a gun to protect their flocks. The old women wear the quaintest of bonnets, like an inverted coalscuttle, perched above their old brown faces, crossed by a thousand lines and wrinkles. Mounted on his stilts, the shepherd can watch his flock and see that the sheep do not get into mischief. He carries a long stick as a crook, and when tired he uses it as a tripod, whereon he calmly sits for hours at a time, smoking, knitting or watching his flock. Many of the women manage their stilts as well as the men, though they have an easier task, since theirs are not such high ones. Some of these women show such great skill in manipulating the stilts that they can maintain their equilibrium while they pick up stones, gather flowers or perform other astonishing feats.



STILT SHEPHERDS IN A MODERN ARCADIA.
An Interesting Scene in the Department of Gascony.

The Landes shepherd is a great feature at weddings, as, fife in hand, he and his followers repair to the church to welcome the bride, and afterward they lead the dance from the church back to the home. The great point in these dances is never to leave go hands, and to follow the leader blindly.

The Landes peasants are a gay folk, who always seem to make the best of their hard lot, and manage to remain cheerful although they are generally miserably poor and frequently fever stricken. In the more remote parts of the country the postman goes his rounds on stilts, and can thus do long distances in a short space of time. Mounted on his wooden legs, he is independent of brooks, marshes and hedges, and goes straight on, checked by nothing.

THE REST WAS SILENCE.

"WOMEN must consider it a dreadful fate to be an old maid," mused Mr. Chugwater.

"They do, Josiah," said Mrs. Chugwater. "Look what terrible noodles they sometimes marry to escape it."

And Josiah rubbed his chin and said nothing.—*Answers.*

THREE REASONS.

THE MINISTER — Mackintosh, why don't you come to church now?

MACKINTOSH — For three reasons, sir. Firstly, I dinna like yer theology; secondly, I dinna like yer singin'; and thirdly, it was in your kirk I first met my wife."