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The Free State of the Congo

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the sea. Travelling along this valley, we reached the King's settlement at Whatiwhatihoe and crossed the *aukati* line forming the northern boundary of the King Country on the night of the 18th of May, 1883.

Previous to reading of the paper,

The PRESIDENT said that Mr. Kerry-Nicholls was not a colonist but a traveller whom a laudable curiosity had led to Australia, and then on to New Zealand, where he spent eighteen months. He had a great deal to say about a region which was almost, if not entirely, new to the members of the Society. No doubt many now present heard the interesting paper which was read by the Rev. Mr. Green last year on the Alps of the Southern Island of New Zealand. Mr. Kerry-Nicholls would not be able to give a description of the same tremendous glaciers or lofty mountains, but he would describe a district quite as interesting and as curious, different from that explored by Mr. Green, and still more different from ordinary European countries. The part of New Zealand in which Mr. Kerry-Nicholls had travelled was inhabited by the Maoris to the entire exclusion of all European settlers. He must not be understood to say that all the Maoris were collected in that district; but whilst they were distributed over considerable portions of the island, the particular part to be described in the paper—on the west of the island, was inhabited exclusively by the Maoris. After a good deal of experience of the white man, the Maoris had come to the conclusion that if they desired to maintain any portion of their country which they could call their own and inhabit in the fashion of their ancestors, they must keep out the invading white man, and he thought that no one would be prepared to say that they were wrong in that view; for the natural instinct of the white man was to spread everywhere, and wherever the white man and the coloured man came into collision, it was generally but a very short time before the coloured man disappeared. The region was full of great interest, and was inhabited by a people admitted to be among the finest of the so-called savage races in the world.

On the conclusion of the paper,

The PRESIDENT in proposing a vote of thanks to Mr. Kerry-Nicholls, said that the meeting was no doubt satisfied that his opening expressions as to the novelty, strangeness, and peculiarities of the country had been fully justified. They had been carried by the lecturer into a region of extraordinary beauty and interest, and he hoped that Englishmen would not be tempted to take possession of the districts which had been retained by the native inhabitants, who seemed to, be very good neighbours. He trusted that good faith would be kept with the people in spite of the temptations to possess such a beautiful region.

The Free State of the Congo. By E. DELMAR MORGAN, F.R.G.S.

Map, p. 272.

ON the 12th of September, 1876, a movement was initiated by the King of the Belgians which has resulted in important events for Africa and great changes in the relations of European powers to the Equatorial regions of the continent. At the King's invitation, representative geographers and friends of Africa, of six European nations (besides Belgium), met at a Conference in the Royal Palace at Brussels, to discuss the question of the exploration and the civilisation of Africa and the means of opening up the interior of the continent to the commerce, industry, and scientific

enterprise of the civilised world, and more particularly to consider what measures should be adopted to extinguish the terrible scourge of slavery, which, though almost stopped on the coasts, was known to continue its desolating influence over wide and populous tracts in the interior of that continent. Among English geographers who took part in these deliberations were the late Sir Bartle Frere, Sir Henry Rawlinson, Sir Rutherford Alcock, Colonel Grant, and Lieutenant Cameron.*

In his opening address the King said that the subject which united them was well worthy to rank among those which occupied the friends of humanity, and that the neutral territory of Belgium appeared to him to offer peculiar facilities for initiating an international movement such as they had in view. The Conference lasted three days, and before separating the assembly passed certain resolutions and declarations setting forth the objects and defining the limits of the work to be done.

Such was the origin of the International African Association, the progress of whose work has been from time to time recorded in our pages. In pursuance of its programme National Committees were to be formed in each of the countries represented, to collect funds for the purpose of co-operating in the despatch of exploring expeditions and the founding of stations, as centres of civilising influence in the interior of the continent.

But international co-operation was of short duration. In England, after very careful discussion in the Council of the Royal Geographical Society, it was decided that African exploration would be more effectually prosecuted by England, and the necessary funds more readily obtained, through separate national enterprise than by international association. Instead of the direct co-operation invited by the King of the Belgians, the "African Exploration Fund" was established, in March 1877; and with the public subscriptions obtained the expedition of Mr. Keith Johnston and his successor Mr. Joseph Thomson was despatched to explore the direct route to Lakes Nyassa and Tanganyika.

Nor was the international character of the movement long maintained in other countries where committees were established; in fact, the

* The following is a list of the members of the Conference taken chiefly from notes kindly supplied to us by Colonel J. A. Grant. For *Austria-Hungary*: Baron de Hofmann; Comte Edward Zichy; Fer. von Hochstetter; Lieutenant Lux. For *Belgium*: Baron Lambertmont; M. Banning; M. Emile de Borchgrave; M. Couvreur; M. le Comte Gobler d'Alviella; M. James; M. de Laveleye; M. Quairier; M. Sainetelette; M. Smalderl; M. Van Biervliet; M. Leon Vander Bossche; M. Jean Van Volxem. For *England*: Sir Bartle Frere; Sir Rutherford Alcock; Admiral Sir Leopold Heath; Major-General Sir Henry Rawlinson; Colonel J. A. Grant; Commander Cameron; W. Mackinnon, Esq.; Sir Fowell Buxton, Bart.; Sir John Kennaway, Bart., M.P. For *France*: Admiral le Baron de la Roncière de Noury; M. Henri Duveyrier; The Marquis de Compiègne; M. D'Abbadie; M. Maunoir. For *Germany*: Baron von Richthofen; Dr. Nachtigal; Dr. Schweinfurth; Herr Gerhard Rohlfs. For *Italy*: The Chevalier Cristoforo Negri. For *Russia*: M. Semenof. Sir Harry Verney, Bart., M.P., was living in Brussels during the sitting of the Conference, and took some part in it. Those named for England, France, Austria, and Germany, resided in the King's Palace.

movement, as we all know, degenerated rapidly into selfish national annexation of territory. The objects which had been set forth at the Brussels Conference could never have been attained had it not been for the persevering and generous efforts of the King of the Belgians, and the liberal expenditure of his private means. The Central Committee at Brussels, over which he presided,* sent out in the course of eight years no fewer than seven large expeditions from the East Coast towards Lake Tanganyika, the first and most important station being that of Karéma on its eastern shore.

Stanley's discovery of the Congo as a great highway into the interior happening about this time, gave a new impulse and direction to the work. Attention was now directed to the Western Coast. The King established a preliminary committee of inquiry called the "*Comité d'études du Haut-Congo*," under which Stanley was engaged and sent out on the mission which has led to such important consequences. The results of this first expedition encouraged the Brussels committee to enlarge its design. The *Comité d'Études* was expanded into the "*Association Internationale du Congo*," with the ultimate aim of establishing a Free State of the Congo.

In 1883, owing to the development of the undertaking, it was decided to establish the Association on a firmer footing by obtaining from the Powers the recognition of its sovereign rights acquired by treaties from the native chiefs of the Congo and Niadi-Kwilu region. As a preliminary step it was necessary to define the rights thus acquired. This was discussed and decided according to international law and precedent, by the late Professor Arntz, of the University of Brussels, Sir Travers Twiss, and other eminent jurists. Among parallel cases cited were the British North Borneo Company, and Liberia. Negotiations were opened with the United States of America through Mr. Sanford, formerly U.S. Minister at Brussels, who, after retiring from the diplomatic service, had become a member of the Association. Early in 1884 he took his departure for New York, where his overtures were most favourably received. The American press, especially the *New York Herald*, published important articles on the work of the Association. The President, in his annual message, made a declaration of an exceedingly friendly character, and the proposed recognition by the United States of the sovereignty of the Association was finally submitted to the Senate.

The following extracts from Senator Morgan's report from the Committee on Foreign Relations may be found interesting :—

"The President in his annual message to this Congress, expresses the sentiment of the people of the United States on the subject of our future relations with the valley of the Congo, in Africa.

* The Members of the Committee were as follow :—*President*, the King of the Belgians; *Members*, Dr. Nachtigal (Germany), Mr. Sanford (United States), M. de Quatrefages (France); *General Secretary*, Colonel Strauch; *Treasurer*, M. Galezot.

"Our attitude towards that country is exceptional, and our interest in its people is greatly enhanced by the fact that more than one-tenth of our population is descended from the negro races in Africa.

"The people of the United States, with but little assistance from the Government, have established a free republic in Liberia, with a constitution modelled after our own, and under the control of the negro race. Its area is 14,300 square miles; its population is about 1,200,000 souls; its commerce is valuable; its government is successful, and its people are prosperous.

"The necessity for a negro colony in Liberia was suggested by the fact that slaves found in vessels captured for violations of the slave-trade laws and treaties were required to be returned to Africa when that was practicable, and it was impossible, and it would have been useless and cruel, to send them back to the localities where they were first enslaved. Humanity prompted certain private citizens of the United States to organise the American Colonisation Society in aid of the return of captured slaves to Africa, and to find a congenial asylum and home for negroes who were emancipated in the United States. Henry Clay was, for many years, President of this Association, and assisted it with the influence of his great name and broad philanthropy.

"The success of the Liberian colony has demonstrated the usefulness of that system of dealing with a social question which is, to the people of the United States, of the highest importance. It has also established a recognised precedent in favour of the right of untitled individuals to found States in the interests of civilisation in barbarous countries, through the consent of the local authorities, and it has given confidence to those who look to the justice of the nations for a restoration of the emancipated Africans to their own country, if they choose to return to it.

"This great duty has, so far, been left entirely to the efforts of citizens of the United States, and it has been supported almost exclusively by their personal contributions. The governments of the world have been slow even to recognise the State thus founded by the courage and means of private citizens, but it is now firmly established in the family of nations, and is everywhere recognised as a free and independent nation.

"This pleasing history of progress, attended with peace and prosperity in Liberia, has given rise to a feeling of earnest interest amongst the people of the United States in the questions which arise from the recent discovery by their countryman, H. M. Stanley, of the great river which drains Equatorial Africa. They rejoice in the revelation that this natural highway affords navigation for steamers extending more than half the distance across the continent, and opens to civilisation the valley of the Congo, with its 900,000 square miles of fertile territory, and its 50,000,000 of people, who are soon to become most useful factors in the increase of the productions of the earth and in swelling the volume of commerce.¹

"The movements of the International African Association which, with a statement of its purposes, are referred to in the letter of the Secretary of State, appended to this report, are in the direction of the civilisation of the negro population of Africa by opening up their country to free commercial relations with foreign countries. As a necessary incident of this praiseworthy work, which is intended, in the broadest sense, for the equal advantage of all foreign nations seeking trade and commerce in the Congo country, the African International Association has acquired, by purchase from the native chiefs, the right of occupancy of several places for their stations and depôts. The property so acquired is claimed only for the Association, which is composed of persons from various countries, and it could not, therefore, be placed under the shelter of any single foreign flag.

"The African International Association established its stations, and opened

roads leading from one to another around the falls of the Congo in the same way that the older factories had been established, with the additional fact in their favour that their settlements were always preceded by an open agreement with the local government in the form of a treaty. A flag was as necessary for the purposes of their settlement, and as an indication of their right, and to designate the places under their control, as it was to the slave traders, whose only advantage is that they have been in possession a long time for the purposes of nefarious traffic in slaves, while the Association has been in possession only a short time for the benign purposes of introducing civilisation into that country.

"Having no foreign flag that they could justly claim, they adopted a flag and displayed it—a golden star in a field of blue—the symbol of hope to a strong but ignorant people, and of prosperity through peace. The native people instinctively regarded that as the first banner they had seen that promised them goodwill and security, and they readily yielded to it their confidence.

"The golden star of the banner of the International Association represents hospitality to the people and commerce of all nations in the Free States of the Congo; civilisation, order, peace, and security to the persons and property of those who visit the Congo country, as well as to its inhabitants; and if, in the promotion of these good purposes, it lawfully represents powers ceded or delegated to the Association by the local governments necessary to make them effectual, it does not thereby offend against humanity, nor unlawfully usurp authority in derogation of the rights of any nation upon the earth."

The discussion in the Senate lasted several days, resulting in a vote favourable to the Association; the President was authorised to recognise its flag as that of a friendly Government, and declarations were shortly afterwards exchanged between the Government of the United States and the Agent of the Association. About the same time a convention was made with France, which was a virtual recognition by that Power of its sovereign rights.

Soon afterwards a Conference on West African affairs was convened at Berlin, the scope of its deliberations comprising freedom of commerce in the basin of the Congo, free navigation on the Congo and Niger rivers, and the establishment of regulations for future acquisitions of territory in Africa.

It would be impossible to enter fully into the several provisions of the *Acte Générale* passed by this Conference; it will suffice to give briefly their general import with their bearing on political geography, referring the reader to the accompanying map.

The principle of Free Commerce in its widest sense was established in the immense basin of the Congo, a maritime belt of 360 miles along the Atlantic was placed on the same footing, and its future extension to the East Coast made probable on a still vaster scale. In this immense territory no import duties will be levied for twenty years to come, nor will such dues ever be exacted in the possessions of the International Association, which constitute by far the largest part. Natives and white men are placed on the same footing, and have similar rights guaranteed to them. All religions are tolerated, whilst the protection of the natives and the

proscription of the slave-trade are to be the fundamental principles of public law in the States and Colonies of Central Africa.

It was further enacted that special measures are to be adopted both by land and sea against the slave-trade, which continues to be the great scourge of Central Africa, and one of the principal obstacles to civilisation.

It was provided that States constituted in the basin of the Congo, and Powers founding colonies there, will have the right of neutralising their possessions either perpetually or temporarily.

One of the dispositions adopted by the Conference tends to prevent European wars from extending to Africa, and in the event of disagreements arising in Africa itself between the Powers of the basin of the Congo, recourse will be had to mediation, if not arbitration.

The free navigation of the Congo and its affluents was proclaimed, comprising an extent of about 5000 kiloms. (3106 miles) open to flags of all nations, and what applies to the river will, according to a somewhat original idea, apply also to railway, canal, or road, supplying the place of any obstructed part of the river. The transit dues must only be such as will compensate the cost of works executed in the bed of the river or commercial establishments erected on its banks.

An International Commission, to which each of the contracting Powers has the right to appoint a delegate, is specially charged to see that all nations benefit on an equal footing from the freedom of navigation and transit. It will at the same time have to provide, in concert with the riverine powers, for the improvement or maintenance of the *régime fluviale*, the security of navigators, and the carrying out of necessary improvements.

All works and establishments are neutralised in time of war, and lastly, the Act passed declares that the navigation of the Congo shall remain open in time of war for ships of all nations, both belligerent as well as neutral, and that private property will be respected, even though under an enemy's flag, on all the waters governed by the Act.

These dispositions constitute a remarkable progress in international law, and confirm those principles adopted by Belgium, and to which she owes the emancipation of her principal river. They moreover embody the spirit of all the treaties concluded by the Association, and set forth the objects it has pursued.

While the Conference was sitting at Berlin the Association concluded treaties with England, Denmark, Italy, Austria, Holland, Belgium, Russia, Spain, and the United Kingdom of Sweden and Norway; whereby all these Powers agreed to recognise its flag as that of a friendly State, the Association engaging on its side to accord to the subjects of these Powers full rights.

A further important negotiation was concluded, during the meeting of the Conference, in reference to the territorial limits of the new Free

State and those of the French and Portuguese possessions in the same region—much disputed matters, which were not settled until after long and interrupted negotiation. A final arrangement was, however, happily arrived at, and a treaty was signed at Paris, and on the 14th February an analogous one was concluded with Portugal.

By these treaties the question of the ancient claims of Portugal to the mouths of the Congo was definitely decided. Had not it been thus disposed of, serious complications might have arisen in the future, and the whole work of the Association been marred. Instead of this a definite agreement, sanctioned by all the Powers, has been made, and a new region opened to the commerce and industry of the civilised world.

The frontiers of the three Powers will be best studied on the map illustrating the present paper; but I may mention that by the convention with Portugal this Power gets the south or left bank of the Congo, from its mouth to Nokki, a distance of 90 miles, where there is a Portuguese and a French factory, the Association retaining the right bank with 23 miles of coast extending from Banana to a point south of Kabinda Bay. Here Portuguese territory again begins, so as to inclose the district round Kabinda, Molembó, Landana, and Massabé where the Association has long been established. This Portuguese *enclave*, as it is called, extends inland for 30 or 40 miles, as far east as the Lucullu, a left tributary of the Chiloango. From Nokki the Portuguese frontier runs east to the Kwango, a left tributary of the Congo, and then turns south. By the convention with France the Association yields up to this Power the whole of the valley of the Kwilu, called on its upper reaches the Niadi, where it was in possession of large tracts of country, and had established no less than eighteen stations. In exchange for this concession it retains the left bank of Stanley Pool which France had claimed through an act of annexation of De Brazza's lieutenant, Serjeant Malamine. Above Manyanga and up the Congo to a point beyond the river Likona, this river forms the boundary between African France and the Free State. Beyond this again the territory of the latter widens considerably, comprising a wide unexplored belt on either side of the river to Lakes Tanganyika and Bangweolo.

We have endeavoured to show the origin of the International Association, and have briefly traced the events which led to the formation of the Free State of the Congo; let us say a few words on the present position of its affairs and its immediate prospects.

The constitution of the New African State is not before us. Its administration will, no doubt, be guided by the same wisdom and foresight as have directed the work of the International Association. But some preliminary difficulties have to be met. Hitherto the porters employed on the Congo have mostly been men from the East Coast, natives of Zanzibar and its district, a lighter coloured race, probably owing to infusion of Arab blood, than the negro of Central Africa.

These Zanzibaris have been of great use as intermediaries between the Europeans and the natives, whose language, a dialect of the Bantu, sufficiently resembles the Swahili to allow of their understanding one another. Being farther advanced in civilisation and Mohammedans by religion, they have held themselves above the natives, for whose fetishism they have a contempt. These men, whose term of service is now expired or in course of expiration, prefer returning to Zanzibar rather than remaining on the Congo, and it is reported no more will be engaged. In future the Association must depend entirely on native porters to supply their places. Of these some 1200 were, by last accounts, carrying loads to Stanley Pool, of whom from 500 to 600 were transporting the steamer *Stanley* to the Pool. A regular supply of native porters under present conditions is of great moment, as until a railway is made, communication between Vivi and Isanghila, and between Manyanga and Leopoldville, must be kept open by them. Another trouble is the necessity of providing an armed force to protect the stations in the event of attack, and give a semblance, if not a reality, of strength to the establishment. The experiment of recruiting Houssas from the Niger districts has been tried, and failed. These blacks have warlike instincts and a soldierly bearing. They are organised into a police force at Lagos, and took part as auxiliaries in the Ashanti campaign. On the Congo, however, they have not been a success, and appear to have been troublesome and shown insubordination. In future, therefore, they will no longer be employed, but it will be difficult to find efficient substitutes. A local militia might be organised, but that would take time, and it is doubtful whether natives can be trusted at present with rifles, and how far they may be relied upon in an emergency.

It is pleasant to turn from these clouds in the Congo Free State and record its triumphs. From the last number of the 'Mouvement Géographique' published at Brussels, we learn that Mr. Tisdell, United States representative, has arrived at Vivi, and was proceeding thence to Stanley Pool. His Government was the first to recognise the sovereignty of the Free State, and they have also been the first to accredit their representative to it. It is also reported that the *Stanley*, the new stern-wheel steamer for the navigation of the Upper Congo, was approaching her destination, whither she is being transported in sections, and by this time she will probably have arrived at Leopoldville. The *Stanley* will make the sixth steamer launched on the Upper Congo, the other five being the *En Avant*, *Association Internationale*, *Royal*, and *Eclaireur* belonging to the Association, and the *Peace* belonging to the Baptist Mission.