SUGGESTIONS FOR PROFITABLE ENTER- PRISE IN BRITISH EAST AFRICA

THE enormous amount we pay yearly to America for raw cotton—£60,000,000—is really startling. Why should we lose our gold, when we have our own vast territories so well adapted for the cultivation of such a valuable commodity?

In British East Africa, of all products known to be adapted to a profitable cultivation, cotton stands foremost. Wherever you go along the coast zone you see the cotton plant healthy and thriving simply by native crude cultivation, or in its semi-wild state; that it survives at all under such conditions speaks volumes, and its luxuriant appearance attests the extreme suitability of the soil and climate for its production. The raising of it is admirably suited to the natives. I do not know of any people in Africa so suited and efficient for this class of work as the Wa-pokomo, Wa-nyika and the Waboni; they are most willing and intelligent, but deplorably poor. Labour is, therefore, cheap and plentiful in this district, and it would be a great blessing to them if some enterprising men would take the matter in hand. I was very much struck with the soil, which is so well adapted for the cultivation of cotton; it consists of a rich reddish loam with some sand, the land is somewhat rolling, therefore easy to cultivate and irrigate, and I am of opinion that as much as 600lbs. per acre per annum could be raised in two crops—one in April and one in October—the two seasons correspond with the advent of the S.W. and W.E. Monsoons, and are locally known as Masika Mku and Masika Mdogo.

I was very much interested in the result of a few cotton seeds I got a native to plant, or rather he scratched the ground and threw them in, and on my return from the

interior several months later, I found they had come on remarkably well without any care, being about 15in. high. The small sample of native cotton, that I gathered on my last visit, is exceedingly fine, of fair length and strength, a good white colour, and nearly equal to the best Egyptian; it would rank with what is known as Sea Island, on an average of years it ought to bring about 8d. per lb., and the seed is worth about £7 per ton.

After carefully considering the matter, I firmly believe that a good sized estate could be made to bear its maiden crop under £15 per acre. I should strongly advise the upland kind of plant, because its product is greater in weight while it is much easier to clean from the seed and with the genial climate of East Africa its length would be greater than that grown in other parts of the world.

Other plants, which are indigenous to East Africa, are the Fibre and Castor Oil plants, in fact, the *Sansevieria* or Bow String Hemp covers hundreds of square miles, and very little capital and labour are necessary for the instantaneous extraction of this valuable fibre.

COST OF MACHINERY :—

1. Portable Engine f.o.b. London	£150
2. Foulkes' Hand Supply Machines	£170
Counter Gear and Packing	£50

These machines would produce about 14cwt. per diem. Value of fibre about £30 per ton. The Bow String Hemp is preferable to any other, because of its strength and resistance to salt water, which qualities were conclusively proved by the voyage of the *Challenger*, and the great difficulties hitherto experienced of scutching these plants to place the fibre on the market have been overcome by my machine. The machines are made by Messrs. Carter and Co., Dunstable, in two sizes—the large one with an automatic supply table, and the small one to be fed by hand.

My reasons for encouraging the cultivation of the *Sansevieria* are that it contains 3 per cent. of fibre to 1½ per cent. or 1¾ per cent. of any other fibrous plant.

As the *Sansevieria* thrives best in shade, I should recommend the Castor Oil plant for this purpose. Wherever you go, especially a little distance from the coast, you see these growing practically as weeds, and as the oil is in greater demand year by year we should encourage the cultivation, which the native can accomplish with ease.

One of the main assets of this coast country was Rubber, in the vine form most favoured by manufacturers; but it is deplorable to see how the natives have been allowed to practically denude the forests along the coast; in all directions you see the vines hanging, having been cropped off close to the roots. With a little method, the natives could be taught how to tap the vines properly, and with new suckers coming up every year they would soon recover; after the third year it would be safe to tap about $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. from each young vine.

The principal timber that would pay to export are two kinds of Mahogany, a bastard Ebony, Cedar or pencil wood, which is now used for fuel, and the much dreaded Mangrove, the bark of which contains valuable properties for tanning, and the wood is most useful for buildings and railway sleepers in the Tropics, on account of its power of resistance to the ravages of the white ant.

The clearance of the Mangrove swamps would be a great factor in the healthiness and development of this fertile coast zone.

JOSEPH FOULKES