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The Congo Free State

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PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY
AND MONTHLY RECORD OF GEOGRAPHY.

The Congo Free State.

By Colonel Sir FRANCIS DE WINTON, R.A., K.C.M.G.

(Read at the Evening Meeting, June 7th, 1886.)

Map, p. 680.

IN presenting myself before you this evening, I may be permitted a few words of explanation as to the reasons why I am here to-night to read a paper on the "New Free State of the Congo." The rise and origin of this State is now well known, and its history has been written by my friend Mr. Stanley. By that history you learn of the perseverance and high-minded philanthropy of his Majesty the King of the Belgians, and of the energy and boundless resource of Mr. Stanley. If I allude to these two points, it is because in my opinion they are the two most striking points of that book, and I shall never cease to admire the faith of the King and the courage of his lieutenant, a faith that never tired, a courage that never was daunted. My work began when that book ends, but it was very different from the work of my predecessor. His, as that history tells us, was the exploration, establishment of stations, and acquisition of territory; mine was to bring that labour under administrative control and weld it into a useful mass. To do this I had naturally to travel, to learn the manners and customs of the natives, to encourage exploration of all parts of our territory, to promote commerce, and so forth, and in now proposing to give you the result of my experiences I beg your kind indulgence, for I am not an explorer, and with the exception of the Kasai I cannot travel over any new ground; neither, to my sorrow, do I possess the necessary attainments which would enable me to throw some light on the many problems of science which are to be ascertained in this interesting region.

The recent explorations of the Upper Congo are so important that they form a fitting commencement of any paper which attempts to describe that region, or which tries to give an account of the progress that is taking place in the development of the country.

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Many of these explorations happened during the period when I had the honour to administer the affairs of this State, and I should be wanting in my duty, in that respect, which we all feel for those who risk their lives in endeavours to conquer the unknown and so add to our geographical knowledge, to those who by their intrepidity and perseverance have conducted these explorations and brought them to a successful issue, if I did not give them the foremost place.

The most important of these explorations—I use the word important because of the difficulties which had to be encountered at the outset, and because of its general completeness—is that of Lieut. Wissmann and his companions, Dr. Wolff, Lieuts. Möeller and François, and Messrs. Schneider and Buchner. These five Germans left the coast nearly three years ago, and marching to the east in two columns through a very difficult country for about 800 miles, effected a junction in about 22° E. long. and 6° S. lat. in what is known as the country of the Baluba tribe. This tribe had been visited on a former occasion by Lieut. Wissmann in company with that lamented and enterprising traveller Dr. Pogge, and friendly relations had then been established between them.

They received a warm welcome, and shortly after their arrival a site was chosen and buildings were begun. The king or head chief of the Baluba moved his village to their neighbourhood, cattle were purchased, seeds planted, and in six months the station was in a thriving and prosperous condition.

But this was only the commencement of the real work of this expedition. Its organisation and equipment had been furnished by the King of the Belgians, and its true object was the exploration of the river Kasai, whose many tributaries had been crossed from time to time by explorers and travellers, of whom Dr. Livingstone was the pioneer, traversing the continent from the Zambesi basin on the east coast to the Portuguese possessions on the west coast. From the number and size of these tributaries it was naturally conjectured that they formed the head waters of some mighty stream; but the true direction of its course, the nature of its bed, its capacity for navigation, the disposition of its inhabitants, the point of its junction with the Congo, &c., all were unknown, and these were the problems which Lieut. Wissmann and his companions undertook to solve. Let us for a few minutes follow their adventurous exploit.

The station completed, one of their number, Mr. Buchner, was left in charge. A spot was selected on the banks of the Lulua, one of the tributaries of the Kasai, trees of suitable wood were felled, and the work of building a fleet of canoes was rapidly pushed forward. I should mention that it had been previously arranged by his Majesty that Lieut. Wissmann should engage a number of Baluba natives to accompany him on his journey down the Kasai, with the view of introducing them to the Congo, and so persuade them to enlist as police or militia in the service

of the new State. Such was Lieut. Wissmann's influence over these people, that the chief Kalemba, and his successor Chingenga, with about 200 of their followers, agreed to accompany him, and they accordingly embarked about April 1885 in twenty large roughly-built canoes on the waters of the Lulua. For the first few days, navigation was difficult on account of rapids, several accidents happened and two natives were drowned. On the 6th day they reached the junction of the Lulua and Luebo. This junction forms the extreme end, towards the N.W. of the Baluba kingdom, the Lulua being the dividing line between the Baluba and Bakuba; the Luebo separating the Baluba from the Bashilela.

From this point navigation became easier, no more rapids were encountered, and the Lulua soon after joined the Kasai, which in its turn received the waters of the Sankuru, and thus reinforced, flowed on a grand river with a W.N.W. course, and the little fleet of canoes floating on its waters advanced each day towards the goal of their hopes and desires, the Congo.

They were not without adventures. At one place they were treacherously attacked by natives, while some of their canoes were entangled in one of the many narrow channels of that part of the river; and in another place they killed seven elephants in about as many minutes. After about forty-two days they sighted the Congo, which at first they took to be a large lake, for the continued course of the Kasai W.N.W. puzzled them. All previous ideas giving it a more northerly direction.

On approaching the junction, the flag of the station of Kwa-mouth was sighted, and then they knew that the object of their journey was gained, that the goal had been won. Three days after, they descended the Congo, and arrived at the station of Leopoldville, thus accomplishing a most adventurous voyage with complete success.

For some months I had been expecting news of Lieut. Wissmann, and had despatched certain goods, sent from Europe for the use of his party, to the Equator station on the Upper Congo, and it was my intention to have been at Leopoldville to meet him on his arrival at Stanley Pool. I was however detained on the Lower Congo longer than I had anticipated, and did not leave Vivi till the 29th July. On my way up country, I learned of the arrival of the expedition, and at Lutete I met Dr. Wolff, who had been sent by Lieut. Wissmann to meet me, and to see about arrangements for taking the Baluba people back to their country.

I reached Leopoldville on the 17th of August, and having decided to use the *Stanley*, a new stern-wheel steamer, which had recently been dragged overland to the waters of the Upper Congo, at great trouble and expense, to transport these people to their homes, the work of putting her together and getting everything ready was pushed forward as rapidly as possible.

On the 5th of October, the *Stanley* left Leopoldville with 238 people on board, and about 18 tons of cargo. She was heavily laden, and it was her first voyage, so I accompanied the expedition; and in thirty-five days after leaving Stanley Pool we reached the junction of the Lulua and Luebo, the point before alluded to. Here everything was put on shore, and the *Stanley* remained four days in order to assist Dr. Wolff and his party to clear sufficient space for a new station. We left on the 11th of November, and on the ninth day reached Leopoldville, taking 137 hours to steam up the river, and 56 hours to come down. I forgot to mention that a small steamer, the *En Avant*, accompanied this expedition. She was left at Luluaburg, in order to enable Dr. Wolff to continue explorations on the Kasai and the Sankuru. Lieut. Wissmann, to my great regret, did not form one of the party. At the time of our departure he was suffering from a severe attack of asthma, and the medical men advised an immediate change to a more northern climate.

I am happy to state that he returned before I left the coast, and by this time is again among the Balubas and continuing his useful work.

If I do not to-night say as much as I might about this noble river, it is because Lieut. Wissmann and Dr. Wolff are preparing an exhaustive report of all their journey and discoveries, with a full account of everything connected with that interesting region, and it would not be right for me to anticipate their account.

I can, however, tell you that the Kasai is a river presenting no serious difficulties as regards navigation; that it offers with its affluents a large field for commerce, and that its discovery opens up a vast territory to the merchant, the missionary, and the explorer.

Its general features may be briefly described as follows. The average width, after junction with the Sankuru, is about three-quarters of a mile, the breadth of valley through which it passes varies from two to five miles. Hills on either side, rising very gently, are seldom more than 100 feet in height. The average velocity of current is about three miles an hour. In many places navigation is somewhat impeded by sand-banks, but with a little care, by avoiding short cuts, and following the strong water, these portions can be easily navigated. The *Stanley* drew about 2 feet 3½ inches, and the *En Avant* about 2 feet 6 inches.

For the first one hundred miles after leaving Luluaburg the banks on either side are covered with dense forest—forest primeval, judging from the huge trees springing from out of the dense mass of foliage which fringe the river margin—trees of every shape and form, with endless variety of leaf and beauty of colour.

This is the home of the indiarubber-plant, the orchilla weed, and the different kinds of gum-bearing trees—also of the bamboo palm, and creepers almost without number, which some day will be found to have a value in the markets of the world. Gradually as we descend the

stream the forest disappears, the valley widens, grassy glades become more frequent, till at length the country becomes an almost open prairie or savannah, dotted here and there with clumps of trees, and the river twists and turns among the low sandy islands, which must constantly change, as they have no vegetation on them except low grass and mimosa shrubs. Here and there are groups of palms, but the scenery is generally the same, and somewhat monotonous.

This section of the river does not seem to be thickly populated. A few huts are dotted on the islands, apparently used for fishing purposes, but on our return we found that the larger villages were placed inland. The last seventy miles before reaching the junction of the Quango navigation is better, the river narrows, and the two banks, especially the left, are thickly populated.

As regards the natives of this region, I saw but little difference between them and the natives of the Congo, except that they were about one degree lower in the scale of civilisation. Judging from their ornaments—they had no beads or other commercial goods—they had never traded with the coast. Many had never seen a white man before. None had ever seen a steamer. To whistle or blow-off steam was enough to stampede a whole village, and what made the wheel go round was a source of endless comment. At last it was decided by one very wise old man that the boilers contained a sort of devil *mundella*, or white man, who was kept inside and fed with wood and fire; that this devil was very strong, and it was he who worked and made the wheel go round. It was not such a bad idea after all.

With one exception all the natives we met were friendly—this exception was the tribe of Basongamino, the same who so treacherously attacked Lieut. Wissmann on his journey down the Kasai. They occupy both banks for about forty miles in about long. E. 21°, and are a troublesome race, always quarrelling with their neighbours, and robbing canoes as they pass up and down the river; in fact, they had completely stopped the navigation of the Kasai as far as native trade was concerned.

With the friendly disposed natives we soon established good relations; they were very anxious for trade, and were ready to barter their arms, which consisted of spears, knives, and bows and arrows, for our goods. One of their customs in trading is to break a small twig, or piece of wood, as the concluding ceremony of a bargain, otherwise it is not complete, and their respective goods can be reclaimed. One afternoon, when we were camped on the Loange river, my servant came rushing in to tell me he had bought a good sized goat for an old 2-lb. meat tin. He was in such a hurry to communicate the news that he forgot to break the customary twig over the transaction. The natives, on the other hand, who had sold the goat, were so delighted at their bargain that they rushed off into the bush, the transaction not being complete, lest they should

have to give up the précieux treasure—the old meat tin—they had obtained.

We were frequently urged to stay at different places in order to allow the natives to bring their ivory for trade; but time is a stern arbiter, and there was so much work for the *Stanley*, that I was reluctantly obliged to push on. From what I ascertained I am of opinion that the basin of the Kasai will be found to contain large quantities of ivory. It also, I should judge, from the numerous tracks seen at our halting-places, abounds in game, especially elephant and buffalo, while the river swarms with hippopotamus. Of bird life I saw but little, except grey parrots; but one night we camped near a colony of bats, who, as the sun went down, came out in amazing numbers. They were about the size of a pigeon and lived in trees. For the entomologist and botanist the forest region of the Kasai offers a brilliant field for research. At Luluaburg, the quantity and beauty of the different varieties of butterflies would gladden the heart of a collector, though he might object to a small kind of bee, as we did, which being disturbed by our camp on shore, in revenge took possession of the *Stanley*, and made their presence felt.

Next in importance to those of Lieut. Wissmann and his brave comrades, are the discoveries and explorations made by Mr. Grenfell, of the Baptist Mission. During the past two years, in the little missionary steamer the *Peace*, he has ascended and explored the Mobangi, Juapa, Loika, and Maringa rivers, besides other smaller tributaries of the Congo, thus extending our knowledge in various directions for a distance of at least 1500 miles. As an account of these discoveries is about to be published in the 'Proceedings' of this Society, I shall only allude to them very briefly. The most important of these rivers is the Mobangi. Mr. Grenfell ascended it as far as $4^{\circ} 30'$ N. latitude. He found it a noble river, resembling in many respects the Kasai. As he proceeded northward he perceived certain differences in the natives as compared with those he was accustomed to on the Congo. These latter are known by the generic name of Bantu, while the Mobangi native appeared to have characteristics similar to the natives of the Cameroons and the Gold Coast, which properly belong to the Fan tribe. As these rivers are explored, and the border lands of these two great nations, the Bantu and Fan, become better known, an interesting study will be afforded to the ethnologist.

A little beyond 4° N. lat., Mr. Grenfell had to return, but not before he had ascertained that the course of the Mobangi had a decided tendency to the eastward.

Now the size and the volume of water of this magnificent tributary of the Congo prove it to be the offspring of many waters coming from afar, whilst its general direction points out that it may have its origin in the Niam-Niam and Mangbattu countries, in fact, that it is the Makua or Welle of Schweinfurth. The sources of rivers are, as you all

know, the sources of many surprises, and I submit this opinion with much deference. It is, however, always satisfactory when the disjointed discoveries of a great river are connected by a complete survey, and the unknown becomes the known. Let us hope this will soon be the case with the Mobangi, and whether it proves to be the Welle, or whether it has its origin in the territory lying to the north of the Congo (perhaps in the Adamawa country, or perhaps it has a connection with the mysterious lake Liba or Tiba), either problem will be most interesting from a geographical point of view, for if the former, it will complete the work begun by Schweinfurth, if the latter, it will add to our knowledge a portion of Africa hitherto unexplored.

Let us also hope that Mr. Grenfell may be allowed to finish this work, for in addition to his merits as an explorer, he is an earnest, large-minded missionary, and has gained for himself the reputation of being a most painstaking and accurate observer.

A German expedition under the auspices of the Berlin Geographical Society, composed of Lieuts. Schmidt, Kauntz, and Dr. Buchner, reached the Congo in the autumn of 1884. Since their arrival they have been at work in the country between Stanley Pool, San Salvador, and the Kuango. Lieut. Schmidt unhappily succumbed to the effects of the climate, and was buried at San Salvador. Dr. Buchner striking the Kuango near *Matundo*, completed the unexplored portion of that river by following it down to its junction with the Kasai, and then crossing over the height of land arrived at our station of Kimpoko at the upper end of Stanley Pool. At one place his little party were threatened by a large and hostile demonstration, but when the natives learned that he was going to Bula Matari their opposition ceased, and he was allowed to pass on without further molestation. I mention this as a proof of the influence exercised by Mr. Stanley among these neighbouring tribes, who, though they have never seen him, acknowledge and respect his name.

Lieut. Kauntz, since my return to Europe, has also further added to our knowledge of that region.

In addition to these efforts, mention should be made of the work done in the Ogowé basin, and in the country north of that river by the French, and I have no doubt Mr. de Brazza will shortly furnish information on this subject.

As a fitting supplement to this short review of the work done in the past, I propose to tell you in a few words what is now being done in the present year.

The *Stanley* left Leopoldville on the 28th December last year, and reached Stanley Falls after a voyage of forty-two days. The object of this voyage was to replenish our magazines on the Upper Congo, to relieve some of the personnel, to punish some tribes who had stopped the navigation of the river about half-way between Bangala and Stanley Falls, and

to make an inquiry into the general prospects of the ivory trade. One of her passengers was Dr. Oscar Lenz, well known for his successful travels in different parts of Africa. His intention was to engage if possible from Tippoo Tip, an Arab escort, with which he proposed to penetrate into the interior, and I cannot do better than read some extracts from a letter I have lately received from him, which will give you an idea of his probable intentions. He impressed me as being a man of great tenacity of purpose, and with a thorough knowledge of African travel, and if he succeeds in his undertaking he will, I am convinced, contribute some valuable knowledge of that portion of Africa he proposes to visit. I am sure you will all join with me in wishing him every success in his arduous undertaking.

“STATION STANLEY FALLS,
February 20th, 1886.

“DEAR SIR,—I have the honour to inform you that the steamer *Stanley* arrived happily, after a trip of forty-eight days, at the station ‘Stanley Falls’ on the 14th February. At Equator Station Mr. Deane took about fifteen Haussas on board; at Iboko (Bangala Station) he engaged ten Haussas and forty-three Bangala men, so that we have now nearly 150 men. At the Falls Station we found Mr. Wester very ill. Lieut. Gleeurup left the station last December, going with the Arabs to Nyangwe, and from there to Zanzibar. Mr. Harris’s time is over. He is going home, and so there is now only Mr. Deane and Mr. Eytken. I was very glad to hear that Tippo Tip is at Singitini (the Zanzibar name of the falls). He has kindly promised me all his assistance. I heard from him the following news:—About one year ago he sent a small expedition in a northerly direction from here. His people were attacked by the Wabai tribe, who then came down to the falls and attacked the Arabs and even the station. Afterwards he sent a big expedition of 500 to 600 to the north, commanded by Ali ben Muhamed. From this expedition he received no news for ten months. He has therefore sent, a few days ago, some people to look after them. He has also received a letter from the Sultan of Zanzibar with the order to come to him, so Tippo Tip will leave Singitini in twenty to thirty days to go to Zanzibar. He told me that he would give me, with the greatest pleasure, 200 to 300 men as soon as Ali comes back from his expedition. On this I told him that I would stop about a month here. If in this time Ali does not come back I would go to Nyangwe, and from there to Ruanda and the lake Muta-Nzige, where Tippo Tip has a station, and he promised me seriously that he would give me people to bring me to that lake. The route is quite open. From this place I can, perhaps, reach the Albert Nyanza, and there I can get news of Mr. Junker, Dr. Schnitzler (Emin Bey), and Signor Casati, so I will wait here a few weeks, and if in this time Ali does not come back, or if he brings bad news from the north, I shall go to Nyangwe.—OSCAR LENZ.”

I have also heard, since my return, that Lieut. Wissmann had persuaded Mr. Grenfell to take him to Luluaburg in the *Peace*. We shall therefore soon have the benefit of Mr. Grenfell's observations to determine with accuracy the course of the Kasai.

The *Stanley* has returned from the Upper Congo and is at this moment also navigating the waters of the Kasai. Her object is to take up fresh stores for Lieut. Wissmann's expedition, to investigate the ivory trade, and to bring back some Balubas for employment in the service of the State. This voyage being completed, Lieut. Wissmann will either proceed up the Mobangi or again visit the Upper Congo stations.

From these outlines you will see that the work of exploration is being steadily prosecuted and encouraged, as far as compatible with the necessary service of the new State. Besides the *Stanley*, there are two other steamers belonging to the Upper Congo, and also the *Peace*, and the *Henry Reid*. I have further received the commands of His Majesty the King of the Belgians to commence arrangements in order that the State may in the future build her own steamers on the Upper Congo out of the native woods, and these arrangements have been so far successful, that by this time next year, we hope to have a steamer of about 100 tons, drawing 18 inches of water, and with a speed of ten knots, in a fair way towards completion.

I cannot quit this portion of my paper without alluding to what appears to me the real value and importance of these discoveries.

From 17° E. to 26° E. long., and from 4° N. to 7° S. lat., is a vast rectangular tableland 475,000 square miles in area, only a few hundred feet in height and having a gradual slope from the south-east to the north-west. Throughout this huge tract runs the mighty Congo, with its horse-shoe shaped course, and the whole is intersected by numerous navigable tributaries. It is Mr. Grenfell's opinion, and I coincide with him, that when this region is fully explored, it will be found that there is scarcely a hundred miles of its area which is not approachable by a water-way. Think for a moment how important this fact becomes when applied to the questions of civilisation and commerce. Consider the possibilities which lie hidden in the future of such a country.

Nature has made in this territory an almost unique system of natural canals, the heavens furnish them with ample supplies of water, and it only needs the perseverance and hand of man to connect this magnificent area with the ocean and so develop its ample resources.

For many years, indeed until quite recently, this country was a *terra incognita*. Vague rumours existed of dwarfs, of a race with tails, of huge mountains, while various other improbabilities were in circulation. The sunshine of knowledge has caused these mists of imagination to disappear, and by the process commonly called familiarity, we have learned to treat the dangers of African exploration with a certain

contempt; but we are not assembled here this evening to discuss dangers or impossibilities. What we desire to know, what we wish to understand, is this—How can we utilise for the benefit of mankind, white and black, this huge mass of the earth's surface? And this brings me to the second portion of my paper, viz. the consideration of the people who inhabit it.

As a general principle, it may be stated, without fear of contradiction, that whatever natural advantages a country may possess, the rest of the world cannot peaceably enjoy them if the inhabitants of that country are a strong, united, and warlike race, and who object to intercourse with the outside world. Therefore, while I have endeavoured to place before you the general outlines, as far as we know them, and the physical advantages of the basin of the Congo, any arguments I may have used in its favour would be useless unless I was further able to show you that the races who occupy it are not calculated, by the nature of circumstances, to offer the least resistance to its occupation by the dual forces of civilisation and commerce.

My experience then of these people may be briefly stated. What I have seen of them I like, and after two years spent in their midst, during which I was forced to study their habits, manners, laws and customs, I see no cause for apprehension that the security of the new State will ever be threatened by its black subjects.

My reasons for this opinion are twofold. First, the character of the people; second, their tribal formation. If asked to define their general character, I should reply that I considered them a negative race. They have none of what we call the higher qualities or virtues. They possess neither gratitude, affection, nor courage. Nor did I find among them what may be termed the vicious kind of vices. They are not naturally cruel, at least, I never saw it; they are not as a rule treacherous; if punished justly they bear no malice. They will lie too, and steal from the white man, and like all black and coloured races, they are cunning and suspicious. When, however, you know them, and are on your guard, it is your own fault if you are taken in, and as you gain their confidence, suspicion is easily removed.

During the two years I was on the Congo, I never experienced any trouble. To govern them they must respect you. My predecessor Mr. Stanley was respected, and I succeeded to the heritage. If a native does not fear you, he at once jumps to the opposite conclusion that you fear him, and then trouble arises. I continued Mr. Stanley's policy, and while I endeavoured to be respected, I on my part respected their manners and customs. If punishment was necessary, I punished as far as possible in conformity with their own laws. In thus ruling them, though you cannot obtain their affection or gratitude, for they do not possess such qualities, you obtain their confidence and respect, and that once gained there is as little difficulty in governing a million of such people as in governing a thousand.

Their chief characteristic is their love for commerce; they are born traders. The women do all the hard work and the agricultural labour, while the men look after the children and do what sewing is required. Thus the labour of the two sexes is almost reversed, yet in spite of this the women retain some of the well-known attributes of their sex. The last time I was passing by the big market of Marza Nkenge, I was resting on one of my boxes while the caravan were making their purchases, when I saw a black belle look a rival from another village well up and down, and then resume her avocations with a satisfied air, as much as to say "Your pocket-handkerchief isn't as good as mine, and oh, what bad beads you have on"; these are the two principal articles of clothing in those parts, and I could not help smiling as the thought passed through my mind, that the world is the world all the world over. I could tell you much more about these people, but it would take up your time. The best account given of their manners and customs will be found in a book called 'Angola and the River Congo,' by Monteiro.

The second reason—their tribal formation—demands only a short explanation. You will easily understand that a country made up of small communities, where a few villages constitute a kingdom, where autonomy—a word much used and abused just now—is the law of the land, where every one is weak, and no one is strong, where there is no unity, no strong hand by which nations are made and kingdoms created; you can well understand that a settled form of government on European principles will meet with no great difficulties from a native population, however large, living under the above conditions. I think this fact and the native love for trade are the two most important factors in the future of the new State. The one guarantees security, and the other invites commerce, and I do not believe there exists in any part of the uncivilised world, at least I have not heard of it, a territory so thickly populated offering similar advantages in its population as the basin of the Congo. Before dismissing the native questions and discussing the commerce of this region, I would speak for a few moments on what may be called the slavery question—a question which has ever excited a deep and natural interest in Great Britain, and a question which should not be avoided in any paper attempting a description of this country.

This question may be divided under two headings:—

1. The domestic slavery of the country.
2. The slavery which is invariably connected with the presence of Arabs in the interior, and the ivory trade.

As regards the first, it is so interwoven in the institutions of the country, that it would take generations to root it out; and though I have alluded to it as domestic slavery, I should more properly have called it domestic service. The natives of the Congo are so well aware of the value of property, that slaves are often better treated than the

members of the family. They carry on most of the commerce of their masters, often marry their daughters, and frequently become rich and powerful. Take for example the chief of Kintamo, Ngaliema. Originally a slave of Nchubila of Kinshassa, he is now the wealthiest ivory trader at Stanley Pool. It was this chief who threatened to stop Mr. Stanley when he was advancing to create the station of Leopoldville, and whose collapse is so graphically described in Mr. Stanley's latest work. Now he is a warm ally, and not long ago, when two of his slaves ran away, taking with them some valuable ivory, he applied to the chief of Leopoldville for assistance. This was given. The runaways were captured, and the ivory recovered and restored. Ngaliema was perfectly satisfied that they should be punished by white man's law; consequently, instead of having a head or an arm cut off, they were given three months' hard labour on the station works. Sacrifices still take place on the death of a great chief, but not in the enormous numbers one hears of on the Gold Coast and in that part of Africa.

The story of Ngaliema is a proof that better influences can be brought to bear on the native mind, and that the domestic slavery of the Congo basin is free from those revolting cruelties, that utter disregard of human life, which prevails in the ivory and slave countries of the central and eastern portion of Equatorial Africa.

To understand the real bearings of this, the second form of slavery, it will be necessary to consider for a few moments what are the principal causes which have created and fostered this nefarious and evil traffic. The principal cause is ivory. To obtain this article, the Arab traders organise and fit out large bands of armed men, generally runaway slaves from Zanzibar, or men who have been obliged to leave the coast and take refuge in the interior. A sufficient number of followers being collected, arms, ammunition, and goods are purchased, and the whole is transported to some central position, where a zeriba or head-quarters is formed. As soon as this position is securely established, bands are sent into the neighbouring countries, which they devastate, burn, and pillage, and the unfortunate inhabitants are taken as slaves, to carry the plundered ivory in large caravans to the coast. Here they and the ivory are both sold, and the Arabs realise a large profit on the double sale. Without the ivory, slaves alone would not pay the expenses which have to be incurred in the outfit, and we may therefore reasonably assume that if the ivory were taken out of the country by the legitimate operations of commerce, the slave trade, which is part and parcel of the present system, would cease to exist. If there was no ivory there would be no slave trade, eastward to the coast or northward to the Soudan. Now here is true work for the philanthropist. Let him assist the new State in developing its resources, let him help in the construction of some sure and certain means of transport from the navigable waters of the Lower Congo to Stanley Pool, and he will strike a deadly blow at a

traffic, the horrible details of which have often filled his heart with a deep pity for the poor unfortunate victims of the cruel system under which it is conducted.

As the well-being of every country or kingdom depends upon the ordered harmony of all its parts, so the future of the new Free State of the Congo must in a measure depend upon the commercial products it is able to offer to the markets of the world. To possess such products is to complete the ordered harmony to which its peaceful trading population and its great natural advantages both contribute. Neither are of use without the other two. You may have large commercial products combined with great natural advantages, but they are useless with a hostile population against you; then products and a peaceful population are of little value if physical conditions do not assist you; and you attempt to develop a most peaceful country with fine natural advantages in vain, if it does not possess products that have a value in the markets of the world.

The next question therefore resolves itself into this, Will the products of this country be sufficient in quantity and value to give a profitable return when disposed of in the European markets?

Let us see what are these products.

In his latest work, 'On the Congo, and the Founding of its Free State,' Mr. Stanley gives an exhaustive analysis as to the probable number of the inhabitants of the Congo basin, and the nature and variety of the products belonging to that region. Those who take an interest in the commerce of the Congo will find facts and figures in the chapter headed "The kernel of the argument" well worth an attentive perusal. It is not my intention to go into details, I should only weary you if I did, but my testimony to certain general facts is a necessary supplement to this section of my paper, and I propose to take a brief prospective glance at what the future commerce of this region may become.

You are well aware that ivory is the most valuable product of this land. That it exists in great quantities in the new Free State we have abundant proof; but as one fact is worth a bushel of general statements, I will give you a fact.

Encouraged by the State, two commercial houses, one Dutch and the other French, sent agents up the country last year, with the object of establishing factories on Stanley Pool, thus enabling them to deal direct with the ivory traders of the Upper Congo. In one day one of these traders had 386 tusks offered to him for sale. Now 386 tusks at an average of 50 lbs. each, equal nearly five tons of ivory, which at 50*l.* the cwt. represents a value of about 5000*l.* I am not going to tell you what the profit would be on such a transaction; it is so great that you would all start off to the Congo to become ivory traders, but to me such a fact is an evidence of a big trade in the future. There are two other points in this episode, which to those who have been in Africa and have some know-

ledge of the ivory trade, are very suggestive. They are these—that if the natives bring in the above-mentioned amount for trade in one day, they must have at least 20 tons in reserve—that is the first point.

Then if, in the small trade that has hitherto been carried on in the neighbourhood of Stanley Pool we find these large depôts of ivory collected, how much more will that trade increase when the country is opened up and we are able to transport goods in sufficient quantities to meet trade requirements. That is the other point, and I think you will agree with me that my fact is an important one. But ivory will soon be exhausted many say. Granted; but consider the vast extent of the Congo basin; that it is untouched; that much of this ivory has been collecting for years, and you may believe me when I tell you that it will take years even partially to clear the country of its dead ivory, and then you have the living ivory to fall back upon.

Thus the ivory may pay what may be termed first expenses, and in the meantime another valuable industry—indiarubber—will be rapidly developing. As you all know, indiarubber is one of the largest products of the great sister river to the Congo, the Amazons. That each year increases our knowledge of its manufacture and the uses to which it can be applied; so that the supply does not equal the demand. It is also known that each year increases the difficulties of collecting this gum on the Amazons. Here, then, is another field for commercial enterprise, and I will give you a fact which came under my personal observation with reference to this article.

I paid a visit to the Kuilu river some four years after its occupation by the then International Association. It is only navigable for small steamers for about 40 miles. At the head of this navigation, numerous small factories have been erected solely for the indiarubber trade. On the day I visited them there were not less than from 700 to 1000 natives all bringing in indiarubber. Now, if on a small river like the Kuilu, with its limited navigation, such a trade springs up in a few years, what will be the trade of the many hundreds of miles of the navigable waters of the Congo?

Besides ivory and indiarubber, there are the other products mentioned by Mr. Stanley in the chapter I have above quoted; and if I do not allude to them, it is not because I do not believe in them, but because I cannot give you any certain practical information as to their probable future value.

As to minerals, I cannot speak with any certainty about them. It is thought that gold exists in the interior, but I am somewhat sceptical. Had there been any surface gold, the keen-eyed native, with his love for metals, would not have left it till now undiscovered. Copper is found of a good quality; but copper mining, as many have found, is a precarious venture. With much anxious care I scanned the cut banks of the Kasai as we passed them by for traces of coal, but none were there.

No, I think it is far better to trust to and develop the natural riches of the soil, and then if there are any treasures buried beneath the surface they will become known in the fulness of time.

I have not yet touched upon the present position and prospects of the Government of the New Free State. If I were to enter into details, they would be so full of my personal work that it could not be pleasing to you, and it would not be agreeable to myself.

This much I can assure you, that the New Free State of the Congo is starting on a safe and useful foundation. That law, order, and system are being rapidly introduced into the working machinery of its government; that it has received the magnificent endowment of 40,000*l.* a year from the King of the Belgians, and that it offers ample security to all who seek a livelihood within its territory.

Perhaps I should add a few words about the climate. Well, the climate of the Congo has been made the subject of foolish praise, and lavish abuse. There is as little need for the one as for the other. It is simply a tropical climate, with well-known marked types of fever common to such latitudes. There are some persons whose constitutions are more liable to fevers than others, these I would not advise a longer stay on the Congo than two years. Prudence and care are as essential to the general health as they are found to be all over the world. I had but one attack of fever, and that was caused by my own imprudence.

My belief is, that as the conditions of life improve out there—and they will improve as the country develops—it will be found that the Congo is as healthy as many parts of India and other tropical climates where Europeans are living, and have lived for many years with impunity.

As a natural law it may be assumed that all geographical discoveries help each one the other, as they increase our knowledge of the surface of the earth. Discoveries are the stepping stones for the introduction of natural sciences, they are the advanced guards of civilisation and commerce. Let us apply this law to the Congo river basin and the New Free State that has been founded to develop it. As a field of labour for the missionary and philanthropist these lands have no equal in the advantages they afford.

To the sportsman and naturalist they are overflowing with the fulness of animal, bird, insect and plant life. To those who follow scientific explorations what opportunities are given for travel and discovery!

And lastly, its commercial capabilities, and these have a twofold aspect.

The trade that is created, and the impetus given to the manufacture of the requirements of that trade. Think for a moment of the misery, hunger, want, and evil passions that follow the steps of the great mass of unemployed labour. Well, here at least is one door, one new market for European produce opened.

Shall we leave this vast territory as dead as we found it? Are the advantages which Nature has given to this region,

“Nature, a mother kind alike to all,
Still grants her bliss at labour’s earnest call—”

Are these advantages to remain unused, uncared for? Surely the answer is “No.” Much has been done by the large-minded philanthropy and munificence of one man, His Majesty the King of the Belgians. He has laid the foundation of a new State, let the world now join in reaping the advantages of his noble work.

Before the paper,

The CHAIRMAN (Sir Rutherford Alcock), after expressing his regret that Lord Aberdare was prevented by a family bereavement from being present at this the first meeting after his election as President, said that in other respects he was very glad to take part in the meeting, because they were about to hear a paper read by a very distinguished traveller and administrator, Sir Francis de Winton, who for more than two years was at the head of the Congo Free State as the representative of the King of the Belgians. It was always most valuable to get direct evidence from those who had been on the spot and could speak from personal observation, but when, in addition, they could speak with authority, as Sir Francis could, he was quite sure that the Society would listen with great interest to whatever was to be said about the capabilities of the territory in the basin of the Congo, a territory larger than half-a-dozen Belgiums. The meeting had the benefit also of the presence of one of the most distinguished African explorers, Mr. Stanley.

After the paper,

The CHAIRMAN said the paper was a most valuable and interesting one, relating as it did to what was well called by Stanley, years ago, the Dark Continent. Not many years ago the region was a *terra incognita*, but nothing more marvellous had happened in the nineteenth century than the opening up of Central Africa to the efforts of missionaries, merchants, and politicians. Any information that could be obtained from personal observation was of singular interest, because the problem now to be solved was not what Africa is, what it can produce, what is its climate, what is the nature of its inhabitants, but how it can be turned to account in the interests of religion, philanthropy, and commerce. In order to carry on commerce, not only must the country be fertile and the population willing to traffic (both which conditions were fulfilled in the basin of the Congo), but there must be facilities of transport, means of communication with the ocean, and he believed that Mr. Stanley had gone a long way to solve that difficulty. Fourteen hundred miles of free navigation was a most tempting lure to any enterprising country, but access to that navigation must first be obtained. According to Mr. Stanley’s account there happened to be some forty leaps and bounds down to the Atlantic coast which interposed before the still water of the Lower Congo could be reached, while on each side of the Equator there were four or five cataracts to be surmounted. The only way of overcoming those difficulties was by a railway, and unless commercial interests led to the formation of an iron road there, it would be vain to expect much trade on the 1400 miles of a grand river, even though the people were willing to traffic with Europeans. All present would be anxious to hear what Mr. Stanley, the most competent authority on the subject, had to say as to the progress that was being made towards conquering this initial difficulty.

Mr. H. M. STANLEY said that he remembered when battling down the great river, amid the Sabbath silence of the island channels, indulging in speculation as to the uses that might be made of the magnificent waterway which daily unfolded itself. As mile after mile of land receded behind him, with majestic vegetation on either bank, and a series of channels between one side and the other, he was deeply struck with the prospects of such a river, provided there was some easy entrance into it, and when 500 miles had rolled past his anxiety rose to such a pitch that his prayer was, "Increase, good Lord, this mileage, otherwise the continent will be lost for ever." Mile after mile was passed, tributary after tributary was seen emptying its treasures of water silently into the depth of the Congo, till at last a thousand miles were counted, and by this time the river was certainly six times greater in volume than at Stanley Falls. From the distant north and south great tributaries rolled their waters into the stream, till at Stanley Pool it seemed as if they were about to have another world revealed to them. At times he could not help feeling that he was at the birthplace of a creation. At the western extremity of Stanley Pool the river contracted again, and he could see a line of vaporous clouds wreathing and purling above the place where it plunged down the terrace, and then he knew his prayer was answered as much as he could expect it to be. He remembered very well how, in 1872, Livingstone used to dilate upon the virtues that were lying dormant in vast Africa, and how he (Mr. Stanley) always replied to him with a sort of sceptical sneer, for at that time he did not believe in the virtues of Africa, he did not believe that any good could come out of Africa, and he told him so with that frankness which ignorance could always muster. Possibly, persons equally ignorant with himself, would have deemed his remarks unanswerable, but in the first leisure time he had after coming out of the Congo, and finding himself at Kabinda, he turned with eager curiosity to sketch the manifold lines of travel he had traced, and to draw the outline of the great river and the spacious lakes that he had navigated. When it was all down on paper what a revelation it was to him! It was neither more nor less than a corroboration of Livingstone's ideas. Down to then he had only been a student in Africa, but when he came to England in 1877-78 he felt inspired to be a teacher. The scales had fallen from his own eyes; why should he not teach the blind folk to see? Of course he could not be surprised that people were so slow to understand, since he had taken five years to realise the good there was in Africa; but it happened that just at that time, when he was wearied with giving lectures and writing a book, there was a student across the Channel deeply investigating the subject—a profound geographical student, King Leopold, who after a few days' conversation and counsel, gave him a commission and said, "Go back there and see what you can do. Develop Africa; let me see what it is, and report as early as you can, and then, perhaps, we will go a little further." He also advanced a modest sum of 20,000*l*. In two months he (Mr. Stanley) arrived at the Congo and began the work. From 1879 till the middle of 1884 he was engaged upon it. He built various stations, nuclei, as it were, of cities, provided people were enterprising enough to follow in his tracks. He reached a distance of 1400 miles from the sea, and then looking back it struck him that it was dangerous for one man to go on and do it all. In successive letters he implored to have some one to assist him before it was too late, for he was afraid that the edifice was being built up with rather untamped mortar, and that it might collapse. At that time there was a hermit lodging at the base of Mount Carmel, just the man that was wanted for the occasion, with that sort of mechanism which reconciled men to their duty, a born chief and leader. That man was Gordon, but just as it was expected that he would come, a letter was received saying that he was going to the Soudan, whence he never returned. In his place, however, there came another gentleman, Lieut.-Colonel de

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Winton. Of course, as he had never seen Colonel de Winton he was very much inclined to study him on his arrival. He found that Colonel de Winton was remarkably bland and gentle, and soft-mannered in his speech, but with a good deal of the requisite firmness shielded by a sort of silky guile, which he quite showed during the very first days that he was on the Congo; so that if Gordon could not be sent no much better man than Colonel de Winton could occupy the position. After a few weeks engaged in initiating him into what had been done and what was to be done, he (Mr. Stanley) had to depart for Europe and enter upon another phase of the work, namely, to win the recognition of the European Powers for the consolidation of the State. Otherwise he would have simply been clearing the wilderness for another power to step in and destroy all that he had done. That work occupied a few months; there were some anxious intervals, but at last they succeeded, and fourteen European Powers subscribed through their plenipotentiaries to recognise the permanent existence of the Congo Free State. If Colonel de Winton would not regard it as a piece of cavil on his part he would like to make one or two remarks upon the paper. It must be understood that in that hall there had been frequent discussions, not always of a mild or conciliatory character, but what he was going to say would be conciliatory. Colonel de Winton made a very remarkable statement when he said that some one had praised the Congo climate. It was true that all who came back from the Congo looked remarkably healthy. If there was any young man present with an orange tint, or a rich, creamy complexion it might be taken for granted that he had just come from the Congo. If a person had a shade of severity on his face it was certain that it had been caused by his zealous efforts to polish the African natives; while if there was a shade of sadness on his countenance, it had doubtless arisen from the painful disappointment he felt, that while he had been contributing his best endeavours towards the unity of the scattered tribes, to carry out the Belgian motto "*Union fait la force*," his country was following the fantastic delusion of disunion. Colonel de Winton would also permit him to protest against one phrase that he had used when he said that the natives possessed neither gratitude, affection, nor courage. Through a magnanimous and tender feeling for the soul of a young cannibal boy, Colonel de Winton brought him to England, and he (Mr. Stanley) had an interview with him. He endeavoured to find out whether it was true that the tribes had neither courage, affection, nor gratitude. He asked him, "Is it true, boy, that your people have no affection?" "Oh, master," he replied, "who says that? That cannot be right. Why, even the animals love one another, and are we less? It is only fire and water that do not like one another." "But is it true that you have no courage?" "Well, master, when we meet white men they have got such fierce weapons that our people are killed before we can reach them, but against one another I think we fight very well." Then he was asked, "How can you prove to me that there is such a thing as gratitude in you?" "Well, master, we love gifts, and we love the giver, but we love the giver best, because the giver might give us something more to-morrow." That was only the answer of a little cannibal boy who probably seven years ago was indulging in a human chop. Lord Bacon said that he that goeth into a country without knowing the language, goeth to school and not to travel. Was any one who had been on the Congo such an accomplished linguist that he could at once say whether these people had gratitude, affection, and courage or not? Europeans out there conducted themselves like despotic chiefs. If His Imperial Majesty the Czar of Russia visited an English home, and received the best the house could afford, it might not be sufficient for him according to his own estimation, but when he went away he might give a snuffbox, or an order, and it would be accepted as a mutual interchange of goodwill; but if it was suspected that the Czar intended to kill his host, or to take away his liberty,

the pugnacious character of the Englishman would not allow him to feel much gratitude. So there had been no true benevolence in the gifts to the natives, and therefore, he did not think it could yet be said that the natives had neither affection, courage, nor gratitude. Colonel de Winton had wisely emphasised the fact that it was time something was done to connect the sea with the vast stretch of navigation on the Upper Congo, but it was not in the power of anybody outside the royal palace at Brussels to lay down a railway. There was the utmost readiness in England to contribute the full number of shares, but until the king's permission was obtained no one would dare to make a railway. No doubt the permission would be granted by-and-by, but so far it had not been obtained. Until the sanction was given it was premature to say a single word relative to the railway, except that it was possible of accomplishment. Without the railway the entire Congo State, vast though its area and inexhaustible its resources, was not worth a two-shilling piece, not worth even a passing thought.

The CHAIRMAN said that Mr. Stanley had given the assurance that there was no physical impossibility about laying a railway past the cataracts, and whenever it pleased His Majesty the King of the Belgians to make the necessary arrangements it was to be hoped that the enterprise of all Europe would be called into play in order to perfect the result of the efforts of so many bold and able men who had taken the preliminary steps for the exploration of Africa. Philanthropy and commerce must join hands in order to put down the slave traffic, and he hoped that before long the iron horse would be got to work, when an almost unlimited field would be opened for almost every kind of enterprise. He was sure the meeting would join with him in a vote of thanks to Sir Francis de Winton for his interesting paper, and to Mr. Stanley for the valuable information he had given them.

Exploration of the Tributaries of the Congo, between Leopoldville and Stanley Falls.

By Rev. GEORGE GRENFELL.

Map, p. 680.

BEING at the present moment on a journey, and not having the notes of my previous ones with me, it is not possible for me to write so fully as I might otherwise do. However, as I must not delay any longer to write something concerning the sketch maps I sent to the Society so long ago, I will at once take the opportunity which presents itself to send a short account of those affluents of the Middle Congo, which I have visited in the Baptist Missionary Society's steamer *Peace*.

The Kwa was the first of these affluents which the *Peace* ascended, and it has also been the field of her most recent journeyings, for a week has not yet elapsed since we completed our return voyage from Luebo Station. Of the first journey you have already had an account,* and you will since have discovered that what we took to be the Lake Leopold river was the Kasai, and that we journeyed upon the waters of that important tributary without knowing it. The Lake Leopold river, as I

* 'Proceedings R.G.S.,' 1885, p. 353.

Scale of English Miles, for the Plans

10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Heights in Feet.

21° 3p. 22°