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claims to English protection and influence as English enterprise and work can give.

The position of the lake with regard to the several European spheres of occupation or influence is peculiar: according to some maps, it is entirely surrounded and shut in, but I am not aware that the Lake itself is claimed by any. Its importance in any future arrangement for opening up Africa and putting an end to the slave trade and the present unnatural condition of slavery can scarcely be overestimated, whether as a rich country of itself (for Tanganyika should include the whole of the depression which drains into it), a centre of commerce and administration, or, simply taking the Lake as the best 400 miles in the great central watery highway of Africa, it is all-important.

For scientific enquiry, for investigation of the native character and languages, the Lake offers peculiar facilities in its central position and relations, besides affording healthy residence for Europeans. Especially is it suitable for an effort to develop the people with the country, by assisting native art and industry in the way I have already suggested. It is to be regretted that the sudden flooding of some regions of Africa with cheap European goods has simply obliterated many valuable native industries, which, under careful encouragement, might have been more profitably preserved. Sad will it be if our operations are to be confined to commercial enterprise simply to enrich ourselves, and the Africans shorn of their native enterprise, and yet not lifted out of native ignorance, drop into subordinate drudgery scarce better than their present condition. The Africans have a splendid country which only requires development. They have ample arts and industries, and only require encouragement and assistance to utilise the resources of their country and become themselves elevated; but the one or the other can only be possible—any enterprise of ours can only be justified—be it political, or commercial, or scientific, if, in its first action and its most stable principle, it aims at the effectual eradication of Africa's curse—the slave trade.

The Bijouga or Bissagos Islands, West Africa.

By EDWARD STALLIBRASS, F.R.G.S.

PERHAPS there is no part of the West Coast of Africa less opened out to trade than that in the neighbourhood of these islands. Situated out of the route of any important steamers, they remain from year to year unvisited except by the Portuguese mail which calls once a month in connection with the mail to the Cape Verde Islands, and by the small French mail gunboat *Dakar*, which runs between the French settlement of Conakri in the Isles do Los * and St. Louis, the capital of Senegal,

* A corruption of *Ilhas dos Idolos*, Isles of Idols.

calling on the way at Melacoree, Pongas, Cacheo, and other small trading factories, as occasion requires.

The position of the Archipelago may perhaps be best described as being situated in the delta of the Jeba, Rio Grande or Bolola, and the Cassini rivers. It is divided into two parts by the Jeba channel on the north and the Orango channel on the south-east. The western group, which perhaps contains the Bijouga Islands proper, is practically unexplored, and trade is only carried on by native canoes, which occasionally bring poultry and fruit up to Bulama with the object of getting guns and powder in exchange. The natives, although now not actually hostile, have kept very much to themselves, and are as a race very different from those of the mainland and its more adjacent islands. They are men of very fine physique, and possess but few of the characteristics of the West African negro. Captain Beaver, in 'Memoranda relative to West African Settlement, 1792' (York Gate Library), says they resemble the other natives of Africa in nothing but colour. He gives a most interesting account of them, mentioning particularly their warlike propensities and great dexterity in use of bows, spears, and swords.

Of this seaward group the largest islands are Orango, some 20 miles long by 10 miles broad, Kanabak, Formosa, Corbelha, and Carashe.

Formed of decomposed volcanic rock, the soil is exceedingly fertile, and with proper management could be made to grow almost anything. The islands are thickly wooded. High ground of three or four hundred feet is met with, and there are no swamps. Water is said to be rather scarce. As is to be expected in archipelagos of this description, there are innumerable rocks and reefs; in fact, the western or seaward side is bounded by one continuous line of rocks, shoals, and breakers, which render all approach within 20 miles very dangerous. There are also many sandbanks and shoals of alluvial deposit formed by the river Jeba. So far as I am aware, there has been no attempt at colonisation in this group, and indeed it is practically unexplored. A note on the most recent Admiralty chart says, "Some of these islands are inhabited, and the people are generally armed."

Turning to the islands immediately off the mainland, and separated from it only by narrow channels, there are on the north of the Jeba river, Bissao, Bassis, and Jatt, while near the mouth of the Bolola river there are Bissagua, Biafares, Bulama, Bossessami Manteri, and numerous others, nearly all unexplored and many nameless.

The Portuguese were probably the first to visit these islands, and they built a large fort on Bissao. The expense of keeping it up, however, proved too great, and in 1703 it is said to have been abandoned.* The colonists remained however, and what was the fort is now the town of Bissao.

Captain Beaver, an Englishman, acting for the Bulama Society of

* 'Modern Universal History,' published 1781, vol. xiv. p. 241.

London, established a settlement, which he called Port Beaver, in 1792, on the eastern side of the island of Bulama, and on the exact site of what is now the Portuguese town of Bulama, and the seat of Government for the Province of Guiné. This settlement was abandoned in the following year, many of the settlers having fallen victims to the terrible climate, and the whole proving a dismal failure.

Another English colony was soon after established at Bulama Point or West Point, and was destined to meet with great success.

Between the years 1826 and 1846 a very extensive survey of the Bijouga Islands and their neighbourhood was made by various officers of the British Navy, and this is the only one ever attempted.

The English colony at Bulama Point continued to flourish; wharfs were built, and a steamer called regularly from Sierra Leone. An unfortunate dispute arose, however, between the English and Portuguese Governments as to the ownership of the island, and under the arbitration of the United States, Portuguese rights were established. The English evacuated in 1868, and since then the fate of the islands seems to have been sealed. The Portuguese Government, leaving the houses of the English Government officials to fall in ruins, settled at Port Beaver, which, as before mentioned, was renamed Bulama. It is hard to find the reason for this, as Bulama Point is a far better port, is more healthy, considerably cooler, and possesses excellent water.

In recent years the most important event in the history of this district has been the establishment by the West African Telegraph Company of a submarine cable between Bissao and Bulama, and also of a line from Bulama to the main Conakri-Bathurst section, into which it is spliced in the form of a T-joint, thus putting these islands in telegraphic communication with Europe.

My visit in the summer of 1888 had for its object the repair of the Bulama-Bissao cable, which had suddenly broken down.

Having shipped all necessary gear on board the British and African Steamship Company's s.s. *Calabar*, I sailed for Sierra Leone, and on arrival there chartered the small schooner *Salatouk*, 17 tons, from the Senegal Trading Company, and proceeded northwards towards Bulama.

Nothing worthy of note occurred during the voyage, which on account of light winds lasted five days, and perhaps the only thing worth mentioning is that between the Compoonee shoals and Alcatraz Island excellent fish are to be caught. My pilot thought it inadvisable to proceed after dark for this reason—as I afterwards found out—and the crew had a good night's sport, red mullet principally being caught.

The advantage of having a sextant with one was brought prominently before me when one evening at dusk we ran into a regular "cul de sac" of breakers, and the pilot came aft with the information that he was lost. We anchored for the night. An attempt was made next morning to get out by the channel by which we had entered, but failed through

light winds. At noon I was able to get a good meridional altitude, and found the latitude to be $10^{\circ} 26' N$. This and the lead line gave a good position for departure, and with the afternoon breeze we made our way out and set on for Alcatraz Island, sighting it just before dark.

Alcatraz Island, which contains a guano deposit, has recently been brought to public notice by the unfortunate deaths of four men through starvation who were placed there by the Governor of Senegal to mind the French flag, and through mismanagement left to their fate.

Before reaching Bulama I noticed that the buoy on the Areia Branca shoal and both the buoys on the Mao Bank were missing. Subsequently I found that all the buoys marked telegraph buoys on the Admiralty chart were also adrift. The tides in these channels are very strong, and at springs run as much as six knots, so that unless the moorings of buoys are periodically renewed they soon give way, and once adrift the buoy is eagerly seized by natives. One large buoy I heard of as being converted into a storehouse for grain.

On the day after my arrival at Bulama I proceeded to Bissao in a small row-boat through a short cut called the Caroa. This is only navigable at high water, and at low is nothing but a sand-flat, dry by some six feet. On the way I was able to sketch-in some prominent points of Circa Island. Passing the island of Arcas, which is nothing but a mangrove swamp, on our left, we proceeded along the side of a dangerous quicksand—the scene of many wrecks—and entering the Bissao channel, duly arrived at our destination.

Governor O'Connor's description of the town many years ago still holds good; he says:—"Bissao, declining when I visited it last in 1855, has since then greatly deteriorated in trade and appearance. The old buildings, totally neglected, are sinking into ruins; the troops, without barracks, living in miserable mud-huts; the port occupied by only a few colonial and coasting vessels; the market scantily supplied with the commonest necessities of life, are indubitable evidences that the power and prestige of Portugal are rapidly on the wane in this part of the world."

If further proof is needed of the miserable state of affairs, it can be found in the fact that only ten years ago a German trader arrived at Bissao with 300*l.* in English gold in his possession. This gentleman nearly starved, as no one in the place had ever seen English gold, and consequently he was unable to exchange it. Anything more complicated than the currency of Bissao and Bulama would be difficult to imagine. Old Portuguese coins, seen nowhere else, and often defaced, pass current between the two places, while the silver of every nation in the world passes freely, Bolivian only being debarred. All these coins have two rates of exchange, a Government and a mercantile. Trade is comparatively at a standstill. Rubber, beeswax, gum, and ground-nuts, are almost the only exports. The chief imports are cotton goods, tobacco

guns, and powder. Only a few miles up the Juba river Portuguese authority is openly defied, and several small craft have lately been captured and their crews murdered by the Manjack tribe.

After leaving Bissao I had occasion to stay some days at Bulama Point. Being provided with tents, they were pitched on suitable ground, and all made snug for the night. Never in my experience have I passed such a night as that one. Unprovided with mosquito curtains, we were tormented by mosquitos and sandflies of a most venomous kind. Even two monkeys in a cage just near showed their sufferings by continuous howling. After this I preferred sleeping on the bare deck of our schooner, anchored about a mile from shore, and thus comparatively free from these pests.

During my stay at Bulama Point I had many opportunities of wandering about the surrounding country, and enjoyed some good sport with the pigeons which abound there. The country is for the most part cultivated, and grows maize, ground-nuts, beans, mandioca, &c. It is extremely fertile, and with proper management could be made to grow anything. The natives are an industrious set, and they may be seen setting out at sunrise with a long-handled spade, and armed with a spear or sword, for the fields, to return again just before sunset. There are few wild animals, but hyenas and wild cats are occasionally killed. Elephants and buffaloes, which Captain Beaver saw in 1792, have long since died out. Tracks of gazelles are frequently met with. There are a few snakes, chiefly of the larger kinds.

One of the most interesting excursions I made was to the site of the old English colony. The walls of some of the houses are still traceable, and my friend Mr. Silva, the Commandant, was able to tell me who had last lived at every house. Many of the fruit-trees then planted are still living. In the hut of a native I came across another relic of the "time of the English," as it is called, in the shape of an old willow-pattern plate. Many were the regrets I heard at the English having vacated the island, as since then a flourishing village, with a rapidly increasing trade, has dwindled down to a few scattered huts. The huts of the natives are well built of earth or mud, and thatched with long grass. In front of the village are some very fine mango-trees. The fruit just then happened to be ripe, and it was greatly sought after by natives, and at night it was no unusual occurrence to see a dozen women with torches, made of an inflammable grass, waiting to pick up mangoes which the bats living in the trees knocked down or dropped in attempting to carry off.

Cotton-trees are common, and the natives weave a coarse cloth of four inches width in hand looms. Excellent fish are caught in fish-ponds constructed on the rocks of the adjacent beach. There are no sharks here, although they abound both at the towns of Bissao and Bulama, and we enjoyed good bathing.

The town of Bulama is very much superior to Bissao, and boasts of some excellently constructed brick and iron barracks of Belgian manufacture, capable of accommodating 200 men. There has never been any wharf, however, and shipping work is carried on under great disadvantages.* Cattle thrive well, but it is a difficult matter to get good meat, as the right to kill is invested in one individual only, and so there is no competition. Both Bulama and Bissao are convict settlements, and the white inhabitants are by no means pleasant people to have to live among.

As already mentioned, the chief trade with natives is in guns, powder, and tobacco. The guns are the usual "trade guns," with flint locks, painted wood stocks, and gas-pipe barrels. The Bijougas have a curious way of tempering or testing the barrels. The hole at the breech is pegged up with wood, then the barrel is filled with palm oil, and its muzzle also plugged up. The whole is then put into a fire, and if after some time no explosion occurs, the operation is considered successful. Their spears are made of soft iron, or sometimes of copper, and are of excellent workmanship. Poison taken from the black snake is said to be applied to their points. The swords and knives used are of a curious shape, said to be particularly suitable for ripping.

The dress of the male Bijouga consists of a skin round the loins, and a rush skull-cap ornamented with feathers and cowrie shells. The females wear a kilt of grass, and are fond of beads and brass wire ornaments. The bodies of both sexes are freely anointed with palm oil.

The canoes in which long trading expeditions are carried on are most curious. They are made in a single piece from a cotton tree, and sometimes measure as much as 70 feet in length, and are capable of carrying 40 or 50 men, all of whom are armed. Sails are sometimes seen, but short oars are generally used, the rowers squatting on the bottom of the canoe, and rising at the beginning of each stroke. The bow of the canoe is ornamented with a figure-head, generally representing either a cow † or a hippopotamus, while the stern is carved to represent the tail of a rattlesnake. Excellent models of these canoes may be bought, and also carved wooden figures and models of animals. Gourds prettily carved are also seen.

The natives are said to be able to converse by tapping on iron bracelets, but I saw nothing of this. It may have some connection with the drum signalling of the Bight of Benin, of which a full account is given by Mr. Archer P. Crouch, B.A., in 'Glimpses of Feverland.'

The climate of the islands is very unhealthy, and perhaps only

* Just before I left in August 1888 a pier was begun. Piles of a foot in diameter were being driven with an ordinary hand-beetle, and I have not yet heard of its completion.

† Cows' horns are worshipped by the Papels who occupy the coast between Geba and Cacheo.

equalled by that of the Gold Coast. Some of the seaward islands are said, however, to be much more healthy than those nearer the mainland, notably Formosa, a fact readily accounted for by their getting the sea-breeze direct. June, July, and August are the worst months of the year. From the 9th June to 9th July we experienced eight tornadoes, an average of two a week. One of these was a very bad one, and the worst known at Bulama for many years. They were accompanied by deluges of rain and heavy thunder and lightning. Ample warning is given of their approach, and so they are not dangerous.

Before concluding, I should like to take the opportunity of saying a good word for the just now much abused African negro, perhaps generally justly so. The crew of the schooner consisted of four men and a boy, all first rate sailors and good fellows, the boy quite a wag. Besides these, who were all natives of Sierra Leone, I had seven Krubos. They were all picked men, of fine physique; one, who was named "Flying Jib," was a perfect demon to work, while another, very properly called "Jack Everyday," was typical of the all-round useful sort. These fellows, throughout a voyage of nearly six weeks, under conditions of some hardship even for a negro, were always cheerful and willing. Nothing could exceed their good humour, a small accident such as a rope carrying away and precipitating three or four of them into the water was to even the victims a source of the greatest amusement. The thorough good-heartedness of these fellows and the nice way in which, on my returning to Sierra Leone after a lapse of some weeks, they all came off on board to see me from motives of pure friendship, are about the pleasantest recollections I have of some pretty hard times.

The Geographical Congress in Paris.

By E. DELMAR MORGAN.

(Concluded from p. 559.)

Thursday, August 8th.

Group I.—Commandant Defforges reviewed the instruments and methods employed in pendulum observations for measuring gravity in the course of a century, expressing the wish that operations of a similar character might be adopted in every country in order to facilitate a comparison of results. The lecturer, who spoke without notes of any kind, by his grasp of the subject and his lucid explanations, greatly interested his audience. In the latter part of his discourse he treated of recent observations made by Colonel Clarke in England and by himself in France, eulogising the former. M. Defforges, who is the author of a pamphlet and of several articles "Sur l'intensité absolue de la pendule," published in the 'Journal de Physique' and the 'Bulletin de la Société Française de Physique,' proposed that a programme of observations should be adopted in order to ascertain the variation of gravity with