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LIFE AND TRAVEL AMONG THE PEOPLE OF THE CONGO.¹

By Rev. THOMAS LEWIS.

It is no mean honour to be asked to address a Scottish audience on any subject pertaining to Central Africa, especially when we remember the magnificent service rendered by Scotchmen in the exploration and development of the Dark Continent. It would be impossible to mention the illustrious names of the sons of the North who have penetrated into the mysterious darkness of Africa, and illumined it, with the lustre of their own genius and self-sacrificing service, as explorers, administrators, and missionaries; but there is one name which shines out with unparalleled brilliancy among all modern explorers, viz., that of David Livingstone—a missionary whose name and example will always be an inspiration to every one who follows in his steps.

It is important in all African matters to remember the various interests represented by different classes of Europeans. We have:—

(1) The *Explorer* pure and simple, whose chief purpose is to pass through a country hitherto unknown, and gather all the information he can in regard to it, and then to return home and publish the results. This class rarely have to study the effects of their expedition upon the inhabitants of the country through which they pass, as they seldom cover the same ground twice.

(2) Then we have the *Trader* or *Gold-hunter*, whose whole business is to get possession of the produce or minerals of the land, and whose highest ambition is to make a vast fortune in as short a time as possible, and then retire to a better clime and more congenial life in the home-land.

(3) The third class is represented by the *Missionary*, who goes abroad with the intention of spending his whole life in the land, and applies himself to the conversion, education, and general uplifting of the native races.

(4) Then again we have another class in the *Administrators* and *Government officials*, who find it no easy matter sometimes to keep the other conflicting interests within bounds; occasionally they find that explorers, traders, and missionaries alike consider themselves equal to the task of governing the Government.

(5) There is, however, another interest in Central Africa which has been sadly neglected, and to a great extent ignored. I mean the interest of the *Native Races*. And I wish on this occasion to identify myself unreservedly with the cause of the African savage.

No one who has studied the African problem in its varied aspects during the past twenty years can help feeling some anxiety as to the future destiny of that great Continent. Rival powers have mapped out the whole of Africa for their special "spheres of influence," which influence is not always for the good of the country itself or of the

¹ A paper read before the Society on April 3rd.

nations who aspire to govern it. This rivalry of the nations has served its purpose in the discovery of unknown regions in Central Africa, and in solving the mysteries connected with the sources of the great rivers and the highlands and lakes of the interior. Now that the question of territory is practically settled, and the delimitation of boundaries proceeding apace, it is time for each power to consider well its policy in the development of the country and the government of its people. The future of this vast Continent depends not on its ivory and rubber trade, nor even on its mineral wealth: not on the discovery of gold and precious stones, but on the far more important discovery of the native himself. For you cannot govern Africa apart from the African. Especially is this the case in tropical regions, where Europeans cannot flourish and where everything depends on native labour. And I venture at this critical time in the history of African affairs to plead most fervently for a fuller recognition of the native element in your mission of civilisation. The Pan-African movement in South Africa must be taken as a sign of the times, which may spread itself over the whole Continent; and unless dealt with in a wise and statesmanlike manner, it may become a source of much confusion and trouble in the near future. When you have settled the present South African war there will arise above the political horizon another problem of far more importance and of vaster dimensions, and you will have to apply yourselves to this question of the native races with much caution and firmness. It is to be hoped that the race hatred and bitterness which exists in some parts will not become the chronic disease and curse of Central Africa.

The time has come when a thorough study of the native character is imperative, and we must inquire whether the African possesses the qualities necessary to enable him to take a prominent position in the development of his country. This question cannot be dismissed with such epithets as "savages," "niggers," or "inferior races." Our own ancestors were "savages." It is a question of evolution. Bring the natives into living touch with the glorious principles of what is best in our civilisation, and they cannot remain savages. The great danger of the present rush of European influences into Central Africa is to produce a superficial and spurious civilisation—a bad copy of the white man, with all his vices, but none of his virtues. What is needed is the genuine development of the native character by bringing to bear upon it the highest moral and Christian principles. Our aim must be *not to Europeanise, but to civilise*, and build up a structure suitable to the nature and temperament of the people.

The object of this paper, therefore, is to give some information relative to the African mind and character, as seen in the institutions and customs of the people, and to show that even among savage tribes there is abundant evidence of the power of subtle reasoning which sometimes may be considered equal to the cleverest feats of modern philosophers. Let me give one example from personal experience. Some years ago I was present at a native palaver, where a slave was accused of attempted murder in a neighbouring town. He managed to escape and got back to his people. Later on the family who prosecuted

presented themselves at his master's place, and demanded the life of the offender or a substantial sum of money, and a day was fixed for the palaver to be "talked." The owner was more ready to part with the slave than with his money, and kept him in irons to be delivered up on the appointed day and killed. But in this case the defending counsel was a philosopher as well as a lawyer. The prosecution stated their case and proved the offence, which took place in their town. According to Congo custom they ought to have caught the would-be murderer and brought him to his chief; but this was not done. So the counsel got up and said no doubt what they had said was all true, but as they had seen him in their town at the time they must know what had become of him, and that they must produce the man; and he proceeded to charge them with doing away with the slave without bringing him to them, as he had not been seen since. Counsel on both sides argued this point all day long, and the prosecution failed utterly to produce the culprit, although he was there in chains before everybody's eyes. The fact that both parties saw him before them, and talked to him, was not sufficient proof of the man's real existence, and the case collapsed. Could any civilised philosopher or lawyer do better?

The people of whom I speak are the Kongos and Zombos, two important tribes of the great Bantu family. They are subjects of the ancient kingdom of Kongo, and inhabit the northern portion of the province of Angola, in Portuguese Congo. The present king, who resides at S. Salvador, is not the important ruler that his predecessors were, and the Zombos have long ceased to pay allegiance to him. They speak the same language with a slight dialectical difference, but the tribal prejudice is very strong, and intercommunication is limited.

A philologist would find ample scope for his special branch here. It is a remarkable fact that the language of these undeveloped tribes, which has only been reduced to writing within the past twenty years, has the elements of some of the most cultured of European tongues. All words are derived from verbs which are rich in tenses and moods. The Kongo "verb" has three voices like that of the Greek—viz., active, passive, and middle, and the noun derived may have the force of any one of the three. This provides for the most varied and definite shades of meaning, and the natives seldom make a mistake in their choice of a word. The regularity of its rules and the nicety of its expressions point unmistakably to a habit of thought and force of intellect which are seldom associated with our idea of savages. Had we no other evidence than this of language, I would have no hesitation in saying that the Kongos are endowed with no mean gift of brain power, and are capable of such development as will make them of the greatest value in the advance march of progress into the heart of Africa.

Even in matters of *fetishism* and *superstition* they are not so simple as some give them the credit for being. I have yet to discover that most mythical of beings called the "Unsophisticated African." His system of *fetishism* is a most complicated one. The longer one studies it, the more astonished he is at the marvellous feats of mental exercises the Kongos

can perform. After nineteen years of careful study I have yet to master the intricacies of native superstition. But I have learned enough to know that a definite course of reasoning runs through the whole system. They begin with a belief in the great spirit-world, which is generally associated in their minds with forests where the spirits of the dead dwell after death. These spirits return to their old haunts, and are consequently greatly feared. This is the primary reason why burials are made the occasions for dancing and general festivities. They wish to appease the departed spirits by showing special attention to the body and honour to the family. For this reason also the dead bodies are wound up mummylike in cloth—sometimes many thousands of yards—of various qualities and colours, which are then kept for varied periods, according to the importance of the family, before the final burial festivities. Sometimes they are thus kept for over twenty years. The Kongos preserve their dead in a hut, and fires are kept burning night and day. This is exceedingly unhealthy, and the Portuguese Government have prohibited the custom at S. Salvador, where white men reside. In Zombo a better plan is followed. There they dig a large pit in the ground, and the cloth-bound body is suspended on two forked sticks fixed in the middle. Sticks are then laid across which are covered with branches and palm-leaves, and finally a thickness of earth, thus forming a vault. When the time for the funeral arrives, the body is taken out and removed to the burial-place, and interred in the ordinary way.

Funerals all through the land are of the first importance, and in more senses than one they are the chief end of life. A Kongo man lives and works only for a proper burial. He amasses cloth and beads and goats and pigs for this sole purpose, and he spends half his life in attending funerals, which are the chief festive occasions in the country.

As to witchcraft, the ordeal by poison and similar things, so much has been said and written by a host of travellers, that they can be passed over without any remarks from me. I would only remind you that all these are a part of a complicated system, cleverly thought out by the native "nganga," or priests, who may be classed among the most cunning rogues upon the face of the earth.

Whatever the raw savage lacks, it is not cunning or an active and creative brain. You see this in the astuteness of his trading transactions. He must be a sharp-witted man who gets the better of a Kongo man in his native market.

My experience of the Zombos dates back only to four years ago, when the Baptist Missionary Society, under whose auspices I have laboured in Africa, decided to make a forward move from S. Salvador in the direction of Zombo. The early missionaries, who settled at this ancient capital twenty-three years ago, looked towards the East and saw a range of hills some forty miles away, and on inquiry they were told that beyond on the plateau lay the Zombo country, whose people were very fierce and warlike, and would not allow white men to enter their territory. They learned, however, that this strong inland tribe supplied most of the markets with slaves, and many of them had been bought by

the king of Kongo, and had settled in the town. From them we gathered some valuable information about the country and the people.

At the request of our directors in London, in 1898 I made a prospecting journey into that region, with the object of selecting a site for a Mission station. My wife, as usual on my journeys, accompanied me. And it has been my experience that the presence of a white lady on a peaceful expedition into unknown districts is a decided advantage, for it goes far to disarm the suspicion of the natives, who are apt to think that every white man comes to take their country from them by force. Our first difficulty was to engage carriers, for the tribal jealousies are so strong that the Kongos were unwilling to enter a land the inhabitants of which were noted for their warlike propensities and savagery. At first they refused, but when they saw I meant to go, they changed their minds, for they would not allow "their white man" to be carried by strangers.

Travelling is a tedious affair on the Congo, and we are compelled to provide ourselves with everything we need in the shape of food, beds, chairs and tables, and cooking utensils, etc. We have no beasts of burden, and we have to use hammocks swung on a bamboo pole and carried by natives. Six men are told off for each hammock, and on fairly even roads they run with their burden at a good rate. Tents we use only when passing through sparsely populated parts. Those who are used to the climate and to the people prefer to camp in native villages, where they can be accommodated with a native hut. These huts are always dry and well smoked, and for this reason far healthier than when a tent is fixed on ground exposed to rain and dew, which at night fills one's tent with damp and malaria rising through the pores of the earth. A native never objects to our turning his few articles of furniture, in the shape of earthen pots, baskets, and empty bottles, out to the yard, and then one's lads can make an effective broom of palm-leaves, and clear out the dirt and much "creeping life" which polite lips never dare to describe.

We left S. Salvador in an easterly direction, with forty carriers, and on the fifth day we ascended the plateau at Diadia, and soon we were bordering on the Zombo country. The people were very timid and superstitious, and feared the presence of the white man; our appearance in a town or village was a signal for the women and children to run away and hide themselves in the bush, while the men would rush into their huts and bring out their loaded flint guns to meet us. On my shouting out in the native language and telling them who we were, they would come around us and engage in conversation. It was highly amusing to see the astonishment in their faces when they heard a white man talking in their own tongue, and the white lady was no end of wonder, especially to the women, who were particularly struck with the high pitch of a European lady's voice and her long hair. On several occasions my wife had to let down her hair for a private exhibition to satisfy the curiosity of the women. The African is never proud of his "wool," and envies the European his straight hair or long beard. Curling-irons would be the last thing an African young lady would desire.

As we proceeded on the Makela road, on the northern boundary of Zomboland, we were greatly interested in the numerous fetishes and charms exhibited at the entrance into towns and villages, and on one or two occasions we came upon witch-doctors holding their palavers, and carrying on their nefarious business of poisoning and killing innocent folks.

At that time two Europeans had just settled at Makela, one a Portuguese trader and the other an official of the Government in charge of a military post established near the boundary of Congo Free State. We halted there for a day or two, and received every attention at the hands of these gentlemen. The Government official was much concerned at my proposal to go further into the interior without what he called sufficient protection, and he wanted me to provide my men with firearms, and offered me a military escort. I thanked him for his kind thought and offer, but explained that I had always moved about among the people unarmed—that I did not possess a firearm myself, and that I never allowed a carrier to carry one. And I have never had any occasion to regret this rule or to modify it. He shrugged his shoulders at my very peculiar scruples, and we departed with many expressions of good wishes for a prosperous journey. We continued our journey eastward until we reached the Nkissi river, known in this district as the Nzadi a Malewa, and found the people speaking a different dialect, but not so different that we could not understand them. The swampy valley of Malewa was anything but inviting, and we therefore retraced our steps, and made for the district of Kibokolo, which lies to the south of Makela. We had heard of this district, from Zombo slaves at S. Salvador; and when we saw the population with its many towns and villages, we decided at once that it was the district which we were seeking for, and remarkably suitable for our purpose. After some trouble we found the principal town, but my headman experienced considerable difficulty in finding the chief. He was not to be seen anywhere, and the people were very timid, but came in crowds to stare at us. At last the chief was brought out from his hiding-place, and he came with his headmen to receive me. This was done in native style, with much etiquette, and he showed us a respectable hut to sleep in. This done, we proceeded to make our residence habitable, in the usual way, while the carriers were shown two other houses for their use. Later on the chief and his people came, and we held a palaver, at which I gave them practically an historical sketch of my life and of our business in their country. I told them that we had been at S. Salvador for many years, teaching the people to read and to write and various trades, and that we were looking for a place where we could do the same in Zombo. After some further talk the chief replied that, as he was one of many chiefs in the country, he could not give any answer to me, but he would call together the other chiefs of the district to-morrow, and I could then repeat in their presence what I had told him that day, and then they could give me an answer. This I considered satisfactory, and was delighted with the progress of things. "To-morrow" came, but it happened to be a market-day, and a market-day in Zombo is in some

respects similar to that of some other countries—the people get home the worse for drink. Drink is a terrible curse in Africa—not only the “fire-water” made in Hamburg and thrust upon them by all European nations alike—but the fermented palm wine and a decoction of cassava beer, which is brewed in large quantities in Zombo. The town was restfully quiet that morning, for they had gone to market, and I was looking out for the promised meeting of chiefs. I found out afterwards that instead of coming to me these gentlemen had gathered themselves at a great palaver in the market-place, a mile and a half away. They were discussing the presence of the white man in their country, and how best to get rid of him. The majority were in favour of killing him and his wife and carriers, and that would prevent any more coming; but the Kibokolo folks were afraid to have a white man killed in their town, and they managed to effect a compromise with the others, and it was finally agreed upon to go and drive him away from their towns, and if he refused, they would beat him and his wife and carriers, and force them away. So about two o’clock that day—and I was perfectly ignorant of what had occurred at the market-place—there was a great outcry on the opposite side of the stream which runs through the midst of the towns, and there were hundreds of natives, covered with their war-paint, rushing down wildly in our direction. When they reached the water they saw our lads there washing their clothes. We had given them a piece of soap, and the soapsuds on the surface of the water created quite a sensation. They had never seen such a thing before, for they had no use for soap in that land, and the cry was raised, “See what the white man has done; he has sent down his boys to poison our water.” Our lads had to run for their lives, leaving their garments behind. In far less time than I can speak about it, we were surrounded by a wild and savage crowd of people, brandishing their cutlasses and spears, and firing their guns over our heads, demanding our immediate departure from their land. I gathered all my men behind me, for it was of the first importance to keep them quiet and avoid a fight. By this time the witch-doctors and the women were crowding around us, displaying their fetishes and charms, and shouting and dancing, and hurling insults at us. Then the town band appeared in the shape of large drums and ivory horns, which they blew with terrific effect, and altogether it was like pandemonium let loose upon us. By dint of shouting I managed to get some of the headmen to hear me, and demanded to know the reason of all this excitement and noise. The only thing I could get out of them was that I must go away at once, for the people were going to kill me. This I refused to do, and told them we should stay there until next day. The chief then sent begging me to leave, that his people had gone mad. The fury of the crowd grew in strength, and the headmen renewed their effort to get us to leave, or they would kill us. I replied that if that was all they wanted, they could do it easily without making such noise and fuss—that we were there without any weapons, and that we would not fight. They were so taken aback with my answer that they did not know what to do; but they kept on with their threats, and their ardour did not cool all through

the night. At half-past five we had our evening meal, as usual, in the open space in front of our hut—for we never have our meals inside in these journeys; if we did, the people would swarm like bees and block the doorway in trying to see the strange people feed, and we could get no air. So we always dine in public. After our usual worship with the carriers we retired to rest, and in spite of the howling mob outside, we managed to have a fair amount of sleep. Next morning there was no difficulty with carriers about starting—they had everything ready at dawn, but we waited breakfast first, and proceeded leisurely about it. I sent my messenger to take leave of the chief, but he refused to come to me or to accept my present, and we went away a sadly disappointed party, followed by the frantic crowd, firing their guns and driving us away.

We were now on the way back to Kongo, and on this return journey a remarkable incident occurred. We missionaries call such occurrences interpositions of Divine Providence. We had travelled only a few days when we met about five hundred Zombos returning from the direction of the coast with loads of rubber on their shoulders. They had been unable to go to the coast on account of a native war which had occurred in the Lembelwa district, not far from S. Salvador. The trade routes were closed, and all the people were in arms. I assured these Zombos that I knew all the chiefs of Lembelwa, and if they would come back with me I could take them through in safety. At first they thought I was laying a trap for them to retaliate for the treatment I had received in their country, but ultimately they decided to trust themselves in my hand. When we reached Lembelwa I found that their story was correct. I took my position in front of all the men, and on emerging out of the grass into the open space in the town I found the road guarded by armed men, and the principal chiefs among them. Being old and intimate friends, I took matters in my own hand, and deposited the chiefs on the grass at the side of the path. This was simply a matter of form to relieve them of the responsibility of allowing us to pass. At each of the towns I left word for the chiefs of the district to come and see me at the camping-place that night. They all came, and we held a palaver. Each side in the quarrel had much to say on the subject, and when they had relieved their minds with much oratory and gesticulations, they appealed to me to arbitrate. I accepted the office, and exercised the utmost impartiality by blaming both sides and giving them a strongly worded lecture on the foolishness and wickedness of their course of action. The outcome of this was a settlement of the dispute and the reopening of the road.

These Zombos went to the coast and sold their rubber, and came back with their merchandise and told their people in Zombo that it was the white man whom they had driven away that helped them in their trouble and settled the road palaver.

A few months later the Kibokolo folks were in trouble. A neighbouring tribe had a quarrel with them and threatened war upon them. The chiefs and people assembled once more at their market-place, this time to discuss their own difficulties, and after several days' "palavering"

they arrived at the conclusion that if they could get that white man whom they had driven away a few months before to come back, he would be able to help them as he did in the Lembelwa district, and they despatched special messengers to S. Salvador, begging us to return and settle down in their town. So it came to pass that exactly twelve months from the time we were driven away by a furious mob, my wife and I were on our way back to Zombo, and this time the Kibokolo folks came out to meet us, and for three days they marched in front of us, with drums and horns, firing guns, and dancing, but this time to welcome us as their "white men." Thus we have entered into this long-neglected and unexplored region of Zombo, and for some years to come I hope to make Kibokolo my home and base for further journeys of exploration to the south and east—a large tract of country altogether unknown to Europeans.

I have already described the features of these highlands of Zombo from a geographical point of view both in London and Glasgow, and need not repeat the description here.

The climate of Zombo, compared with that of the Congo in general is healthy. At Kibokolo, although for the past three years we have lived in a rough way in temporary grass houses, our health has been excellent. The same thing might be said of the Portuguese at Makela, who say that the climate is equal to that of Portugal, which is doubtful. It is too soon yet to speak with any degree of certainty on this point, and time alone can decide it. But with an altitude of over 3000 feet above sea-level, a sandy and well-drained soil, with an abundant supply of excellent water, clear as crystal in the numerous streams, I see no reason why it should not be a fairly healthy climate. Certainly it is a vast improvement on the swampy lowlands of the Congo valley.

The Zombos are similar to the Kongos in their habits and customs, but more industrious. Unlike the Kongos, the men do a fair amount of farm-work, and do not depend so absolutely for their living on the labour of their wives. They are also keen traders, and spend much of their time in collecting rubber from the rubber-producing districts towards the east, and take it to the coast, principally to Noki on the river, but often they journey as far as Ambrizette and Loanda on the coast, where they exchange their produce for powder, salt, cotton, and other goods.

These highlands are more thickly populated than the region of the coast, and the people seem to thrive better. The sleep sickness so virulent on the river is not so prevalent here.

The standard of morality is low, and polygamy is the rule. Marriage is chiefly a business transaction arranged between families, and is not by any means indissoluble; the bond may be cancelled by the simple process of returning the money. In the native language the transaction is spoken of as "borrowing." In the case of a free woman she is still in the power of her family and under their protection; and the children born to them are under the control of her family—the natural father having no voice in their management. The wife is a "borrowed" article, and nothing more. This places the woman in an independent position,

and in many respects it is a protection. If the husband ill-treats his wife she can run away to her family and claim their assistance, and if need be the marriage can be dissolved. This naturally leads to no end of family troubles and tribal disputes. It is not so with a *slave wife*; she is the property of her husband, and the father has full control over his children. From the man's point of view this is much more satisfactory, and costs him less than the usual sum paid for the "borrowed" free woman.

This, together with the institution of polygamy, makes the family relationship a very complicated affair. Families are always traced through the women. The law of succession is not from father to son, but from father to nephew on the sister's side. The legal inheritor of a man's property is the eldest son of his eldest sister. This seems strange, but a careful study of the system of polygamy and native customs regarding the marriage state shows no other way practicable.

This brings me to the important question of *Slavery*. There is much ignorance and misconception in regard to this matter. First of all, we must distinguish between the *Slave Trade* and what is known as *Domestic Slavery*. Both are essentially wrong, and the sooner they are swept away from the face of the earth the better. The *Slave Trade* consists of capturing and buying slaves, either for export or for labour in plantations within the country. This vile traffic has been, and still is, the curse of Central Africa, and it is the duty of every civilised Government to come down on it with a strong hand and prohibit it by all the means in its power. *Domestic Slavery* is a more difficult term to define. There is buying and selling in the native markets, but the slaves become attached to the family, and are not bought with the intention of reselling or of making profit by the transaction. A man may buy women slaves to become his wives, or young men to become husbands of his women-folk. The importance or social position of an African is estimated by the size of his family or the number of his wives. Hence he buys slaves to increase the number of his clan. They are his property, and may be considered his assets if he gets into financial difficulties. This is what is called domestic slavery.

Many natives become slaves of their own free will. If a man has no relations, life as a free being becomes almost intolerable to him. He has nobody to protect him, and, the saddest thing of all, he cannot get a wife anywhere. So he will approach the head of some family, and asks to be received as a slave. Then he is provided with a wife, and if children are born of the marriage he becomes practically a part of the family, and he is his own master to a great extent.

A peculiar feature of this system is the provision made to enable a slave to escape from a bad master. Should a slave desire to exchange masters, he has only to persuade another man to receive him, who is willing to pay a fair price for him. This transfer is called "eating a goat"; for when a runaway slave seeks the protection of a new master he is given a meal, including some goat's flesh, a token of his acceptance, and that his protector is willing to settle the claims of his former master. This is constantly being done, and "to eat a goat" is a settled

phrase in their language, and is very expressive : thus a convert from heathenism to Christianity is spoken of as a man who has "eaten God's goat," which means that such a man has escaped from one master and claimed the protection of another.

In dealing with the question of *slavery*, therefore, we must carefully distinguish between these two systems, and attack them from different positions and with different weapons. The *trade* must be put down with an iron hand by all the Governments responsible for the welfare of their respective spheres, and on the whole this is being done by the administrations that are under the direct control of European Governments. But I venture to think that *domestic* slavery must be approached by a different method. This institution cannot be abolished by force of arms. It is a part of a great system upon which all the laws and customs of the people may be said to stand. To deal with it successfully we must lift the moral standard of the people to a higher level, develop their character, and educate them to loftier ideas and ambitions. In vain we attempt to pull down the old structure of savage laws and institutions if we can give them no clearer vision of the nobler temple of civilisation and progress. We shall rescue the downtrodden slaves of Central Africa only when we succeed in imparting into the African mind the principles and rudiments of freedom and humanity. What we need is not suppressive laws and regulations, but the building up of free institutions that will develop the native mind and understanding, and give the people higher ideals and a wider view of life. Give Africa more "Lovedales" and "Blantyres," with their schools and industries, and the whole fabric of slavery and cruelty will fall to the ground.

It is a matter for sincere congratulations that our Governments are beginning to realise the importance of protecting the native races. The Portuguese Government has discovered that the constant export of the best blood of Angola and Congo carried on under the system of "contract labour" (*serviçães*) has been the ruin of their colony, and there is good reason to hope that the bill recently introduced in the Lisbon Parliament will put an end to this infamous business once for all. This system has been the one dark blot on the Administration. Its officers hitherto have made it their principal business to recruit carriers and employees for the different trading firms at Makela, forgetting that they had any obligations to protect the liberty of Portugal's dark subjects. They are now paying the penalty of their misguided policy. No country can prosper under such conditions. Slavery is always the same, whether we call it by its old name, or by the more modern appellation of "contracted" or of "forced labour."

I must hasten to say, however, that the Portuguese treatment of the native is not cruel or hard. Those who enjoy the protection of the Portuguese Government have much to be thankful for; and I have noticed that the natives on the undefined borders of the Congo State are most anxious to claim that their towns are in Portuguese territory. We have been shocked beyond measure during the past few years with the accounts of terrible barbarities perpetrated upon natives by the officers and agents of a neighbouring state; but as far as I am aware, no charges

of this character have been brought against the Portuguese. Their Government is most inoffensive, and I am glad of an opportunity to bear witness to the humanity and kind-heartedness of its agents in dealing with the natives. I have also to acknowledge the ready help which they have rendered to us in matters concerning the welfare of the natives, and the equal treatment which they have meted out to Protestants and Catholics, to English and Portuguese alike.

In conclusion, is it too much to hope that the sword will now remain in its scabbard in Africa, and that all nationalities and sections shall join hands in the most noble of all enterprises, viz., the uplifting of the native races, and equipping them for the prominent part which they are destined to take in the development of their country? There is a great task before us. For ages past the land has been drained of its best life to supply plantations with *slave labour*, as if the Continent of Africa only existed for that purpose.

At the dawn of this twentieth century a new light has been thrown across the darkness, and a new era has commenced in the history of Africa in which the African shall be recognised as a fellow-man and a fellow-worker. Let the Angel of Peace fly aloft, and let Civilisation spread her silver wings over the length and breadth of the Continent; then shall the wilderness become a garden, and Africa shall become the pride of all the nations, and the black man and the white man shall rejoice together, in peace and in love.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE ANTILLES.

By J. D. FALCONER, M.A., B.Sc.

ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT enunciated two great ideas about the structure of the New World. In the one he insisted upon the geological continuity of the great mountain-systems from Alaska to Fuegia: in the other he asserted that between the twin continents there was formerly intercalated a third element, a third America, now represented only by the submerged mountain-chain of the Antilles. Modern scientific research, while it has largely modified the former, has strongly confirmed the latter idea, and has afforded us data from which the geography of the lost land at different periods can be at least partially restored.

Omitting for the moment all details of the central region, we may take first a general survey of the origin of the New World and its connection with the Antilles. It will be readily granted that the presence of a complex of Archæan or pre-Cambrian rocks appearing now at the surface over wide areas, or partially covered by unconformable strata of later age, indicates the probable distribution of the dry land at the beginning of Palæozoic time. The most extensive development of Archæan gneisses, schists, and plutonic intrusions in America occurs in the Laurentian district of Canada, stretching from the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes away to the north-west along the