

# PORTUGUESE EAST AFRICA

A LAND WHICH SUPPLIES NATIVE WORKMEN FOR THE GOLD MINES of The RAND.

Special Correspondence of the Deseret News by Frank G. Carpenter.

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AMBOO CREEK, Portuguese East Africa, June 10.—Away out here in the jungle, in the misty lowlands back of the In-

man oosen, about 2,000 miles northeast of Cape Town, in the heart of Portu-

guese Africa I find an American man-

aging a cotton plantation. He is em-

ployed by the Rhodesia company, and

he has set out a tract of about 500

acres along the line of the railroad,

which runs from Beira to Bulawayo.

His work is entirely experimental. The

company owns three miles on each

side its tracks, and it hopes to develop

a great cotton industry in the Portu-

guese possessions.

The cotton is now two months old

and it is already knee high. The plants

look thrifty, and the fields are as

clean as a garden. They are watched

day and night to keep out the rhinoc-

eros and hippopotami, and during the

rainy season one has to be careful how

one wades through the rows for fear of

being a leg to a hungry crocodile.

I have had a long talk with the man-

ager. His name is Stillson, and he

comes from Meriden, Miss. He tells me

that one of the chief dangers is from

the wild beasts. The country has many

lions, and his men killed a young

leopard with their hoes the other day.

The leopard was asleep and they

stepped on him and sunk their mat-

tocks into his brain. Mr. Stillson says

that the tracks the hippopotami make

are each as big around as a dinner

plate, and that if they get into the

field they ruin the plants.

COTTON IN SOUTH AFRICA.

I talked with this man as to the pros-

pects of raising cotton in this part of

the world. He tells me that there is

a vast deal of available land, both in

this region and farther south. Some

cotton has been grown on the Maputo

river, not far from Lourenco Marques,

and experiments are being made in

other parts of Portuguese East Africa.

The cotton raised here at Bambo

Creek has a longer fiber than that from

the same seed when grown in America.

Mr. Stillson is experimenting with our

cotton and with Egyptian cotton. He

uses a steam plow to break up the

ground, and then runs American cul-

tivators over it. The cotton that is now

grown here was planted last December,

and the first picking took place in

May. The plants ripen at different

times, and the Egyptian cotton later

than the American cotton. The picking

season continues throughout the sum-

mer.

I understand that the Mozambique

company, which controls this great ter-

ritory, has sold 5,000 acres of land to

a syndicate in the province of Mozam-

bique, and that this syndicate intends

to raise cotton upon it. The land is

ready to be irrigated and the water is

ready being built on the plantation.

Steam and motor plows are to be im-

ported and the estate will have the

most up-to-date of labor-saving ap-

pliances.

AN OLD CONTRACT LABOR SYS-

TEM.

During my talk with Mr. Stillson, I

asked him some questions as to the

men who work his plantation. Said he:

"We use the negroes, and hire them

through the Mozambique company. This

company has control of the natives

and they are forced to do as it says.

We are now paying about \$3.30

per month for a good man. We hand

this over to the company, and it al-

lows the man \$2 and takes the 30 cents

as its commission. That is the way all

labor is furnished here. We have now

150 men in the fields and we get them

all from the company. If a man shirks

or refuses to work, we send him to the

military commandant for punishment,

and if he will not work after that he is

put in jail and another man is sent in

his place."

"What punishments are used in such

cases?"

"The most common one is slapping

the man on the hand with a web strap,

which sucks up the skin. The suction

is like that of a piece of leather pressed

against a flat stone. It is very pain-

ful, but it does not usually lay a man

up for more than a day or so at a

time."

"What hours do your men work?"

"From sunrise to sunset. They work

hard, and I should say they are good

hands in the cotton fields as our ne-

groes at home. They are much like our

negroes but they are on the whole bet-

ter formed and, if anything, more mus-

cular."

PORTUGUESE NATIVES FOR AFRI-

CAN MINES.

Portuguese East Africa is now one of

the chief sources of the labor supply

of the mines of the Transvaal. Before

the Chinese were imported four-fifths

of the negro workmen were brought in

from the outside, and mostly from this

region. The miners paid about \$3 a

head to the Portuguese authorities.

Within the past year it has been decid-

ed that the Chinese must be sent back

home as soon as can be, and a large

number of natives will be required to

take their places. There are white labor

contractors now going through Portu-

guese East Africa and British Central

Africa looking up men to work in the

gold mines.

We took a great gang of such labor-

ers on the ship at Chinde, the chief

port for Nyasaland, as we came down

the coast to Beira. The landing there

is rough. We anchored far outside the

bar and the negroes were brought to

the ship in a steam launch and loaded

by means of a great basket. This bas-

ket was about as large around as a

hoghead and about 10 feet in height.

There was a door at one side. The ne-

groes, the number of a dozen at a

time, stepped into this. The door was

closed and then the basket, negroes and

all, was raised by means of a derrick to

our steamer. The human freight

hoveled out in unison as it rose, and

the men thought they were killed when

the basket came down with a thud on

the deck.

During our stay we took about two

score such basketful of ebony hu-

manity, making something like 200

negroes in all. I was told that the

men would be taken to Delagoa bay,

and thence shipped by railroad to the

mines of the Rand. They are em-

ployed on short time contracts, and

as a rule serve only a few months,

when they are anxious to go back

home. The Chinese came in on three

years' contracts, with the privilege of

extending them to six years. They

have made much better laborers than

the native Africans, who, as a rule,

wish to stop labor as soon as they have

accumulated enough money to buy an

extra wife or so who can support them

at home.

A NIGHT AT BAMBOO CREEK.

I stopped at Bamboo creek on ac-

count of a washout on the railroad

going into Rhodesia. I had traveled

all day from Beira, on the Indian

ocean, passing through lands largely

covered with water. It had been rain-

ing for a week or so and the country

is now flooded. Some of the bridges

have been swept away and the road is

so unsafe that the engineers do not

care to go over it at night. The re-

sult is that our party is landed here in

the wilds. There is no town excepting

a hotel and this cotton plantation.

The hotel is a tin shanty of one story

with a barroom in front, a dining room

at the side and a kitchen in the rear.

The bar-room is filled with mementos

Negro Versus Chinese Cheap Labor—An Odd Contract System—A Visit to a Cotton Plantation Run by an American—"Sweet Marie" At Bamboo Creek—The Chief Cities of the Colony—Lourenco Marques as the Great Gold Port of the Future.



PORTUGUESE LABORERS FOR THE GOLD MINES OF THE TRANS VAAL.

Photographed for the "News" by Frank G. Carpenter.

of big game hunting. The huge skull of a hippopotamus lies on one end of the counter, and there are lion skulls and leopard skulls among the whisky and brandy bottles at the rear. At one end of the room is a stuffed zebra with a stuffed leopard on top of him, and about the walls are the heads and horns of a dozen different kinds of antelopes. The bartender sells hippopotamus hide whips and canes at extravagant prices, and he offers to lend me his rifle if I care to shoot big game. He says there are no end of rhinos and hippos nearby, and that a lion can be found almost any night by going within a few miles of the hotel. I have not yet decided to go.

"SWEET MARIE" IN BLACK AFRICA.

We were a curious party as we came into the hotel for dinner, and our entertainment was interesting. In the first place we had the chief engineer of the Rhodesia railway, and with him a nephew of Lord Roberts, who is also a civil engineer. We had another railroad official, who has charge of a line away up the Zambesi in British Central Africa, and the American cotton planter of whom I have already spoken. Among the other travelers are a millionaire Wall street broker, who is making a pleasure tour of Afri-

ca, an English commercial traveler, and a South African miner on his way to the Transvaal. We soon got acquainted and after dinner we had a little entertainment in the tin shack, away out here in the wilds. The chief engineer played the organ and gave quite a concert, including among his selections a number of American songs. One of the best of these was "Sweet Marie," which was written by Cy Warman when he was the engineer on a railroad near Denver. The song was composed by one engineers in the wilds of the Rockies, and now far off here in the wilds of Africa, it was sung for us by another engineer.

After the songs we had big game stories, including those of lion hunts, elephant hunts and struggles with hippos and rhinos. Among these was a surprising tale about a crocodile which the Central African engineer had recently shot. He said the reptile was an old one, and that it had evidently been a great man eater, for he had found 48 native bracelets and anklets in his stomach. His presumption was that the crocodile had eaten 48 negroes so ornamented, to say nothing of numerous others who had left off their jewelry when they went to bathe. This is my first taste of Portuguese East Africa. I saw the country first at

Chinde and sailed for miles along the coast before I came to Beira. The territory is enormous. It extends along the borders of the Indian ocean for as far as from New York to Omaha and at the north goes inland as far as from Washington to Boston. It is larger than Texas and it would make considerably more than six states the size of Ohio, Kentucky or Virginia. Its native population is estimated at two or three millions, but no accurate census has been taken; and, although the Portuguese have owned the country for more than 300 years, they know almost nothing about it. The greater part of it, as I have said, has been leased to the Mozambique company and that company fixes the taxes and pays Portugal for the privilege of exploiting the town. It runs the postoffice and sells its own postage stamps.

## THE PRAZZO SYSTEM.

It farms out the natives and makes them pay taxes, which in some cases they work out by giving their labor to foreigners. This is known as the prazzo system. The country is divided up into districts known as prazos. These are put up at auction, the successful bidder having the right to collect the taxes of his prazzo for a term of three years. He is allowed to levy a tax of so much on each native and he must pay that amount in cash or work. The contractor has also the right to force the people to do a certain amount on the public roads and on house building for the officials. He has also other rights which make the system little more than a legalized slavery. The taxes are often paid in goods, and the value of their work is measured by American or English cotton cloth, the price of which can be regulated largely by the collector. A part of the labor is the hunting of elephants and the gathering of rubber, both of which are exceedingly profitable. I am told that the abuses of such men, in the faraway districts, are terrible, and that the people have comparatively few rights that the tax collectors are bound to respect. It is said that slavery is still common in some regions, although it is not recognized by the government and is contrary to law. The conditions are not as bad as in Portuguese West Africa, where slaves are still bought and sold, but they are bad enough.

## MOZAMBIQUE A BACK NUMBER.

The cities of Portuguese East Africa are changing. It used to be that Mozambique was by far the most important. Situated on a little island, in the wide channel between Africa and Madagascar, it was for years one of the great ports of the continent. It was a center of the slave trade, and the residence of the chief Portuguese officials. The country has two capitals, one at Mozambique at the north and the other at Lourenco Marques at the south. Mozambique is still the headquarters of the Mozambique company, and its operations are conducted from there. Lourenco Marques is the chief commercial center, and with its magnificent harbor and its short railroad to the gold fields, it is fast becoming one of the most important cities on the east coast of Africa. Mozambique lies on a little island only a quarter of a mile wide and not more than a mile long. It is close to the mainland and canoes are always

moving back and forth carrying food and supplies. The island is covered with houses. It has clean sidewalks, paved with cement, and its roadways are macadamized.

It has a fort and public buildings, but now the streets are practically deserted. Many of the good houses are vacant and others have been turned into the homes of coolies and petty trading stores. The bazaar in which the slaves were exposed for sale have passed away and the town is practically dead.

The city of Beira, is not as prosperous as it has been in the past. Its population has fallen off since the Boer war, and it now has 600 or 700 whites, about 1,500 negroes and a considerable number of East Indians. It is a town of banks, stores and hotels. It has a street car line, but the cars are little four-wheeled affairs, each large enough to hold but two persons, and they are pushed over the tracks by negroes, who run along behind.

## LOURENCO MARQUES.

Lourenco Marques, on the other hand, is rapidly growing. It is lighted by electricity, and there are lines of electric railways which connect its various sections. It has a new postoffice, a new railway station and many new buildings. The great marsh at the back of the city has been drained and the mosquito plague is practically wiped out. The town is rapidly becoming the chief port for the Transvaal, and it is where our American goods for that region are now landed. The city has one of the best harbors on the African continent. It is known as Delagoa bay. It is 23 miles long and about 14 miles wide, and it reminds one of Manila bay in its extent. Indeed, it could contain at one time all the ships which come to Africa and have room to spare.

Lourenco Marques began to grow when the railroad connecting it with Johannesburg was built. This was about 13 years ago, and its progress has been steady from then until now. It is by far the nearest route from the sea to the gold fields. The distance from Johannesburg is only 334 miles, while from Durban, the chief port of Natal farther south, it is 483 miles and from Cape Town more than 1,900 miles. The Portuguese government has been doing much to improve the harbor. It has built a quay almost half a mile long and has equipped it with all modern conveniences for loading and unloading vessels. It has built great warehouses and has also constructed a dry dock and other marine works.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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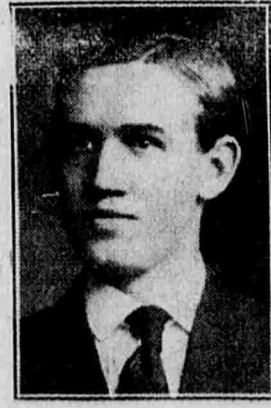
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