

MINDANAO.

All About the Richest and Least Known of the Philippine Islands, Where the Land Belongs to Uncle Sam.

FRANK G. CARPENTER

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Zamboanga, March 13.—It looks like a leg of mutton with a fat shank, a well-trimmed stem and the bone sticking out like a handle, and it is, in fact, the richest and juiciest piece of meat in Uncle Sam's Philippines larder.

I refer to the island of Mindanao. I am at Zamboanga, just on the tip of the little end of the bone, but I have gone about the coast, and from what I have heard and seen can tell you something about it. I cannot tell you much, for but little is known. The greater part of the island has not been explored, and it has many regions which have never been trod by the foot of a white man. The Spaniards had their settlements only close to the coast, and their wars with the Moros were such that they did not dare to go among the more savage tribes of the interior.

MILITARY GOVERNOR OF MANILA.



Colonel Edward M. McLernand, son of General John A. McLernand, who has been appointed military governor of Manila. He will be duly installed with appropriate ceremonies.

The only men, in fact, who have been inland are the Jesuit missionaries. They have made maps of the island, and it is from their notes that my best information comes. These maps have been sent through Gen. Bates to Washington, and Congress will have an opportunity to publish them.

OUR RICHEST ISLAND.

I have learned enough, however, to make me believe that Mindanao is the richest and best of all our possessions in the far East. It has the advantage of belonging almost altogether to the government, and can be opened up just as Uncle Sam pleases. It will be one of the subjects of congressional legislation when the war ends, and it will for years have an important place in the news from this part of the world.

Before I describe its resources and people I would like to show you just where it is. It is very far out of the world, and is the nearest to the equator of our American possessions. Here at Zamboanga I am as far south from Manila in a straight line as New York city is distant from Pittsburgh, and as far away from Apatari, at the northern end of Luzon, as the distance between the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico. The whole of Mindanao is more than 500 miles nearer the equator than the isthmus of Panama, and Zamboanga is a little more than 300 miles from that so-called hottest line of the globe.

Still, Mindanao has not a bad climate. Everywhere the troops are stationed on the island the surgeons tell me that the conditions are remarkably comfortable. There is little or no sickness among the soldiers, and, considering that we are in the tropics, remarkably little among the natives. Here at Zamboanga, on the coast, I do not find it more hot than Washington city in June, and in the mountainous regions in the interior the air should be better.

IS AS BIG AS OHIO.

The island of Mindanao is about as big as the State of Ohio. It may be a few square miles more or less, but no one will know until our geological survey professors have been to the ground. It is more than 500 miles from here to Matil, on the east coast, where we have just stationed a company of the 31st regiment, and about 200 miles from north to south, where the island is widest. As you will see from the map, Mindanao has an enormous coast line. Its shores in places run in and out like the teeth of a saw. It has numerous bays and many good harbors. It is, with the exception of the northern portion, outside of the region of typhoons and in that of equatorial currents, and although the rainfall is heavy, it is said to have a better climate than Luzon. The topography of the island is rolling. Three separate volcanic ranges cross it from north to south, the middle range being the highest, and culminating in Mt. Apo, near the Gulf of Davao. The top of Mt. Apo is more than 10,000 feet above the sea. Its peak can be seen by our troops at the town of Davao. It is an active volcano, with vapor and fire coming from its southern side. The most of this mountain is wooded, only the summit being bare. The other mountains of the island are covered with a rich growth of timber, from 200 feet high and twenty feet thick being the average, and there are found.

A LAND OF RIVERS AND LAKES.

Mindanao is well watered. It is cut up with rivers and lakes that it is said that there are few places where you cannot reach a navigable stream within ten miles travel. It has about two hundred rivers, a large number of which are navigable for small boats.

The Rio Grande, which flows into the bay of Illana, in the southern part of the island, is about two hundred and ninety miles long, of which one hundred miles are navigable. The Rio Grande river almost bisects the eastern end of the country, rising near the Gulf of Davao, and flowing northward into the Bay of Butuan. It has two large lakes, and there are other lakes scattered through the island. The word Mindanao means the man of the lake. It probably comes from the large lake in the center. This is known as Linao. It has an area of 180 square miles. Another lake, known as Lake Manit, has about thirty square miles, and it lies in an extinct crater. Just south of the town of Illigan, and connected with it by the River Illigan, is the Lake of Malanao. This is the only one of the lakes which the Spaniards attempted to control. They brought gunboats and took them in sections to it much to the surprise of the inhabitants. In the province of Cottabato there are two lakes which feed the Rio Grande

night. The houses are made by thatch and bamboo poles and are usually only a roof and floor, being without walls of any kind. At Zamboanga, where the Spaniards go almost naked. A man who has just returned from a trip among them says that the men he saw wore squares of cloth suspended from the waist, and their waists and women wore skirts which were not more than a foot long. The women had brass rings on their ankles and wrists. The men were armed with bows and arrows and spears. The weapons were poisoned, the poison coming from a tree which grows in the mountains.

The Mindayas are a strange people who live in the eastern part of this island, not far from Matil. We have recently established a garrison at that point, and we shortly hope to get something concerning them. They have fair skins and look not unlike Europeans. In addition to these there are many other tribes, some of whom, such as the Bagobos, Atas, Gayanos, and Tagacoles, are notorious for having human sacrifices. Many of the savages are head hunters and all are supposed to be unfriendly to the whites. As to this, however, nothing certain can be known, until explorations can be made. Such of the soldiers as have gone into the mountains have not been molested, and the probability is that if the people are kindly treated there will be little trouble with them.

The problem of handling them and the Moros is a most serious one, especially the Moros. This so far, has been most admirably done by Gen. Bates, but whether the policy will hold good is yet to be seen. I find the Moros to be most interesting people. There are in the neighborhood of two hundred thousand of them on this island. They have villages everywhere along the coast and about the lakes of the interior. There are large numbers of them about Zamboanga, and I see them everywhere. They are semi-savages, but their civilization, history and character is such that I will have to devote one or more special letters to describing them. They have caused the Spaniards trouble for centuries, and until now have steadily resisted any union of either religion or government with the whites.

A ROYAL PRINCIPALITY.

In this letter I should like to give some idea of the resources of Mindanao, for, as I have said I consider it one of the most important parts of our possessions. I have spoken of the timber. The best of the hardwoods of the archipelago are to be found here. The mountains are covered with trees. In traveling along the east and south coast you see wooded hills rising one above the other, extending on and on until they lose themselves in the clouds, which in this latitude always hang low. The woods are mahogany, rosewood, ebony and many other varieties. Here at Zamboanga the buildings occupied by our troops are floored with mahogany. The soldiers stand with their heavy boots over boards which would make piano tops, and I rode my horse today across the canal over a wooden bridge which, with the proper machinery, might have been turned into a \$50 dinner table. At the headquarters yesterday I put my feet on a rosewood floor under the mahogany table of Col. Pettit, and this morning took a ride in a dugout, fifty feet long, gouged out of a log which, in the United States, would have been turned into walking sticks worth a dollar apiece. Rosewood is in fact the oak of Mindanao, and mahogany is as common as pine is in Wisconsin.

THE SPANIARDS SAVED THE TIMBER.

The question as to why the Spaniards did not develop the timber resources of the island is often asked. The reason probably is that the quantity that they could make more by taxing foreigners who attempted to do so. They put the taxes too high, however, and in this way prevented development. They had rigid forestry laws. The lumber to be cut had to be in a certain way. The logs must be cut just so, and there were so many fees and restrictions that every big lumber company which attempted to operate failed. Today there are many men looking into the timber interests and eventually saw mills will be established. There are a few mills here now, but most of the sawing and planing is done by hand. Those who bring the mills should remember that the logs are very hard and that the circular saws which we commonly use will not cut it. The saws which are found to work best are those which go up and down, and band saws, or gang saws, would probably work.

GOLD AND COAL MINES.

Mindanao is believed to be the richest of the Philippines in its mineral deposits. Coal is known to exist in a number of the provinces, and I am told that large deposits have been recently discovered not far from the northern coast. I met the other day a lawyer from Portland, Oregon, who claimed to have secured an option on these mines, and who says he will soon start to the United States to organize a company for their exploitation. There is some coal not far from Zamboanga, but as to its quality or that in the north, I have not yet been able to learn.

The gold propositions are equally indefinite. There is no doubt but that there is gold in the streams in many parts of Mindanao, but whether it exists in paying quantities has not yet been determined.

Foreman, a man who has written the best book about the islands, speaks of a Frenchman who for a long time washed about four pounds of gold dust a month out of the Surigao district. The Chinese have been buying gold from the natives, and traces of mines have been discovered in a number of places near here by prospectors.

There are a number of Californians and Australians already in the mountains, but few have ventured far. A former hospital steward named Handy, who came out here with the army in 1898, has just registered five claims with the judge advocate general at the headquarters here. There is as yet no law as to recording such claims, but he has left his matters in this shape in order that he may establish his claims when the laws as to mining property are made. This man resided from the army some time ago, and has since devoted himself to prospecting.

He has gone with the Moros back into a country where the man who enters is supposed to take his life into his hands. He interested the Moros with him, taking up claims for them at the same time. He says he was well treated everywhere, and that although he had \$500 in his valise, which was unlocked, it was not stolen. His claims lie along a river at a distance of about forty miles inland from Zamboanga. He claims that he found color in every pit he excavated, and that in many places the gold was found in paying quantities, although he did not go down to the bedrock. He has brought some samples of gold in with him. It is in

flakes like bran and is absolutely pure. At one place the Moros took him to some mines which had been worked by their people forty years ago, but from which they had been driven by the Spaniards. The remains of the workings could be plainly seen, although large trees had grown up in the pits. One of the captains, who is stationed at the Bay of Illana, about a hundred miles east of here, tells me he has found color in the sands of the Rio Grande river, and similar news comes from the province of Davao. They will be made there. Copper is said to exist in Surigao and other provinces, and there is also said to be mercury in Surigao.

THE LAND OF COCONUTS.

The real gold mines of Mindanao, however, lie in its soil. I cannot describe the wonderful vegetation which we have here growing by the millions, and such coconut trees! They are from fifty to a hundred feet high, and some of them bearing. It is said, a coconut for every day of the year. They wall the shore of eastern Mindanao for miles. You may almost ride for days here and not get out of sight of a coconut grove. Many of the trees are notched so that men who gather the nuts, as it is called, from the bottom of the tree to the top on steps. They take the meat from the nuts, chop it into little pieces and dry it in the sun. It is then known as copra, and this shape is shipped to Europe, where the oil is pressed from it for use in the making of soap and other such things. Some coconuts are shipped in the shell and in some parts of the island the

shells are dried and their fiber used for making rough matting. Hogs are fattened on the coconuts and the people eat the nuts and drink the milk.

What would you think of turning a spit and getting a glass of wine from a tree? Well, this very thing is done down here. The natives draw their wine and whiskey from the coconut trees. They cut off the blossoms and fasten to them bamboo tubes, into which the sap runs. Every so often they remove the tube and empty the liquid into another bamboo. After being left for six hours it begins to ferment, and before the day is over it is turned into a liquor, which, as the Indians say, "will make the drunk come." The stuff looks like cider, and smells to me somewhat like cold buttermilk.

It is drunk by the natives both fresh and fermented.

COFFEE AND BANANAS.

I see many coffee trees in my country grows easily and produce excellent berries. I understand that the soil of almost any part of the coast will raise coffee, and if this is so it should be even better in the mountains. Some of the best coffee in the world comes from Java, which is only a few hundred miles to the southward, and it may be that this island is destined to equal the great Dutch colony in its coffee plantations. If so, it will support an enormous population. It is almost as large as Java, and that island has twenty-four million people on it, about one-third as many as are in the United States.

Almost anything can be raised in Mindanao. I see banana trees here up to fifteen feet high. They tower above you, shading the ground and producing the most delicious fruit. I have visited large hemp plantations and am told that some provinces produce as much as a million dollars' worth of hemp every year. Cacao is also raised, and scattered here and there over the lowlands are sugar plantations. The most of these are in the hands of Visayans, Zamboanguenians and Chinese, the Moros owning practically nothing except their villages and cattle. The country is a rich grazing country and number of cattle are now being shipped north to the Manila market.

THE BOER WAR.

The Boer war for the moment has narrowed itself down to the discussion of two questions—the safety of Johannesburg and the treatment of the Dutch rebels in Cape Colony. The statement which came from America, that the Boers would certainly destroy the mines and make of Johannesburg another Moscow as a matter of "military precedence," has had a very different effect from the one desired. It was, of course, intended to rouse European investors in the Rand to the necessity of

speedy intervention. There is not, of course, any military reason for the destruction of several million dollars' worth of underground machinery. The mines can give no manner of aid or comfort to the British soldiers, and to wreck them, so far as they are capable of being wrecked at all, would be simply a plain act of wanton pillage, for which the British government would be entirely justified in holding the members of the Transvaal executive

personally responsible. The threat as to the real qualities that go to make up the Boer character, and the French and German shareholders who a few months ago were cursing "British greed" and laughing over the misadventures of British officers, are now only too anxious to see those officers quartered in Johannesburg with all possible dispatch.—Sydney Brooks, in Harper's Weekly.

EUROPE TO BE DAZZLED BY THE BE-JEWELLED SHAH.

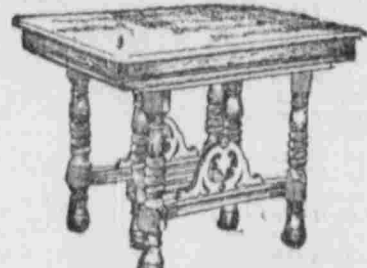


Muzaffer ed-Din, Shah of Persia, is on his way to the Paris Exposition where those who recall the former glittering progress of Persia's ruler through the Occident are preparing for the most gorgeous pageantry on record. The Shah travels in a style of unequalled splendor and wears all his diamonds which are worth a king's ransom, wherever he goes. The political significance of the Shah's European trip is very great. Russia and England will vie with each other to do him honor, for upon his friendship or his enmity depends the safety of the Indian empire.

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