

ACCOUNTS AND PAPERS:

SIXTY-FIVE VOLUMES.

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--(14.)--

COLONIES AND BRITISH POSSESSIONS—*continued.*

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AFRICA—*continued.*

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VOL. LXII.

# CORRESPONDENCE

AND

## REPORT FROM HIS MAJESTY'S CONSUL AT BOMA

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### ADMINISTRATION

OF THE

### INDEPENDENT STATE OF THE CONGO.

*Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty.  
February 1904.*

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**CORRESPONDENCE relating to the Recruitment of Labour in the British Central Africa Protectorate for Employment in the Transvaal.**

[In continuation of "Africa No 2 (1903)."]

*Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Majesty's Command. March 1904.*

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## CORRESPONDENCE

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## Correspondence and Report from His Majesty's Consul at Boma respecting the Administration of the Independent State of the Congo.

No. 1.

*The Earl of Cromer to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received February 9.)*

(Extract.)

*On the Nile, near Kiro, January 21, 1903*

I HAVE just visited the Belgian stations of Kiro and Lado, as also the station of Gondokoro in the Uganda Protectorate.

Your Lordship may like to receive some remarks on the impressions I derived as regards the Belgian positions on the Upper Nile.

I should, in the first instance, observe that Commandant Hanolet, who is in charge of the district, was absent in the interior of the country; but Sir Reginald Wingate and myself were most courteously received by the officers in command at Kiro and Lado.

From the point of view of appearance, the two Belgian stations contrast favourably with any of the Soudanese stations on the Nile, and still more favourably with Gondokoro in the Uganda Protectorate. The principal dwelling-houses are of brick. They seem to be well built. The stations are kept scrupulously clean. The troops are well housed. Flourishing gardens have been created. I counted the graves of nine Europeans at Kiro, all of whom died of fever, but I am informed that the health of the place is now greatly improved.

I had heard so many and such contradictory accounts of the Belgian Administration that I was very desirous of ascertaining some concise and definite evidence on this subject. During a hurried visit, and with opportunities of observation confined to the banks of the river, I scarcely anticipated that I should be able to arrive at any independent opinion on the point at issue. I saw and heard, however, quite enough to gain an insight into the spirit which pervades the Administration.

It must be remembered that the 1,100 miles of country which I traversed between Khartoum and Gondokoro has, until recently, been the prey of slave-dealers, Egyptian Pashas, and dervishes. Under the circumstances, it might well have been expected that much time would be required to inspire confidence in the intentions of the new Government. It is, however, certain that, with the exception of a portion of the Nuer tribe, who live in a very remote region on the upper waters of the Sobat, confidence has been completely established in those districts which are under British rule. Except in the uninhabitable "Sudd" region, numerous villages are dotted along the banks of the river. The people, far from flying at the approach of white men as was formerly the case, run along the banks, making signs for the steamer to stop. It is clear that the Bari, Shilluks, and Dinkas place the utmost trust and confidence in the British officers with whom they are brought in contact. In spite of the difficulties of communicating with them through an interpreter—himself but slightly educated—it was impossible to mistake their manifest signs and expressions of security and content. They flock into the Settlements without fear; and if, as often happens, they will not work, it is merely because they are lazy and have few wants, not because they entertain doubt that they will be paid for working. These remarks apply equally to Gondokoro, although I was only able to see a few of the natives there. I had not time to visit the principal Bari village, which lies at some little distance from the river.

The contrast when once Congolese territory is entered is remarkable. From the frontier to Gondokoro is about 80 miles. The proper left, or western, bank of the river is Belgian. The opposite bank is either under the Soudanese or the Uganda Government. There are numerous islands, and as all these are under British rule—for the thalweg, which, under Treaty, is the Belgian frontier, skirts the western bank of the river—

I cannot say that I had an opportunity of seeing a full 30 miles of Belgian territory. At the same time, I saw a good deal, and I noticed that, whereas there were numerous villages and huts on the eastern bank and on the islands, on the Belgian side not a sign of a village existed. Indeed, I do not think that any one of our party saw a single human being in Belgian territory, except the Belgian officers and men and the wives and children of the latter. Moreover, not a single native was to be seen either at Kiro or Lado. I asked the Swedish officer at Kiro whether he saw much of the natives. He replied in the negative, adding that the nearest Bari village was situated at some distance in the interior. The Italian officer at Lado, in reply to the same question, stated that the nearest native village was seven hours distant.

The reason of all this is obvious enough. The Belgians are disliked. The people fly from them, and it is no wonder they should do so, for I am informed that the soldiers are allowed full liberty to plunder, and that payments are rarely made for supplies. The British officers wander, practically alone, over most parts of the country, either on tours of inspection or on shooting expeditions. I understand that no Belgian officer can move outside the settlements without a strong guard.

It appears to me that the facts which I have stated above afford amply sufficient evidence of the spirit which animates the Belgian Administration, if, indeed, Administration it can be called. The Government, so far as I could judge, is conducted almost exclusively on commercial principles, and, even judged by that standard, it would appear that those principles are somewhat short-sighted.

No. 2.

*Sir C. Phipps to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received September 21.)*

My Lord,

Brussels, September 19, 1893.

I HAVE the honour to transmit herewith copy of a note, together with its inclosures, which has been addressed by the Congo Government to the Representatives at Brussels of the Powers parties to the Act of Berlin to which your Lordship's Circular despatch of the 8th August respecting the affairs of the Independent State of the Congo had been communicated.\*

M. de Cuvelier, in handing me these documents, stated that he had been instructed to follow the same procedure as that adopted by His Majesty's Government.

I have, &c.

(Signed) CONSTANTINE PHIPPS.

Inclosure in No. 2.

LE Gouvernement de l'État Indépendant du Congo, ayant eu connaissance de la dépêche du Foreign Office, datée du 8 Août dernier, remise aux Puissances Signataires de l'Acte de Berlin, constate qu'il est d'accord avec le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté sur deux points fondamentaux, à savoir, que les indigènes doivent être traités avec humanité et menés graduellement dans les voies de la civilisation, et que la liberté de commerce, dans le bassin conventionnel du Congo, doit être entière et complète.

Mais il nie que la manière dont est administré l'État entraînerait un régime systématique "de cruauté ou d'oppression" et que le principe de la liberté commerciale apporterait des modifications au droit de propriété tel qu'il est universellement compris, alors qu'il n'est pas un mot à cet effet dans l'Acte de Berlin. L'État du Congo note qu'il ne se trouve dans cet Acte aucune disposition qui consacrerait des restrictions quelconques à l'exercice du droit de propriété ou qui reconnaîtrait aux Puissances Signataires un droit d'intervention dans les affaires d'administration intérieure les unes des autres. Il tient à se montrer fidèle observateur de l'Acte de Berlin, de ce grand Acte International qui lie toutes les Puissances Signataires ou adhérentes, en ce que dit le sens grammatical si clair de son texte, que nul n'a pouvoir de diminuer ou d'amplifier.

La note Anglaise remarque que c'est en ces dernières années qu'a pris consistance la campagne menée en Angleterre contre l'État du Congo, sous le double prétexte de mauvais traitements des natifs et de l'existence de monopoles commerciaux.

\* See Africa No. 14 (1903).

Il est à remarquer, en effet, que cette campagne date du jour où la prospérité de l'État s'affirma. L'État se trouvait fondé depuis des années et administré comme il l'est aujourd'hui, ses principes sur la domanialité des terres vacantes, l'organisation et le recrutement de sa force armée étaient connus et publics, sans que ces philanthropes et ces commerçants, de l'opinion desquels fait état le début de la note, s'en montrassent préoccupés. C'était l'époque où le Budget de l'État ne pouvait s'équilibrer que grâce aux subsides du Roi-Souverain et aux avances de la Belgique, et où le mouvement commercial du Congo n'attirait pas l'attention. On ne trouve le terme "the Congo atrocities" utilisé alors qu'à propos de "the alleged ill-treatment of African natives by English and other adventurers in the Congo Free State."\* A partir de 1895, le commerce de l'État du Congo prend un essor marqué, et le chiffre des exportations monte progressivement de 10 millions en 1895 à 50 millions en 1902. C'est aussi à partir d'alors que le mouvement contre l'État du Congo se dessine. Au fur et à mesure que l'État affirmera davantage sa vitalité et ses progrès, la campagne ira s'accroissant, s'appuyant sur quelques cas particuliers et isolés pour invoquer des prétextes d'humanité et dissimuler le véritable objectif des convoitises qui, dans leur impatience, se sont cependant trahies sous la plume des pamphlétaires et par la voix de membres de la Chambre des Communes, mettant nettement en avant la disparition et le partage de l'État du Congo.

Il fallait, dans ce but, dresser contre l'État toute une liste de chefs d'accusation. Dans l'ordre humanitaire, on a repris, pour les rééditer à l'infini, les cas allégués de violences contre les indigènes. Car, dans cette multitude de "meetings," d'écrits, de discours, dirigés ces derniers temps contre l'État, ce sont toujours les mêmes faits affirmés et les mêmes témoignages produits. Dans l'ordre économique, on a accusé l'État de violation de l'Acte de Berlin, nonobstant les considérations juridiques des hommes de loi les plus autorisés qui justifient, à toute évidence de droit, son régime commercial et son système foncier. Dans l'ordre politique, on a imaginé cette hérésie en droit international d'un État, dont l'indépendance et la souveraineté sont entières, qui relèverait d'ingérences étrangères.

En ce qui concerne les actes de mauvais traitement à l'égard des natifs, nous attachons surtout de l'importance à ceux qui, d'après la note, ont été consignés dans les dépêches des Agents Consulaires de Sa Majesté. A la séance de la Chambre des Communes du 11 Mars, 1903, Lord Cranborne s'était déjà référé à ces documents officiels, et nous avons demandé à son Excellence Sir C. Phipps que le Gouvernement Britannique voulût bien nous donner connaissance des faits dont il s'agissait. Nous réitérons cette demande.

Le Gouvernement de l'État n'a jamais d'ailleurs nié que des crimes et délits se commissent au Congo, comme en tout autre pays ou toute autre Colonie. La note reconnaît elle-même que ces faits délictueux ont été déférés aux Tribunaux et que leurs auteurs ont été punis. La conclusion à en tirer est que l'État remplit sa mission; la conclusion que l'on en déduit est que "many individual instances of cruelty have taken place in the Congo State" et que "the number of convictions falls considerably short of the number of actual offences committed." Cette déduction ne paraît pas nécessairement indiquée. Il semble plus logique de dire que les condamnations sévères prononcées seront d'un salutaire exemple et qu'on peut en espérer une diminution de la criminalité. Que si effectivement des actes délictueux, sur les territoires étendus de l'État, ont échappé à la vigilance de l'autorité judiciaire, cette circonstance ne serait pas spéciale à l'État du Congo.

La note Anglaise procède surtout par hypothèses et par suppositions: "It was alleged . . . . It is reported . . . . It is also reported . . . ." et elle en arrive à dire que "His Majesty's Government do not know precisely to what extent these accusations may be true." C'est la constatation que, aux yeux du Gouvernement Britannique lui-même, les accusations dont il s'agit ne sont ni établies ni prouvées. Et, en effet, la violence, la passion et l'invraisemblance de nombre de ces accusations les rendent suspectes aux esprits impartiaux. Pour n'en donner qu'un exemple, on a fait grand état de cette allégation que, sur un train descendant de Léopoldville à Matadi, trois wagons étaient remplis d'esclaves, dont une douzaine étaient enchaînés, sous la garde de soldats. Des renseignements ont été demandés au Gouverneur-Général. Il répond: "Les individus représentés comme composant un convoi d'esclaves étaient, pour la plus grande majorité (125), des miliciens dirigés du district de Lualaba-Kassaï, du Lac Léopold II et des Bangalas, sur le camp du Bas-Congo. Vous trouverez annexés les états relatifs à ces individus. Quant aux hommes

\* "Transactions of the Aborigines Protection Society; 1890-1896," p. 155.

enchaînés, ils constituaient un groupe d'individus condamnés par le Tribunal territorial de Basoko et qui venaient purger leur peine à la maison centrale de Boma. Ce sont les numéros 3642 à 3649 du registre d'érou de la prison de Boma."

C'est ainsi encore qu'une "interview" toute récente, reproduisant les accusations coutumières de cruauté, est due à un ancien agent de l'Etat "déclaré impropre au service," et qui n'a pas vu accepter par l'Etat sa proposition d'écrire dans la presse des articles favorables à l'Administration.

La note ignore les réponses, démentis, ou rectifications qu'ont amenés, dans les différents temps où elles se sont produites, les attaques contre les Agents de l'Etat. Elle ignore les déclarations officielles qu'en Juin dernier, le Gouvernement de l'Etat fit publiquement à la suite des débats du 20 Mai à la Chambre des Communes, débats annexés à la note. Nous annexons ici le texte de ces déclarations, qui ont, par avance, rencontré les considérations de la dépêche du 8 Août.

Le seul grief nouveau qu'elle énonce—en vue sans doute d'expliquer ce fait non sans importance, que le Consul Anglais qui a résidé au Congo depuis 1901 ne paraît pas appuyer de son autorité personnelle les dénonciations de particuliers—c'est que cet Agent aurait été "principally occupied in the investigation of complaints preferred by British subjects." L'impression en résulterait que de telles plaintes auraient été exceptionnellement nombreuses. Sans aucun doute, le Consul, en diverses occasions, s'est mis en rapport avec l'Administration de Boma dans l'intérêt de ses ressortissants, mais il ne paraît pas que ces affaires, si l'on en juge par celles d'entre elles dont a eu à s'occuper la Légation d'Angleterre auprès du Gouvernement Central à Bruxelles, soient autres, par leur nombre ou leur importance, que celles de la vie administrative courante : des cas ont notamment visé le règlement de successions délaissées au Congo par des ressortissants Anglais ; quelques-uns ont eu pour objet la réparation d'erreurs de procédure judiciaire comme il s'en produit ailleurs, et il n'est pas avancé que ces réclamations n'ont pas reçu la suite qu'elles comportaient. Le même Consul, dont la nomination remonte à 1898, écrivait le 2 Juillet, 1901, au Gouverneur-Général :—

"I pray believe me when I express now, not only for myself, but for my fellow-countrymen in this part of Africa, our very sincere appreciation of your efforts on behalf of the general community—efforts to promote goodwill among all and to bring together the various elements of our local life."

Les prédécesseurs de Mr. R. Casement—car des Consuls Anglais avec juridiction sur le Congo ont été appointés par le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté depuis 1888—ne paraissent pas davantage avoir été absorbés par l'examen de plaintes multiples ; tout au moins une telle appréciation ne se trouve pas consignée dans le Rapport, le seul publié, de M. le Consul Pickersgill, qui, par le fait qu'il rend compte de son voyage à l'intérieur du Congo, jusqu'aux Stanley Falls, dément cette sorte d'impossibilité, pour les Agents Consulaires Anglais, d'apprécier *de visu* toute partie quelconque de leur juridiction.

Comme allégations contre le système d'administration de l'Etat, la note vise les impôts, la force publique et ce qu'on appelle le travail forcé.

Au fond, c'est la contribution de l'indigène du Congo aux charges publiques que l'on critique, comme s'il existait un seul pays ou une seule Colonie où l'habitant, sous une forme ou sous une autre, ne participe pas à ces charges. On ne conçoit pas un Etat sans ressources. Sur quel fondement légitime pourrait-on baser l'exemption de tout impôt pour les indigènes, alors qu'ils sont les premiers à bénéficier des avantages d'ordre matériel et moral introduits en Afrique ? A défaut de numéraire, il leur est demandé une contribution en travail. D'autres ont dit la nécessité, pour sauver l'Afrique de sa barbarie, d'amener le noir à la compréhension du travail, précisément par l'obligation de l'impôt :—

"It is a question (of native labour) which has engaged my most careful attention in connection with West Africa and other Colonies. To listen to the right honourable gentleman, you would almost think that it would be a good thing for the native to be idle. I think it is a good thing for him to be industrious ; and by every means in our power, we must teach him to work. . . . No people ever have lived in the world's history who would not work. In the interests of the natives all over Africa, we have to teach them to work."

Ainsi s'exprimait Mr. Chamberlain à la Chambre des Communes, le 6 Août, 1901. Et récemment, il disait :—

"We are all of us taxed, and taxed heavily. Is that a system of forced labour ? . . . . To say that because we put a tax on the native therefore he is reduced to a condition of servitude and of forced labour is, to my mind, absolutely ridiculous. . . . It is perfectly fair to my mind that the native should contribute something

towards the cost of administering the country." (House of Commons, the 9th March, 1903.)

"If that really is the last word of civilization, if we are to proceed on the assumption that the nearer the native or any human being comes to a pig the more desirable is his condition, of course I have nothing to say. . . . I must continue to believe that, at all events, the progress of the native in civilization will not be secured until he has been convinced of the necessity and the dignity of labour. Therefore, I think that anything we reasonably can do to induce the native to labour is a desirable thing."

Et il défendait le principe d'une taxe sur le natif parce que "the existence of the tax is an inducement to him to work." (House of Commons, the 24th March, 1903.)

Aussi l'exemple de taxes sur les indigènes se retrouve-t-il presque partout en Afrique. Au Transvaal, chaque natif paie une taxe de capitation de 2*l.* ; dans l'Orange River Colony, le natif est soumis à une "poll tax ;" dans la Southern Rhodesia, le Bechuanaland, le Basutoland, dans l'Uganda, au Natal, il est perçu une "hut tax ;" au Cap, on trouve cette "hut tax" et une "labour tax ;" dans l'Afrique Orientale Allemande, il est également perçu un impôt sur les huttes, payable en argent, en produits, ou en travail. Cette sorte d'impôt a été appliquée encore dans le Protectorat de Sierra-Leone, où elle a pu être payée "in kind by rice or palm-nuts," et la suggestion a été faite "that work on roads and useful works should be accepted in lieu of payment in money or produce."

On voit donc que le mode de paiement de l'impôt, en argent ou en nature, n'en altère pas la légitimité, lorsque son taux n'est pas excessif. Tel est le cas au Congo, où les prestations fournies par l'indigène ne représentent pas plus de quarante heures de travail par mois. Encore est-il que ce travail est rétribué et que l'impôt payé en nature fait, en quelque sorte, l'objet d'une ristourne à l'indigène.

Partout le paiement de l'impôt est obligatoire ; son non-paiement entraîne des voies de contrainte. Les textes qui établissent les taxes sur les huttes frappent l'indigène récalcitrant de peines, telles que l'emprisonnement et le travail forcé. Au Congo non plus, l'impôt n'est pas facultatif. On a vu, ailleurs, les actes d'autorité qu'a parfois rendus nécessaires le refus des indigènes de se soumettre à la loi : telles les difficultés à Sierra-Leone, à propos desquelles un publiciste Anglais, parlant des agents de la force publique, affirme :—

"Between July 1894 and February 1896, no fewer than sixty-two convictions—admittedly representing a small proportion of offences actually committed—were recorded against them for flogging, plundering, and generally maltreating the natives."

D'autres exemples pourraient être rappelés de l'opposition que rencontre chez les populations indigènes l'établissement des règles gouvernementales. Il est fatal que la civilisation se heurte à leurs instincts de sauvagerie, à leurs coutumes et pratiques barbares ; et il se conçoit qu'elles ne se plient pas sans impatience à un état social qui leur apparaît comme restrictif de leurs licences et de leurs excès et qu'elles cherchent même à s'y soustraire. C'est une chose commune en Afrique que l'exode d'indigènes, passant d'un territoire à l'autre, dans l'espoir de trouver de l'autre côté des frontières une autorité moins établie ou moins forte, et de s'exonérer de toute dépendance et de toute obligation. Il se pourrait, à coup sûr, que des indigènes de l'Etat se soient, sous l'empire de telles considérations, déplacés vers les territoires voisins, encore qu'une sorte d'émigration sur une large échelle, comme la présente la note Anglaise, n'ait jamais été signalée par les Commandants des provinces frontalières. Il est, au contraire, constaté, dans la région du Haut-Nil, que des natifs qui s'étaient installés en territoire Britannique sont revenus sur la rive gauche à la suite de l'établissement d'impositions nouvellement édictées par l'autorité Anglaise. Si c'est, d'ailleurs, ces régions qui sont visées, les informations de la note semblent être en contradiction avec d'autres renseignements donnés, par exemple, par Sir Harry Johnston :—

"This much I can speak of with certainty and emphasis : that from the British frontier near Fort George to the limit of my journeys into the Mbuba country of the Congo Free State, up and down the Semliki, the natives appear to be prosperous and happy. . . . The extent to which they were building their villages and cultivating their plantations within the precincts of Fort Mbeni showed that they had no fear of the Belgians."

Le Major H. H. Gibbons, qui s'est trouvé plusieurs mois sur le Haut-Nil, écrit :—

"Ayant eu l'occasion de connaître plusieurs officiers et de visiter leurs stations de l'Etat du Congo, je suis convaincu que la conduite de ces messieurs a été bien mal

interprétée par la presse. J'ai cité comme preuve mon expérience personnelle, qui est en opposition avec une version récemment publiée par la presse Anglaise, qui les accuse de grandes cruautés."

La déclaration de Juin dernier, ci-jointe, a fait justice des critiques contre la force publique de l'État en signalant que son recrutement est réglé par la loi et qu'il n'atteint qu'un homme sur 10,000. Dire que "the method of obtaining men for military service is often but little different from that formerly employed to obtain slaves," c'est méconnaître les prescriptions minutieuses édictées pour, au contraire, éviter les abus. Les levées s'opèrent dans chaque district; les Commissaires de District règlent, de commun accord avec les Chefs indigènes, le mode de conscription. Les engagements volontaires et les multiples réengagements complètent aisément les effectifs qui atteignent à peine le chiffre modique de 15,000 hommes.

Ceux qui allèguent, comme le dit la note, que "the men composing the armed force of the State were in many cases recruited from the most warlike and savage tribes," ignorent que la force publique est recrutée dans toutes les provinces et parmi toute la population du territoire. Les intérêts de l'État protestent contre cette notion d'une armée que l'autorité elle-même formerait d'éléments indisciplinés et sauvages et des exemples—tels que les excès qui ont été mis à charge des auxiliaires irréguliers utilisés dans l'Uganda, ainsi que les révoltes qui se sont produites jadis au Congo, imposent, au contraire, une circonspection spéciale pour la composition de la force armée. Les cadres Européens, qui se composent d'officiers Belges, Italiens, Suédois, Norwégiens, et Danois, y maintiennent une sévère discipline, et l'on chercherait en vain à quelles réelles circonstances fait allusion l'assertion que les soldats "not infrequently terrorized over their own officers." Elle n'est pas plus fondée que cette autre assertion, "that compulsion is often exercised by irresponsible native soldiers uncontrolled by an European officer." Depuis longtemps, l'autorité était consciente des dangers que présentait l'existence de postes de soldats noirs, dont le Rapport de Sir D. Chalmers, sur l'insurrection à Sierra-Leone, a constaté les inévitables abus de pouvoirs. Au Congo, ils ont été graduellement supprimés.

Il apparaîtra, à ceux qui ne nient pas l'évidence, que des reproches articulés contre l'État, le plus injuste est d'avancer "that no attempt at any administration of the natives is made, and that the officers of the Government do not apparently concern themselves with such work."

On peut s'étonner de trouver semblable affirmation dans une dépêche d'un Gouvernement dont l'un des membres, Lord Cranborne, Sous-Secrétaire d'État pour les Affaires Étrangères, disait le 20 Mai dernier:—

"There was no doubt that the administration of the Congo Government had been marked by a very high degree of a certain kind of administrative development. There were railways, there were steamers upon the river, hospitals had been established, and all the machinery of elaborate judicial and police systems had been set up."

Un autre Membre de la Chambre des Communes reconnaissait—

"That the Congo State had done good work in excluding alcoholic liquors from the greater part of their domain, that they had established a certain number of hospitals, had diminished small-pox by means of vaccination, and had suppressed the Arab Slave Trade."

Si atténuées que soient ces appréciations, encore démentent-elles cette affirmation d'aujourd'hui que "the natives are left entirely to themselves, so far as any assistance in their government or in their affairs is concerned."

Telles ne semblent pas être les conclusions auxquelles, déjà en 1898, arrivait le Consul Anglais Pickersgill.

"Has the welfare of the African," se demande-t-il, "been duly cared for in the Congo State?" Il répond: "The State has restricted the liquor trade . . . . . it is scarcely possible to over-estimate the service which is being rendered by the Congo Government to its subjects in this matter. . . . . Intertribal wars have been suppressed over a wide area, and, the imposition of European authority being steadily pursued, the boundaries of peace are constantly extending. . . . . The State must be congratulated upon the security it has created for all who live within the shelter of its flag and abide by its laws and regulations. . . . . Credit is also due to the Congo Government in respect of the diminution of cannibalism. . . . . The yoke of the notorious Arab Slave Traders has been broken, and traffic in human beings amongst the natives themselves has been diminished to a considerable degree."

Ce Rapport constatait aussi que les travaux des natifs étaient rémunérés et

rendait hommage aux efforts de l'État pour instruire les jeunes indigènes et ouvrir des écoles.

Depuis 1898 l'amélioration de la condition générale de l'indigène a encore progressé. Le portage à dos d'homme, dont précisément Mr. Pickersgill signalait le côté pénible pour les indigènes, a disparu là où il était le plus actif, en raison de la mise en exploitation des voies ferrées. Ailleurs, l'automobile est utilisée comme moyen de transport. La "sentry"—le poste de soldats nègres qu'il critiquait non sans raison—n'existe plus. Le bétail est introduit dans tous les districts. Des Commissions d'Hygiène sont instituées. Les écoles et les ateliers se sont multipliés.

"L'indigène," dit le document ci-joint, "est mieux logé, vêtu, nourri; il remplace ses huttes par des habitations plus résistantes et mieux appropriées aux exigences de l'hygiène; grâce aux facilités de transport, il s'approvisionne des produits nécessaires à ses besoins nouveaux; des ateliers lui sont ouverts, où il apprend des métiers manuels—tels que, ceux de forgeron, charpentier, mécanicien, maçon; il étend ses plantations, et, à l'exemple des blancs, s'inspire des modes de culture rationnels; les soins médicaux lui sont assurés; il envoie ses enfants dans les colonies scolaires de l'État et aux écoles des missionnaires."

Il est juste de reconnaître, a-t-on dit à la Chambre des Communes, que la régénération matérielle et morale de l'Afrique Centrale ne peut être l'œuvre d'un jour. Les résultats obtenus jusqu'à présent sont considérables; nous chercherons à les consolider et à les accentuer, malgré les entraves que l'on s'efforce de mettre à l'action de l'État, action que l'intérêt bien entendu de la civilisation serait, au contraire, de favoriser.

La note Anglaise ne démontre pas que le système économique de l'État est opposé à l'Acte de Berlin. Elle ne rencontre pas les éléments de droit et de fait par lesquels l'État a justifié la conformité de ses lois foncières et de ses concessions avec les dispositions de cet Acte. Elle n'explique pas pourquoi ni en quoi la liberté de commerce, termes dont la Conférence de Berlin s'est servie dans leur sens usuel, grammatical et économique, ne serait plus entière au Congo parce qu'il s'y trouve des propriétaires.

La note confond l'exploitation de son bien par le propriétaire avec le commerce. L'indigène, qui récolte pour compte du propriétaire, ne devient pas propriétaire des produits récoltés et ne peut naturellement les céder à autrui, pas plus que l'ouvrier qui extrait les produits d'une mine ne peut en frustrer le propriétaire en en disposant lui-même. Ces règles sont de droit et sont mises en lumière dans de multiples documents: consultations juridiques et décisions judiciaires dont quelques-unes sont annexées. Le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté ne conteste pas que l'État a le droit de répartir les terres domaniales entre les occupants *bonâ fide* et que l'indigène ne peut plus prétendre aux produits du sol, mais seulement lorsque "land is reduced into individual occupation." La distinction est sans base juridique. Si l'État peut céder les terres, c'est que l'indigène n'en a pas la propriété, et à quel titre alors conserverait-il un droit aux produits d'un fonds dont la propriété est légitimement acquise par d'autres? Pourrait-on soutenir, par exemple, que la Compagnie du Chemin de Fer du Bas-Congo ou la Société du Sud-Cameroun ou l'Italian Colonial Trading Company sont tenues de tolérer le pillage par les indigènes des terres qu'elles ont reçues, parce qu'elles ne les occuperaient pas actuellement? En fait, d'ailleurs, au Congo, l'appropriation des terres exploitées en régie ou par les Compagnies Concessionnaires est chose réalisée. L'État et les Sociétés ont consacré à leur mise en valeur, notamment des forêts, des sommes considérables se chiffrant par millions de francs. Il n'y a donc pas de doute que dans tous les territoires du Congo, l'État exploite réellement et complètement ses propriétés, tout comme les Sociétés exploitent réellement et complètement leurs Concessions.

Cet état de choses existant et consolidé dans l'État Indépendant permettrait, en ce qui le concerne, de ne point insister plus longuement sur la théorie formulée par la note et qui envisage tour à tour les droits de l'État, ceux des occupants *bonâ fide*, ceux des indigènes.

Cependant, elle s'impose à l'attention des Puissances par les graves difficultés qu'elle ferait surgir si elle était implicitement acceptée.

La note contient les trois propositions suivantes:—

"The State has the right to partition the State lands among *bonâ fide* occupants."

"The natives will, as the land is so divided out amongst *bonâ fide* occupiers, lose their right of roaming over it and collecting the natural fruits which it produces."

"Until unoccupied land is reduced into individual occupation and so long as the

produce can only be collected by the native, the native should be free to dispose of that produce as he pleases."

Il n'est pas une de ces propositions qui ne semble exclure les deux autres, et à vrai dire ces contradictions aboutissent à la négation du droit de Concession.

S'il a existé des occupants *bonâ fide*, ils sont devenus propriétaires: l'occupation, lorsqu'elle trouve à s'exercer, est dans toutes les législations un des modes d'acquisition de la propriété, et, au Congo, les titres en dérivant ont été légalement enregistrés. Si la terre n'a été valablement occupée par personne, elle est sans maître ou, plus exactement, elle a l'État pour maître: il peut en disposer au profit d'un tiers, et celui-ci trouve dans cet acte de disposition un titre complet et absolu. Dans l'un comme dans l'autre cas, il ne se conçoit pas que les fruits du sol puissent être réservés à d'autres qu'au propriétaire sous le prétexte qu'il n'est pas apte, en fait, à récolter les produits de son fonds.

Par une singulière contradiction, le système de la note dit qu'à la suite de l'attribution des terres par l'État, les indigènes "lose their right of collecting the natural fruits," et, d'autre part, qu'ils conservent le droit de disposer de ces produits "until unoccupied land is reduced into individual occupation." On ne comprend pas la notion d'un droit appartenant aux natifs qui existerait ou non de par le fait de tiers. Ou bien, par suite de l'attribution des terres, ils ont perdu leurs droits, et alors ils les ont perdus totalement et complètement; ou bien, ils les ont conservés, et ils doivent les conserver, quoique "the land is reduced into individual occupation."

Que faut-il d'ailleurs entendre dans le système de la note par occupants "*bonâ fide*" et par "individual occupation?" Qui sera juge du point de savoir si l'occupant a mis ses terres en état d'occupation individuelle, s'il était apte à en recueillir les produits ou si c'était encore l'indigène? Ce serait, en tous cas, des points relevant essentiellement du droit interne.

La note, au surplus, est incomplète sur un autre point. Elle dit que là où l'exploitation ne se ferait pas encore par les ayants droit, la faculté d'exploiter devrait appartenir aux indigènes. Elle voudrait donc donner un droit aux indigènes au préjudice des Gouvernements ou des concessionnaires blancs, mais n'explique pas comment ni par qui le tort ainsi causé serait compensé ou indemnisé. Quoique le système ainsi préconisé ne puisse avoir d'application dans l'État du Congo, puisqu'il ne s'y trouve plus de terres inappropriées, cette remarque s'impose dans l'intérêt des blancs établis dans le bassin conventionnel. S'il est équitable de bien traiter les noirs, il est juste de ne pas spolier les blancs, qui, dans l'intérêt de tous, doivent rester la race dirigeante.

Économiquement parlant, il serait déplorable qu'en dépit des droits régulièrement acquis par les blancs, les terres domaniales se trouvassent livrées aux indigènes, fût-ce temporairement. Ce serait le retour à leur état d'abandon de jadis, alors que les natifs les laissaient inproductives, car les récoltes de caoutchouc, les plantations de café, de cacao, de tabac, &c., datent du jour où l'État en a pris lui-même l'initiative: le mouvement des exportations était insignifiant avant l'essor que lui ont donné les entreprises gouvernementales. Ce serait aussi l'inobservance certaine des mesures d'exploitation rationnelle, de plantation et de replantation auxquelles s'astreignent l'État et les Sociétés Concessionnaires pour assurer la conservation des richesses naturelles du pays.

Jamais au Congo, que nous sachions, les demandes d'achat des produits naturels n'ont été adressées aux légitimes propriétaires. Jusqu'ici l'on n'a cherché à y acheter que des produits provenant de recels, et l'État, comme c'était son devoir, a fait poursuivre ces tentatives délictueuses.

La politique de l'État n'a pas, comme on l'a dit, tué le commerce: elle l'a, au contraire, créé, et elle perpétue la matière commerciale; c'est grâce à elle que, sur le marché commercial d'Anvers et bientôt au Congo même—on examine la possibilité d'y établir des dépôts de vente—peuvent être offertes annuellement à tous indistinctement, sans privilège ni monopole, 5,000 tonnes de caoutchouc récolté au Congo, alors qu'antérieurement, par exemple en 1887, l'exportation du caoutchouc se chiffrait à peine par 30 tonnes. C'est l'État qui, après avoir à ses frais créé la matière commerciale, en maintient soigneusement la source au moyen des plantations et replantations.

Il n'est pas à oublier que l'État du Congo a dû compter sur ses propres ressources. Ce fut une nécessité pour lui d'utiliser son domaine dans l'intérêt général. Toutes les recettes du domaine sont versées au Trésor, ainsi que le revenu des actions dont l'État est détenteur en raison de Concessions accordées. Ce n'est même qu'en tirant tout le

parti utile de ses domaines et en engageant la plus grande partie de leurs revenus qu'il a pu contracter des emprunts et provoquer à des entreprises de chemins de fer par des garanties d'intérêt, réalisant ainsi l'un des moyens les plus désirés par la Conférence de Bruxelles pour faire pénétrer la civilisation au centre de l'Afrique. Aussi n'a-t-il pas hésité à gager ses domaines dans ce but.

L'Acte de Berlin ne s'y oppose pas, car il n'a édicté aucune proscription des droits de propriété, comme on veut, après coup, le lui faire dire, tendant ainsi, consciemment ou non, à la ruine de tout le bassin conventionnel du Congo.

Il n'échappera pas non plus aux Puissances que les conclusions de la note Anglaise, en suggérant une référence à la Cour de La Haye, tendent à faire considérer comme cas d'arbitrage des questions de souveraineté et d'administration intérieure que la doctrine courante a toujours exclues des décisions d'arbitres. Pour ce qui concerne le cas actuel, il est à supposer que la suggestion d'une référence à la Cour de La Haye a une portée générale, s'il est vrai que, de l'avis des Chambres de Commerce Anglaises, "the principles and practice introduced into the administration of the affairs of the French Congo, the Congo Free State, and other areas in the conventional basin of the Congo being in direct opposition to the Articles of the Act of Berlin 1885." Le Gouvernement de l'État n'a cessé, pour sa part, de préconiser l'arbitrage pour les dissensions d'ordre international qui en comportaient l'application: ainsi, il voudrait voir déferées à l'arbitrage les divergences de vues qui se sont produites au sujet du bail des territoires du Bahr-el-Ghazal.

Après un examen attentif de la note Anglaise, le Gouvernement de l'État du Congo reste convaincu qu'en raison du vague et du manque complet de preuves, ce dont elle fait implicitement l'aveu, il n'est pas une juridiction au monde, en en supposant une qui ait compétence pour être saisie, qui puisse, bien loin de prononcer une sorte de condamnation, prendre une autre décision que celle de ne pas donner suite à de simples suppositions.

Si l'État du Congo se voit attaqué, l'Angleterre peut se dire que, plus que nulle autre nation, elle s'est trouvée, elle aussi, en butte aux attaques et aux accusations de toute espèce, et longue serait la liste des campagnes poursuivies en divers temps et jusque dans récentes occasions contre son administration coloniale. Elle n'a certes pas échappé aux critiques que lui ont valu ses guerres multiples et sanglantes contre les populations indigènes ni aux reproches de violenter les natifs et de porter atteinte à leur liberté. Ne lui a-t-on pas fait grief de ces longues insurrections à Sierra-Leone—de cet état d'hostilité dans la Nigérie, où tout dernièrement, d'après les journaux Anglais, la répression militaire a, en une seule circonstance, coûté la vie à 700 indigènes, à la plupart de leurs Chefs et au Sultan—de cette lutte qui se poursuit au Somaliland au prix du sacrifice de nombreuses vies humaines, sans que cependant il ne soit exprimé à la Chambre des Communes d'autre regret que celui du chiffre élevé des dépenses?

Alors que ces attaques adressées à l'Angleterre l'ont laissée indifférente, il y a lieu d'être surpris de la voir aujourd'hui attacher une toute autre importance à celles dirigées contre l'État du Congo.

On peut croire, cependant, que les préférences des indigènes de l'État du Congo demeurent acquises au Gouvernement d'une petite nation pacifique, dont les visées restent pacifiques comme a été pacifique sa création basée sur les Traités conclus avec les indigènes.

(Signé) CHR. DE CUVELIER.

Bruxelles, le 17 Septembre, 1903.

(Translation.)

THE Government of the Independent State of the Congo have examined the despatch from the Foreign Office, dated the 8th August last, which was communicated to the Signatory Powers of the Berlin Act, and declare themselves in agreement with His Majesty's Government on two fundamental points, viz., that natives ought to be treated with humanity and gradually led into the paths of civilization, and that freedom of commerce in the Conventional Basin of the Congo ought to be entire and complete.

They deny, however, that the manner in which the State is administered involves a systematic régime "of cruelty or oppression," and that the principle of commercial freedom would introduce modifications in the rights of property as universally understood, seeing that there is not a word to this effect in the Berlin Act. The Congo State observes that there is in that Act no provision which would sanction restrictions of any kind on the exercise of the rights of property, or give to one Signatory Power the right of intervention in the interior administration of another. It desires faithfully to observe

the Berlin Act, that great International Act which binds all Signatory or adhering Powers, according to the clear grammatical sense of the text, which none has power either to take from or add to.

The English note observes that it is within the last few years that a definite shape has been assumed by the campaign conducted in England against the Congo State, on the twofold pretext of the ill-treatment of natives and the existence of commercial monopolies.

It is indeed worthy of remark that this campaign dates from the time when the prosperity of the State became assured. The State had been founded for years, and administered in the same way as it is now, its principles in regard to the State-ownership of vacant lands, and the manner in which its armed forces were organized and recruited, were known to the public, without any interest in the matter being shown by the philanthropists and traders to whose opinion the note begins by referring. This was the period during which the State Budget could only be balanced by means of the King-Sovereign's subsidies and Belgian loans, and when the commerce of the Congo did not attract attention. The term "Congo atrocities" was at that time only used in connexion with "the alleged ill-treatment of African natives by English and other adventurers in the Congo Free State."\* After 1895 the trade of the Congo State developed remarkably, and the amount of its exports shows a progressive increase from 10 millions in 1895 to 50 millions in 1902. It is also about this time that the anti-Congo movement took shape. As the State gave increased proof of vitality and progress, the campaign became more active, reliance being placed on a few individual and isolated cases with a view to using the interests of humanity as a pretext and concealing the real object of a covetousness which, in its impatience, has betrayed itself in the writings of pamphleteers and in the speeches of Members of the House of Commons, in which the abolition and partition of the Congo State has been clearly put forward.

Such being the object in view, it became necessary to bring a whole series of charges against the State. So far as the humanitarian side of the question is concerned, the alleged cases of violence offered to natives have once more been brought forward and re-edited *ad infinitum*. For in all the meetings, writings, and speeches which have latterly been directed against the State, it is always the same facts which are brought up, and the same evidence which is produced. With regard to the economic side of the question, the State has been accused of having violated the Act of Berlin, notwithstanding the legal opinions of such lawyers as are most qualified to speak to the point, which afford ample legal justification both for its commercial and for its land system. With regard to the political side, a heresy in international law has been imagined, viz., that a State, the independence and sovereignty of which are absolute, should, at the same time, owe its position to the intervention of foreign Powers.

With regard to the cases of ill-treatment of natives, we attach special importance to those which, according to the note, have been reported in the despatches of His Majesty's Consular Agents. At the sitting of the House of Commons on the 11th March, 1903, Lord Cranborne referred to these official documents, and we have requested through his Excellency Sir C. Phipps that the British Government will make known to us the facts alluded to. We repeat the request.

The Government of the State have, however, never denied that crimes and offences are committed in the Congo, as in every other country or Colony. The note itself recognizes that these offences have been brought before the Tribunals, and that the criminals have been punished. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the State fulfils its mission; the conclusion actually drawn is that "many individual instances of cruelty have taken place in the Congo State," and that "the number of convictions falls considerably short of the number of offences actually committed." This deduction does not appear necessarily to follow. It would seem more logical to say that the severe sentences inflicted will serve as a wholesome example, and that a decrease of crime may on that account be looked for. If some offences have indeed, in the extensive territories of the State, escaped the vigilance of the judicial authorities, this is a circumstance which is not peculiar to the Congo State.

The English note proceeds chiefly on hypotheses and suppositions: "It was alleged . . . . It is reported . . . . It is also reported . . . ." and it even says that "His Majesty's Government do not know precisely to what extent these accusations may be true." This is an acknowledgment that, in the eyes of the British Government themselves, the accusations in question are neither established nor proved. And, indeed, the violence, the passion, and the improbability of many of these accusations must raise doubt in an impartial mind as to their genuineness. To give but one

\* "Transactions of the Aborigines Protection Society, 1890-1896," p. 155.

example:—a great deal has been made of the statement that, in a train coming down from Leopoldville to Matadi, three carriages were full of slaves, a dozen of whom were in chains and guarded by soldiers. The Governor-General was asked for a report on the case. He replied: "The individuals represented as composing a convoy of slaves were, the great majority of them (125), levies proceeding from the district of Lualaba-Kasai, Lake Leopold II, and the Bangalas to the camp in the Lower Congo. Annexed you will find lists of these persons. As regards the men in chains, they were certain individuals on whom sentence had been passed by the territorial Tribunal at Basoko, and who were on their way to undergo their sentence at the central prison at Boma. They are Nos. 3642 to 3649 on the prison register at Boma."

In the same way, quite a recent "interview," in which the usual accusations of cruelty were reproduced, is due to a person formerly in the employ of the State, who was "declared unfit for service," and who has failed to persuade the State to accept his proposal to write for the press articles favourable to the Administration.

The note ignores the replies, contradictions, and corrections which the attacks on the Agents of the State have occasioned at the various times when they have taken place. It ignores the official declarations publicly made by the Government of the State in June last, after the debate in the House of Commons on the 20th May, the report of which is annexed to the note. We also annex the text of these declarations which dealt, by anticipation, with the considerations set forth in the despatch of the 8th August.

The only fresh cause of complaint which the note brings forward—doubtless with the object of explaining the not unimportant fact that the English Consul, who has resided in the Congo since 1901, does not appear to support, by his personal authority, the accusations of private individuals—is that this Agent has been "principally occupied in the investigation of complaints preferred by British subjects." The impression which one would derive from this is that such complaints have been exceptionally numerous. No doubt the Consul has, on different occasions, communicated with the Administration at Boma in the interests of his countrymen, but the subjects of his representations, if one may judge by such of their number as the English Legation has had to bring to the notice of the Central Government at Brussels, do not appear, either in number or importance, to have been more than matters of every day administrative routine: some cases in particular concerned the regulation of the succession to property in the Congo left by deceased English subjects; the object in others was to repair errors of judicial procedure, such as occur elsewhere, and it is not even alleged that the proper action has not been taken upon these representations. The same Consul, who was appointed in 1898, wrote to the Governor-General on the 2nd July, 1901, as follows:—

"I pray believe me when I express now, not only for myself, but for my fellow-countrymen in this part of Africa, our very sincere appreciation of your efforts on behalf of the general community—efforts to promote goodwill among all and to bring together the various elements of our local life."

Nor do the predecessors of Mr. R. Casement—for English Consuls with jurisdiction in the Congo were appointed by His Majesty Government as long ago as 1888—appear to have been absorbed in the examination of innumerable complaints; at all events, that is not the view taken in the Report (the only one published) by Consul Pickersgill, who, by the mere fact of giving an account of his journey into the interior of the Congo as far as Stanley Falls, disproves the alleged impossibility for the English Consular Agents to form an opinion *de visu* in regard to every part of their district.

With regard to the charges against the administrative system of the State, the note deals with taxes, public armed forces, and what is termed forced labour.

It is, at bottom, the contributions made by the Congo natives to the public charges which are criticized, as if there existed a single country or Colony in which the inhabitants do not, under one form or another, bear a part in such charges. A State without resources is inconceivable. On what legitimate grounds could the exemption of natives from all taxes be based, seeing that they are the first to benefit by the material and moral advantages introduced into Africa? As they have no money, a contribution in the shape of labour is required from them. It has been said that, if Africa is ever to be redeemed from barbarism, it must be by getting the negro to understand the meaning of work by the obligation of paying taxes:—

"It is a question (of native labour) which has engaged my most careful attention in connection with West Africa and other Colonies. To listen to the right honourable gentleman, you would almost think that it would be a good thing for the native to be idle. I think it is a good thing for him to be industrious; and by every means in our power we must teach him to work. . . . No people ever have lived in the world's



history who would not work. In the interests of the natives all over Africa, we have to teach them to work."

Such was the language used by Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons on the 6th August, 1901; and still more recently he expressed himself as follows:—

"We are all of us taxed, and taxed heavily. Is that a system of forced labour? . . . . To say that because we put a tax on the native therefore he is reduced to a condition of servitude and of forced labour is, to my mind, absolutely ridiculous. . . . It is perfectly fair to my mind that the native should contribute something towards the cost of administering the country." (House of Commons, the 9th March, 1903.)

"If that really is the last word of civilization, if we are to proceed on the assumption that the nearer the native or any human being comes to a pig the more desirable is his condition, of course I have nothing to say. . . . I must continue to believe that, at all events, the progress of the native in civilization will not be secured until he has been convinced of the necessity and the dignity of labour. Therefore, I think that anything we reasonably can do to induce the native to labour is a desirable thing."

And he defended the principle of taxing the native on the ground that "the existence of the tax is an inducement to him to work." (House of Commons, the 24th March, 1903.)

Moreover, it is to be observed that in nearly every part of Africa the natives are taxed. In the Transvaal every native pays a "head tax" of 2*l.*; in the Orange River Colony he is subject to a "poll tax;" in Southern Rhodesia, Bechuanaland, Basutoland, Uganda, and Natal a "hut tax" is levied; in Cape Colony we find a "hut tax" and a "labour tax;" in German East Africa also a tax is levied on huts, payable either in money, in kind, or in labour. This species of tax has also been applied in the Sierra Leone Protectorate, where payment could be made "in kind by rice or palm nuts," and it has been suggested that work on roads and useful works should be accepted in lieu of payment in money or produce.

The legality of a tax is, therefore, not affected by the mode of its payment, whether in money or in kind, so long as the amount is not excessive. It is certainly not so in the Congo, where the work done by the native does not represent more than forty hours' work a-month. Such work, moreover, is paid for, and the tax in kind thus gives the native as it were some return for his labour.

Payment of taxes is obligatory everywhere; and non-payment involves measures of compulsion. The regulations under which the hut-tax is levied impose on the native, for non-payment, such penalties as imprisonment and forced labour. Nor in the Congo is payment of taxes optional. Repressive measures have occasionally been rendered necessary elsewhere by the refusal of natives to conform to the law, *e.g.*, the disturbances at Sierra Leone, in connexion with which an English publicist, speaking of the police force, states:—

"Between July 1894 and February 1896 no fewer than sixty-two convictions, admittedly representing a small proportion of offences actually committed, were recorded against them for flogging, plundering, and generally maltreating the natives."

Further instances might be recalled of the opposition encountered among native populations to the institution of governmental regulations. Civilization necessarily comes into collision with their savage instincts and barbarous customs and habits; and it can be understood that they submit but impatiently to, and even try to escape from, a state of society which seems to them to be restrictive of their licence and excesses. It frequently happens in Africa that an exodus of natives takes place from one territory to another, in the hope of finding beyond the frontier a Government less well established or less strong, and of thus freeing themselves from all obligations and restraints. Natives of the State may quite well, under the influence of considerations of this kind, have crossed into neighbouring territories, although no kind of emigration on a large scale, such as is referred to in the English note, has ever been reported by the Commandants of the frontier provinces. On the contrary, it is a fact that natives in the Upper Nile region who had settled in British territory have returned to the left bank in consequence of the imposition of new taxes by the English authorities. Besides, if it is these territories which are alluded to, the information contained in the note would seem to be in contradiction with other particulars furnished, for instance, by Sir Harry Johnston.

"This much I can speak of with certainty and emphasis, that from the British frontier near Fort George to the limit of my journeys into the Mbuta country of the Congo Free State, up and down the Semliki, the natives appear to be prosperous and happy. . . . The extent to which they were building their villages and cultivating their plantations within the precincts of Fort Mbeni showed that they had no fear of the Belgians."

Major H. H. Gibbons, who was for several months on the Upper Nile, writes:—  
"Having had occasion to know many officers, and to visit their stations in the Congo State, I am convinced that their behaviour has been much misunderstood by the press. I have quoted as a proof my experience, which is at variance with an article recently published in the English press, in which they are accused of great cruelties."

The declaration of last June, of which a copy is inclosed, has disposed of the criticisms directed against the public forces of the State, by pointing out that recruitment for them is regulated by law, and that it is only one man in every 10,000 who is affected. To say that "the method of obtaining men for military service is often but little different from that formerly employed to obtain slaves" is to misunderstand the carefully drawn regulations which have, on the contrary, been issued to check abuses. Levies take place in each district; the district Commissioners settle the mode of conscription in agreement with the native Chiefs. Voluntary enlistment, and numerous re-enlistments, easily fill up the ranks, which only reach, all told, the moderate total of 15,000 men.

Those who allege, as the note says, that "the men composing the armed force of the State were in many cases recruited from the most warlike and savage tribes" must be unaware that the public forces are recruited from every province, and from the whole population. It is inconceivable that the authorities of a State, with due regard to its interests, should form an army out of undisciplined and savage elements, and instances are to be found—such as the excesses said to have been perpetrated by irregular levies in Uganda, and the revolts which formerly occurred in the Congo—which, on the contrary, render it necessary that special care should be exercised in raising armed forces. The European establishment, consisting of Belgian, Italian, Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish officers, maintains strict discipline, and it would be vain to seek the actual facts alluded to in the assertion that the soldiers "not infrequently terrorized over their own officers." Such an assertion is as unfounded as the one "that compulsion is often exercised by irresponsible native soldiers, uncontrolled by an European officer." For a long time past the authorities have been alive to the danger arising from the existence of stations of negro soldiers, who inevitably abuse their authority, as recognized in the Report of Sir D. Chalmers on the insurrection in Sierra Leone. In the Congo such stations have been gradually abolished.

Those who do not refuse to accept patent facts will recognize that of the reproaches levied at the State, the most unjust is the statement "that no attempt at any administration of the natives is made, and that the officers of the Government do not apparently concern themselves with such work."

It is astonishing to come across such an assertion in a despatch from a Government, one of whose members, Lord Cranborne, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, stated on the 20th May last:—

"There was no doubt that the administration of the Congo Government had been marked by a very high degree of a certain kind of administrative development. There were railways, there were steamers upon the river, hospitals had been established, and all the machinery of elaborate judicial and police systems had been set up."

Another member of the House of Commons acknowledged—

"That the Congo State had done good work in excluding alcoholic liquor from the greater part of their domain; that they had established a certain number of hospitals, had diminished small-pox by means of vaccination, and had suppressed the Arab Slave Trade."

However limited these admissions, still they contradict the assertion now made that "the natives are left entirely to themselves, so far as any assistance in their government or in their affairs is concerned."

Such does not seem to have been the conclusion at which Mr. Pickersgill, the English Consul, had arrived as long ago as 1898.

"Has the welfare of the African," he asks, "been duly cared for in the Congo State?" He answers: "The State has restricted the liquor trade . . . . it is scarcely possible to over-estimate the service which is being rendered by the Congo Government to its subjects in this matter. . . . Intertribal wars have been suppressed over a wide area, and, the imposition of European authority being steadily pursued, the boundaries of peace are constantly extending. . . . The State must be congratulated upon the security it has created for all who live within the shelter of its flag and abide by its laws and regulations. . . . Credit is also due to the Congo Government in respect of the diminution of cannibalism. . . . The yoke of the notorious Arab slave-traders has been broken, and traffic in human beings amongst the natives themselves has been diminished to a considerable degree."

This Report also showed that the labour of the native was remunerated, and gave

due credit to the State for its efforts to instruct the young natives, and to open schools.

Since 1898 the general condition of the native has been still further improved. The system of carriers ("le portage à dos d'homme"), the hardships of which, so far as the native was concerned, were specially pointed out by Mr. Pickersgill, has disappeared from those parts of the country where it was most practised, in consequence of the opening of railways. Elsewhere motor cars are used as means of transport. The "sentry," the station of negro soldiers which the Consul criticized, not without reason, no longer exists. Cattle have been introduced into every district. Sanitary Commissions have been instituted. Schools and workshops have multiplied.

"The native," says the inclosed document,\* "is better housed, better clad, and better fed; he is replacing his huts by better built and healthier dwelling-places; thanks to existing transport facilities, he is able to obtain the produce necessary to satisfy his new wants; workshops have been opened for him, where he learns handicrafts, such as those of the blacksmith, carpenter, mechanic, and mason; he extends his plantations and, taking example by the white man, learns rational modes of agriculture; he is always able to obtain medical assistance; he sends his children to the State school-colonies and to the missionary schools."

As stated in the House of Commons, it is only right to recognize that the material and moral regeneration of Central Africa cannot be the work of a day. The results so far obtained have been considerable, and these we shall try to consolidate and develop, in spite of the way in which an effort is being made to hamper the action of the State, which in the real interests of civilization should rather be promoted.

The English note does not show that the economic system of the State is in opposition to the Berlin Act. It does not meet the points of law and fact by means of which the State has demonstrated the conformity of its system of land tenure and concessions with the provisions of that Act. It does not explain either how or why freedom of trade—a term used at the Conference of Berlin in its usual, grammatical, and economic sense—is incomplete in the Congo State because there are landowners there.

The note confuses the utilization of his property by the owner with trade. The native who collects on behalf of the owner does not become the owner of what is so collected, and naturally cannot dispose of it to a third party, any more than a miner can rob the proprietor of the produce of the mine and dispose of it himself. These rules are in accordance with the principles of justice and are explained in numerous documents, such as legal opinions and judicial decisions, some of which are annexed. His Majesty's Government do not deny that the State is justified in allotting domain lands to *bond fide* occupants, or that the native has no longer any right to the produce of the soil as soon as the "land is reduced into individual occupation." The distinction is without legal foundation. If the State can part with land, it is because the native is not the owner; by what title could he then retain a right to the produce of property which has been lawfully acquired by others? Could it be contended, for instance, that the Lower Congo Railway Company, or the South Cameroons Company, or the Italian Colonial Trading Company are, on the ground that they are not at present in occupation, bound to allow the native to plunder the territories allotted to them? As a matter of fact, moreover, in the Congo State the appropriation of lands worked on Government account or by the Concessionary Companies is an accomplished fact. The State and the Companies have devoted large sums, amounting to many millions of francs, to the development of the lands in question, and more especially to that of the forests. There can, therefore, be no doubt that throughout the territories of the Congo the State really and completely works its property, just as the Companies really and completely work their Concessions.

The state of affairs then which actually exists, and is established in the Independent State, is such that there is really no need, as far as the State itself is concerned, to dwell longer on the theory set forth in the note which deals in turn with the rights of the State, with those of *bond fide* occupants, and those of the natives.

Still this theory calls for the attention of the Powers in view of the serious difficulties which would arise were it to be implicitly accepted.

The note lays down the three following propositions:—

"The State has the right to partition the State lands among *bond fide* occupants."

"The natives will, as the land is so divided out amongst *bond fide* occupants, lose their right of roaming over it and collecting the natural fruits which it produces."

"Until unoccupied land is reduced into individual occupation, and so long as the produce can only be collected by the native, the native should be free to dispose of that produce as he pleases."

\* See Annex No. 1.

There is no single one of these propositions but apparently excludes the other two, and, as a matter of fact, such contradictions amount to a denial of the right to grant Concessions.

If *bond fide* occupants ever existed they have become proprietors; occupation, where it can be exercised, is under all legislative codes, one of the methods by which property can be acquired, and in the Congo State titles of ownership deriving from it have been legally registered. If the land has never been legally occupied, it is without an owner, or, rather the State is the owner: the State can allot it to a third party, for whom such allotment is a complete and absolute title. In either case it is hard to see how the fruits of the soil can be reserved for any but the owner on the pretext that the latter is not able to collect the produce of his property.

By a curious contradiction it is observed in the note that, as a consequence of the allotment of lands by the State, the natives "lose their right of collecting the natural fruits," and, on the other hand, that they retain the right of disposing of these fruits "until unoccupied land is reduced into individual occupation." It is difficult to understand what is meant by a right which belongs to the natives or not according to the action of a third party. Either they lost their rights on the lands being allotted, and in that case they have lost them entirely and completely, or else they have retained them, and are entitled to retain them, although "the land is reduced into individual occupation."

Again, what are we to understand by the expressions "*bond fide*" occupants and "individual occupation?" Who is to determine whether the occupier has brought his lands into a state of individual occupation, whether he is able to collect their produce, or whether it is still for the native to do so? In any case, such a question is essentially one to be settled by municipal law.

The note is, moreover, incomplete in another respect. It states that where the land has not yet been worked by those who have a right to it, the option of working should belong to the native. Rights would thus be given to the natives to the prejudice of the Government or of white concessionaires, but the note does not explain how nor by whom the wrong thus caused would be repaired or made good. Though the system thus advocated cannot be applied in the Congo State, as there are no longer any unappropriated lands there, attention should be called to the statement in the interest of white men established in the conventional basin. If it is right to treat the negro well, it is none the less just not to despoil the white man, who, in the interest of all, must remain the dominant race.

From an economic point of view, it would be very regrettable if, in spite of the rights regularly acquired by white men, the domain lands were, even temporarily, handed over to the natives. Such a course would involve a return to their former condition of abandonment, when the natives left them unproductive, for the collection of rubber, the plantation of coffee, cocoa, tobacco, &c., date from the day when the State itself took the initiative: the export trade was insignificant before the impetus it received from Government enterprise. Such a course would furthermore certainly involve the neglect of rational methods of work, of planting and of replanting—measures which the State and the Concessionary Companies have assumed as an obligation with a view to securing the preservation of the natural riches of the country.

Never in the Congo, so far as we know, have requests to buy natural produce been addressed to the rightful owners. Up to now the only attempts made have been to buy the produce which has been stolen, and the State, as was its duty, has had those guilty of these unlawful attempts prosecuted.

It is not true, as has been asserted, that the policy of the State has killed trade; it has, on the contrary, created the materials which trade deals in and keeps up the supply; it is thanks to the State that, on the Antwerp market—and soon even in the Congo where the possibility of establishing trade depôts is being considered—5,000 tons of rubber collected in the Congo can be annually put on sale to all and sundry without privilege or monopoly, while formerly, in 1887, for instance, the rubber export amounted to hardly 30 tons. It is the State which, after having created, at its own expense, the material of trade, carefully preserves the source of it by means of planting and replanting.

It must not be forgotten either that the Congo State has been obliged to rely on its own resources. It was forced to utilize its domain in the public interest. All the receipts of the domain go into the Treasury, as also the dividends of the shares which the State holds in exchange for Concessions granted. It has only been by fully utilizing its domain lands, and pledging the greater part of their revenues, that it has been able to raise loans, and encourage the construction of railways by guarantees of interest, thus realizing one of the means most advocated by the Brussels Conference for promoting

civilization in Central Africa. Nor has it hesitated to mortgage its domain lands with this object.

The Berlin Act is not opposed to such a course, for it never proscribed the rights of property as there is now an *ex post facto* attempt to make out, an attempt tending, consciously or not, to the ruin of the whole conventional basin of the Congo.

It will not escape the notice of the Powers that the English note, by suggesting a reference to the Court at The Hague, tends to bring into consideration as cases for arbitration questions of sovereignty and internal administration as questions for arbitration which, according to prevailing doctrines, are excluded from arbitral decisions. As far as the present case is concerned, it must be assumed that the suggestion of referring the matter to the Court at The Hague has a general meaning, if it is true that, in the opinion of the English Chambers of Commerce, "the principles and practice introduced into the administration of the affairs of the French Congo, the Congo Free State, and other areas in the conventional basin of the Congo being [*sic*] in direct opposition to the Articles of the Act of Berlin, 1885." The Government of the Congo State have never ceased advocating arbitration as a mode of settling questions which are of an international nature, and can thus be suitably treated, as, for instance, the divergencies of opinion which have arisen in connexion with the lease of the territories of the Bahr-el-Ghazal.

The Government of the Congo State, after careful examination of the English note, remain convinced that, in view of its vagueness, and the complete lack of evidence, which is implicitly admitted, there is no tribunal in the world, supposing there were one possessing competent jurisdiction, which could, far from pronouncing a condemnation, take any decision other than to refuse action on mere supposition.

If the Congo State is attacked, England may admit that she, more than any other nation, has been the object of attacks and accusations of every kind, and the list would be long of the campaigns which have at various times, and even quite recently, been directed against her colonial administration. She has certainly not escaped criticism in regard to her numerous and bloody wars against native populations, nor the reproach of oppressing natives and invading their liberty. Has she not been blamed in regard to the long insurrections in Sierra Leone; to the disturbed state of Nigeria, where quite recently, according to the English newspapers, military measures of repression cost, on one single occasion, the lives of 700 natives, of most of their Chiefs, and of the Sultan; and to the conflict in Somaliland, which is being carried on at the cost of many lives, without, however, exciting expressions of regret in the House of Commons, except on the score of the heavy expense?

Seeing that these attacks have left England indifferent, it is somewhat surprising to find her now attaching such importance to those made on the Congo State.

There is, however, reason to think that the natives of the Congo State prefer the Government of a small and pacific nation, whose aims remain as peaceful as its creation which was founded on Treaties concluded with the natives.

(Signed)

CHR. DE CUVELIER.

Brussels, September 17, 1903.

Annexes.\*

- I. "Bulletin Officiel de l'État Indépendant du Congo," Juin 1903.
- II. Judgments delivered by the Tribunals of French Congo.
- III. Opinions of Messrs. Van Maldeghem and de Paepe, Van Berchem, Barboux, and Nys.

Translations of Extracts from Annex I.

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In conformity with Articles II and XIII of the Berlin Act, it (the Congo State) has assured to all flags, without distinction of nationality, free access to all its interior waters and full and entire freedom of navigation. The railway, which has been constructed to obviate the innavigability of the lower river, is open to the traffic of all nations in conformity with Article XVI.

\* Copies have been sent to the Library of each House of Parliament.

In conformity with Article III, there is no differential treatment either of ships or goods, and no tax is levied on foreigners which is not equally borne by nationals.

In conformity with Article IV, no transit due has been imposed.

In conformity with Article VI, freedom of conscience and the free exercise of worship are guaranteed to natives, to foreigners, and to the missions of all creeds.

In conformity with Article VII, the State has adhered to the Convention of the Universal Postal Union.

Availing itself of the power conferred by Article X, the Congo State has declared itself perpetually neutral, and in no circumstance has failed in the duties imposed by neutrality.

In conformity with Article XII, it has endeavoured, in case of any international difference, to have recourse to mediation and arbitration, and has never declined to accept such procedure.

In conformity with the Declaration of the 2nd July, 1890, the import and export duties levied do not exceed the limits fixed by the Agreements of the 8th April, 1892, and the 10th March, 1902, between the State, France and Portugal.

Article I of the Act of Berlin lays down that "the trade of all nations shall enjoy complete freedom in the Conventional basin of the Congo," and, by Article V, "no monopoly or favour of any kind in matters of trade" shall be granted there. These provisions, like the rest, have been respected by the Congo State in the letter and in the spirit.

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Freedom of trade is complete in the Congo, and is restricted neither by monopoly nor privilege. Every one is free to sell or buy every sort of produce in which it is lawful to trade. The law protects this freedom by forbidding any interference with the freedom of business transactions; it punishes "any one who has employed violence or threats with a view to compel the natives, whether on the roads in the interior, or in the markets, to part with their goods to particular persons or at particular prices;"\* it punishes "those who, by violence, abuse, or threats, shall have interfered with the freedom of trade, with a view either to stop trade caravans on the public roads or to obstruct the freedom of traffic whether by land or water."†

It is asserted that the principle of the freedom of trade is infringed by the appropriation by the State of vacant and ownerless lands within its boundaries. When by the Decree of the 1st July, 1885, the State declared that "no one has the right to occupy vacant lands without a title; vacant lands are to be considered as belonging to the State,"‡ it did so in reliance on a legal principle which is universally admitted, its action in this matter was not, as has been said, the first step in a deliberate policy of exclusiveness. That principle was inscribed in the Codes of all civilized countries; it has been sanctioned by all Colonial legislative systems.

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If it were true that, by declaring all ownerless lands to be Government property, the Congo State had expropriated the natives, all these various legislative systems could be attacked on the same ground. It is generally admitted that the native has no real title to the ownership of the vast stretches of country which from time immemorial he has allowed to lie fallow, or to the forests which he has never turned to profit. But the law of the Congo State is careful to maintain the natives in the enjoyment of the lands they occupy and, as a matter of fact, not only are they not disturbed in this enjoyment, but they are actually extending the lands they cultivate and their plantations as their needs grow. The State has been at much pains to prevent the natives from being robbed.

"No one has the right to dispossess natives of the lands which they occupy (Ordinance of the 1st July, 1885, Article 2).

"The lands occupied by the native population under the authority of their Chiefs, shall continue to be governed by the local customs and usages (Decree of the 14th September, 1886, Article 2).

"All Acts or Agreements which would tend to drive the natives from the territories they occupy, or to deprive them directly or indirectly of their liberty or means of livelihood, are prohibited (Decree of the 14th September, 1886, Article 2).

\* Penal Code, Art. 56 (Decree of the 26th May, 1888, Bulletin Officiel, 1897, p. 31).

† Penal Code, Art. 57 (idem, p. 31).

‡ Bulletin Officiel, 1885, p. 31.

"In cases where the lands which form the subject of application are occupied in part by natives, the Governor-General, or his Delegate, shall intervene in order, if possible, to effect an arrangement with them, securing to the applicant the lands so occupied, either by cession or by lease, but the State is not to be put to any expense in the matter (Decree of the 9th April, 1893, Article 5).

"When native villages are inclosed in lands which have either been disposed of or leased, the natives may, so long as the land has not been officially measured, take into cultivation, without the consent of either the owner or the lessor, the vacant lands surrounding their villages (Decree of the 9th April, 1893, Article 6).

"The members of the Land Commission shall examine with special care the question whether the lands applied for ought not to be reserved either for the public use or with a view to allow of the extension of cultivation by the natives (Decree of the 2nd February, 1893, Article 2)."

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If it is inexact to say that the natives have been robbed of immemorial rights, it is equally so to assert that the policy of the State has aimed at the exclusion of private trading in order to assure greater advantages for its own commercial enterprises.

Such a statement can only be the result of a misapprehension of the various phases through which the Congo trade has passed since 1885. At that time private enterprise was centred in the Lower Congo only. The Government, far from wishing to close the Upper Congo, declared its access free to all. The Decree of the 30th April, 1887, led, on the contrary, to various commercial firms establishing themselves above Stanley Pool, owing to the facilities it afforded for settling on the domain lands.

Article 6 of that Decree provided:—

"Non-natives who desire to found commercial or agricultural establishments in the districts above Stanley Pool, or in others to be eventually designated by the Governor-General of the Congo, shall be at liberty to take possession with this view of an area, the maximum size of which shall be fixed by the Governor-General; provided that they fulfil such conditions as he shall lay down, they shall enjoy a preferential right to the eventual acquisition of property in such lands at a price which shall be fixed by him beforehand."

And Article 7 added:—

"The non-natives who, in the same regions, shall desire to occupy lands, of which the area shall exceed the maximum referred to in the preceding Article, may occupy them provisionally on such conditions as the Governor-General shall determine. He shall further decide whether the preferential right alluded to in the preceding Article shall be given to them in regard to this larger extent of land."\*

With a view to assist commercial enterprise in the regions of the interior, the Government even exempted from export duty—the only customs duties which they could at that time levy—all native produce coming from the territories above Stanley Pool.

"From the 1st January, 1888," so ran Article 1 of the Ordinance of the 19th October, 1887, "and till further orders, native produce coming from the State territories on the left bank of Stanley Pool and above that lake shall be exempted from export duty."†

Later, by the Decree of the 17th October, 1889,‡ the Government announced that applications might be presented for concessions to work rubber and other vegetable produce in the State forests of the Upper Congo where such produce was not already worked by the native population.

By the Decree of the 9th July, 1890, the collection of ivory within the State domains was entirely given up to private persons throughout such parts of the Congo as were at that time visited by the steamers.

These Regulations were applicable to all foreign enterprise, without distinction of nationality; they show that there was no such policy of ostracism in regard to private enterprise such as is now attributed to the State.

It has not been the fault of the Government that nationals of all countries have not profited by this liberal system. They continued, however, to confine themselves, with few exceptions, to the Lower Congo. The Companies which decided to extend their operations in the central districts of the Congo found every facility for the establishment of agencies, and acquired the favourable position which they now enjoy.

\* Bulletin Officiel, 1887, p. 72.

† Bulletin Officiel, 1888, p. 3.

‡ Bulletin Officiel, 1889, p. 218.

The State can hardly be blamed because, in face of the almost universal inaction on the part of private individuals, it endeavoured to turn its territories to account by working its domain lands, either on its own account or through others. It was, however, the only way to secure the funds necessary for the Budget, the charges in which steadily increased with the extension of the public service, and to give the country the benefit of an economic system by imposing upon the concessionary Companies the obligation to undertake works of public utility.

The Government, further, were careful not to abandon a policy of moderation in the matter. When by the Decree of the 30th October, 1892, they defined regions reserved for working by the domain (those, that is to say, in which it had been ascertained, after inquiry, that the natives had never engaged in the collection of rubber), they still left vast zones at the disposal of the public, and allowed to private persons the exclusive right to work the rubber on the Government properties there. As a matter of fact, the zones in question comprised more than a quarter of the vacant State lands, apart from the whole country below Stanley Pool. Nevertheless, the Companies persisted for some years more in not moving towards these regions; it has only been since 1897 that there have been any signs of general activity. It was then that the numerous factories which are still to be found there were started in the Kassai, Ikelemba, and Lulonga districts, and on the banks of the Congo. But it is to be noted that with one exception none but Belgian Companies decided to put their capital into those enterprises, and to take the consequent risks. Foreigners have held aloof, in spite of the fact that they were at perfect liberty to establish themselves in these regions; even the firms which had been long established in the Lower Congo, and especially the English houses, did not consider the moment favourable for establishing branches in the Upper Congo. The above remark is generally applicable, in so far that, also in the territories for which Concessions have been given, not one of the concessionary Companies has found any foreign interests previously existing; indeed, certain foreigners who were interested in one of the most important of them, the Anglo-Belgian India-Rubber and Exploration Company, which was founded by an English group, have parted with their interests.

The commercial field open to private persons in the Congo never has been and is not limited; trade is free, so far as it is legitimate, throughout the country, and in certain regions the State, far from organizing any excessive working of its domain lands, has even renounced the exercise of its rights of property. To give one instance only the Dutch Company, the value of whose exports was 730,000 fr. in 1887, exported in 1901 goods to the value of more than 3,000,000 fr.

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The work of organization has since been going on over the whole country by the more and more effective occupation of the territory; posts and stations have been multiplied, and now number 215; the work of the administrative, judicial, and sanitary authorities has expanded; transport facilities have been introduced; two lines of railways have been laid in the Lower Congo, and there are others either being constructed or proposed in the Upper Congo; seventy-nine steamers and boats have been put on the river and its affluents; 1,500 kilom. of telegraph and telephone lines have been laid; carriage roads have been built, on which the use of automobiles will put an end to the system of carriers ("portage à dos d'homme"); vaccine institutes have been established with a view to putting a stop, through the increased use of lymph, to the ravages of small-pox; water-works have been built in important centres, such as Boma and Matadi; hospitals for blacks and whites have been founded at different posts, as also Red Cross stations and a bacteriological institute; importation of spirituous liquors and trade in them has been prohibited almost everywhere, while the importation of alcoholic drinks made with absinthe, as also trade in them, have been forbidden everywhere; the trade in improved fire-arms and ammunition for them has been absolutely forbidden; cattle have been introduced at all the stations, and model farms have been established; Sanitary Commissions have been instituted whose duty it is to watch over the requirements of the elements of public health.

This general development is necessarily accompanied by an improvement of the conditions in which the native lives, wherever he comes into contact with the European element. Materially, he is better housed, better clad, and better fed; he is replacing his huts by better built and healthier dwelling-places; thanks to existing

transport facilities, he is able to obtain the produce necessary to satisfy his new wants; workshops have been opened for him, where he learns handicrafts, such as those of the blacksmith, carpenter, mechanic, and mason; he extends his plantations, and, taking example by the white man, learns rational modes of agriculture; he is always able to obtain medical assistance; he sends his children to the State school-colonies and to the missionary schools. Steps have been taken to safeguard the individual liberty of the blacks, and especially to prevent labour contracts between blacks and non-natives degenerating into disguised slavery. It is on this point that the Decree of the 8th November, 1888, enters into the most minute details concerning the length of the engagement, the form of the contract, and the payment of wages. Recent legislation in French Congo, which has very properly been praised by the English organs, has been dictated by the like solicitude for the natives.

The native is free to seek by work the remuneration which contributes to the increase of his well-being. One of the objects, indeed, of the general policy of the State is to aim at the regeneration of the race by impressing them with the high idea of the necessity of work. It is intelligible that Governments, conscious of their moral responsibility, should not advocate the right of the inferior races to be idle, which would entail the continuance of a social system opposed to civilization. The Congo State aims at carrying out its educational mission by requiring the native to contribute, by means of a tax in kind, for which, however, payment is made to him, to the development of the State forests; the amount of such payments was, in the Budget for 1903, nearly 3,000,000 fr. The legality of such a system of developing the State property rests not only on the universal principle which attributes to the State the possession of ownerless lands, but also on the cession which the local Chiefs have made to the State, by peaceful methods and Treaties, of such political and land rights as they may have possessed; and on the fact that it is the State itself which has revealed to the natives the existence of those natural riches of which they were ignorant by showing them how to work; it is the State, too, which has bound itself, equally with private persons, to plant and replant, and thus to insure the preservation and perpetuity of those natural riches which the carelessness of some and the lust of gain of others could not have failed to destroy.

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The system which the State has followed, while forwarding the economical development of the country, has at the same time caused a considerable commercial movement, inasmuch as the exports now amount to a value of 50,000,000, and 5,000 tons of rubber from the Congo forests are sold every year at Antwerp to the highest bidder.

Whatever may have been said this prosperity has not been attained to the detriment of the native. It has been asserted that the native populations must of necessity be badly treated because they are subjected on the one hand to military service, and on the other to the payment of certain taxes.

Military service is no more slavery in the Congo than anywhere else where the system of conscription is in force. The manner in which the public forces are recruited and organized has formed the subject of the most minute legislative provisions, with a view to the avoidance of abuses. As a matter of fact military service is not a heavy burden to the population, from whom it only takes one man in 10,000. To show the errors which have been believed in regard to the public forces it is necessary once more to point out that they are composed entirely of regular troops, and there are no "irregular levies" composed of undisciplined and barbarous elements. Care has been taken gradually to get rid of posts of black soldiers, and at the present moment every military post is commanded by a white officer. The increase in the number of officials has allowed of giving European officers to all detachments of these forces.

In regard to contributions in kind which are levied on the native by the authorities, such taxes are as legitimate as any other. They do not impose on the native burdens of a different or heavier kind than the forms of impost enforced in the neighbouring Colonies, such as the hut tax. The native thus bears his share of the public burden as a return for the protection afforded him by the State, and this share is a light one since on an average it means for the native no more than forty hours of work a-month.

It is unfortunately true that acts of violence have been committed against the natives in the Congo, as everywhere else in Africa: the Congo State has never sought either to deny or to conceal them. The detractors of the State show themselves to be prejudiced when they quote these acts as the necessary consequence of a bad system of administration, or when they assert that they are tolerated by the higher authorities.

Whenever any European official has been guilty of such acts he has been punished by the Courts, and a certain number of Europeans are at this moment in the prisons of the State expiating their offences against the penal laws which protect the life and person of the native. If the enormous extent of the Congo State is taken into account, such cases are the exception, as is obvious from the fact that recent publications attacking the Congo State have been obliged, in support of their indictment, to take up incidents nearly ten years old, and even to have recourse, amongst others, to the testimony of a commercial agent actually condemned for his excesses against the blacks. It is worthy of remark that the Catholic missionaries have never called attention to this general system of cruelty which is imputed to the State, and if judicial statistics demonstrate the stern measures that have been taken by the Criminal Courts, it does not follow that there is more crime in the Congo than in other Central African Colonies.

No. 3.

*Mr. Casement to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received December 12.)*

My Lord,

*London, December 11, 1903.*

I HAVE the honour to submit my Report on my recent journey on the Upper Congo.

I left Matadi on the 5th June, and arriving at Léopoldville on the 6th, remained in the neighbourhood of Stanley Pool until the 2nd July, when I set out for the Upper Congo. My return to Léopoldville was on the 15th September, so that the period spent in the Upper River was one of only two and a-half months, during which time I visited several points on the Congo River itself, up to the junction of the Lulongo River, ascended that river and its principal feeder, the Lopori, as far as Bongandanga, and went round Lake Mantumba.

Although my visit was of such brief duration, and the points touched at nowhere lay far off the beaten tracks of communication, the region visited was one of the most central in the Congo State, and the district in which most of my time was spent, that of the Equator, is probably one of the most productive. Moreover, I was enabled, by visiting this district, to contrast its present day state with the condition in which I had known it some sixteen years ago. Then (in 1887) I had visited most of the places I now revisited, and I was thus able to institute a comparison between a state of affairs I had myself seen when the natives lived their own savage lives in anarchic and disorderly communities, uncontrolled by Europeans, and that created by more than a decade of very energetic European intervention. That very much of this intervention has been called for no one who formerly knew the Upper Congo could doubt, and there are to-day widespread proofs of the great energy displayed by Belgian officials in introducing their methods of rule over one of the most savage regions of Africa.

Admirably built and admirably kept stations greet the traveller at many points; a fleet of river steamers, numbering, I believe, forty-eight, the property of the Congo Government, navigate the main river and its principal affluents at fixed intervals. Regular means of communication are thus afforded to some of the most inaccessible parts of Central Africa.

A railway, excellently constructed in view of the difficulties to be encountered, now connects the ocean ports with Stanley Pool, over a tract of difficult country, which formerly offered to the weary traveller on foot many obstacles to be overcome and many days of great bodily fatigue. To-day the railway works most efficiently, and I noticed many improvements, both in the permanent way and in the general management, since the date of my last visit to Stanley Pool in January 1901. The cataract region, through which the railway passes, is a generally unproductive and even sterile tract of some 220 miles in breadth. This region is, I believe, the home, or birthplace, of the sleeping sickness—a terrible disease, which is, all too rapidly, eating its way into the heart of Africa, and has even traversed the entire continent to well-nigh the shores of the Indian Ocean. The population of the Lower Congo has been gradually reduced by the unchecked ravages of this, as yet, undiagnosed and incurable disease, and as one cause of the seemingly wholesale diminution of human life which I everywhere observed in the regions revisited, a prominent place must be assigned to this malady. The natives certainly attribute their alarming death-rate to this as one of the inducing causes, although they attribute, and I think principally, their rapid decrease in numbers to other causes as well. Perhaps the most striking change observed during

my journey into the interior was the great reduction observable everywhere in native life. Communities I had formerly known as large and flourishing centres of population are to-day entirely gone, or now exist in such diminished numbers as to be no longer recognizable. The southern shores of Stanley Pool had formerly a population of fully 5,000 Batekes, distributed through the three towns of Ngaliema's (Léopoldville), Kinchasa, and Ndolo, lying within a few miles of each other. These people, some twelve years ago, decided to abandon their homes, and in one night the great majority of them crossed over into the French territory on the north shores of Stanley Pool. Where formerly had stretched these populous native African villages, I saw to-day only a few scattered European houses, belonging either to Government officials or local traders. In Léopoldville to-day there are not, I should estimate, 100 of the original natives or their descendants now residing. At Kinchasa a few more may be found dwelling around one of the European trading depôts, while at Ndolo none remain, and there is nothing there but a station of the Congo Railway Company and a Government post. These Bateke people were not, perhaps, particularly desirable subjects for an energetic Administration, which desired, above all things, progress and speedy results. They were themselves interlopers from the northern shores of the Congo River, and derived a very profitable existence as trading middlemen, exploiting the less sophisticated population among whom they had established themselves. Their loss to the southern shores of Stanley Pool is none the less to be deplored, I think, for they formed, at any rate, a connecting link between an incoming European commercial element and the background of would-be native suppliers.

Léopoldville is sometimes spoken of as a Congo town, but it cannot rightly be so termed. Apart from the Government station, which, in most respects, is very well planned, there is nothing at all resembling a town—barrack would be the correct term. The Government station of Léopoldville numbers, I was informed by its Chief, some 130 Europeans, and probably 3,000 native Government workmen, who all dwell in well ordered lines of either very well-built European houses, or, for the native staff, mud-built huts. Broad paths, which may be termed streets, connect the various parts of this Government Settlement, and an elementary effort at lighting by electricity has already evolved three lights in front of the house of the Commissaire-Général. Outside the Government staff, the general community, or public of Léopoldville, numbers less than one dozen Europeans, and possibly not more than 200 native dependents of their households or trading stores. This general public consists of two missionary establishments, numbering in all 4 Europeans; a railway station with, I think, 1 European; 4 trading establishments—1 Portuguese, 1 Belgian, 1 English, and 1 German—numbering 7 Europeans, with, perhaps, 80 or 100 native dependents; 2 British West African petty traders, and a couple of Loango tailor boys, who make clothes for the general community. This, I think, comprises almost all those not immediately dependent upon the Government.

These shops and traders do scarcely any business in native produce, of which there may be said to be none in the district, but rely upon a cash trade in Congolese currency, carried on with the large staff of Government employés, both European and native. Were this cash dealing to cease, the four European shops would be forced to put up their shutters. During the period of my stay at Léopoldville it did actually cease, and, for reasons which were not known publicly, the large native staff of Congo Government workmen, instead of receiving a part of their monthly wages in cash to spend locally—as also those being paid off on the expiry of their contracts—were remunerated by the Government in barter goods, which were issued from a Government store. This method of payment did not satisfy either the native Government employés or the local traders, and I heard many complaints on this score. The traders complained, some of them to myself, that as they had no other form of trading open to them, save this with the Government staff against cash, for the Government to itself now pay these men in goods was to end, at a blow, all trade dealings in the district. The native workmen complained, too, that they were paid in cloth which often they did not want in their own homes, and in order to have the wherewithal to purchase what they wanted, a practice at once arose amongst these men to sell for cash, at a loss to themselves, the cloth they had been forced to receive in payment from the Government store. The workmen lost on this transaction, and so did the traders. Pieces of cloth which were charged by the Government at 10 fr. each in paying off the workmen, these men would readily part with for 7 fr., and even for 6 fr. in cash. I myself, one day in June, bought for 7 fr. a-piece, from two just-discharged Government workmen, two pieces of cloth which had been charged against them at 10 fr. each. These men wished to buy salt at one of the local stores, and to obtain the means

of doing so, they readily sacrificed 3 fr. in each 10 fr. of their pay. The traders, too, complained that by this extensive sale of cotton goods at reduced rates by the Government employés, their own sales of cloth at current prices were rendered well-nigh impossible throughout the district.

The 3,000 Government workpeople at Léopoldville are drawn from nearly every part of the Congo State. Some, those from the cataract district especially, go voluntarily seeking employment, but many—and I believe a vast majority—are men, or lads, brought from districts of the Upper Congo, and who serve the authorities not primarily at their own seeking. On the 16th June last, five Government workpeople brought me their contracts of engagement with a request that I might tell them how long a period they still had to serve. They were all Upper Congo men, and had already nearly completed the full term of their engagement. The contracts, in each case, appeared as having been signed and drawn up at Boma on behalf of the Governor-General of the Congo State, and were, in each case, for a term of seven years. The men informed me that they had never been to Boma, and that the whole of their period of service had been spent either at Léopoldville or on the Upper Congo. In three of these cases I observed that an alteration had been made in the period of service, in the following terms:—

“Je réduis de sept à cinq ans le terme de service du . . . . .”

This entry was signed by the acting State Inspector of the district. It seemingly had not been observed, for it was struck out by his successor, and, as a matter of fact, the full period of seven years was, in each case, within a few months of completion.

On the whole the Government workmen at Léopoldville struck me as being well cared for, and they were certainly none of them idle. The chief difficulty in dealing with so large a staff arises from the want of a sufficiency of food supply in the surrounding country. The staple food of the entire Upper Congo is a preparation of the root of the cassava plant, steeped and boiled, and made up into loaves or puddings of varying weight. The natives of the districts around Léopoldville are forced to provide a fixed quantity each week of this form of food, which is levied by requisitions on all the surrounding villages. The European Government staff is also mainly dependent upon food supplies obtained from the natives of the neighbourhood in a similar manner. This, however necessary, is not a welcome task to the native suppliers who complain that their numbers are yearly decreasing, while the demands made upon them remain fixed, or tend even to increase.

The Government station at Léopoldville and its extensive staff, exist almost solely in connection with the running of Government steamers upon the Upper Congo.

A hospital for Europeans and an establishment designed as a native hospital are in charge of a European doctor. Another doctor also resides in the Government station whose bacteriological studies are unremitting and worthy of much praise. The native hospital—not, I am given to understand, through the fault of the local medical staff—is, however, an unseemly place. When I visited the three mud huts which serve this purpose, all of them dilapidated, and two with the thatched roofs almost gone, I found seventeen sleeping sickness patients, male and female, lying about in the utmost dirt. Most of them were lying on the bare ground—several out on the pathway in front of the houses, and one, a woman, had fallen into the fire just prior to my arrival (while in the final, insensible stage of the disease), and had burned herself very badly. She had since been well bandaged, but was still lying out on the ground with her head almost in the fire, and while I sought to speak to her, in turning, she upset a pot of scalding water over her shoulder. All of the seventeen persons I saw were near their end, and on my second visit, two days later, the 19th June, I found one of them lying dead out in the open.

In somewhat striking contrast to the neglected state of these people, I found, within a couple of hundred yards of them, the Government workshop for repairing and fitting the steamers. Here all was brightness, care, order, and activity, and it was impossible not to admire and commend the industry which had created and maintained in constant working order this useful establishment. In conjunction with a local missionary, some effort was made during my stay at Léopoldville, to obtain an amelioration of the condition of the sleeping-sickness people in the native hospital, but it was stated, in answer to my friend's representations, that nothing could be done in the way of building a proper hospital until plans now under consideration had

been matured elsewhere. The structures I had visited, which the local medical staff greatly deplored, had endured for several years as the only form of hospital accommodation provided for the numerous native staff of the district.

The Government stores at Léopoldville are large and well built, and contain not only the goods the Government itself sends up river in its fleet of steamers, but also the goods of the various Concession Companies. As a rule, the produce brought down river by the Government steamers is transhipped direct into the railway trucks which run alongside the wharf, and is carried thence by train to Matadi for shipment to Europe. The various Companies carrying on operations on the Upper Congo, and who hold Concessions from the Congo Government, are bound, I was told, by Conventions to abstain from carrying, save within the limits of their Concessions, either goods or passengers. This interdiction extends to their own merchandise and to their own agents. Should they carry, by reason of imperative need, outside these limits any of their own goods or their own people, they are bound to pay to the Congo Government either the freight or passage money according to the Government tariff, just as though the goods or passengers had been conveyed on one of the Government vessels. The tariff upon goods and passengers carried along the interior waterways is a fairly high one, not perhaps excessive under the circumstances, but still one that, by reason of this virtual monopoly, can produce a yearly revenue which must go far towards maintaining the Government flotilla. By the estimates for 1902, published in the "Bulletin Officiel" of January this year, the transport service is credited with a production of 3,100,000 fr. of public revenue for 1902, while the expenditure for the same year is put at 2,023,376 fr. That this restriction of public conveyance to Government vessels alone is not altogether a public gain my own experience demonstrated. I had wished to leave Stanley Pool for the Upper Congo at an early date after my arrival in Léopoldville, but as the Government vessels were mostly crowded, I could not proceed with any comfort by one of these. The steam-ship "Flandre," one of the largest of these vessels, which left Léopoldville for Stanley Falls on the 22nd June, and by which I had, at first, intended to proceed, quitted port with more than twenty European passengers over her complement, all of whom, I was informed, would have to sleep on deck. I accordingly was forced to seek other means of travelling, and through the kindness of the Director of one of the large commercial Companies (the "Société Anonyme Belge du Haut-Congo") I found excellent accommodation, as a guest, on one of his steamers. Although thus an invited guest and not paying any passage money, special permission had to be sought from the Congo Government before this act of courtesy could be shown me, and I saw the telegram from the local authority, authorizing my conveyance to Chumbiri.

This commercial Company has three other steamers, but the interdiction referred to applies to the entire flotilla of trading vessels of Congolese nationality on the Upper River. Despite the fact that these vessels are not allowed to earn freight or passage, they are all, for their tonnage, heavily taxed, while the Government vessels, which earn considerable sums on transport of general goods and passengers, pay no taxes. The four vessels of the Société Anonyme Belge du Haut-Congo referred to, of which the largest is only, I believe, one of 30 tons, pay annually, I was informed, the following taxes:—

	Fr.
For permission to cut firewood .. .. .	17,870
Licence for each steamer, according to her tonnage .. .. .	400 to 600
The master of each vessel must be licensed, for which a tax of 20 fr. per annum is levied.	

Himself and each European member of the crew must then pay 30 fr. per annum as "imposition personnelle," whilst each native member of the crew costs his employers 3 fr. per head for engagement licence annually, and 10 fr. per head per annum as "imposition personnelle."

The "President Urban," the largest steamer of the Company referred to, under these various heads pays, I was informed, a sum of not less than 11,000 fr. in taxes per annum. Should she carry any of the agents of the Company owning her, or any of its goods, save within the restricted area of its Concession, her owners must pay to the Congo Government both passage money and freight on these, just as though they had been sent by one of the Government vessels.

No firewood may be cut by the public within half-an-hour's steaming distance of any of the Government wooding posts, which are naturally chosen at the best wooding sites available along the various waterways, so that the 10,000 fr. wood-cutting licence which the "President Urban" pays entitles her only to cut up for

fuel such suitable timber as her crew may be able to find in the less accessible spots.

At F\* I spent four days. I had visited this place in August 1887 when the line of villages comprising the settlement contained from 4,000 to 5,000 people. Most of these villages to-day are entirely deserted, the forest having grown over the abandoned sites, and the entire community at the present date cannot number more than 500 souls. There is no Government station at F\*, but the Government telegraph line which connects Léopoldville with Coquilhatville, the headquarters of the Equator district, runs through the once townlands of the F\* villages close to the river bank. The people of the riverside towns, and from 20 miles inland, have to keep the line clear of undergrowth, and in many places the telegraph road serves as a useful public path between neighbouring villages. Some of the natives of the neighbourhood complained that for this compulsory utilitarian service they had received no remuneration of any kind; and those at a distance that they found it hard to feed themselves when far from their homes they were engaged on this task. Inquiry in the neighbourhood established that no payment for this work had seemingly been made for fully a year.

Men are also required to work at the neighbouring wood-cutting post for the Government steamers, which is in charge of a native Headman or Kapita, who is under the surveillance of a European "Chef de Poste" at Bolobo, the nearest Government station, which lies about 40 miles up-stream. These wood-cutters, although required compulsorily to serve and sometimes irregularly detained, are adequately paid for their services.

The F\* villages have to supply kwanga (the prepared cassava root already referred to) for the neighbouring wood-cutting post, and the quantity required of them is, they asserted, in excess of their means of supply and out of proportion to the value received in exchange. The supply required of them was fixed, I found, at 380 kwanga (or boiled cassava puddings) every six days, each pudding weighing from 4½ lb. to 6 lb., or a total of from 1,700 lb. to 1 ton weight of carefully prepared food-stuffs per week. For this a payment of one brass rod per kwanga is made, giving a sum of 19 fr. in all for the several villages whose task it is to keep the wood post victualled. These villages by careful computation I reckoned contained 240 persons all told—men, women, and children. In addition to preparing and carrying this food a considerable distance to the Government post, these people have to take their share in keeping the telegraph line clear and in supplying Government workmen. One elderly man was arrested at the period of my visit to serve as a soldier and was taken to Bolobo, 40 miles away, but was subsequently released upon representations made by a missionary who knew him. The number of wood-cutters at the local post is about thirty I was informed, so that the amount of food levied is beyond their requirements, and the excess is said to be sold by them at a profit to the crews of passing steamers. At one of the smallest of these F\* villages, where there are not more than ten persons all told, and only three of these women able to prepare and cook the food, 40 kwanga (180 lb. to 270 lb. weight of food) had to be supplied every week at a payment of 40 rods (2 fr.). These people said: "How can we possibly plant and weed our gardens, seek and prepare and boil the cassava, make it into portable shape, and then carry it nearly a day's journey to the post? Moreover, if the kwanga we make are a little small or not well-cooked, or if we complain that the rods given us in settlement are too short, as they sometimes are, then we are beaten by the wood-cutters, and sometimes we are detained several days to cut firewood as a punishment."

Statements of this kind might be tediously multiplied.

The local mission station at F\* requires much smaller kwanga than the Government size, getting from 1½ lb. to 2 lb. weight of food at the same price—viz., 1 rod. The kwanga made up for general consumption, as sold in local markets, weigh only about 1 lb. each. The Government requires, delivered free, even at considerable distances, from four and a-half to six times the weight of prepared food to that sold publicly for ½d.

In most parts of the Upper Congo the recognized currency consists of lengths of brass wire; these lengths varying according to the district. At one period the recognized length of a brass rod was 18 inches, but to-day the average length of a rod cannot be more than 8 or 9 inches. The nominal value of one of these rods is ½d., twenty of them being reckoned to the franc; but the intrinsic value, or actual cost of a rod to any importer of the brass wire direct from Europe, would come to less than a ¼d., I should say. Such as it is, clumsy and dirty, this is the principal form of

currency known on the Upper Congo where, saving some parts of the French Congo I visited, European money is still quite unknown.

The reasons for the decrease of population at F\* given me, both by the natives and by others, point to sleeping sickness as probably one of the principal factors. There has also been emigration to the opposite side of the river, to the French shore, but this course has never, I gather, been popular. The people have not easily accommodated themselves to the altered condition of life brought about by European Government in their midst. Where formerly they were accustomed to take long voyages down to Stanley Pool to sell slaves, ivory, dried fish, or other local products against such European merchandise as the Bateke middlemen around the Pool had to offer in exchange, they find themselves to-day debarred from all such form of activity.

The open selling of slaves and the canoe convoys, which once navigated the Upper Congo, have everywhere disappeared. No act of the Congo State Government has perhaps produced more laudable results than the vigorous suppression of this widespread evil. In the 160 miles' journey from Léopoldville to F\* I did not see one large native canoe in mid-stream, and only a few small canoes creeping along the shore near to native villages. While the suppression of an open form of slave dealing has been an undoubted gain, much that was not reprehensible in native life has disappeared along with it. The trade in ivory has to-day entirely passed from the hands of the natives of the Upper Congo, and neither fish nor any other outcome of local industry now changes hands on an extensive scale or at any distance from home.

So far as I could observe in the limited time at my disposal, the people of F\* now rarely leave their homes save when required by the local Government official at Bolobo to serve as soldiers, or woodcutters at one of the Government posts, or to convey the weekly supplies of food required of them to the nearest Government station. These demands for food-stuffs comprise fowls and goats for consumption by the European members of the Government staff at Léopoldville, or for passengers on the Government steamers. They emanate from the Chief of the post at Bolobo who, I understand, is required in so far as he can, to keep up this supply. In order to obtain this provision he is forced to exercise continuous pressure on the local population, and within recent times that pressure has not always taken the form of mere requisition. Armed expeditions have been necessary and a more forcible method of levying supplies adopted than the law either contemplated or justifies. Very specific statements as to the harm one of these recent expeditions worked in the country around F\* were made to me during my stay there. The officer in command of the G\* district, at the head of a band of soldiers passed through a portion of the district wherein the natives, unaccustomed to the duties expected of them, had been backward in sending in both goats and fowls.

The result of this expedition, which took place towards the end of 1900, was that in fourteen small villages traversed seventeen persons disappeared. Sixteen of these whose names were given to me were killed by the soldiers, and their bodies recovered by their friends, and one was reported as missing. Of those killed eleven were men, three women, and one a boy child of 5 years. Ten persons were tied up and taken away as prisoners, but were released on payment of sixteen goats by their friends, except one, a child, who died at Bolobo. In addition 48 goats were taken away and 225 fowls; several houses were burned, and a quantity of their owners' property either pillaged or destroyed. Representations on behalf of the injured villages were made to the Inspecteur d'État at Léopoldville, who greatly deplored the excesses of his subordinate, and sent to hold an inquiry and to pay compensation to the relatives of those killed and for the live-stock or goods destroyed or taken away. The local estimate of the damage done amounted to 71,730 brass rods (3,586 fr.), which included 20,500 brass rods (1,025 fr.), assessed as compensation for the seventeen people. Three of these were Chiefs, and the amount asked for would have worked out at about 1,000 brass rods (50 fr.) per head, not probably an extravagant estimate for human life, seeing that the goats were valued at 400 rods each (20 fr.). A total sum, I was told, of 18,000 brass rods (950 fr.) was actually paid to the injured villages by the Government Commissioner, who came from Stanley Pool; and this sum, it was said, was levied as a fine for his misconduct on the official responsible for the raid. I could not learn what other form of punishment, if any, was inflicted on this officer. He remained as the Government Representative for some time afterwards, was then transferred to another post in the immediate neighbourhood, and finally went home at the expiration of his period of service.

At Bolobo, where I spent ten days waiting for a steamer to continue my journey,

a somewhat similar state of affairs prevails to that existing at F\*. Bolobo used to be one of the most important native Settlements along the south bank of the Upper Congo, and the population in the early days of civilized rule numbered fully 40,000 people, chiefly of the Bobangi tribe. To-day the population is believed to be not more than 7,000 or 8,000 souls. The Bolobo men were famous in former days for their voyages to Stanley Pool and their keen trading ability. All of their large canoes have to-day disappeared, and while some of them still hunt hippopotami—which are still numerous in the adjacent waters—I did not observe anything like industry among them.

Indeed, it would be hard to say how the people now live or how they occupy their own time. They did not complain so much of the weekly enforced food supplies required of them, which would, indeed, seem to be an unavoidable necessity of the situation, as to the unexpected calls frequently made upon them. Neither rubber nor ivory is obtained in this neighbourhood. The food supply and a certain amount of local labour is all that is enforced. As woodcutters, station hands in the Government post, canoe paddlers, workers on the telegraph route or in some other public capacity, they are liable to frequent requisition.

The labour required did not seem to be excessive, but it would seem to be irregularly called for, unequally distributed, and only poorly remunerated, or sometimes not remunerated at all.

Complaints as to the manner of exacting service are much more frequent than complaints as to the fact of service being required. If the local official has to go on a sudden journey men are summoned on the instant to paddle his canoe, and a refusal entails imprisonment or a beating. If the Government plantation or the kitchen garden require weeding, a soldier will be sent to call in the women from some of the neighbouring towns. To the official this is a necessary public duty which he cannot but impose, but to the women suddenly forced to leave their household tasks and to tramp off, hoe in hand, baby on back, with possibly a hungry and angry husband at home, the task is not a welcome one.

One of the weightier tasks imposed upon the neighbourhood during my stay at Bolobo was the construction of a wooden pier at the Government beach whereat Government vessels might come alongside.

I visited this incompleting structure several times, and estimated that from 1,500 to 2,000 trees and saplings had already been used in its partial construction. All of these were cut down and carried in by the men of some of the neighbouring towns, and for this compulsory service no remuneration had, up to that date, I was on all sides informed, been made to any one of them. They were ordered, they said, to do it as a public duty. The timber needed had to be sought at a considerable distance, most of the trees had been carried some miles, and the task was not altogether an agreeable one. The chief complaint I heard directed against this work, however, was that the pier was being so badly put up that when finished it would be quite useless, and all their work would thus be thrown away. My own opinion of the structure was that this criticism was well founded, and that the first annual rise of the river would sweep most of the ill-laid timbers away.

The Bolobo people do not object so much to the regular food tax, just because this is regular, and they can prepare and regularly meet it, as to the sudden and unexpected labour tasks, such as canoe journeys, or this more onerous pier building. They could, I perceived, trace no connection between this hastily-conceived exaction on their time and labour and a system of general contribution in the public interest, which, to be readily admitted, should be clearly defined. Were a regular annual tax levied in money, or some medium of barter exchange serving as a legal currency, the people would in time be brought to see that a payment of this kind evenly distributed and enforced was, indeed, a public duty they were bound to acquit themselves of, and one their Government was justified in strictly enforcing; but they do not assign any such value to the unsystematic calls upon them which prevail to-day. To be hastily summoned from their usual home avocations, or even from their possibly habitual idleness, to perform one or other of the tasks indicated above, and to get neither food nor pay for their exertions, as is often the case, seems to these unprogressive people not a public service they are called upon to perform in the public interest, but a purely personal burden laid upon their bodies and their time by the local agent of an organization which, to them, would seem to exist chiefly for its own profit.

The weight of the kwanga required at Bolobo seemed to be less than that enforced at F\*, and I found that this variance existed throughout the Upper Congo.



At Bolobo the kwanga loaves supplied to the Government post weighed each a little over 3 lb. That made for ordinary sale in the public market just over 1 lb.: one of each that I weighed myself gave 3 lb. 2 oz. to the Government loaf, and 13 oz. to that made for general consumption. The price paid in each case was the same—viz., one brass rod.

At the village of H\*, some 4 or 5 miles from the Government post, which I visited, I found the village to number some forty adult males with their families. This village has to supply weekly to the Government post 400 of these loaves (say 1,250 lb. weight of food) for which a payment of 20 fr. (400 rods) is made. The people of H\* told me that when short of cassava from their own fields for the preparation of this supply, they bought the root in the local market and had to pay for it in the raw state just twice what they received for the prepared and cooked product they delivered at the post. I had no means of verifying this statement, but I was assured by many persons that it was strictly true. In addition to supplying this food weekly, H\* is liable to the usual calls for canoe paddlers, day labourers at the Government station (male and female), timber gatherers for the pier, and woodcutters at the local wood-post of the Government steamers.

There was a good deal of sickness in this town, and in that beyond it at the date of my visit. Sleeping sickness and, still more, small-pox. Both diseases have done much to reduce the population. Emigration to the French shore, once active, would seem now to have ceased. Efforts are made locally, to improve the physical and sanitary condition of the people, and improvements due to these efforts are becoming apparent, but I was given to understand that progress is very slow.

The insufficiency of food generally observable in this part of the Congo would seem to account for much sickness, and probably for the mental depression of the natives I so often observed, itself a frequent cause of disease. The Chief of the Government post at G\* during a part of my stay there told me that he thought the district was quite exhausted, and that it must be ever increasingly difficult to obtain food from it for the public requirements of the local administration.

Some 40 miles above Bolobo a large "camp d'instruction," with from 600 to 800 native recruits and a staff of several European officers is established at a place called Yumbi. I had, to my regret, no opportunity of visiting this camp, although I met one of its officers who very kindly invited me there, promising a hearty welcome. He informed me that native food supplies were fairly plentiful in the neighbourhood of this camp, and that the principal rations of the soldiers consisted of hippopotamus meat, the Congo in that neighbourhood affording a seemingly inexhaustible supply of these creatures.

In front of the house of one of the natives in a village, I saw some seventy hippopotamus skulls. The animals, I was told, had all been killed by one man. Many are speared, and some are shot by the native hunters with cap-guns. A somewhat considerable trade in these weapons appears to have been done until recently by the Government Agents in the district, and I found several of the Bolobo young men with guns of this description which they had bought at different times from the local official, generally paying for them with ivory tusks. The sale of these arms by Representatives of the Congo Government would seem to have ceased somewhat more than a year ago, since which date the holders of the guns have been exposed to some trouble in order to obtain licences. Dealing in or holding guns of this description would seem to be regulated by clearly drawn up Regulations, which, however, do not seem to have been observed until last year. A tax of 20 fr. is now levied on the issue of a licence to bear arms, which the law renders obligatory on every gun holder, but this tax is also collected in an irregular manner.

I learned while at Bolobo that a large influx from the I\* district (which comprises the "Domaine de la Couronne") had lately taken place into the country behind G\*. The nearest Settlement of these emigrants was said to be about 20 to 25 miles from G\*, and I determined to visit this place. I spent three days on this journey, visited two large villages in the interior belonging to the K\* tribe, wherein I found that fully half the population now consisted of refugees belonging to the L\* tribe who had formerly dwelt near I\*. I saw and questioned several groups of these people, whom I found to be industrious blacksmiths and brass-workers. These people consisted of old and young men, women, and children. They had fled from their country and sought an asylum with their friends the K\* during the last four years. The distance they had travelled in their flight they put at about six or seven days' march—which I

should estimate at from 120 to 150 miles of walking. They went on to declare, when asked why they had fled, that they had endured such ill-treatment at the hands of the Government officials and the Government soldiers in their own country that life had become intolerable, that nothing had remained for them at home but to be killed for failure to bring in a certain amount of rubber or to die from starvation or exposure in their attempts to satisfy the demands made upon them. The statements made to me by these people were of such a nature that I could not believe them to be true. The fact remained, however, that they had certainly abandoned their homes and all that they possessed, had travelled a long distance, and now preferred a species of mild servitude among the K\* to remaining in their own country. I took careful note of the statements made to me by these people, which will be found in the transcript attached (Inclosure 1).\* I subsequently found when at M\* some days later, other L\*, who confirmed the truth of the statements made to me at N\*.

On reaching Bolobo in September I obtained information amply confirming the statements made to me. My own further inquiries at M\* are embodied in the accompanying document (Inclosure 1).†

Leaving Bolobo on the 23rd July, I passed on up river in a small steam-launch I had been fortunate enough to secure for my private use. We touched at several points on the French shore, and on the 25th July reached Lukolela, where I spent two days. This district had, when I visited it in 1887, numbered fully 5,000 people; to-day the population is given, after a careful enumeration, at less than 600. The reasons given me for their decline in numbers were similar to those furnished elsewhere, viz., sleeping-sickness, general ill-health, insufficiency of food, and the methods employed to obtain labour from them by local officials and the exactions levied on them. The Lukolela district furnishes a small supply of rubber, which is required by the Local Government posts to be brought in at fixed periods as a general contribution. Food—"kwanga" and fish—are also required of the riverside dwellers. The towns I visited were very ill-kept and tumble-down, and bore no comparison, either in the class of dwelling-houses now adopted or in the extent of cultivated ground around them, to the condition in which these people formerly dwelt.

Several reasons for the increase of sickness and the great falling-off in the population of the district were stated by the local missionary, who has resided for many years at Lukolela, in two letters which he recently addressed to the Governor-General of the Congo State. A copy of these letters was handed to me by the writer—the Rev. John Whitehead—on my calling in at Lukolela on my way down river on the 12th September. I had no opportunity of verifying, by personal observation, the statements made by Mr. Whitehead in his letter, for my stay at Lukolela was only one of a few hours. I have, however, no right to doubt Mr Whitehead's veracity, and he declared himself prepared to accept full responsibility for the statements his letter contained. A copy of these letters is appended (Inclosure 2).‡

The Government post at Lukolela I did not visit, but viewed from the river it presents a charming aspect; well-built houses, surrounded by plantations of coffee-trees, extend for some distance along the shore.

From Lukolela I proceeded to O\*, which I purposed visiting. O\*, with its two adjoining villages, when I had last seen them in the autumn of 1887, had presented a scene of the greatest animation. The population of the three towns then numbered some 4,000 to 5,000 people—O\* alone, it was estimated, containing at least 3,000. Scores of men had put off in canoes to greet us with invitations that we should spend the night in their village. On steaming into O\*, I found that this village had entirely disappeared, and that its place was occupied by a large "camp d'instruction," where some 800 native recruits, brought from various parts of the Congo State, are drilled into soldierhood by a Commandant and a staff of seven or eight European officers and non-commissioned officers.

There is also a large plantation of coffee-trees, a telegraph office, and a trading store, but I could see no indications of native life beyond those dependent on these establishments. The once villages and their fields had been converted into a very well-laid-out and admirably-maintained military station. From the Commandant and his officers a cordial welcome was received. The camp as a military centre is excellently chosen, the situation of Irebu commanding not only the Lake Mantumba waterway, but one of the chief navigable channels of the Congo; and it is, moreover, situated opposite the estuary of the great Ubangi River, which is probably the most

\* See p. 60.

† See p. 60.

‡ See p. 64.

important Congo affluent. The Commandant informed me that a very large supply of native food, amply sufficient for the soldiers under his command, was supplied weekly by the natives of the surrounding district.

It is difficult to exactly estimate the number of soldiers enrolled and maintained by the Congo Government. There are, I think, four separate "camps d'instruction" upon the Upper Congo, each of which should have an effective of 700 men. The effective strengths of the companies of Manyema, Lake Léopold II, Lualaba-Kasai, Aruwimi, and Ruzizi-Kivu were fixed respectively by Circular of the Governor-General, dated the 25th June, 1902, at 750, 475, 850, 450, and 875 men. There are many other companies of the "Force Publique" in the Congo State, and I think it might safely be estimated that the number of men with the colours does not amount to less than 18,000. By a Circular addressed to the local authorities, dated the 26th May last, the Governor-General stated that it was necessary to add 200 men to each of the camps in the Upper Congo. In the same Circular a proposed increase of the general strength of the army was indicated in the following terms:—

"Notre programme militaire est très vaste et sa réalisation exige une attention soutenue et de grands efforts, mais sans son exécution intégrale notre situation demeurera précaire.

"S'il le fallait, mais je ne pense pas même que ce soit nécessaire, le Gouvernement se montrerait disposé à augmenter dans une certaine mesure le contingent pour 1903."

The same Circular added that:—

"Certains districts en effet ne remplacent pas les miliciens décédés, désertés en cours de route et ceux réformés à leur arrivée au camp.

"De plus, pendant la période d'instruction dans les camps un grand nombre de déchets se produisent aussi parmi ces recrues, les transports de miliciens laissant encore à désirer."

The Commandant informed me that some of the natives who had fled into the French territory opposite ten years ago, when the Irebu tribes had deserted their homes, were now gradually returning to Congo State territory. I found, subsequently, that this was the case, the people alleging that since the rubber tax had been dropped in the Mantumba district they preferred returning to their home lands to remaining on the strange sites in French territory, to which they had fled when that tax was at work.

From Irebu I proceeded some 25 miles to Ikoko, once a large village on the north shore of Lake Mantumba. I remained in Lake Mantumba seventeen days visiting, during that time, the Government post at Bikoro on the east shore of the lake, and many native towns scattered around the lake side. I also ascended by boat one of the rivers falling into the lake, and visited three native villages in the forest situated along this waterway. Lake Mantumba is a fine sheet of water about 25 or 30 miles long and some 12 or 15 miles broad at the broadest part, surrounded by a dense forest. The inhabitants of the district are of the Ntomba tribe, and are still rude savages, using very fine bows and arrows and ill-made spears as their weapons. There are also in the forest country many families or clans of a dwarf race called Batwas, who are of a much more savage and untameable disposition than the Ntombas, who form the bulk of the population. Both Batwas and Ntombas are still cannibals, and cannibalism, although repressed and not so openly indulged in as formerly, is still prevalent in the district. The Mantumba people were, in the days before the establishment of Congo State rule, among the most active fishermen and traders of the Upper Congo. In fleets of canoes they used to issue out upon the main waters of the Congo and travel very great distances, fighting their way if necessary, in search of purchasers of their fish or slaves, or to procure these latter. All this has ceased and, save for small canoes used in catching fish, I saw neither on the lake itself nor at the many villages I touched along its shores, any canoes comparable to those so frequently seen in the past. A man I visited told me that a fine canoe he bought for 2,000 brass rods (100 fr.), in which to send the weekly imposition of fish to the local State post, had been kept by the official there, had been used to transport Government soldiers in, and was now attached to a Government wood-cutting post, which he named, out on the main river. He had received nothing for the loss of this canoe, and when I urged him to lay the matter

before the local official responsible, who had doubtless retained the canoe in ignorance, he pulled up his loin cloth and, pointing to where he had been flogged with a chicotte, said: "If I complained I should only get more of these." Although afraid to complain locally, he declared he would be perfectly willing to accompany me if I would take him before one of the Congo Judges or, above all, down to Boma. I assured him that a statement such as that he had made to me would meet with attention at Boma, and that if he could prove its truth he would get satisfaction for the loss of the canoe.

Statements of a similar character, often supported by many witnesses, were made to me more than once during my journey around the lake, some of them pointing to far greater derelictions of duty. The same man told me, on the same occasion, that one of the Government officials of the district (the same man, indeed, who had retained the canoe) had recently given him three wives. The official, he declared, had been "making war" on a town in the forest I was then in, for failing to bring in its fixed food supply, and as a result of the punitive measures undertaken the town had been destroyed and many prisoners taken. As a result, several women so taken were homeless, and were distributed. "Wives were being given away that day," said my informant, "he gave me three, but another man got four." The man went on to say that one of these "wives" had since escaped, aided, as he complained, by one of his own townsmen, who was a slave from her own native town.

The population of the lake-side towns would seem to have diminished within the last ten years by 60 or 70 per cent. It was in 1893 that the effort to levy an india-rubber imposition in this district was begun, and for some four or five years this imposition could only be collected at the cost of continual fighting. Finding the task of collecting india-rubber a well nigh impossible one, the authorities abandoned it in this district, and the remaining inhabitants now deliver a weekly supply of food-stuffs for the up-keep of the military camp at Irebu, or the big coffee plantation at Bikoro. Several villages I visited supply also to the latter station a fortnightly tax of gum-copal, which the surrounding forests yield abundantly. Gum-copal is also exposed and washed up on the shores of the lake. The quantity of this commodity supplied by each village on which it is assessed is put at 10 bags per fortnight. Each bag is officially said to contain 25 kilog., so that the imposition would amount to a quarter of a ton weight per fortnight. I found, when trying to lift some of these bags I saw being packed at a native village I was in, that they must weigh considerably more than 25 kilog., so that I concluded that each sack represents that quantity net of gum-copal. There is a considerable loss in cleaning, chipping, and washing crude gum as collected. The quantity brought by each village would thus work out at 6½ tons per annum. When I visited the Government station at P\*, the chief of that post showed me ten sacks of gum which he said had been just brought in by a very small village in the neighbourhood. For this quarter of a ton of gum-copal he said he had paid the village one piece of blue drill—a rough cotton cloth which is valued locally, after adding the cost of transport, at 11½ fr. a-piece. By the Congo Government "Bulletin Officiel" of this year (No. 4, April 1903) I found that 339½ tons of gum-copal were exported in 1902, all from the Upper Congo, and that this was valued at 475,490 fr. The value per ton would, therefore, work out at about 56l. The fortnightly yield of each village would therefore seem to be worth a maximum of 14l. (probably less), for which a maximum payment of 11½ fr. is made. At one village I visited I found the majority of the inhabitants getting ready the gum-copal and the supply of fish which they had to take to P\* on the morrow. They were putting it into canoes to paddle across the lake—some 20 miles—and they left with their loads in the night from alongside my steamer. These people told me that they frequently received, instead of cloth, 150 brass rods (7½ fr.) for the quarter of a ton of gum-copal they took fortnightly.

The value of the annual payment in gum-copal made by each town would seem to be about 360l., while at an average of 9 fr. as the remuneration each receives fortnightly, they would appear to receive some 10l. in annual return.

In the village of Montaka, at the south end of the lake, where I spent two days, the people seemed, during my stay, to be chiefly engrossed in the task of chipping and preparing the gum-copal for shipment to Bikoro, and in getting ready their weekly yield of fish for the same post. I saw the filling with gum of the ten basket-sacks taking place under the eyes of the Chief—who himself contributed—and a State sentry who was posted there. Each household in the town was represented at this final task, and every adult householder of Montaka shared in the general contribution. Assuming the population of Montaka at from 600 to 800—and it cannot now be more

although a town of 4,000 souls ten years ago—fully 150 householders are thus directly affected by the collection and delivery, each fortnight, of this “impôt en nature,” and are affected for the great majority of the days throughout the year.

Since for the 6½ tons of gum-copal which the 150 householders of Montaka contribute annually, they are seen to receive not more than a total payment of 10*l.* in the year—viz., 26 fortnightly payments of, on an average, say 9 fr. 50 c., giving 247 fr. annually—it follows that the remuneration each adult householder of Montaka receives for his entire year's work is the one hundred and fiftieth part of that total—or just 1*s.* 4*d.* This is just the value of an adult fowl in Montaka. I bought ten fowls, or chickens rather, the morning of my going away, and for the only reasonably sized one among them I gave 30 rods (1 fr. 50 c.), the others, small fledglings, ranging from 15 to 20 rods each (75 cents. to 1 fr.).

The 6½ tons of gum-copal supplied annually by these 150 householders being valued at about 364*l.*, it follows that each householder had contributed something like 2*l.* 8*s.* per annum in kind.

The labour involved may or may not be unduly excessive—but it is continuous throughout the year—each man must stay in his town and be prepared each week and fortnight to have his contribution ready under fear of summary punishment.

The natives engaged as workmen on my steamer were paid each a sum of 20 rods (1 fr.) per week for food rations only, and 100 rods (5 fr.) per month wages. One of these native workmen thus earned more in one week of my service—which was that of any other private establishment employing ordinary labour—than the Montaka householder got in an entire year for his compulsory public service rendered to the Government.

At other villages which I visited, I found the tax to consist of baskets, which the inhabitants had to make and deliver weekly as well as, always, a certain amount of food-stuffs—either kwanga or fish. These baskets are used at Bikoro in packing up the gum-copal for conveyance down the river and to Europe—the river transport being effected by Government steamers. The basket-makers and other workers complained that they were sometimes remunerated for their labour with reels of sewing cotton and shirt buttons (of which they had no use) when supplies of cloth or brass wire ran short at Bikoro. As these natives go almost entirely naked, I could believe that neither thread or shirt buttons were of much service to them. They also averred that they were frequently flogged for delay or inability to complete the tale of these baskets, or the weekly supply of food. Several men, including a Chief of one town, showed broad weals across their buttocks, which were evidently recent. One, a lad of 15 or so, removing his cloth, showed several scars across his thighs, which he and others around him said had formed part of a weekly payment for a recent shortage in their supply of food. That these statements were not all untrue was confirmed by my visit to P\*, when the “domaine privé” store was shown to me. It had very little in it, and I learned that the barter stock of goods had not been replenished for some time. There appeared to be from 200 to 300 pieces of coarse cotton cloth, and nothing else, and as the cloth was visibly old, I estimated the value of the entire stock at possibly 15*l.* It certainly would not have fetched more if put up to auction in any part of the Upper Congo.

The instructions regulating the remuneration of the native contributors and the mode of exploitation of the “forêts domaniales” were issued in the “Bulletin Officiel” of 1896, under authority of Decrees dated the 30th October and the 5th December, 1892.

These general instructions require that:—

“L'exploitation se fait par les agents de l'Intendance, sous la direction du Commissaire de District.

“Tout ce qui se rapporte à l'exploitation du domaine privé doit être séparé nettement des autres services gouvernementaux.

“Les agents préposés à l'exploitation du domaine privé consacrent tous leurs soins au développement de la récolte du caoutchouc et des autres produits de la forêt.

“Quel que soit le mode d'exploitation adopté à cet effet, ils sont tenus d'accorder aux indigènes une rémunération qui ne sera en aucun cas inférieure au montant du prix de la main-d'œuvre nécessaire à la récolte du produit; cette rémunération est fixée par le Commissaire de District, qui soumet son tarif à l'approbation du Gouverneur-Général.

“L'Inspecteur d'État en mission vérifie si ce tarif est en rapport avec le prix de la main-d'œuvre; il veille à sa stricte application, et il examine si les conditions générales d'exploitation ne donnent lieu à aucune plainte justifiée.

“Il fait comprendre aux agents chargés du service que, par le fait de rétribuer équitablement l'indigène, ils emploient le seul moyen efficace d'assurer la bonne administration du domaine et de faire naître chez lui le goût et l'habitude du travail.”

Both from the condition of the Domaine Privé Store I inspected at P\*, and the obvious poverty and universal discontent of the native contributors, whose towns I visited during the seventeen days spent in Lake Mantumba, it was clear that these instructions had long since ceased to be operative. The responsibility for the non-application of such necessary regulations could not be attributed to the local officials, who, obviously, if left without the means of adequate remuneration could not themselves make good the oversights or omissions of their superiors. That these omissions form part of a systematic breach of instructions conceived in the interest of the native I do not assert, but it was most apparent that neither in Lake Mantumba nor the other portions of the Domaine Privé which I visited was any adequate provision made for inculcating the natives with any just appreciation of the value of work.

The station at Bikoro has been established as a Government plantation for about ten years. It stands on the actual site of the former native town of Bikoro, an important Settlement in 1893, now reduced to a handful of ill-kept, untidy huts, inhabited by only a remnant of its former expropriated population.

Another small village, Bomenga, stands on the other side of the Government houses; the plantation enveloping both villages, and occupying their old cassava fields and gardens, which are now planted with coffee trees. Further inland these give place to cocoa and india-rubber trees (*fantumia elastica*), and also to the indigenous *Landolphia* creeper, which is being extensively cultivated. The entire plantation covers 800 hectares. There are 70 kilom. of well-cleared pathway through it, one of these roads measuring 11 kilom. in almost a straight line; 400 workmen are employed, consisting in small group I saw I was informed were “prisoners” from the Ruki district. There are 140,000 coffee trees and 170,000 cocoa trees actually in the ground, the latter a later planting than the coffee. Last year the yield was: coffee 112 tons, and cocoa 7 tons, all of which, after cleaning and preparing at the Government dépôt at Kinchasa, was shipped to Europe on the Government account. India-rubber planting was not begun until November 1901. There are now 248 hectares already under cultivation, having 700,000 young *Landolphia* creepers, and elsewhere on the plantation, on portions mainly given up to coffee growing, there are 50,000 *fantumia elastica* and 50,000 *manihot glaziovii* trees. The station buildings are composed entirely of native materials, and are erected entirely by local native labour. The Chief of the Post has very ably directed the work of this plantation, which engrosses all his time, and until quite recently he had no assistant. A subordinate official is now placed under his orders. When he took over the district he told me there were sixty-eight native soldiers attached to the post, which number he has now been able to reduce to nineteen. In the days when the india-rubber tax prevailed in Lake Mantumba there were several hundreds of soldiers required in that region. No rubber is now worked in the neighbourhood I am informed.

Despite the 70 kilom. of roadway through the plantation, much of which has to be frequently—indeed daily—traversed, the two Europeans have no means of locomotion provided them, and must make their daily inspection to various points of this large plantation on foot.

In addition to the control of this flourishing establishment, the Chief of the Post is the Executive Chief of the entire district, but it is evident that but little time or energy could be left to the most energetic official for duties outside the immediate scope of his work as a coffee and india-rubber grower, in addition to those “engrossing cares” the general instructions cited above impose upon the agents who exploit the State domain.

I have dwelt upon the condition of P\* and the towns I visited around Lake Mantumba in my notes taken at the time, and these are appended hereto (Inclosure 3)\*. A careful investigation of the conditions of native life around the lake confirmed the truth of the statements made to me—that the great decrease in population, the dirty and ill-kept towns, and the complete absence of goats, sheep, or fowls—once very plentiful in this country—were to be attributed above all else to the continued effort made during many years to compel the natives to work india-rubber. Large bodies of native troops had formerly been quartered in the district, and the punitive measures undertaken to this end had endured for a considerable period.

\* See p. 70.

During the course of these operations there had been much loss of life, accompanied, I fear, by a somewhat general mutilation of the dead, as proof that the soldiers had done their duty. Each village I visited around the lake, save that of Q\* and one other, had been abandoned by its inhabitants. To some of these villages the people have only just returned; to others they are only now returning. In one I found the bare and burnt poles of what had been dwellings left standing, and at another—that of R\*—the people had fled at the approach of my steamer, and despite the loud cries of my native guides on board, nothing could induce them to return, and it was impossible to hold any intercourse with them. At the three succeeding villages I visited beyond R\*, in traversing the lake towards the south, the inhabitants all fled at the approach of the steamer, and it was only when they found whose the vessel was that they could be induced to return.

At one of these villages, S\*, after confidence had been restored and the fugitives had been induced to come in from the surrounding forest, where they had hidden themselves, I saw women coming back carrying their babies, their household utensils, and even the food they had hastily snatched up, up to a late hour of the evening. Meeting some of these returning women in one of the fields I asked them why they had run away at my approach, and they said, smiling, "We thought you were Bula Matadi" (i.e., "men of the Government"). Fear of this kind was formerly unknown on the Upper Congo; and in much more out-of-the-way places visited many years ago the people flocked from all sides to greet a white stranger. But to-day the apparition of a white man's steamer evidently gave the signal for instant flight.

The chief of the P\* post told me that a similar alarm reigned almost everywhere in the country behind his station, and that when he went on the most peaceful missions only a few miles from his house the villages were generally emptied of all human beings when he entered them, and it was impossible in the majority of cases to get into touch with the people in their own homes. It was not so in all cases, he said, and he instanced certain villages where he could go certain of a friendly reception, but with the majority, he said, he had found it quite impossible to ever find them "at home." He gave, as an explanation, when I asked for the reason of this fear of the white man, that as these people were great savages, and knew themselves how many crimes they had committed, they doubtless feared that the white man of the Government was coming to punish their misconduct. He added that they had undoubtedly had an "awful past" at the hands of some of the officials who had preceded him in the local administration, and that it would take time for confidence to be restored. Men, he said, still came to him whose hands had been cut off by the Government soldiers during those evil days, and he said there were still many victims of this species of mutilation in the surrounding country. Two cases of the kind came to my actual notice while I was in the lake. One, a young man, both of whose hands had been beaten off with the butt ends of rifles against a tree, the other a young lad of 11 or 12 years of age, whose right hand was cut off at the wrist. This boy described the circumstances of his mutilation, and, in answer to my inquiry, said that although wounded at the time he was perfectly sensible of the severing of his wrist, but lay still fearing that if he moved he would be killed. In both these cases the Government soldiers had been accompanied by white officers whose names were given to me. Of six natives (one a girl, three little boys, one youth, and one old woman) who had been mutilated in this way during the rubber régime, all except one were dead at the date of my visit. The old woman had died at the beginning of this year, and her niece described to me how the act of mutilation in her case had been accomplished. The day I left Lake Mantumba five men whose hands had been cut off came to the village of T\* across the lake to see me, but hearing that I had already gone away they returned to their homes. A messenger came in to tell me, and I sent to T\* to find them, but they had then dispersed. Three of them subsequently returned, but too late for me to see them. These were some of those, I presume, to whom the official had referred, for they came from the country in the vicinity of P\* station. Statements of this character, made both by the two mutilated persons I saw and by others who had witnessed this form of mutilation in the past, are appended (Inclosure 4).\*

The taxes levied on the people of the district being returnable each week or fortnight, it follows that they cannot leave their homes. At some of the villages I visited near the end of Lake Mantumba the fish supplies have to be delivered weekly to the military camp at Irebu, or when the water is high in the lake

\* See p. 76.

and fish harder to catch, every ten days. The distance from Irebu of one of these towns could not have been less than 45 miles. To go and come between their homes and the camp involved to the people of this town 90 miles of canoe paddling, and with the lake stormy and its waters rough—as is often the case—the double journey would take at least four days. This consumption of time must be added to that spent in the catching of the fish, and as the punishment for any falling off in quantity or delay in delivery is not a light one, the Chief responsible for the tax stoutly opposes any one quitting the town. Some proof of this incidentally arose during my stay, and threatened to delay my journey. Being short-handed I sought, when at Ikoko, to engage six or seven young men of the town as woodcutters to travel on board the steamer. I proposed to engage them for two or three months, and offered good wages, much more than by any local service they could hope to earn. More men offered than I needed, and I selected six. The State Chief of the village hearing of this at once came to me to protest against any of his people leaving the town, and said that he would have all the youths I had engaged tied up and sent over to the Government official at Bikoro. There were at the time three soldiers armed with Albinis rifles quartered at Ikoko, and the Chief sent for them to arrest my would-be crew. The Chief's argument, too, was perfectly logical. He said, "I am responsible each week for 600 rations of fish which must be delivered at Bikoro. If it fails I am held responsible and will be punished. I have been flogged more than once for a failure in the fish supply, and will not run any risks. If these men go I shall be short-handed, therefore they must stay to help in getting the weekly tax." I was forced to admit the justice of this argument, and we finally arrived at a compromise. I promised the Chief that, in addition to paying wages to the men I took, a sum representing the value to him of their labour should be left at Ikoko, so that he might hire extra hands to get the full quantity of fish required of him. I admitted that he had been forced to flog men from villages which failed in their weekly supplies, but that he had for some months discontinued this course. He said that now he put defaulters into prison instead. If a village which was held to supply, say, 200 rations of fish each week brought only 180 rations, he accepted no excuse, but put two men in "block." If thirty rations were wanting he detained three of the men, and so on—a man for each ten rations. These people would remain prisoners, and would have to work at Bikoro, or possibly would be sent to Coquilhatville, the administrative head-quarters of the Equator district, until the full imposition came in.

I subsequently found when in the neighbourhood of Coquilhatville that summary arrest and imprisonment of this kind for failure to complete the tale of local imposition is of constant occurrence. The men thus arrested are kept often in the "chain gang" along with other prisoners, and are put to the usual class of penitential work. They are not brought before or tried by any Court or sentenced to any fixed term of imprisonment, but are merely detained until some sort of satisfaction is obtained, and while under detention are kept at hard work.

Indeed, I could not find that a failure to meet the weekly tax is punishable by law and no law was cited to me as a warrant for this summary imprisonment, but if such a law exists it is to be presumed that it does not treat the weekly taxpayers' failure as a grave criminal offence. The men taken are frequently not those in fault; the requisitioning authority cannot discriminate. He is forced to insure compliance with the demands imposed on each village, and the first men to hand from the offending community of necessity have to pay in the chain-gang the general failure and possibly the individual fault of others. Men taken in this way are sometimes not seen again in their own homes. They are either taken to distant Government stations as workmen, or are drafted as soldiers into the Force Publique. The names of many men thus taken from the Mantumba district were given to me, and in some cases their relatives had heard of their death in distant parts of the country. This practice was, I believe, more general in the past, but that it still exists to-day, and on an extensive scale, I had several instances of observing in widely separated districts. The officials effecting these arrests do not seem to have any other course open to them, unless it be a resort to military punitive measures or to individual corporal punishment; while the natives assert that, as the taxes are unequally distributed, and their own numbers constantly decreasing, the strain upon them each week often becomes unbearable, and some of their number will shirk the constantly recurring unwelcome task. Should this shirking become general instead of being confined to individuals, punitive measures are undertaken against the refractory community. Where these do not end in fighting, loss of life and destruction of native property, they entail very heavy fines which are levied on the defaulting village. An expedition of the minor kind occurred some five months