Arthur Conan Doyle

The Crime of the Congo

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The Crime of the Congo

Arthur Conan Doyle

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PREFACE

There are many of us in England who consider the crime which has been wrought in the Congo lands by King Leopold of Belgium and his followers to be the greatest which has ever been known in human annals. Personally I am strongly of that opinion. There have been great expropriations like that of the Normans in England or of the English in Ireland. There have been massacres of populations like that of the South Americans by the Spaniards or of subject nations by the Turks. But never before has there been such a mixture of wholesale expropriation and wholesale massacre all done under an odious guise of philanthropy and with the lowest commercial motives as a reason. It is this sordid cause and the unctious hypocrisy which makes this crime unparalleled in its horror.

The witnesses of the crime are of all nations, and there is no possibility of error concerning facts. There are British consuls like Casement, Thesiger, Mitchell and Armstrong, all writing in their official capacity with every detail of fact and date. There are Frenchmen like Pierre Mille and Félicien Challaye, both of whom have written books upon the subject. There are missionaries of many races—Harris, Weeks and Stannard (British); Morrison, Clarke and Shepherd (American); Sjoblom (Swedish) and Father Vermeersch, the Jesuit. There is the eloquent action of the Italian Government, who refused to allow Italian officers to be employed any longer in such hangman's work, and there is the report of the Belgian commission, the evidence before which was suppressed because it was too dreadful for publication; finally, there is the incorruptible evidence of the kodak. Any American citizen who will glance at Mark Twain's "King Leopold's Soliloquy" will see some samples of that. A perusal of all of these sources of information will show that there is not a grotesque, obscene or ferocious torture which human ingenuity could invent which has not been used against these harmless and helpless people.

This would, to my mind, warrant our intervention in any case. Turkey has several times been interfered with simply on the general ground of humanity. There is in this instance a very special reason why America and England should not stand by and see these people done to death. They are, in a sense, their wards. America was the first to give official recognition to King Leopold's enterprise in 1884, and so has the responsibility of having actually put him into that position which he has so dreadfully abused. She has been the indirect and innocent cause of the whole tragedy. Surely some reparation is due. On the other hand England has, with the other European Powers, signed the treaty of 1885, by which each and all of them make it responsible for the condition of the native races. The other Powers have so

far shown no desire to live up to this pledge. But the conscience of England is uneasy and she is slowly rousing herself to act. Will America be behind?

At this moment two American citizens, Shepherd and that noble Virginian, Morrison, are about to be tried at Boma for telling the truth about the scoundrels. Morrison in the dock makes a finer Statue of Liberty than Bartholdi's in New York harbour.

Attempts will be made in America (for the Congo has its paid apologists everywhere) to pretend that England wants to oust Belgium from her colony and take it herself. Such accusations are folly. To run a tropical colony honestly without enslaving the natives is an expensive process. For example Nigeria, the nearest English colony, has to be subsidized to the extent of $2,000,000 a year. Whoever takes over the Congo will, considering its present demoralized condition, have a certain expense of $10,000,000 a year for twenty years. Belgium has not run the colony. It has simply sacked it, forcing the inhabitants without pay to ship everything of value to Antwerp. No decent European Power could do this. For many years to come the Congo will be a heavy expense and it will truly be a philanthropic call upon the next owner. I trust it will not fall to England.

Attempts have been made too (for there is considerable ingenuity and unlimited money on the other side) to pretend that it is a question of Protestant missions against Catholic. Any one who thinks this should read the book, "La Question Kongolaise," of the eloquent and holy Jesuit, Father Vermeersch. He lived in the country and, as he says, it was the sight of the "immeasurable misery," which drove him to write.

We English who are earnest over this matter look eagerly to the westward to see some sign of moral support of material leading. It would be a grand sight to see the banner of humanity and civilization carried forward in such a cause by the two great English-speaking nations.

Arthur Conan Doyle.

INTRODUCTION

I am convinced that the reason why public opinion has not been more sensitive upon the question of the Congo Free State, is that the terrible story has not been brought thoroughly home to the people. Mr. E. D. Morel has done the work of ten men, and the Congo Reform Association has struggled hard with very scanty means; but their time and energies have, for the most part, been absorbed in dealing with each fresh phase of the situation as it arose. There is room, therefore, as it seemed to me, for a general account which would cover the whole field and bring the matter up to date. This account must necessarily be a superficial one, if it is to be produced at such a size and such a price, as will ensure its getting at that general public for which it has been prepared. Yet it contains the essential facts, and will enable the reader to form his own opinion upon the situation.

Should he, after reading it, desire to help in the work of forcing this question to the front, he can do so in several ways. He can join the Congo Reform Association (Granville House, Arundel Street, W. C.). He can write to his local member and aid in getting up local meetings to ventilate the question. Finally, he can pass this book on and purchase other copies, for any profits will be used in setting the facts before the French and German public.

It may be objected that this is ancient history, and that the greater part of it refers to a period before the Congo State was annexed to Belgium on August 10th, 1908. But responsibility cannot be so easily shaken off. The Congo State was founded by the Belgian King, and exploited by Belgian capital, Belgian soldiers and Belgian concessionnaires. It was defended and upheld by successive Belgian Governments, who did all they could to discourage the Reformers. In spite of legal quibbles, it is an insult to common sense to suppose that the responsibility for the Congo has not always rested with Belgium. The Belgian machinery was always ready to help and defend the State, but never to hold it in control and restrain it from crime.

One chance Belgium had. If immediately upon taking over the State they had formed a Judicial Commission for the rigid inspection of the whole matter, with power to punish for all past offences, and to examine all the scandals of recent years, then they would have done something to clear the past. If on the top of that they had freed the land, given up the system of forced labour entirely, and cancelled the charters of all the concessionnaire companies, for the obvious reason that they have notoriously abused their powers, then Belgium could go forward in its colonizing enterprise on the same terms as other States, with her sins expiated so far as expiation is now possible.

She did none of these things. For a year now she has herself persevered in the evil ways of her predecessor. Her colony is a scandal before the whole world. The era of murders and mutilations has, as we hope, passed by, but the country is sunk into a state of cowed and hopeless slavery. It is not a new story, but merely another stage of the same story. When Belgium took over the Congo State, she took over its history and its responsibilities also. What a load that was is indicated in these pages.

The record of the dates is the measure of our patience. Can any one say that we are precipitate if we now brush aside vain words and say definitely that the matter has to be set right by a certain near date, or that we will appeal to each and all of the Powers, with the evidence before them, to assist us in setting it right? If the Powers refuse to do so, then it is our duty to honour the guarantees which we made as to the safety of these poor people, and to turn to the task of setting it right ourselves. If the Powers join in, or give us a mandate, all the better. But we have a mandate from something higher than the Powers which obliges us to act.

Sir Edward Grey has told us in his speech of July 22nd, 1909, that a danger to European peace lies in the matter. Let us look this danger squarely in the face. Whence does it come? Is it from Germany, with her traditions of kindly home life—is this the power which would raise a hand to help the butchers of the Mongalla and of the Domaine de la Couronne? Is it likely that those who so justly admire the splendid private and public example of William II. would draw the sword for Leopold? Both in the name of trade rights and in that of humanity Germany has a long score to settle on the Congo. Or is it the United States which would stand in the way, when her citizens have vied with our own in withstanding and exposing these iniquities? Or, lastly, is France the danger? There are those who think that because France has capital invested in these enterprises, because the French Congo has itself degenerated under the influence and example of its neighbour, and because France holds a right of pre-emption, that therefore our trouble lies across the Channel. For my own part, I cannot believe it. I know too well the generous, chivalrous instincts of the French people. I know, also, that their colonial record during centuries has been hardly inferior to our own. Such traditions are not lightly set aside, and all will soon be right again when a strong Colonial Minister turns his attention to the concessionnaires in the French Congo. They will remember de Brazza's dying words: "Our Congo must not be turned into a Mongalla." It is an impossibility that France could ally herself with King Leopold, and certainly if such were, indeed, the case, the *entente cordiale* would be strained to breaking. Surely, then, if these three Powers, the ones most directly involved, have such obvious reasons for helping, rather than hindering, we may go

forward without fear. But if it were not so, if all Europe frowned upon our enterprise, we would not be worthy to be the sons of our fathers if we did not go forward on the plain path of national duty.

Arthur Conan Doyle.

Windlesham, Crowborough,
September, 1909.

I

HOW THE CONGO FREE STATE CAME TO BE FOUNDED

In the earlier years of his reign King Leopold of Belgium began to display that interest in Central Africa which for a long time was ascribed to nobility and philanthropy, until the contrast between such motives, and the actual unscrupulous commercialism, became too glaring to be sustained. As far back as the year 1876 he called a conference of humanitarians and travellers, who met at Brussels for the purpose of debating various plans by which the Dark Continent might be opened up. From this conference sprang the so-called International African Association, which, in spite of its name, was almost entirely a Belgian body, with the Belgian King as President. Its professed object was the exploration of the country and the founding of stations which should be rest-houses for travellers and centres of civilization.

On the return of Stanley from his great journey in 1878, he was met at Marseilles by a representative from the King of Belgium, who enrolled the famous traveller as an agent for his Association. The immediate task given to Stanley was to open up the Congo for trade, and to make such terms with the natives as would enable stations to be built and depôts established. In 1879 Stanley was at work with characteristic energy. His own intentions were admirable. “We shall require but mere contact,” he wrote, “to satisfy the natives that our intentions are pure and honourable, seeking their own good, materially and socially, more than our own interests. We go to spread what blessings arise from amiable and just intercourse with people who have been strangers to them.” Stanley was a hard man, but he was no hypocrite. What he said he undoubtedly meant. It is worth remarking, in view of the accounts of the laziness or stupidity of the natives given by King Leopold’s apologists in order to justify their conduct toward them, that Stanley had the very highest opinion of their industry and commercial ability. The following extracts from his writings set this matter beyond all doubt:

“Bolobo is a great centre for the ivory and camwood powder trade, principally because its people are so enterprising.”

Of Irebu—“a Venice of the Congo”—he says:

“These people were really acquainted with many lands and tribes on the Upper Congo. From Stanley Pool to Upoto, a distance of 6,000 miles, they knew every landing-place on the river banks. All the ups and downs of savage life, all the profits and losses derived from barter, all the diplomatic arts used by tactful

savages, were as well known to them as the Roman alphabet to us.... No wonder that all this commercial knowledge had left its traces on their faces; indeed, it is the same as in your own cities in Europe. Know you not the military man among you, the lawyer and the merchant, the banker, the artist, or the poet? It is the same in Africa, MORE ESPECIALLY ON THE CONGO, WHERE THE PEOPLE ARE SO DEVOTED TO TRADE."

"During the few days of our mutual intercourse they gave us a high idea of their qualities—industry, after their own style, not being the least conspicuous."

"As in the old time, Umangi, from the right bank, and Mpa, from the left bank, despatched their representatives with ivory tusks, large and small, goats and sheep, and vegetable food, clamorously demanding that we should buy from them. Such urgent entreaties, accompanied with blandishments to purchase their stock, were difficult to resist."

"I speak of eager native traders following us for miles for the smallest piece of cloth. I mention that after travelling many miles to obtain cloth for ivory and redwood powder, the despairing natives asked: 'Well, what is it you do want? Tell us, and we will get it for you.'"

Speaking of English scepticism as to King Leopold's intentions, he says:

"Though they understand the satisfaction of a sentiment when applied to England, they are slow to understand that it may be a sentiment that induced King Leopold II. to father this International Association. He is a dreamer, like his *confrères* in the work, because the sentiment is applied to the neglected millions of the Dark Continent. They cannot appreciate rightly, because there are no dividends attaching to it, this ardent, vivifying and expansive sentiment, which seeks to extend civilizing influences among the dark races, and to brighten up with the glow of civilization the dark places of sad-browed Africa."

One cannot let these extracts pass without noting that Bolobo, the first place named by Stanley, has sunk in population from 40,000 to 7,000; that Irebu, called by Stanley the populous Venice of the Congo, had in 1903 a population of fifty; that the natives who used to follow Stanley, beseeching him to trade, now, according to Consul Casement, fly into the bush at the approach of a steamer, and that the unselfish sentiment of King Leopold II. has developed into dividends of 300 per cent. per annum. Such is the difference between Stanley's anticipation and the actual fulfilment.

Untroubled, however, with any vision as to the destructive effects of his own work, Stanley laboured hard among the native chiefs, and returned to his employer with

no less than 450 alleged treaties which transferred land to the Association. We have no record of the exact payment made in order to obtain these treaties, but we have the terms of a similar transaction carried out by a Belgian officer in 1883 at Palabala. In this case the payment made to the Chief consisted of “one coat of red cloth with gold facings, one red cap, one white tunic, one piece of white baft, one piece of red points, one box of liqueurs, four demijohns of rum, two boxes of gin, 128 bottles of gin, twenty red handkerchiefs, forty singlets and forty old cotton caps.” It is clear that in making such treaties the Chief thought that he was giving permission for the establishment of a station. The idea that he was actually bartering away the land was never even in his mind, for it was held by a communal tenure for the whole tribe, and it was not his to barter. And yet it is on the strength of such treaties as these that twenty millions of people have been expropriated, and the whole wealth and land of the country proclaimed to belong, not to the inhabitants, but to the State—that is, to King Leopold.

With this sheaf of treaties in his portfolio the King of the Belgians now approached the Powers with high sentiments of humanitarianism, and with a definite request that the State which he was forming should receive some recognized status among the nations. Was he at that time consciously hypocritical? Did he already foresee how widely his future actions would differ from his present professions? It is a problem which will interest the historian of the future, who may have more materials than we upon which to form a judgment. On the one hand, there was a furtive secrecy about the evolution of his plans and the despatch of his expeditions which should have no place in a philanthropic enterprise. On the other hand, there are limits to human powers of deception, and it is almost inconceivable that a man who was acting a part could so completely deceive the whole civilized world. It is more probable, as it seems to me, that his ambitious mind discerned that it was possible for him to acquire a field of action which his small kingdom could not give, in mixing himself with the affairs of Africa. He chose the obvious path, that of a civilizing and elevating mission, taking the line of least resistance without any definite idea whither it might lead him. Once faced with the facts, his astute brain perceived the great material possibilities of the country; his early dreams faded away to be replaced by unscrupulous cupidity, and step by step he was led downward until he, the man of holy aspirations in 1885, stands now in 1909 with such a cloud of terrible direct personal responsibility resting upon him as no man in modern European history has had to bear.

It is, indeed, ludicrous, with our knowledge of the outcome, to read the declarations of the King and of his representatives at that time. They were actually forming the strictest of commercial monopolies—an organization which was destined to crush

out all general private trade in a country as large as the whole of Europe with Russia omitted. That was the admitted outcome of their enterprise. Now listen to M. Beernaert, the Belgian Premier, speaking in the year 1885:

“The State, of which our King will be the Sovereign, will be a sort of international Colony. There will be no monopolies, no privileges.... Quite the contrary: absolute freedom of commerce, freedom of property, freedom of navigation.”

Here, too, are the words of Baron Lambermont, the Belgian Plenipotentiary at the Berlin Conference:

“The temptation to impose abusive taxes will find its corrective, if need be, in the freedom of commerce.... No doubt exists as to the strict and literal meaning of the term ‘in commercial matters.’ It means ... the unlimited right for every one to buy and to sell.”

The question of humanity is so pressing that it obscures that of the broken pledges about trade, but on the latter alone there is ample reason to say that every condition upon which this State was founded has been openly and notoriously violated, and that, therefore, its title-deeds are vitiated from the beginning.

At the time the professions of the King made the whole world his enthusiastic allies. The United States was the first to hasten to give formal recognition to the new State. May it be the first, also, to realize the truth and to take public steps to retract what it has done. The churches and the Chambers of Commerce of Great Britain were all for Leopold, the one attracted by the prospect of pushing their missions into the heart of Africa, the others delighted at the offer of an open market for their produce. At the Congress of Berlin, which was called to regulate the situation, the nations vied with each other in furthering the plans of the King of the Belgians and in extolling his high aims. The Congo Free State was created amid general rejoicings. The veteran Bismarck, as credulous as the others, pronounced its baptismal blessing. “The New Congo State is called upon,” said he, “to become one of the chief promoters of the work” (of civilization) “which we have in view, and I pray for its prosperous development and for the fulfilment of the noble aspirations of its illustrious founder.” Such was the birth of the Congo Free State. Had the nations gathered round been able to perceive its future, the betrayal of religion and civilization of which it would be guilty, the immense series of crimes which it would perpetrate throughout Central Africa, the lowering of the prestige of all the white races, they would surely have strangled the monster in its cradle.

It is not necessary to record in this statement the whole of the provisions of the Berlin Congress. Two only will suffice, as they are at the same time the most

important and the most flagrantly abused. The first of these (which forms the fifth article of the agreement) proclaims that “No Power which exercises sovereign rights in the said regions shall be allowed to grant therein either monopoly or privilege of any kind in commercial matters.” No words could be clearer than that, but the Belgian representatives, conscious that such a clause must disarm all opposition, went out of their way to accentuate it. “No privileged situation can be created in this respect,” they said. “The way remains open without any restriction to free competition in the sphere of commerce.” It would be interesting now to send a British or German trading expedition up the Congo in search of that free competition which has been so explicitly promised, and to see how it would fare between the monopolist Government and the monopolist companies who have divided the land between them. We have travelled some distance since Prince Bismarck at the last sitting of the Conference declared that the result was “to secure to the commerce of all nations free access to the centre of the African Continent.”

More important, however, is Article VI., both on account of the issues at stake, and because the signatories of the treaty bound themselves solemnly, “in the name of Almighty God,” to watch over its enforcement. It ran: “All the Powers exercising sovereign rights or influence in these territories pledge themselves to watch over the preservation of the native populations and the improvement of their moral and material conditions of existence, and to work together for the suppression of slavery and of the slave trade.” That was the pledge of the united nations of Europe. It is a disgrace to each of them, including ourselves, the way in which they have fulfilled that oath. Before their eyes, as I shall show in the sequel, they have had enacted one long, horrible tragedy, vouched for by priests and missionaries, traders, travellers and consuls, all corroborated, but in no way reformed, by a Belgium commission of inquiry. They have seen these unhappy people, who were their wards, robbed of all they possessed, debauched, degraded, mutilated, tortured, murdered, all on such a scale as has never, to my knowledge, occurred before in the whole course of history, and now, after all these years, with all the facts notorious, we are still at the stage of polite diplomatic expostulations. It is no answer to say that France and Germany have shown even less regard for the pledge they took at Berlin. An individual does not condone the fact that he has broken his word by pointing out that his neighbour has done the same.

II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONGO STATE

Having received his mandate from the civilized world King Leopold proceeded to organize the Government of the new State, which was in theory to be independent of Belgium, although ruled by the same individual. In Europe, King Leopold was a constitutional monarch; in Africa, an absolute autocrat. There were chosen three ministers for the new State—for foreign affairs, for finances and for internal affairs; but it cannot be too clearly understood that they and their successors, up to 1908, were nominated by the King, paid by the King, answerable only to the King, and, in all ways, simply so many upper clerks in his employ. The workings of one policy and of one brain, as capable as it is sinister, are to be traced in every fresh development. If the ministers were ever meant to be a screen, it is a screen which is absolutely transparent. The origin of everything is the King—always the King. M. van Ectvelde, one of the three head agents, put the matter into a single sentence: "C'est à votre majesté qu'appartient l'État." They were simply stewards, who managed the estate with a very alert and observant owner at their back.

One of the early acts was enough to make observers a little thoughtful. It was the announcement of the right to issue laws by arbitrary decrees without publishing them in Europe. There should be secret laws, which could, at any instant, be altered. The *Bulletin Officiel* announced that "Tous les Actes du Gouvernement qu'il y a intérêt à rendre publics seront insérés au *Bulletin Officiel*." Already it is clear that something was in the wind which might shock the rather leathery conscience of a European Concert. Meanwhile, the organization of the State went forward. A Governor-General was elected, who should live at Boma, which was made the capital. Under him were fifteen District Commissaries, who should govern so many districts into which the whole country was divided. The only portion which was at that time at all developed was the semi-civilized Lower Congo at the mouth of the river. There lay the white population. The upper reaches of the stream and of its great tributaries were known only to a few devoted missionaries and enterprising explorers. Grenfell and Bentley, of the Missions, with Von Wissman, the German, and the ever-energetic Stanley, were the pioneers who, during the few years which followed, opened up the great hinterland which was to be the scene of such atrocious events.

But the work of the explorer had soon to be supplemented and extended by the soldier. Whilst the Belgians had been entering the Congo land from the west, the slave-dealing Arabs had penetrated from the east, passing down the river as far as

Stanley Falls. There could be no compromise between such opposite forces, though some attempt was made to find one by electing the Arab leader as Free State Governor. There followed a long scrambling campaign, carried on for many years between the Arab slavers on the one side and the Congo forces upon the other—the latter consisting largely of cannibal tribes—men of the Stone Age, armed with the weapons of the nineteenth century. The suppression of the slave trade is a good cause, but the means by which it was effected, and the use of Barbarians who ate in the evening those whom they had slain during the day, are as bad as the evil itself. Yet there is no denying the energy and ability of the Congo leaders, especially of Baron Dhanis. By the year 1894 the Belgian expeditions had been pushed as far as Lake Tanganyika, the Arab strongholds had fallen, and Dhanis was able to report to Brussels that the campaign was at an end, and that slave-raiding was no more. The new State could claim that they had saved a part of the natives from slavery. How they proceeded to impose upon all of them a yoke, compared to which the old slavery was merciful, will be shown in these pages. From the time of the fall of the Arab power the Congo Free State was only called upon to use military force in the case of mutinies of its own black troops, and of occasional risings of its own tormented “citizens.” Master of its own house, it could settle down to exploit the country which it had won.

In the meantime the internal policy of the State showed a tendency to take an unusual and sinister course. I have already expressed my opinion that King Leopold was not guilty of conscious hypocrisy in the beginning, that his intentions were vaguely philanthropic, and that it was only by degrees that he sank to the depths which will be shown. This view is borne out by some of the earlier edicts of the State. In 1886, a long pronouncement upon native lands ended by the words: “All acts or agreements are forbidden which tend to the expulsion of natives from the territory they occupy, or to deprive them, directly or indirectly, of their liberty or their means of existence.” Such are the words of 1886. Before the end of 1887, an Act had been published, though not immediately put into force, which had the exactly opposite effect. By this Act all lands which were not actually occupied by natives were proclaimed to be the property of the State. Consider for a moment what this meant! No land in such a country is actually occupied by natives save the actual site of their villages, and the scanty fields of grain or manioc which surround them. Everywhere beyond these tiny patches extend the plains and forests which have been the ancestral wandering places of the natives, and which contain the rubber, the camwood, the copal, the ivory, and the skins which are the sole objects of their commerce. At a single stroke of a pen in Brussels everything was taken from them, not only the country, but the produce of the country. How could they

trade when the State had taken from them everything which they had to offer? How could the foreign merchant do business when the State had seized everything and could sell it for itself direct in Europe? Thus, within two years of the establishment of the State by the Treaty of Berlin, it had with one hand seized the whole patrimony of those natives for whose "moral and material advantage" it had been so solicitous, and with the other hand it had torn up that clause in the treaty by which monopolies were forbidden, and equal trade rights guaranteed to all. How blind were the Powers not to see what sort of a creature they had made, and how short-sighted not to take urgent steps in those early days to make it retrace its steps and find once more the path of loyalty and justice! A firm word, a stern act at that time in the presence of this flagrant breach of international agreement, would have saved all Central Africa from the horror which has come upon it, would have screened Belgium from a lasting disgrace, and would have spared Europe a question which has already, as it seems to me, lowered the moral standing of all the nations, and the end of which is not yet.

Having obtained possession of the land and its products, the next step was to obtain labour by which these products could be safely garnered. The first definite move in this direction was taken in the year 1888, when, with that odious hypocrisy which has been the last touch in so many of these transactions, an Act was produced which was described in the *Bulletin Officiel* as being for the "Special protection of the black." It is evident that the real protection of the black in matters of trade was to offer him such pay as would induce him to do a day's work, and to let him choose his own employment, as is done with the Kaffirs of South Africa, or any other native population. This Act had a very different end. It allowed blacks to be bound over in terms of seven years' service to their masters in a manner which was in truth indistinguishable from slavery. As the negotiations were usually carried on with the capita, or headman, the unfortunate servant was transferred with small profit to himself, and little knowledge of the conditions of his servitude. Under the same system the State also enlisted its employees, including the recruits for its small army. This army was supplemented by a wild militia, consisting of various barbarous tribes, many of them cannibals, and all of them capable of any excess of cruelty or outrage. A German, August Boshart, in his "Zehn Jahre Afrikanischen Lebens," has given us a clear idea of how these tribes are recruited, and of the precise meaning of the attractive word "libéré" when applied to a State servant. "Some District Commissary," he says, "receives instructions to furnish a certain number of men in a given time. He puts himself in communication with the chiefs, and invites them to a palaver at his residence. These chiefs, as a rule, already have an inkling of what is coming, and, if made wise by experience, make a virtue of

necessity and present themselves. In that case the negotiations run their course easily enough; each chief promises to supply a certain number of slaves, and receives presents in return. It may happen, however, that one or another pays no heed to the friendly invitation, in which case war is declared, his villages are burned down, perhaps some of his people are shot, and his stores or gardens are plundered. In this way the wild king is soon tamed, and he sues for peace, which, of course, is granted on condition of his supplying double the number of slaves. These men are entered in the State books as 'libérés.' To prevent their running away, they are put in irons and sent, on the first opportunity, to one of the military camps, where their irons are taken off and they are drafted into the army. The District Commissary is paid £2 sterling for every serviceable recruit."

Having taken the country and secured labour for exploiting it in the way described, King Leopold proceeded to take further steps for its development, all of them exceedingly well devised for the object in view. The great impediment to the navigation of the Congo had lain in the continuous rapids which made the river impassable from Stanley Pool for three hundred miles down to Boma at the mouth. A company was now formed to find the capital by which a railway should be built between these two points. The construction was begun in 1888, and was completed in 1898, after many financial vicissitudes, forming a work which deserves high credit as a piece of ingenious engineering and of sustained energy. Other commercial companies, of which more will be said hereafter, were formed in order to exploit large districts of the country which the State was not yet strong enough to handle. By this arrangement the companies found the capital for exploring, station building, etc., while the State—that is, the King—retained a certain portion, usually half, of the company's shares. The plan itself is not necessarily a vicious one; indeed, it closely resembles that under which the Chartered Company of Rhodesia grants mining and other leases. The scandal arose from the methods by which these companies proceeded to carry out their ends—those methods being the same as were used by the State, on whose pattern these smaller organizations were moulded.

In the meantime King Leopold, feeling the weakness of his personal position in face of the great enterprise which lay before him in Africa, endeavoured more and more to draw Belgium, as a State, into the matter. Already the Congo State was largely the outcome of Belgian work and of Belgian money, but, theoretically, there was no connection between the two countries. Now the Belgian Parliament was won over to advancing ten million francs for the use of the Congo, and thus a direct connection sprang up which has eventually led to annexation. At the time of this loan King Leopold let it be known that he had left the Congo Free State in his

will to Belgium. In this document appear the words, “A young and spacious State, directed from Brussels, has pacifically appeared in the sunlight, thanks to the benevolent support of the Powers that have welcomed its appearance. Some Belgians administer it, while others, each day more numerous, there increase their wealth.” So he flashed the gold before the eyes of his European subjects. Verily, if King Leopold deceived other Powers, he reserved the most dangerous of all his deceits for his own country. The day on which they turned from their own honest, healthy development to follow the Congo lure, and to administer without any previous colonial experience a country more than sixty times their own size, will prove to have been a dark day in Belgian history.

The Berlin Conference of 1885 marks the first International session upon the affairs of the Congo. The second was the Brussels Conference of 1889-90. It is amazing to find that after these years of experience the Powers were still ready to accept King Leopold’s professions at their face value. It is true that none of the more sinister developments had been conspicuous, but the legislation of the State with regard to labour and trade was already such as to suggest the turn which affairs would take in future if not curbed by a strong hand. One Power, and one only, Holland, had the sagacity to appreciate the true situation, and the independence to show its dissatisfaction. The outcome of the sittings was various philanthropic resolutions intended to strengthen the new State in dealing with that slave trade it was destined to re-introduce in its most odious form. We are too near to these events, and they are too painfully intimate, to permit us to see humour in them; but the historian of the future, when he reads that the object of the European Concert was “to protect effectually the aboriginal inhabitants of Africa,” may find it difficult to suppress a smile. This was the last European assembly to deal with the affairs of the Congo. May the next be for the purpose of taking steps to truly carry out those high ends which have been forever spoken of and never reduced to practice.

The most important practical outcome of the Brussels Conference was that the Powers united to free the new State from those free port promises which it had made in 1885, and to permit it in future to levy ten per cent. upon imports. The Act was hung up for two years owing to the opposition of Holland, but the fact of its adoption by the other Powers, and the renewed mandate given to King Leopold, strengthened the position of the new State to such an extent that it found no difficulty in securing a further loan from Belgium of twenty-five millions of francs, upon condition that, after ten years, Belgium should have the option of taking over the Congo lands as a colony.

If in the years which immediately succeeded the Brussels Conference—from 1890 to 1894—a bird's-eye view could be taken of the enormous river which, with its tributaries, forms a great twisted fan radiating over the whole centre of Africa, one would mark in all directions symptoms of European activity. At the Lower Congo one would see crowds of natives, impressed for the service and guarded by black soldiers, working at the railway. At Boma and at Leopoldsville, the two termini of the projected line, cities are rising, with stations, wharves and public buildings. In the extreme southeast one would see an expedition under Stairs exploring and annexing the great district of Katanga, which abuts upon Northern Rhodesia. In the furthest northeast and along the whole eastern border, small military expeditions would be disclosed, fighting against rebellious blacks or Arab raiders. Then, along all the lines of the rivers, posts were being formed and stations established—some by the State and some by the various concessionnaire companies for the development of their commerce.

In the meantime, the State was tightening its grip upon the land with its products, and was working up the system which was destined to produce such grim results in the near future. The independent traders were discouraged and stamped out, Belgium, as well as Dutch, English and French. Some of the loudest protests against the new order may be taken from Belgian sources. Everywhere, in flagrant disregard of the Treaty of Berlin, the State proclaimed itself to be the sole landlord and the sole trader. In some cases it worked its own so-called property, in other cases it leased it. Even those who had striven to help King Leopold in the earlier stages of his enterprise were thrown overboard. Major Parminter, himself engaged in trade upon the Congo, sums up the situation in 1902 as follows: "To sum up, the application of the new decrees of the Government signifies this: that the State considers as its private property the whole of the Congo Basin, excepting the sites of the natives' villages and gardens. It decrees that all the products of this immense region are its private property, and it monopolizes the trade in them. As regards the primitive proprietors, the native tribes, they are dispossessed by a simple circular; permission is graciously granted to them to collect such products, but only on condition that they bring them for sale to the State for whatever the latter may be pleased to give them. As regards alien traders, they are prohibited in all this territory from trading with the natives."

Everywhere there were stern orders—to the natives on the one hand, that they had no right to gather the products of their own forests; to independent traders on the other hand, that they were liable to punishment if they bought anything from the natives. In January, 1892, District Commissary Baert wrote: "The native of the district of Ubangi-Welle are not authorized to gather rubber. It has been notified to

them that they can only receive permission to do so on condition that they gather the produce for the exclusive benefit of the State." Captain Le Marinel, a little later, is even more explicit: "I have decided," he says, "to enforce rigorously the rights of the State over its domain, and, in consequence, cannot allow the natives to convert to their own profit, or to sell to others, any part of the rubber or ivory forming the fruits of the domain. Traders who purchase, or attempt to purchase, such fruits of this domain from the natives—which fruits the State only authorizes the natives to gather subject to the condition that they are brought to it—render themselves, in my opinion, guilty of receiving stolen goods, and I shall denounce them to the judicial authorities, so that proceedings may be taken against them." This last edict was in the Bangala district, but it was followed at once by another from the more settled Equateur district, which shows that the strict adoption of the system was universal. In May, 1892, Lieutenant Lemaire proclaims: "Considering that no concession has been granted to gather rubber in the domains of the State within this district, (1) natives can only gather rubber on condition of selling the same to the State; (2) any person or persons or vessels having in his or their possession, or on board, more than one kilogramme of rubber will have a *procèsverbal* drawn up against him, or them, or it; and the ship can be confiscated without prejudice to any subsequent proceedings."

The sight of these insignificant lieutenants and captains, who are often non-commissioned officers of the Belgian army, issuing proclamations which were in distinct contradiction to the expressed will of all the great Powers of the world, might at the time have seemed ludicrous; but the history of the next seventeen years was to prove that a small malignant force, driven on by greed, may prove to be more powerful than a vague general philanthropy, strong only in good intentions and platitudes. During these years—from 1890 to 1895—whatever indignation might be felt among traders over the restrictions placed upon them, the only news received by the general public from the Congo Free State concerned the founding of new stations, and the idea prevailed that King Leopold's enterprise was indeed working out upon the humanitarian lines which had been originally planned. Then, for the first time, incidents occurred which gave some glimpse of the violence and anarchy which really prevailed.

The first of these, so far as Great Britain is concerned, lay in the treatment of natives from Sierra Leone, Lagos, and other British Settlements, who had been engaged by the Belgians to come to Congoland and help in railway construction and other work. Coming from the settled order of such a colony as Sierra Leone or Lagos, these natives complained loudly when they found themselves working side by side with impressed Congolese, and under the discipline of the armed sentinels

of the Force Publique. They were discontented and the discontent was met by corporal punishment. The matter grew to the dimensions of a scandal.

In answer to a question asked in the House of Commons on March 12th, 1896, Mr. Chamberlain, as Secretary of State for the Colonies, stated that complaints had been received of these British subjects having been employed without their consent as soldiers, and of their having been cruelly flogged, and, in some cases, shot; and he added: “They were engaged with the knowledge of Her Majesty’s representatives, and every possible precaution was taken in their interests; but, in consequence of the complaints received, the recruitment of labourers for the Congo has been prohibited.”

This refusal of the recruitment of labourers by Great Britain was the first public and national sign of disapproval of Congolese methods. A few years later, a more pointed one was given, when the Italian War Ministry refused to allow their officers to serve with the Congo forces.

Early in 1895 occurred the Stokes affair, which moved public opinion deeply, both in this country and in Germany. Charles Henry Stokes was an Englishman by birth, but he resided in German East Africa, was the recipient of a German Decoration for his services on behalf of German colonization, and formed his trading caravans from a German base, with East African natives as his porters. He had led such a caravan over the Congo State border, when he was arrested by Captain Lothaire, an officer in command of some Congolese troops. The unfortunate Stokes may well have thought himself safe as the subject of one great Power and the agent of another, but he was tried instantly in a most informal manner upon a charge of selling guns to the natives, was condemned, and was hanged on the following morning. When Captain Lothaire reported his proceedings to his superiors they signified their approbation by promoting him to the high rank of Commissaire-Général.

The news of this tragedy excited as much indignation in Berlin as in London. Faced with the facts, the representatives of the Free State in Brussels—that is, the agents of the King—were compelled to admit the complete illegality of the whole incident, and could only fall back upon the excuse that Lothaire’s action was *bona-fide*, and free from personal motive. This is by no means certain, for as Baron von Marschall pointed out to the acting British Ambassador at Berlin, Stokes was known to be a successful trader in ivory, exporting it by the east route, and so depriving the officers of the Congo Government of a ten per cent. commission, which would be received by them if it were exported by the west route. “This was the reason,” the report continued, quoting the German Statesman’s words, “that he

had been done away with, and not on account of an alleged sale of arms to Arabs, his death being, in fact, not an act of justice, but one of commercial protection, neither more nor less."

This was one reading of the situation. Whether it was a true one or not, there could be no two opinions as to the illegality of the proceedings. Under pressure from England, Lothaire was tried at Boma and acquitted. He was again, under the same pressure, tried at Brussels, when the Prosecuting Counsel thought it consistent with his duty to plead for an acquittal and the proceedings became a fiasco. There the matter was allowed to remain. A Blue Book of 188 pages is the last monument to Charles Henry Stokes, and his executioner returned to high office in the Congo Free State, where his name soon recurred in the accounts of the violent and high-handed proceedings which make up the history of that country. He was appointed Director of the Antwerp Society for the Commerce of the Congo—an appointment for which King Leopold must have been responsible—and he managed the affairs of that company until he was implicated in the Mongalla massacres, of which more will be said hereafter.

It has been necessary to describe the case of Stokes, because it is historical, but nothing is further from my intention than to address national *amour propre* in the matter. It was a mere accident that Stokes was an Englishman, and the outrage remains the same had he been a citizen of any State. The cause I plead is too broad, and also too lofty, to be supported by any narrower appeals than those which may be addressed to all humanity. I will proceed to describe a case which occurred a few years later to show that men of other nationalities suffered as well as the English. Stokes, the Englishman, was killed, and his death, it was said by some Congolese apologists, was due to his not having, after his summary trial, announced that he would lodge an immediate appeal to the higher court at Boma. Rabinck, the Austrian, the victim of similar proceedings, did appeal to the higher court at Boma, and it is interesting to see what advantage he gained by doing so.

Rabinck was, as I have said, an Austrian from Olmutz, a man of a gentle and lovable nature, popular with all who knew him, and remarkable, as several have testified, for his just and kindly treatment of the natives. He had, for some years, traded with the people of Katanga, which is the southeastern portion of the Congo State where it abuts upon British Central Africa. The natives were at the time in arms against the Belgians, but Rabinck had acquired such influence among them that he was still able to carry on his trade in ivory and rubber for which he held a permit from the Katanga Company.

Shortly after receiving this permit, for which he had paid a considerable sum, certain changes were made in the company by which the State secured a controlling influence in it. A new manager, Major Weyns, appeared, who represented the new régime, superseding M. Lévêque, who had sold the permits in the name of the original company. Major Weyns was zealous that the whole trade of the country should belong to the Concessionnaire Company, which was practically the Government, according to the usual, but internationally illegal, habit of the State. To secure this trade, the first step was evidently to destroy so well-known and successful a private trader as M. Rabinck. In spite of his permits, therefore, a charge was trumped up against him of having traded illegally in rubber—an offence which, even if he had no permit, was an impossibility in the face of that complete freedom of trade which was guaranteed by the Treaty of Berlin. The young Austrian could not bring himself to believe that the matter was serious. His letters are extant, showing that he regarded the matter as so preposterous that he could not feel any fears upon the subject. He was soon to be undeceived, and his eyes were opened too late to the character of the men and the organization with which he was dealing. Major Weyns sat in court-martial upon him. The offence with which he was charged, dealing illegally in rubber, was one which could only be punished by a maximum imprisonment of a month. This would not serve the purpose in view. Major Weyns within forty minutes tried the case, condemned the prisoner, and sentenced him to a year's imprisonment. There was an attempt to excuse this monstrous sentence afterward by the assertion that the crime punished was that of selling guns to the natives, but as a matter of fact there was at the time no mention of anything of the sort, as is proved by the existing minutes of the trial. Rabinck naturally appealed against such a sentence. He would have been wiser had he submitted to it in the nearest guard-house. In that case he might possibly have escaped with his life. In the other, he was doomed. "He will go," said Major Weyns, "on such a nice little voyage that he will act like this no more, and others will take example from it." The voyage in question was the two thousand miles which separated Katanga from the Appeal Court at Boma. He was to travel all this way under the sole escort of black soldiers, who had their own instructions. The unfortunate man felt that he could never reach his destination alive. "Rumours have it," he wrote to his relatives, "that Europeans who have been taken are poisoned, so if I disappear without further news you may guess what has become of me." Nothing more was heard from him save two agonized letters, begging officials to speed him on his way. He died, as he had foreseen, on the trip down the Congo, and was hurriedly buried in a wayside station when two hours more would have brought the body to Leopoldville. If it is possible to add a darker shadow to the

black business it lies in the fact that the apologists of the State endeavoured to make the world believe that their victim's death was due to his own habit of taking morphia. The fact is denied by four creditable witnesses, who knew him well, but most of all is it denied by the activity and energy which had made him one of the leading traders of Central Africa—too good a trader to be allowed open competition with King Leopold's huge commercial monopoly. As a last and almost inconceivable touch, the whole of the dead man's caravans and outfits, amounting to some £15,000, were seized by those who had driven him to his death, and by the last reports neither his relatives nor his creditors have received any portion of this large sum. Consider the whole story and say if it is exaggeration to state that Gustav Maria Rabinck was robbed and murdered by the Congo Free State.

Having shown in these two examples the way in which the Congo Free State has dared to treat the citizens of European States who have traded within her borders, I will now proceed to detail, in chronological order, some account of the dark story of that State's relations to the subject races, for whose moral and material advantage we and other European Powers have answered. For every case I chronicle there are a hundred which are known, but which cannot here be dealt with. For every one known, there are ten thousand, the story of which never came to Europe. Consider how vast is the country, and how few the missionaries or consuls who alone would report such matters. Consider also that every official of the Congo State is sworn neither at the time nor *afterward* to reveal any matter that may have come to his knowledge. Consider, lastly, that the missionary or consul acts as a deterrent, and that it is in the huge stretch of country where neither are to be found that the agent has his own unfettered way. With all these considerations, is it not clear that all the terrible facts which we know are but the mere margin of that welter of violence and injustice which the Jesuit, Father Vermeersch, has summed up in the two words, "Immeasurable Misery!"

III

THE WORKING OF THE SYSTEM

Having claimed, as I have shown, the whole of the land, and therefore the whole of its products, the State—that is, the King—proceeded to construct a system by which these products could be gathered most rapidly and at least cost. The essence of this system was that the people who had been dispossessed (ironically called "citizens") were to be forced to gather, for the profit of the State, those very products which had been taken from them. This was to be effected by two means; the one, taxation, by which an arbitrary amount, ever growing larger until it consumed almost their whole lives in the gathering, should be claimed for nothing. The other, so-called barter by which the natives were paid for the stuff exactly what the State chose to give, and in the form the State chose to give it, there being no competition allowed from any other purchaser. This remuneration, ridiculous in value, took the most absurd shape, the natives being compelled to take it, whatever the amount, and however little they might desire it. Consul Thesiger, in 1908, describing their so-called barter, says: "The goods he proceeds to distribute, giving a hat to one man, or an iron hoe-head to another, and so on. Each recipient is then at the end of a month responsible for so many balls of rubber. No choice of the objects is given, no refusal is allowed. If any one makes any objection, the stuff is thrown down at his door, and whether it is taken or left, the man is responsible for so many balls at the end of the month. The total amounts are fixed by the agents at the maximum which the inhabitants are capable of producing."

But is it not clear that no natives, especially tribes who, as Stanley has recorded, had remarkable aptitude for trade, would do business at all upon such terms? That is just where the system came in.

By this system some two thousand white agents were scattered over the Free State to collect the produce. These whites were placed in ones and twos in the more central points, and each was given a tract of country containing a certain number of villages. By the help of the inmates he was to gather the rubber, which was the most valuable asset. These whites, many of whom were men of low *morale* before they left Europe, were wretchedly paid, the scale running from 150 to 300 francs a month. This pay they might supplement by a commission or bonus on the amount of rubber collected. If their returns were large it meant increased pay, official praise, a more speedy return to Europe, and a better chance of promotion. If, on the other hand, the returns were small, it meant poverty, harsh reproof and degradation. No system could be devised by which a body of men could be so driven to attain

results at any cost. It is not to the absolute discredit of Belgians that such an existence should have demoralized them, and, indeed, there were other nationalities besides Belgians in the ranks of the agents. I doubt if Englishmen, Americans, or Germans could have escaped the same result had they been exposed in a tropical country to similar temptations.

And now, the two thousand agents being in place, and eager to enforce the collection of rubber upon very unwilling natives, how did the system intend that they should set about it? The method was as efficient as it was absolutely diabolical. Each agent was given control over a certain number of savages, drawn from the wild tribes, but armed with firearms. One or more of these was placed in each village to ensure that the villagers should do their task. These are the men who are called “capitas,” or head-men in the accounts, and who are the actual, though not the moral, perpetrators of so many horrible deeds. Imagine the nightmare which lay upon each village while this barbarian squatted in the midst of it. Day or night they could never get away from him. He called for palm wine. He called for women. He beat them, mutilated them, and shot them down at his pleasure. He enforced public incest in order to amuse himself by the sight. Sometimes they plucked up spirit and killed him. The Belgian Commission records that 142 capitas had been killed in seven months in a single district. Then came the punitive expedition, and the destruction of the whole community. The more terror the capita inspired, the more useful he was, the more eagerly the villagers obeyed him, and the more rubber yielded its commission to the agent. When the amount fell off, then the capita was himself made to feel some of those physical pains which he had inflicted upon others. Often the white agent far exceeded in cruelty the barbarian who carried out his commissions. Often, too, the white man pushed the black aside, and acted himself as torturer and executioner. As a rule, however, the relationship was as I have stated, the outrages being actually committed by the capitas, but with the approval of, and often in the presence of, their white employers.

It would be absurd to suppose that the agents were all equally merciless, and that there were not some who were torn in two by the desire for wealth and promotion on the one side and the horror of their daily task upon the other. Here are two illustrative extracts from the letters of Lieutenant Tilkens, as quoted by Mr. Vandervelde in the debate in the Belgian Chamber: “The steamer *v. d. Kerkhove* is coming up the Nile. It will require the colossal number of fifteen hundred porters—unhappy blacks! I cannot think of them. I ask myself how I shall find such a number. If the roads were passable it would make some difference, but they are hardly cleared of morasses where many will meet their death. Hunger and weariness will make an end of many more in the eight days’ march. How much

blood will the transport make to flow? Already I have had to make war three times against the chieftains who will not take part in this work. The people prefer to die in the forest instead of doing this work. If a chieftain refuses, it is war, and this horrible war—perfect firearms against spear and lance. A chieftain has just left me with the complaint: 'My village is in ruins, my women are killed.' But what can I do? I am often compelled to put these unhappy chieftains into chains until they collect one or two hundred porters. Very often my soldiers find the villages empty, then they seize the women and children."

To his mother he writes:

"Com. Verstraeten visited my station and highly congratulated me. He said the attitude of his report hung upon the quantity of rubber I would bring. My quantity rose from 360 kilos in September to 1,500 in October, and from January it will be 4,000 per month, which gives me 500 francs over my pay. Am I not a lucky fellow? And if I continue, in two years I shall have reached an additional 12,000 francs."

But a year later he writes in a different tone to Major Leussens:

"I look forward to a general rising. I warned you before, I think, already in my last letter. The cause is always the same. The natives are weary of the hitherto *régime*—transport labour, collection of rubber, preparation of food stores for blacks and whites. Again for three months I have had to fight with only ten days' rest. I have 152 prisoners. For two years now I have been carrying on war in this neighbourhood. But I cannot say I have subjected the people. They prefer to die. What can I do? I am paid to do my work, I am a tool in the hands of my superiors, and I follow orders as discipline requires."

Let us consider now for an instant the chain of events which render such a situation not only possible, but inevitable. The State is run with the one object of producing revenue. For this end all land and its produce are appropriated. How, then, is this produce to be gathered? It can only be by the natives. But if the natives gather it they must be paid their price, which will diminish profits, or else they will refuse to work. Then they must be made to work. But the agents are too few to make them work. Then they must employ such sub-agents as will strike most terror into the people. But if these sub-agents are to make the people work all the time, then they must themselves reside in the villages. So a capita must be sent as a constant terror to each village. Is it not clear that these steps are not accidental, but are absolutely essential to the original idea? Given the confiscation of the land, all the rest must logically follow. It is utterly futile, therefore, to imagine that any reform can set matters right. Such a thing is impossible. Until unfettered trade is unconditionally

restored, as it now exists in every German and English colony, it is absolutely out of the question that any specious promises or written decrees can modify the situation. But, on the other hand, if trade be put upon this natural basis, then for many years the present owners of the Congo land, instead of sharing dividends, must pay out at least a million a year to administer the country, exactly as England pays half a million a year to administer the neighbouring land of Nigeria. To grasp that fact is to understand the root of the whole question.

And one more point before we proceed to the dark catalogue of the facts. Where did the responsibility for these deeds of blood, these thousands of cold-blooded murders lie? Was it with the capita?

He was a cannibal and a ruffian, but if he did not inspire terror in the village he was himself punished by the agent. Was it, then, with the agent? He was a degraded man, and yet, as I have already said, no men could serve on such terms in a tropical country without degradation. He was goaded and driven to crime by the constant clamour from those above him. Was it, then, with the District Commissary? He had reached a responsible and well-paid post, which he would lose if his particular district fell behind in the race of production. Was it, then, with the Governor-General at Boma? He was a man of a hardened conscience, but for him also there was mitigation. He was there for a purpose with definite orders from home which it was his duty to carry through. It would take a man of exceptional character to throw up his high position, sacrifice his career, and refuse to carry out the evil system which had been planned before he was allotted a place in it. Where, then, was the guilt? There were half a dozen officials in Brussels who were, as shown already, so many bailiffs paid to manage a property upon lines laid down for them. Trace back the chain from the red-handed savage, through the worried, bilious agent, the pompous Commissary, the dignified Governor-General, the smooth diplomatist, and you come finally, without a break, and without a possibility of mitigation or excuse, up the cold, scheming brain which framed and drove the whole machine. It is upon the King, always the King, that the guilt must lie. He planned it, knowing the results which must follow. They did follow. He was well informed of it. Again and again, and yet again, his attention was drawn to it. A word from him would have altered the system. The word was never said. There is no possible subterfuge by which the moral guilt can be deflected from the head of the State, the man who went to Africa for the freedom of commerce and the regeneration of the native.

IV

FIRST FRUITS OF THE SYSTEM

The first testimony which I shall cite is that of Mr. Glave, which covers the years 1893 up to his death in 1895. Mr. Glave was a young Englishman, who had been for six years in the employ of the State, and whose character and work were highly commended by Stanley. Four years after the expiration of his engagement he travelled as an independent man right across the whole country, from Tanganyika in the east to Matadi near the mouth of the river, a distance of 2,000 miles. The agent and rubber systems were still in their infancy, but already he remarked on every side that violence and disregard of human life which were so soon to grow to such proportions. Remember that he was himself a Stanleyman, a pioneer and a native trader, by no means easy to shock. Here are some of his remarks as taken from his diary.

Dealing with the release of slaves by the Belgians, for which so much credit has been claimed, he says (*Cent. Mag.*, Vol. 53):

“They are supposed to be taken out of slavery and freed, but I fail to see how this can be argued out. They are taken from their villages and shipped south, to be soldiers, workers, etc., on the State stations, and what were peaceful families have been broken up, and the different members spread about the place. They have to be made fast and guarded for transportation, or they would all run away. This does not look as though the freedom promised had any seductive prospects. The young children thus ‘liberated’ are handed over to the French mission stations, where they receive the kindest care, but nothing justifies this form of serfdom. I can understand the State compelling natives to do a certain amount of work for a certain time; but to take people forcibly from their homes, and despatch them here and there, breaking up families, is not right. I shall learn more about this on the way and at Kabambare. If these conditions are to exist, I fail to see how the anti-slavery movement is to benefit the native.”

With regard to the use of barbarous soldiers he says:

“State soldiers are also employed without white officers. This should not be allowed, for the black soldiers do not understand the reason of the fighting, and instead of submission being sought, often the natives are massacred or driven away into the hill.... But the black soldiers are bent on fighting and raiding; they want no peaceful settlement. They have good rifles and ammunition, realize their superiority over the natives with their bows and arrows, and they want to shoot and

kill and rob. Black delights to kill black, whether the victim be man, woman, or child, and no matter how defenceless. This is no reasonable way of settling the land; it is merely persecution. Blacks cannot be employed on such an errand unless under the leadership of whites."

He met and describes one Lieutenant Hambursin, who seems to have been a capable officer:

"Yesterday the natives in a neighbouring village came to complain that one of Hambursin's soldiers had killed a villager; they brought in the offender's gun. To-day at roll-call the soldier appeared without his gun; his guilt was proved, and without more to do, he was hanged on a tree. Hambursin has hanged several for the crime of murder."

Had there been more Hambursins there might have been fewer scandals. Glave proceeds to comment on treatment of prisoners:

"In stations in charge of white men, Government officers, one sees strings of poor emaciated old women, some of them mere skeletons, working from six in the morning till noon, and from half-past two till six, carrying clay water-jars, tramping about in gangs, with a rope round the neck, and connected by a rope one and a half yards apart. They are prisoners of war. In war the old women are always caught, but should receive a little humanity. They are naked, except for a miserable patch of cloth of several parts, held in place by a string round the waist. They are not loosened from the rope for any purpose. They live in the guard-house under the charge of black native sentries, who delight in slapping and ill-using them, for pity is not in the heart of the native. Some of the women have babies, but they go to work just the same. They form, indeed, a miserable spectacle, and one wonders that old women, although prisoners of war, should not receive a little more consideration; at least, their nakedness might be hidden. The men prisoners are treated in a far better way."

Describing the natives he says:

"The natives are not lazy, good-for-nothing fellows. Their fine powers are obtained by hard work, sobriety and frugal living."

He gives a glimpse of what the chicotte is like, the favourite and universal instrument of torture used by the agents and officers of the Free State:

"The 'chicotte' of raw hippo hide, especially a new one, trimmed like a corkscrew, with edges like knife-blades, and as hard as wood, is a terrible weapon, and a few blows bring blood; not more than twenty-five blows should be given unless the offence is very serious. Though we persuaded ourselves that the African's skin is

very tough it needs an extraordinary constitution to withstand the terrible punishment of one hundred blows; generally the victim is in a state of insensibility after twenty-five or thirty blows. At the first blow he yells abominably; then he quiets down, and is a mere groaning, quivering body till the operation is over, when the culprit stumbles away, often with gashes which will endure a lifetime. It is bad enough the flogging of men, but far worse is this punishment when inflicted on women and children. Small boys of ten or twelve, with excitable, hot-tempered masters, often are most harshly treated. At Kasnogo there is a great deal of cruelty displayed. I saw two boys very badly cut. I conscientiously believe that a man who receives one hundred blows is often nearly killed, and has his spirit broken for life."

He has a glimpse of the treatment of the subjects of other nations:

"Two days before my arrival (at Wabundu) two Sierra Leoneans were hanged by Laschet. They were sentries on guard, and while they were asleep allowed a native chief, who was a prisoner and in chains, to escape. Next morning Laschet, in a fit of rage, hanged the two men. They were British subjects, engaged by the Congo Free State as soldiers. In time of war, I suppose, they could be executed, after court-martial, by being shot; but to hang a subject of any other country without trial seems to me outrageous."

Talking of the general unrest he says:

"It is the natural outcome of the harsh, cruel policy of the State in wringing rubber from these people without paying for it. The revolution will extend." He adds: "The post (Isangi) is close to the large settlement of an important coast man, Kayamba, who now is devoted to the interests of the State, catching slaves for them, and stealing ivory from the natives of the interior. Does the philanthropic King of the Belgians know about this? If not, he ought to."

As he gets away from the zone of war, and into that which should represent peace, his comments become more bitter. The nascent rubber trade began to intrude its methods upon his notice:

"Formerly the natives were well treated, but now expeditions have been sent in every direction, forcing natives to make rubber and to bring it to the stations. Up the Ikelemba, we are taking down one hundred slaves, mere children, all taken in unholy wars against the natives.... It was not necessary in the olden times, when we white men had no force at all. This forced commerce is depopulating the country.... Left Equateur at eleven o'clock this morning, after taking on a cargo of one hundred small slaves, principally boys, seven or eight years old, with a few girls

among the batch, all stolen from the natives. The Commissary of the district is a violent-tempered fellow. While arranging to take on the hundred small slaves a woman who had charge of the youngsters was rather slow in understanding his order, delivered in very poor Kabanji. He sprang at her, slapped her in the face, and as she ran away, kicked her. They talk of philanthropy and civilization! Where it is, I do not know."

And again:

"Most white officers out on the Congo are averse to the india-rubber policy of the State, but the laws command it. Therefore, at each post one finds the natives deserting their homes, and escaping to the French side of the river when possible."

As he goes on his convictions grow stronger:

"Everywhere," he said, "I hear the same news of the doings of the Congo Free State—rubber and murder, slavery in its worst form. It is said that half the libérés sent down die on the road.... In Europe we understand from the word libérés slaves saved from their cruel masters. Not at all! Most of them result from wars made against the natives because of ivory or rubber."

On all sides he sees evidence of the utter disregard of humanity:

"To-day I saw the dead body of a carrier lying on the trail. There could have been no mistake about his being a sick man; he was nothing but skin and bones. These posts ought to give some care to the porters; the heartless disregard for life is abominable.... Native life is considered of no value by the Belgians. No wonder the State is hated."

Finally, a little before his death, he heard of that practice of mutilation which was one of the most marked fruits of the policy of "moral and material advantage of the native races" promised at the Berlin Conference:

"Mr. Harvey heard from Clarke, who is at Lake Mantumba, that the State soldiers have been in the vicinity of his station recently fighting and taking prisoners; and he himself had seen several men with bunches of hands signifying their individual skill. These, I presume, they must produce to prove their success! Among the hands were those of men and women, and also those of little children. The missionaries are so much at the mercy of the State that they do not report these barbaric happenings to the people at home. I have previously heard of hands, among them children's, being brought to the stations, but I was not so satisfied of the truth of the former information as of the reports received just now by Mr. Harvey from Clarke. Much of this sort of thing is going on at the Equateur Station. The methods employed are not necessary. Years ago, when I was on duty at the Equateur

without soldiers, I never had any difficulty in getting what men I needed, nor did any other station in the old, humane days. The stations and the boats then had no difficulty in finding men or labour, nor will the Belgians, if they introduce more reasonable methods."

A sentence which is worth noting is that "The missionaries are so much at the mercy of the State that they do not report these barbaric happenings to the people at home." Far from the question being one, which, as the apologists for King Leopold have contended, has been fomented by the missionaries, it has actually been held back by them, and it is only the courage and truthfulness of a handful of Englishmen and Americans which have finally brought it to the front.

So much for Mr. Glave's testimony. He was an English traveller. Mr. Murphy, an American missionary, was working in another part of the country, the region where the Ubangi joins the Congo, during the same years. Let us see how far his account, written entirely independently (*Times*, November 18, 1895), agrees with the other:

"I have seen these things done," he said, "and have remonstrated with the State in the years 1888, 1889, and 1894, but never got satisfaction. I have been in the interior and have seen the ravages made by the State in pursuit of this iniquitous trade. Let me give an incident to show how this unrighteous trade affects the people. One day a State corporal, who was in charge of the post of Solifa, was going round the town collecting rubber. Meeting a poor woman, whose husband was away fishing, he asked: 'Where is your husband?' She answered by pointing to the river. He then asked: 'Where is his rubber?' She answered: 'It is ready for you.' Whereupon he said 'You lie,' and lifting up his gun, shot her dead. Shortly afterward the husband returned and was told of the murder of his wife. He went straight to the corporal, taking with him his rubber, and asked why he had shot his wife. The wretched man then raised his gun and killed the corporal. The soldiers ran away to the headquarters of the State, and made representations of the case, with the result that the Commissary sent a large force to support the authority of the soldiers; the town was looted, burned, and many people were killed and wounded."

Again:

"In November last (1894) there was heavy fighting on the Bosira, because the people refused to give rubber, and I was told upon the authority of a State officer that no less than eighteen hundred people were killed. Upon another occasion in the same month some soldiers ran away from a State steamer, and, it was said, went to the town of Bombumba. The officer sent a message telling the chief of the town to give them up. He answered that he could not, as the fugitives had not been in his town. The officer sent the messenger a second time with the order: 'Come to me at

once, or war in the morning.' The next morning the old chief went to meet the Belgians, and was attacked without provocation. He himself was wounded, his wife was killed before his eyes, and her head cut off in order that they might possess the brass necklet that she wore. Twenty-four of the chief's people were also killed, and all for the paltry reason given above. Again the people of Lake Mantumba ran away on account of the cruelty of the State, and the latter sent some soldiers in charge of a coloured corporal to treat with them and induce them to return. On the way the troops met a canoe containing seven of the fugitives. Under some paltry pretext they made the people land, shot them, cut off their hands and took them to the Commissary. The Mantumba people complained to the missionary at Irebu, and he went down to see if the story was true. He ascertained the case to be just as they had narrated, and found that one of the seven was a little girl, who was not quite dead. The child recovered, and she lives to-day, the stump of the handless arm witnessing against this horrible practice. These are only a few things of many that have taken place in one district."

It was not merely for rubber that these horrors were done. Much of the country is unsuited to rubber, and in those parts there were other imposts which were collected with equal brutality. One village had to send food and was remiss one day in supplying it:

"The people were quietly sleeping in their beds when they heard a shot fired, and ran out to see what was the matter. Finding the soldiers had surrounded the town, their only thought was escape. As they raced out of their homes, men, women and children, they were ruthlessly shot down. Their town was utterly destroyed, and is a ruin to this day. The only reason for this fight was that the people had failed to bring Kwanga (food) to the State upon that one day."

Finally Mr. Murphy says: "The rubber question is accountable for most of the horrors perpetrated in the Congo. It has reduced the people to a state of utter despair. Each town in the district is forced to bring a certain quantity to the headquarters of the Commissary every Sunday. It is collected by force; the soldiers drive the people into the bush; if they will not go they are shot down, their left hands being cut off and taken as trophies to the Commissary. The soldiers do not care whom they shoot down, and they most often shoot poor, helpless women and harmless children. These hands—the hands of men, women and children—are placed in rows before the Commissary, who counts them to see the soldiers have not wasted the cartridges. The Commissary is paid a commission of about a penny per pound upon all the rubber he gets; it is, therefore, to his interest to get as much as he can."

Here is corroboration and amplification of all that Mr. Glaves had put forward. The system had not been long established, and was more efficient ten or twelve years later, but already it was bearing some notable first fruits of civilization. King Leopold's rule cannot be said to have left the country unchanged. There is ample evidence that mutilations of this sort were unknown among the native savages. Knowledge was spreading under European rule.

Having heard the testimony of an English traveller and of an American missionary, let us now hear that of a Swedish clergyman, Mr. Sjoblom, as detailed in *The Aborigines' Friend*, July, 1897. It covers much the same time as the other two, and is drawn from the Equateur district. Here is the system in full swing:

"They refuse to bring the rubber. Then war is declared. The soldiers are sent in different directions. The people in the towns are attacked, and when they are running away into the forest, and try to hide themselves, and save their lives, they are found out by the soldiers. Then their gardens of rice are destroyed, and their supplies taken. Their plantains are cut down while they are young and not in fruit, and often their huts are burned, and, of course, everything of value is taken. Within my own knowledge forty-five villages were altogether burned down. I say altogether, because there were many others partly burned down. I passed through twenty-eight abandoned villages. The natives had left their places to go further inland. In order to separate themselves from the white men they go part of the way down the river, or else they cross the river into French territory. Sometimes, the natives are obliged to pay a large indemnity. The chiefs often have to pay with brass wire and slaves, and if the slaves do not make up the amount their wives are sold to pay. I was told that by a Belgian officer. I will give you," Mr. Sjoblom continues, "an instance of a man I saw shot right before my eyes. In one of my inland journeys, when I had gone a little farther, perhaps, than the Commissary expected me to go, I saw something that perhaps he would not have liked me to see. It was at a town called Ibera, one of the cannibal towns to which no white man had ever been before. I reached it at sunset, after the natives had returned from the various places in which they had been looking for india-rubber. They gathered together in a great crowd, being curious to see a white man. Besides, they had heard I had some good news to tell them, which came through the Gospel. When that large crowd gathered, and I was just ready to preach, the sentinels rushed in among them to seize an old man. They dragged him aside a little from the crowd, and the sentinel in charge came to me and said, 'I want to shoot this man, because he has been in the river fishing to-day. He has not been on the river for india-rubber.' I told him: 'I have not authority to stop you, because I have nothing to do with these palavers, but the people are here to hear what I have to say to

them, and I don't want you to do it before my eyes.' He said: 'All right, I will keep him in bonds, then, until to-morrow morning when you have gone. Then I will kill him.' But a few minutes afterward the sentinel came in a rage to the man and shot him right before my eyes. Then he charged his rifle again and pointed it at the others, who all rushed away like chaff before the wind. He told a little boy, eight or nine years of age, to go and cut off the right hand of the man who had been shot. The man was not quite dead, and when he felt the knife he tried to drag his hand away. The boy, after some labour, cut the hand off and laid it by a fallen tree. A little later this hand was put on a fire to smoke before being sent to the Commissary."

Here we get the system at its highest. I think that picture of the child hacking off the hand of the dying man at the order of the monster who would have assuredly murdered him also had he hesitated to obey, is as diabolical a one as even the Congo could show. A pretty commentary upon the doctrine of Christ which the missionary was there to preach!

Mr. Sjoblom seems to have been unable to believe at first that such deeds were done with the knowledge and approval of the whites. He ventured to appeal to the Commissary. "He turned in anger on me," he adds, "and in the presence of the soldiers said that he would expel me from the town if I meddled with matters of that kind any more."

It would, indeed, have been rather absurd for the Commissary to interfere when the severed hand had actually been cut off in order to be presented to him. The whole procedure is explained in the following paragraph:

"If the rubber does not reach the full amount required, the sentinels attack the natives. They kill some and bring the hands to the Commissary. Others are brought to the Commissary as prisoners. At the beginning they came with their smoked hands. The sentinels, or else the boys in attendance on them, put these hands on a little kiln, and after they had been smoked, they by and by put them on the top of the rubber baskets. I have on many occasions seen this done."

Then we read in the latest State papers of the Belgian diplomatists that they propose to continue the beneficent and civilizing work which they have inherited.

Yet another paragraph from Mr. Sjoblom showing the complicity of the Belgian authorities, and showing also that the presence of the missionaries was some deterrent against open brutality. If, then, they saw as much as they did, what must have been the condition of those huge tracts of country where no missions existed?

“At the end of 1895, the Commissary—all the people were gathering the rubber—said he had often told the sentinels not to kill the people. But on the 14th of December a sentinel passed our mission station and a woman accompanied him, carrying a basket of hands. Mr. and Mrs. Banks, besides myself, went down the road, and they told the sentinel to put the hands on the road that they might count them. We counted eighteen right hands smoked and from the size of the hands we could judge that they belonged to men, women and children. We could not understand why these hands had been collected, as the Commissary had given orders that no more natives were to be killed for their hands. On my last journey I discovered the secret. One Monday night, a sentinel who had just returned from the Commissary, said to me: ‘What are the sentinels to do? When all the people are gathered together, the Commissary openly tells us not to kill any more people, but when the people have gone he tells us privately that if they do not bring plenty of india-rubber we must kill some, but not bring the hands to him.’ Some sentinels, he told me, had been put in chains because they killed some natives who happened to be near a mission station; but it was only because he thought it might become known that the Commissary, to justify himself, had put the men in chains. I said to the sentinel: ‘You should obey the first command, never to kill any more.’ ‘The people,’ he answered, ‘unless they are frightened, do not bring in the rubber, and then the Commissary flogs us with the hippopotamus hide, or else he puts us in chains, or sends us to Boma.’ The sentinel added that the Commissary induced him to hide cruelty while letting it go on, and to do this in such a way that he might be justified, in case it should become known and an investigation should be made. In such a case the Commissary could say, ‘Why, I told him openly not to kill any more’ and he might put the blame on the soldier to justify himself, though the blame and the punishment in all its force ought to have been put on himself, after he had done such a terrible act in order to disguise or mislead justice. If the sentinels were puzzled about this message, what would the natives be?”

I have said that there was more to be said for the cannibal murderers than for those who worked the system. The capitas pleaded the same excuse. “Don’t take this to heart so much,” said one of them to the missionary. “They kill us if we do not bring rubber. The Commissary has promised us if we bring plenty of hands he will shorten our service. I have brought plenty already, and I expect my time will soon be finished.”

That the Commissaries are steeped to the lips in this horrible business has been amply shown in these paragraphs. But Mr. Sjoblom was able to go one stage further along the line which leads to the Palace at Brussels. M. Wahis, the Governor-General, a man who has played a sinister part in the country, came up the

river and endeavoured to get the outspoken Swede to contradict himself, or, failing that, to intimidate him. To get at the truth or to right the wrong seems to have been the last thing in his mind, for he knew well that the wrong was essential to the system, and that without it the wheels would move more slowly and the head engineer in Europe would soon wish to know what was amiss with his rubber-producing machine. “You may have seen all these things that you have stated,” said he, “but nothing is proved.” The Commissary meanwhile had been holding a rifle to the head of witnesses so as to make sure that nothing would be proved. In spite of this Mr. Sjoblom managed to collect his evidence, and going to the Governor, asked him when he could listen to it. “I don’t want to hear any witnesses,” said he, and then: “If you continue to demand investigation in these matters we will make a charge against you.... That means five years’ imprisonment.”

Such is Mr Sjoblom’s narrative involving Governor Wahis in the general infamy. “It is not true,” cries the Congolese apologist. Strange how Swedes, Americans, and British, laymen and clergy, all unite in defaming this innocent State! No doubt the wicked children lop off their own hands in order to cast a slur upon “the benevolent and philanthropic enterprise of the Congo.” Tartuffe and Jack the Ripper—was ever such a combination in the history of the world!

One more anecdote of Mr. Wahis, for it is not often that we can get a Governor of the Congo in person face to face with the results of his own work. As he passed down the river, Mr. Sjoblom was able to report another outrage to him:

“Mr. Banks told the Governor that he had seen it himself, whereupon M. Wahis summoned the commandant in charge—the officer who had ordered the raid had already gone elsewhere—and asked him in French if the story were true. The Belgian officer assured M. Wahis that it was, but the latter, thinking Mr. Banks did not understand French, said: ‘After all, you may have seen this; but you have no witnesses.’ ‘Oh,’ said Mr. Banks, ‘I can call the commandant, who has just told you that it is true.’ M. Wahis then tried to minimize the matter, when, to his great surprise, Mr. Banks added: ‘In any case I have, at his own request, furnished to the British Consul, who passed through here lately, a signed statement concerning it.’ M. Wahis rose from his chair, saying: ‘Oh, then, it is all over Europe!’ Then for the first time he said that the responsible Commissary must be punished.”

It need not be added that the punishment was the merest farce.

These successive reports, each amplifying the other, coming on the top of the killing of Mr. Stokes, and the action of the British Colonial Office in prohibiting recruiting for Congoland, had the effect of calling strong attention to the condition

of that country. The charges were met partly by denial, partly by general phrases about morality, and partly by bogus reform. M. van Eetvelde, in Brussels, and M. Jules Houdret, in London, denied things which have since been proved up to the hilt. The reform took the shape of a so-called Natives' Protection Commission. Like all these so-called reforms, it was utterly ineffectual, and was only meant for European consumption. No one knew so well as the men at Brussels that no possible reform could have any effect whatever unless the system was itself abolished, for that system produced outrages as logically and certainly as frost produces ice. The sequel will show the results of the Natives' Protection Commission.

V

FURTHER FRUITS OF THE SYSTEM

For a moment I must interrupt the narrative of the long, dismal succession of atrocities in order to explain certain new factors in the situation.

It has already been shown that the Congo State, unable to handle the whole of its vast domain, had sublet large tracts of it to monopolist companies, in absolute contradiction to Article V. of the Berlin Treaty. Up to the year 1897, these companies were registered in Belgium, and had some pretence to being international in scope. The State had no open or direct control over them. This was now altered. The State drew closer the bonds which united it to these commercial undertakings. They were, for the most part, dissolved, and then reconstructed under Congo law. In most cases, in return for the monopoly, the State was given control, sometimes to the extent of appointing all managers and agents. Half the shares of the company or half the profits were usually made over to the State. Thus one must bear in mind in future that whether one talks of the Abir Company, of the Kasai, the Katanga, the Anversoise, or any other, it is really with the State—that is, with King Leopold—that one has to do. He owned the companies, but paid them fifty per cent. commission for doing all the work. As their profits were such as might be expected where nothing was paid either for produce or for labour (varying from fifty to seven hundred per cent. per annum), all parties to the bargain were the gainers.

Another new factor in the situation was the completion, in 1898, of the Lower Congo Railway, which connects Boma with Stanley Pool, and so outflanks the cataracts. The enterprise itself was beneficent and splendid. The means by which it was carried out were unscrupulous and inhuman. Had civilization no complaint against the Congo State save the history of its railway construction with its forced labour, so different to the tradition of the tropical procedure of other European colonies, it would be a heavy indictment. Now it sinks to insignificance when compared with the enslavement of a whole people and the twenty years of uninterrupted massacre. As a sketch of the condition of the railway district here is a little pen picture by M. Edouard Picard, of the Belgian Senate, who saw it in the building:

“The cruel impression conveyed by the mutilated forests,” he wrote, “is heightened in the places where, till lately, native villages nestled, hidden and protected by thick and lofty foliage. The inhabitants have fled. They have fled in spite of

encouraging palavers and promises of peace and kind treatment. They have burnt their huts, and great heaps of cinders mark the sites, amid deserted palm-groves and trampled-down banana fields. The terrors caused by the memory of inhuman floggings, of massacres, of rapes and abductions, haunt their poor brains, and they go as fugitives to seek shelter in the recesses of the hospitable bush, or, across the frontiers, to find it in French or Portuguese Congo, not yet afflicted with so many labours and alarms, far from the roads traversed by white men, those baneful intruders, and their train of strange and disquieting habits." The outlook was as gloomy when he wandered along the path trodden by the caravans to the Pool and back again. "We are constantly meeting these carriers, either isolated or in Indian file; blacks, blacks, miserable blacks, with horribly filthy loin-clothes for their only garments; their bare and frizzled heads supporting their loads—chest, bale, ivory-tusk, hamper of rubber, or barrel; for the most part broken down, sinking under the burdens made heavier by their weariness and insufficiency of food, consisting of a handful of rice and tainted dried fish; pitiful walking caryatids; beasts of burden with the lank limbs of monkeys, pinched-up features, eyes fixed and round with the strain of keeping their balance and the dulness of exhaustion. Thus they come and go by thousands, organized in a system of human transport, requisitioned by the State armed with its irresistible *force publique*, supplied by the chiefs whose slaves they are and who pounce on their wages; jogging on, with knees bent and stomach protruding, one arm raised up and the other resting on a long stick, dusty and malodorous; covered with insects as their huge procession passes over mountains and through valleys; dying on the tramp, or, when the tramp is over, going to their villages to die of exhaustion."

It will be remembered that Captain Lothaire, having been acquitted of the murder of Mr. Stokes, was sent out by King Leopold to act as managing-director of the Anversoise Trust. In 1898, he arrived in the Mongalla District, and from then onward there came to Europe vague rumours of native attacks and bloody reprisals, with those other symptoms of violence and unrest which might be expected where a large population accustomed to freedom is suddenly reduced to slavery. How huge were the rubber operations which were carried through under the ferocious rule of Captain Lothaire, may be guessed from the fact that the profits of the company, which had been 120,000 francs in 1897, rose to 3,968,000 in 1899—a sum which is considerably more than twice the total capital. M. Mille tells of a Belgian agent who showed 25,000 cartridges and remarked, "I can turn those into 25,000 pounds of rubber." Captain Lothaire believed in the same trade methods, for his fighting and his output increased together. It is worth while to slaughter

one-fourth of the population if the effect is to drive the others to frenzied and unceasing work.

No definite details might ever have reached Europe of those doings had not Lothaire made the capital mistake of quarrelling with his subordinates. One of these, named Lacroix, sent a communication to the *Nieuw Gazet*, of Antwerp, which, with the *Petit Bleu*, acted an honourable and independent part at this epoch. The Congo Press Bureau, which has stifled the voice of the more venal portion of the Belgian and Parisian Press, had not at that time attained the efficiency which it afterward reached. This letter from Lacroix was published on April 10th, 1900, and shed a lurid light upon what had been going on in the Mongalla District. It was a confession, but a confession which involved his superiors as well as himself. He told how he had been instructed by his chief to massacre all the natives of a certain village which had been slow in bringing its rubber. He had carried out the order. Later, his chief had put sixty women in irons, and allowed nearly all of them to die of hunger because the village—Mummumbula—had not brought enough rubber. “I am going to be tried,” he wrote, “for having murdered one hundred and fifty men, for having crucified women and children, and for having mutilated many men and hung the remains on the village fence.” At the same moment as this confession of Lacroix, *Le Petit Bleu* published sworn affidavits of soldiers employed by the Trust, telling how they had put to death whole villages for being short with their rubber. Moray, another agent, published a confession in *Le Petit Bleu*, from which this is an extract:

“At Ambas we were a party of thirty, under Van Eycken, who sent us into a village to ascertain if the natives were collecting rubber, and in the contrary case to murder all, including men, women and children. We found the natives sitting peaceably. We asked them what they were doing. They were unable to reply, thereupon we fell upon them all, and killed them without mercy. An hour later we were joined by Van Eycken, and told him what had been done. He answered: ‘It is well, but you have not done enough!’ Thereupon he ordered us to cut off the heads of the men and hang them on the village palisades, also their sexual members, and to hang the women and children on the palisades in the form of a cross.”

In the face of these fresh revelations there was an outburst of feeling in Belgium, showing that it is only their ignorance of the true facts which prevents the inhabitants of that country from showing the same humanity as any other civilized nation would do. They have not yet realized the foul things which have been done in their name. Surely when they do realize it there will be a terrible reckoning! Some were already very alive to the question. MM. Vandervelde and Lorand

fought bravely in the Chamber. The officials, with MM. Liebrichts and De Cuvelier at their head, made the usual vague professions and general denials. “Ah, you can rest assured light will be forthcoming, complete, striking!” cried the former. Light was indeed forthcoming, though not so complete as might be wished, for some, at least, of the scoundrels implicated were tried and condemned. In any other European colony they would have been hanged offhand, as the villainous murderers that they were. But they do not hang white men in the Congoland, even with the blood of a hundred murders on their hands. The only white man ever hanged there was the Englishman Stokes for competing in trade.

What is to be remarked, however, is that only subordinates were punished. Van Eycken was acquitted; Lacroix had imprisonment; Mattheys, another agent accused of horrible practices, got twelve years—which sounded well at the time, but he was liberated at the end of three. In the sentence upon this man the Judge used the words, “Seeing that it is just to take into account the example which his superiors gave him in showing no respect for the lives or rights of the natives.” Brave words, but how helpless is justice when such words can be said, and no result follow! They referred, of course, to Captain Lothaire, who had, in the meanwhile, fled aboard a steamer at Matadi, and made his escape to Europe. His flight was common knowledge, but who would dare to lay his hand upon the favourite of the King. Lothaire has had occasion several times since to visit the Congo, but Justice has indeed sat with bandaged eyes where that man was concerned!

There is one incident which should be marked in the story of this trial. Moray, whose testimony would have been of great importance, was found dead in his bed just before the proceedings. There have been several such happenings in Congo history. Commandant Dooms, having threatened to expose the misdeeds of Lieutenant Massard before Europe, was shortly afterward declared to have been mysteriously drowned by a hippopotamus. Dr. Barotti, returning hot with anger after an inspection of the State, declares vehemently that he was poisoned. There is much that is of the sixteenth century in this State, besides its views of its duties to the natives.

Before passing these revelations with the attendant burst of candour in the Belgian Press, it may be well to transcribe the following remark in an interview from a returned Congo official which appeared in the *Antwerp Nieuw Gazet* (April 10th, 1900). He says:

“When first commissioned to establish a fort, I was given some native soldiers and a prodigious stock of ammunition. My chief gave me the following instructions: ‘Crush every obstacle!’ I obeyed, and cut through my district by fire and sword. I

had left Antwerp thinking I was simply to gather rubber. Great was my stupefaction when the truth dawned on me."

This, with the letter of Lieutenant Tilken, as quoted before, gives some insight into the position of the agent.

Indeed, there is something to be said for these unfortunate men, for it is a more awful thing to be driven to crime than to endure it. Consider the sequence of events! The man sees an advertisement offering a commercial situation in the tropics. He applies to a bureau. He is told that the salary is some seventy-five pounds a year, with a bonus on results. He knows nothing of the country or conditions. He accepts. He is then asked if he has any money. He has not. One hundred pounds is advanced to him for expenses and outfit, and he is pledged to work it off. He goes out and finds the terrible nature of the task before him. He must condone crime to get his results. Suppose he resigns? "Certainly," say the authorities; "but you must remain there until you have worked off your debt!" He cannot possibly get down the river, for the steamers are all under Government control. What can he do then? There is one thing which he very frequently does, and that is to blow out his brains. The statistics of suicide are higher than in any service in the world. But suppose he takes the line: "Very well, I will stay if you make me do so, but I will expose these misdeeds to Europe." What then? The routine is a simple one. An official charge is preferred against him of ill-treating the natives. Ill-treating of some sort is always going forward, and there is no difficulty with the help of the sentries in proving that something for which the agent is responsible does not tally with the written law, however much it might be the recognized custom. He is taken to Boma, tried and condemned. Thus it comes about that the prison of Boma may at the same time contain the best men and the worst—the men whose ideas were too humane for the authorities as well as those whose crimes could not be overlooked even by a Congolese administration. Take warning, you who seek service in this dark country, for suicide, the Boma prison, or such deeds as will poison your memory forever are the only choice which will lie before you.

Here is the sort of official circular which descends in its thousands upon the agent. This particular one was from the Commissioner in the Wille district:

"I give you *carte blanche* to procure 4,000 kilos of rubber a month. You have two months in which to work your people. Employ gentleness at first, and if they persist in resisting the demands of the State, employ force of arms."

And this State was formed for the "moral and material advantage of the native."

While dealing with trials of Boma I will give some short account of the Caudron case, which occurred in 1904. This case was remarkable as establishing judicially what was always clear enough: the complicity between the State and the criminal. Caudron was a man against whom 120 cold-blooded murders were charged. He was, in fact, a zealous and efficient agent of the Anversoise Society, that same company whose red-edged securities rose to such a height when Manager Lothaire taught the natives what a minister in the Belgian House described as the Christian law of work. He did his best for the company, and he did his best for himself, for he had a three per cent. commission upon the rubber. Why he should be chosen among all his fellow-murderers is hard to explain, but it was so, and he found himself at Boma with a sentence of twenty years. On appealing, this was reduced to fifteen years, which experience has shown to mean in practice two or three. The interesting point of his trial, however, is that his appeal, and the consequent decrease of sentence which justified that appeal, were based upon the claim that the Government was cognisant of the murderous raids, and that the Government soldiers were used to effect them. The points brought out by the trial were:

1. The existence of a system of organized oppression, plunder, and massacre, in order to increase the output of india-rubber for the benefit of a “company,” which is only a covering name for the Government itself.

2. That the local authorities of the Government are cognisant, and participatory in this system.

3. That local officials of the Government engage in these rubber raids, and that Government troops are regularly employed there on.

4. That the Judicature is powerless to place the real responsibility on the proper shoulders.

5. That, consequently, these atrocities will continue until the system itself is extirpated.

Caudron’s counsel called for the production of official documents to show how the chain of responsibility went, but the President of the Appeal Court refused it, knowing as clearly as we do, that it could only conduct to the Throne itself.

One might ask how the details of this trial came to Europe when it is so seldom that anything leaks out from the Courts of Boma. The reason was that there lived in Boma a British coloured subject named Shanir, who was at the pains to attend the court day by day in order to preserve some record of the procedure. This he dispatched to Europe. The sequel is interesting. The man’s trade, which was a very

large one, was boycotted, he lost his all, brooded over his misfortunes, and finally took his own life—another martyr in the cause of the Congo.

VI

VOICES FROM THE DARKNESS

I will now return to the witnesses of the shocking treatment of the natives. Rev. Joseph Clark was an American missionary living at Ikoko in the Crown Domain, which is King Leopold's own special private preserve. These letters cover the space between 1893 and 1899.

This is Ikoko as he found it in 1893:

"Irebo contains say 2,000 people. Ikoko has at least 4,000 and there are other towns within easy reach, several as large as Irebo, and two probably as large as Ikoko. The people are fine-looking, bold and active."

In 1903 there were 600 people surviving.

In 1894 Ikoko in the Crown Domain began to feel the effects of "moral and material regeneration." On May 30th of that year Mr. Clark writes:

"Owing to trouble with the State the Irebo people fled and left their homes. Yesterday the State soldiers shot a sick man who had not attempted to run away, and others have been killed by the State (native) soldiers, who, in the absence of a white man, do as they please."

In November, 1894:

"At Ikoko quite a number of people have been killed by the soldiers, and most of the others are living in the bush."

In the same month he complained officially to Commissaire Fievez:

"If you do not come soon and stop the present trouble the towns will be empty.... I entreat you to help us to have peace on the Lake.... It seems so hard to see the dead bodies in the creek and on the beach, and to know why they are killed.... People are living in the bush like wild beasts without shelter or proper food, and afraid to make fires. Many died in this way. One woman ran away with three children—they all died in the forest, and the woman herself came back a wreck and died before long—ruined by exposure and starvation. We knew her well. My hope in 1894 was to get the facts put before King Leopold, as I was sure he knew nothing of the awful conditions of the collection of the so-called 'rubber tax.'"

On November 28th he writes:

"The State soldiers brought in seven hands, and reported having shot the people in the act of running away to the French side, etc."

"We found all that the soldiers had reported was untrue, and that the statements made by the natives to me were true. We saw only six bodies; a seventh had evidently fallen into the water, and we learned in a day or two that an eighth body had floated into the landing-place above us—a woman that had either been thrown or had fallen into the water after being shot."

On December 5th, he says:

"A year ago we passed or visited between here and Ikoko the following villages:

	Probable population
Lobwaka	250
Boboko	250
Bosungu	100
Kenzie	150
Bokaka	200
Mosenge	150
Ituta	80
Ngero	2,000
Total	3,180

"A week ago I went up, and only at Ngero were there any people: there we found ten. Ikoko did not contain over twelve people other than those employed by Frank. Beyond Ikoko the case is the same."

April 12th, 1895, he writes:

"I am sorry that rubber palavers continue. Every week we hear of some fighting, and there are frequent 'rows,' even in our village, with the armed and unruly soldiers.... During the past twelve months it has cost more lives than native wars and superstition would have sacrificed in three to five years. The people make this comparison among themselves.... It seems incredible and awful to think of these savage men armed with rifles and let loose to hunt and kill people, because they do not get rubber to sell at a mere nothing to the State, *and it is blood-curdling to see them returning with hands of the slain and to find the hands of young children, amongst bigger ones, evidencing their 'bravery.'*"

The following was written on May 3rd, 1895:

"The war on account of rubber. The State demands that the natives shall make rubber and sell same to its agents at a very low price. The natives do not like it. It is hard work and very poor pay, and takes them away from their homes into the forest, where they feel very unsafe, as there are always feuds among them.... The rubber from this district has cost hundreds of lives, and the scenes I have witnessed while unable to help the oppressed have been almost enough to make me wish I were dead. The soldiers, are themselves savages, some even cannibals, trained to use rifles and in many cases they are sent away without supervision, and they do as they please. When they come to any town no man's property or wife is safe, and when they are at war they are like devils.

"*Imagine them returning from fighting some 'rebels'; see, on the bow of the canoe is a pole and a bundle of something on it.... These are the hands (right hands) of sixteen warriors they have slain. 'Warriors!' Don't you see among them the hands of little children and girls (young girls or boys)? I have seen them. I have seen where even the trophy has been cut off while yet the poor heart beat strongly enough to shoot the blood from the cut arteries to a distance of fully four feet.*"

"A young baby was brought here one time; its mother was taken prisoner, and before her eyes they threw the infant in the water to drown it. The soldiers coolly told me and my wife that their white man did not want them to bring infants to their place. They dragged the women off and left the infant beside us, but we sent the child to its mother, and said we would report the matter to the chief of the post. We did so, but the men were not punished. The principal offender was told before me he would get fifty lashes, but I heard the same mouth send a message to say he would not be flogged."

Compare with this the following extracts from King Leopold's *Officiel Bulletin*, referring to this very tract of country:

"The exploitation of the rubber vines of this district was undertaken barely three years ago by M. Fievez. The results he obtained have been unequalled. The district produced in 1895 more than 650 tons of rubber, bought (*sic*) for 2½*d.* (European price), and sold at Antwerp for 5*s.* 5*d.* per kilo (2 lbs.)."

A later bulletin adds:

"With this development of general order is combined an inevitable amelioration in the native's condition of existence *wherever he comes into contact with the European element*....

"Such is, in fact, one of the ends of the general policy of the State, to *promote the regeneration of the race by instilling into him a higher idea of the necessity of labour*."

Truly, I know nothing in history to match such documents as these—pirates and bandits have never descended to that last odious abyss of hypocrisy. It stands alone, colossal in its horror, colossal, too, in its effrontery.

A few more anecdotes from the worthy Mr. Clark. This is an extract from a letter to the Chief of the District, Mueller:

"There is a matter I want to report to you regarding the Nkake sentries. You remember some time ago they took eleven canoes and shot some Ikoko people. As a proof they went to you with some hands, of which three were the hands of little children. We heard from one of their paddlers that one child was not dead when its hand was cut off, but did not believe the story. Three days after we were told the child was still alive in the bush. I sent four of my men to see, and they brought back a little girl whose right hand had been cut off, and she left to die from the wound. The child had no other wound. As I was going to see Dr. Reusens about my own sickness I took the child to him, and he has cut the arm and made it right and I think she will live. But I think such awful cruelty should be punished."

Mr. Clark still clung to the hope that King Leopold did not know of the results of his own system. On March 25th, 1896, he writes:

"*This rubber traffic is steeped in blood, and if the natives were to rise and sweep every white person on the upper Congo into eternity there would still be left a fearful balance to their credit.* Is it not possible for some American of influence to see the King of the Belgians, and let him know what is being done in his name? *The Lake is reserved for the King*—no traders allowed—and *to collect rubber for him hundreds of men, women and children have been shot*."

At last the natives, goaded beyond endurance, rose against their oppressors. Who can help rejoicing that they seem to have had some success?

Extracts from letter-book commencing January 29th, 1897:

"The native uprising. This was brought about at last by sentries robbing and badly treating an important chief. *In my presence* he laid his complaint before M. Mueller, reporting the seizure of his wives and goods and the personal violence he had suffered at the hands of M. Mueller's soldiers stationed in his town. *I saw M. Mueller kick him off his veranda.* Within forty-eight hours there were no 'sentries' or their followers left in that chief's town—they were killed and mutilated—and

soon after M. Mueller, with another white officer and many soldiers, were killed, and the revolt began."

Such is some of the evidence, a very small portion of the whole narrative furnished by Mr. Clark. Remember that it is extracted from a long series of letters written to various people during a succession of years. One could conceive a single statement being a concoction, but the most ingenious apologist for the Congo methods could not explain how such a document as this could be other than true.

So much for Mr. Clark, the American. The evidence of Mr. Scrivener, the Englishman, covering roughly the same place and date, will follow. But lest the view should seem too Anglo-Saxon, let me interpolate a paragraph from the travels of a Frenchman, M. Leon Berthier, whose diary was published by the Colonial Institute of Marseilles in 1902:

"Belgian post of Imesse well constructed. The Chef de Poste is absent. He has gone to punish the village of M'Batchi, guilty of being a little late in paying the rubber tax.... A canoe full of Congo State soldiers returns from the pillage of M'Batchi.... Thirty killed, fifty wounded.... At three o'clock arrive at M'Batchi, the scene of the bloody punishment of the Chef de Poste at Imesse. Poor village! The débris of miserable huts.... One goes away humiliated and saddened from these scenes of desolation, filled with indescribable feelings."

In showing the continuity of the Congo horror and the extent of its duration (an extent which is the shame of the great Powers who acquiesced in it by their silence), I have marshalled witnesses in their successive order. Messrs. Glave, Murphy and Sjoblom have covered the time from 1894 to 1897; Mr. Clark has carried it on to 1900; we have had the deeds of 1901-4 as revealed in the Boma Law Courts. I shall now give the experience of Rev. Mr. Scrivener, an English missionary, who in July, August and September, 1903, traversed a section of the Crown Domain, that same region specially assigned to King Leopold in person, in which Mr. Clark had spent so many nightmare years. We shall see how far the independent testimony of the Englishman and the American, the one extracted from a diary, the other from a succession of letters, corroborate each other:

"At six in the morning woke up to find it still raining. It kept on till nine, and we managed to get off by eleven. All the cassava bread was finished the day previous, so a little rice was cooked, but it was a hungry crowd that left the little village. I tried to find out something about them. They said they were runaways from a district a little distance away, where rubber was being collected. They told us some horrible tales of murder and starvation, and when we heard all we wondered that

men so maltreated should be able to live without retaliation. The boys and girls were naked, and I gave them each a strip of calico, much to their wonderment....

“Four hours and a half brought us to a place called Sa.... On the way we passed two villages with more people than we had seen for days. There may have been 120. Close to the post was another small village. We decided to stay there the rest of the day. Three chiefs came in with all the adult members of their people, and altogether there were not 300. And this where, not more than six or seven years ago, there were at least 3,000! It made one’s heart heavy to listen to the tales of bloodshed and cruelty. And it all seemed so foolish. To kill the people off in the wholesale way in which it has been done in this Lake district, because they would not bring in a sufficient quantity of rubber to satisfy the white man—and now here is an empty country and a very much diminished output of rubber as the inevitable consequence....”

Finally Mr. Scrivener emerged in the neighbourhood of a “big State station.” He was hospitably received, and had many chats with his host, who seems to have been a very decent sort of man, doing his best under very trying circumstances. His predecessor had worked incalculable havoc in the country, and the present occupant of the post was endeavouring to carry out the duties assigned to him (those duties consisting, as usual, of orders to get all the rubber possible out of the people) with as much humanity as the nature of the task permitted. In this he, no doubt, did what was possible as one whom the system had not yet degraded to its level—one of the rare few: and one cannot wonder that they should be rare, seeing the nature of the bonds, and the helplessness in which an official is placed who does not carry out the full desires of his superiors. But he had only succeeded in getting himself into trouble with the district commander in consequence. He showed Mr. Scrivener a letter from the latter upbraiding him for not using more vigorous means, telling him to talk less and shoot more, and reprimanding him for not killing more than one man in a district under his care where there was a little trouble.

Mr. Scrivener had the opportunity while at this State post, under the *régime* of a man who was endeavouring to be as humane as his instructions allowed, to actually see the process whereby the secret revenues of the “Crown Domain” are obtained. He says:

“Everything was on a military basis, but, so far as I could see, the one and only reason for it all was rubber. It was the theme of every conversation, and it was evident that the only way to please one’s superiors was to increase the output somehow. I saw a few men come in, and the frightened look even now on their

faces tells only too eloquently of the awful time they have passed through. As I saw it brought in, each man had a little basket, containing, say, four or five pounds of rubber. This was emptied into a larger basket and weighed, and being found sufficient, each man was given a cupful of coarse salt, and to some of the head-men a fathom of calico.... I heard from the white men and some of the soldiers some most gruesome stories. The former white man (I feel ashamed of my colour every time I think of him) would stand at the door of the store to receive the rubber from the poor trembling wretches, who after, in some cases, weeks of privation in the forest, had ventured in with what they had been able to collect. A man bringing rather under the proper amount, the white man flies into a rage, and seizing a rifle from one of the guards, shoots him dead on the spot. Very rarely did rubber come in but one or more were shot in that way at the door of the store—'to make the survivors bring more next time.' Men who had tried to run from the country and had been caught, were brought to the station and made to stand one behind the other, and an Albini bullet sent through them. 'A pity to waste cartridges on such wretches.' Only the roads to and fro from the various posts are kept open, and large tracts of country are abandoned to the wild beasts. The white man himself told me that you could walk on for five days in one direction, and not see a single village or a single human being. And this where formerly there was a big tribe!...

"As one by one the surviving relatives of my men arrived, some affecting scenes were enacted. There was no falling on necks and weeping, but very genuine joy was shown and tears were shed as the losses death had made were told. How they shook hands and snapped their fingers! What expressions of surprise—the wide-opened mouth covered with the open hand to make its evidence of wonder the more apparent.... So far as the State post was concerned, it was in a very dilapidated condition.... On three sides of the usual huge quadrangle there were abundant signs of a former population, but we only found three villages—bigger, indeed, than any we had seen before, but sadly diminished from what had been but recently the condition of the place.... Soon we began talking, and, without any encouragement on my part, they began the tales I had become so accustomed to. They were living in peace and quietness when the white men came in from the Lake with all sorts of requests to do this and to do that, and they thought it meant slavery. So they attempted to keep the white men out of their country, but without avail. The rifles were too much for them. So they submitted, and made up their minds to do the best they could under the altered circumstances. First came the command to build houses for the soldiers, and this was done without a murmur. Then they had to feed the soldiers, and all the men and women—hangers-on—who accompanied them.

"Then they were told to bring in rubber. This was quite a new thing for them to do. There was rubber in the forest several days away from their home, but that it was worth anything was news to them. A small reward was offered, and a rush was made for the rubber; 'What strange white men, to give us cloth and beads for the sap of a wild vine.' They rejoiced in what they thought was their good fortune. But soon the reward was reduced until they were told to bring in the rubber for nothing. To this they tried to demur, but to their great surprise several were shot by the soldiers, and the rest were told, with many curses and blows, to go at once or more would be killed. Terrified, they began to prepare their food for the fortnight's absence from the village, which the collection of the rubber entailed. The soldiers discovered them sitting about. 'What, not gone yet?' Bang! bang! bang! bang! And down fell one and another, dead, in the midst of wives and companions. There is a terrible wail, and an attempt made to prepare the dead for burial, but this is not allowed. All must go at once to the forest. And off the poor wretches had to go, without even their tinderboxes to make fires. Many died in the forests from exposure and hunger, and still more from the rifles of the ferocious soldiers in charge of the post. In spite of all their efforts, the amount fell off, and more and more were killed....

"I was shown around the place, and the sites of former big chiefs' settlements were pointed out. A careful estimate made the population, of say, seven years ago, to be 2,000 people in and about the post, within a radius of, say a quarter of a mile. All told, they would not muster 200 now, and there is so much sadness and gloom that they are fast decreasing.... Lying about in the grass, within a few yards of the house I was occupying, were numbers of human bones, in some cases complete skeletons. I counted thirty-six skulls, and saw many sets of bones from which the skulls were missing. I called one of the men, and asked the meaning of it. 'When the rubber palaver began,' said he, 'the soldiers shot so many we grew tired of burying, and very often we were not allowed to bury, and so just dragged the bodies out into the grass and left them. There are hundreds all round if you would like to see them.' But I had seen more than enough, and was sickened by the stories that came from men and women alike of the awful time they had passed through. The Bulgarian atrocities might be considered as mildness itself when compared with what has been done here....

"In due course we reached Ibali. There was hardly a sound building in the place.... Why such dilapidation? The Commandant away for a trip likely to extend into three months, the sub-lieutenant away in another direction on a punitive expedition. In other words, the station must be neglected, and rubber-hunting carried out with all vigour. I stayed here two days, and the one thing that impressed itself upon me

was the collection of rubber. I saw long files of men come, as at Mbongo, with their little baskets under their arms, saw them paid their milk-tin full of salt, and the two yards of calico flung to the head-men; saw their trembling timidity, and, in fact, a great deal more, to prove the state of terrorism that exists, and the virtual slavery in which the people are held....

“So much for the journey to the Lake. It has enlarged my knowledge of the country, and also, alas! my knowledge of the awful deeds enacted in the mad haste of men to get rich. So far as I know, I am the first white man to go into the *Domaine Privé* of the King, other than the employees of the State. I expect there will be wrath in some quarters, but that cannot be helped.”

So far Mr. Scrivener. But perhaps the reader may think that there really was a missionary plot to decry the Free State. Let us have some travellers, then. Here is Mr. Grogan from his “Cape to Cairo”:

“The people were terrorized and were living in marshes.” This was on the British frontier. “The Belgians have crossed the frontier, descended into the valley, shot down large numbers of natives, British subjects, driven off the young women and cattle, and actually tied up and burned the old women. I do not make these statements without having gone into the matter. I remarked on the absence of women and the reason was given. It was on further inquiry that I was assured by the natives that white men had been present when the old women had been burned.... They even described to me the personal appearance of the white officers with the troops.... The wretched people came to me and asked me why the British had deserted them.”

Further on he says:

“Every village had been burned to the ground, and as I fled from the country I saw skeletons, skeletons everywhere. And such postures! What tales of horror they told.”

Just a word in conclusion from another witness, Mr. Herbert Frost:

“The power of an armed soldier among enslaved people is absolutely paramount. By chief or child, every command, wish, or whim of the soldier must be obeyed or gratified. At his command with rifle ready a man will ... outrage his own sister, give to his persecutor the wife he loves most of all, say or do anything, indeed, to save his life. The woes and sorrows of the race whom King Leopold has enslaved have not decreased, for his Commissaire officers and agents have introduced and maintain a system of deviltry hitherto undreamed of by his victims.”

Does this all seem horrible? But in the face of it is there not something more horrible in a sentence of this kind?—

“Our only programme, I am anxious to repeat, is the work of moral and material regeneration, and we must do this among a population whose degeneration in its inherited conditions it is difficult to measure. The many horrors and atrocities which disgrace humanity give way little by little before our intervention.”

It is King Leopold who speaks.

VII

CONSUL ROGER CASEMENT'S REPORT

Up to this time the published reports as to the black doings of King Leopold and his men were, with the exception of a guarded document from Consul Pickersgill, in 1898, entirely from private individuals. No doubt there were official reports but the Government withheld them. In 1904, this policy of reticence was abandoned, and the historic report of Consul Roger Casement confirmed, and in some ways amplified, all that had reached Europe from other sources.

A word or two as to Mr. Casement's own personality and qualifications may not be amiss, since both were attacked by his Belgian detractors. He is a tried and experienced public servant, who has had exceptional opportunities of knowing Africa and the natives. He entered the Consular Service in 1892, served on the Niger till 1895, was Consul at Delagoa Bay to 1898, and was finally transferred to the Congo. Personally, he is a man of the highest character, truthful, unselfish—one who is deeply respected by all who know him. His experience, which deals with the Crown Domain districts in the year 1903, covers some sixty-two pages, to be read in full in "White Book, Africa, No. 1, 1904." I will not apologize for the length of the extracts, as this, the first official exposure, was an historical document and from its publication we mark the first step in that train of events which is surely destined to remove the Congo State from hands which have proved so unworthy, and to place it in conditions which shall no longer be a disgrace to European civilization. It may be remarked before beginning that at some of these conversations with the natives Mr. Scrivener was present, and that he corroborates the account given by the Consul.

The beginning of Mr. Casement's report shows how willing he was to give praise where praise was possible, and to say all that could be said for the Administration. He talks of "energetic European intervention," and adds, "that very much of this intervention has been called for no one who formerly knew the Upper Congo could doubt." "Admirably built and admirably kept stations greet the traveller at many points." "To-day the railway works most efficiently." He attributes sleeping sickness as "one cause of the seemingly wholesale diminution of human life which I everywhere observed in the regions re-visited; 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."

The Government work shop “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.”

These are not the words of a critic who has started with a prejudiced mind or the desire to make out a case.

In the lower reaches of the river above Stanley Pool Casement found no gross ill-usage. The natives were hopeless and listless, being debarred from trade and heavily taxed in food, fish and other produce. It was not until he began to approach the cursed rubber zones that terrible things began to dawn upon him. Casement had travelled in 1887 in the Congo, and was surprised to note the timidity of the natives. Soon he had his explanation:

“At one of these village, 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.”

“... 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 eleven or twelve 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 fines inflicted upon villages for trifling offences were such as to produce the results here described:

“The officer had then imposed as further punishment a fine of 55,000 brass rods (2,750 fr.)—£110. This sum they had been forced to pay, and as they had no other means of raising so large a sum they had, many of them, been compelled to sell their children and their wives. I saw no live-stock of any kind in W—— save a very few fowls—possibly under a dozen—and it seemed, indeed, not unlikely that, as these people asserted, they had great difficulty in always getting their supplies ready. A father and mother stepped out and said that they had been forced to sell their son, a little boy called F, for 1,000 rods to meet their share of the fine. A widow came and declared that she had been forced, in order to meet her share of the fine, to sell her daughter G, a little girl whom I judged from her description to be about ten years of age. She had been sold to a man in Y——, who was named, for 1,000 rods, which had then gone to make up the fine.”

The natives were broken in spirit by the treatment:

“One of them—a strong, indeed, a splendid-looking man—broke down and wept, saying that their lives were useless to them, and that they knew of no means of escape from the troubles which were gathering around them. I could only assure these people that their obvious course to obtain relief was by appeal to their own constituted authorities, and that if their circumstances were clearly understood by those responsible for these fines I trusted and believed some satisfaction would be forthcoming.”

These fines, it may be added, were absolutely illegal. It was the officer, not the poor, harried natives, who had broken the law.

“These fines, it should be borne in mind, are illegally imposed; they are not ‘fines of Court’; are not pronounced after any judicial hearing, or for any proved offence against the law, but are quite arbitrarily levied according to the whim or ill-will of the executive officers of the district, and their collection, as well as their imposition, involves continuous breaches of the Congolese laws. They do not, moreover, figure in the account of public revenues in the Congo ‘Budgets’; they are not paid into the public purse of the country, but are spent on the needs of the station or military camp of the officer imposing them, just as seems good to this official.”

Here is an illustrative anecdote:

“One of the largest Congo Concession Companies had, when I was on the Upper River, addressed a request to its Directors in Europe for a further supply of

ball-cartridge. The Directors had met this demand by asking what had become of the 72,000 cartridges shipped some three years ago, to which a reply was sent to the effect that these had all been used in the production of india-rubber. I did not see this correspondence, and cannot vouch for the truth of the statement; but the officer who informed me that it had passed before his own eyes was one of the highest standing in the interior."

Another witness showed the exact ratio between cartridges and rubber:

"'The S. A. B. on the Bussira, with 150 guns, get only ten tons (rubber) a month; we, the State, at Momboyo, with 130 guns, get thirteen tons per month.' 'So you count by guns?' I asked him. 'Partout,' M. P. said. 'Each time the corporal goes out to get rubber cartridges are given to him. He must bring back all not used; and for every one used, he must bring back a right hand.' M. P. told me that sometimes they shot a cartridge at an animal in hunting; they then cut off a hand from a living man. As to the extent to which this is carried on, he informed me that in six months they, the State, on the Momboyo River, had used 6,000 cartridges, which means that 6,000 people are killed or mutilated. It means more than 6,000 for the people have told me repeatedly that the soldiers kill children with the butt of their guns."

That the statement about the cutting off of living hands is correct is amply proved by the Kodak. I have photographs of at least twenty such mutilated Negroes in my own possession.

Here is a copy of a dispatch from an official quoted in its naked frankness:

"Le Chef Ngulu de Wangata est envoyé dans la Maringa, pour m'y acheter des esclaves. Prière a MM. les agents de l'A.B.I.R. de bien vouloir me signaler les méfaits que celui-ci pourrait commettre en route.

"Le Capitaine-Commandant,
(Signé) "Sarrazzyn."

"*Colquilhatville, le 1er Mai, 1896.*"

Pretty good for the State which boasts that it has put down the slave trade.

There is a passage showing the working of the rubber system which is so clear and authoritative that I transcribe it in full:

"I went to the homes of these men some miles away and found out their circumstances. To get the rubber they had first to go fully a two days' journey from their homes, leaving their wives, and being absent for from five to six days. They were seen to the forest limits under guard, and if not back by the sixth day trouble was likely to ensue. To get the rubber in the forests—which, generally speaking,

are very swampy—involves much fatigue and often fruitless searching for a well-flowing vine. As the area of supply diminishes, moreover, the demand for rubber constantly increases. Some little time back I learned the Bongandanga district supplied seven tons of rubber a month, a quantity which it was hoped would shortly be increased to ten tons. The quantity of rubber brought by the three men in question would have represented, probably, for the three of them certainly not less than seven kilog. of pure rubber. That would be a very safe estimate, and at an average of 7fr. per kilog. they might be said to have brought in £2 worth of rubber. In return for this labour, or imposition, they had received goods which cost certainly under 1*s.*, and whose local valuation came to 45 rods (1*s.* 10*d.*). As this process repeats itself twenty-six times a year, it will be seen that they would have yielded £52 in kind at the end of the year to the local factory, and would have received in return some 24*s.* or 25*s.* worth of goods, which had a market value on the spot of £2 7*s.* 8*d.* In addition to these formal payments they were liable at times to be dealt with in another manner, for should their work, which might have been just as hard, have proved less profitable in its yield of rubber, the local prison would have seen them. The people everywhere assured me that they were not happy under this system, and it was apparent to a callous eye that in this they spoke the strict truth."

Again I insert a passage to show that Casement was by no means an ill-natured critic:

"It is only right to say that the present agent of the A.B.I.R. Society I met at Bongandanga seemed to me to try, in very difficult and embarrassing circumstances, to minimize as far as possible, and within the limits of his duties, the evils of the system I there observed at work."

Speaking of the Mongalla massacres—those in which Lothaire was implicated—he quotes from the judgment of the Court of Appeal:

"That it is just to take into account that, by the correspondence produced in the case, the chiefs of the Concession Company have, if not by formal orders, at least by their example and their tolerance, induced their agents to take no account whatever of the rights, property, and lives of the natives; to use the arms and the soldiers which should have served for their defence and the maintenance of order to force the natives to furnish them with produce and to work for the Company, as also to pursue as rebels and outlaws those who sought to escape from the requisitions imposed upon them.... That, above all, the fact that the arrest of women and their detention, to compel the villages to furnish both produce and workmen,

was tolerated and admitted even by certain of the administrative authorities of the region."

Yet another example of the workings of the system:

"In the morning, when about to start for K——, many people from the surrounding country came in to see me. They brought with them three individuals who had been shockingly wounded by gun fire, two men and a very small boy, not more than six years of age, and a fourth—a boy child of six or seven—whose right hand was cut off at the wrist. One of the men, who had been shot through the arm, declared that he was Y of L——, a village situated some miles away. He declared that he had been shot as I saw under the following circumstances: the soldiers had entered his town, he alleged, to enforce the due fulfilment of the rubber tax due by the community. These men had tied him up and said that unless he paid 1,000 brass rods to them they would shoot him. Having no rods to give them they had shot him through the arm and had left him."

I may say that among my photographs are several with shattered arms who have been treated in this fashion.

This is how the natives were treated when they complained to the white man:

"In addition, fifty women are required each morning to go to the factory and work there all day. They complained that the remuneration given for these services was most inadequate, and that they were continually beaten. When I asked the Chief W why he had not gone to D F to complain if the sentries beat him or his people, opening his mouth he pointed to one of the teeth which was just dropping out, and said: 'That is what I got from the D F four days ago when I went to tell him what I now say to you.' He added that he was frequently beaten, along with others of his people, by the white man."

One sentry was taken almost red-handed by Mr. Casement:

"After some little delay a boy of about fifteen years of age appeared, whose left arm was wrapped up in a dirty rag. Removing this, I found the left hand had been hacked off by the wrist, and that a shot hole appeared in the fleshy part of the forearm. The boy, who gave his name as I I, in answer to my inquiry, said that a sentry of the La Lulanga Company now in the town had cut off his hand. I proceeded to look for this man, who at first could not be found, the natives to a considerable number gathering behind me as I walked through the town. After some delay the sentry appeared, carrying a cap-gun. The boy, whom I placed before him, then accused him to his face of having mutilated him. The men of the town, who were questioned in succession, corroborated the boy's statement. The

sentry, who gave his name as K K, could make no answer to the charge. He met it by vaguely saying some other sentry of the Company had mutilated I I; his predecessor, he said, had cut off several hands, and probably this was one of the victims. The natives around said that there were two other sentries at present in the town, who were not so bad as K K, but that he was a villain. As the evidence against him was perfectly clear, man after man standing out and declaring he had seen the act committed, I informed him and the people present that I should appeal to the local authorities for his immediate arrest and trial."

The following extract must be my final quotation from Consul Casement's report:

"I asked then how this tax was imposed. One of them, who had been hammering out an iron neck-collar on my arrival, spoke first. He said:

"'I am N N. These other two beside me are O O and P P, all of us Y——. From our country each village had to take twenty loads of rubber. These loads were big: they were as big as this....' (Producing an empty basket which came nearly up to the handle of my walking-stick.) 'That was the first size. We had to fill that up, but as rubber got scarcer the white man reduced the amount. We had to take these loads in four times a month.'

"*Q.* 'How much pay did you get for this?'

"*A.* (Entire audience.) 'We got no pay! We got nothing!'

"And then N N, whom I asked again, said:

"'Our village got cloth and a little salt, but not the people who did the work. Our chiefs eat up the cloth; the workers got nothing. The pay was a fathom of cloth and a little salt for every big basketful, but it was given to the chief, never to the men. It used to take ten days to get the twenty baskets of rubber—we were always in the forest and then when we were late we were killed. We had to go further and further into the forest to find the rubber vines, to go without food, and our women had to give up cultivating the fields and gardens. Then we starved. Wild beasts—the leopards—killed some of us when we were working away in the forest, and others got lost or died from exposure and starvation, and we begged the white man to leave us alone, saying we could get no more rubber, but the white men and their soldiers said: "Go! You are only beasts yourselves; you are nyama (meat)." We tried, always going further into the forest, and when we failed and our rubber was short, the soldiers came to our towns and killed us. Many were shot, some had their ears cut off: others were tied up with ropes around their necks and bodies and taken away. The white men sometimes at the posts did not know of the bad things the

soldiers did to us, but it was the white men who sent the soldiers to punish us for not bringing in enough rubber.'

"Here P P took up the tale from N N:

"'We said to the white men, "We are not enough people now to do what you want us. Our country has not many people in it and we are dying fast. We are killed by the work you make us do, by the stoppage of our plantations, and the breaking up of our homes." The white man looked at us and said: "There are lots of people in Mputu"' (Europe, the white man's country). '"If there are lots of people in the white man's country there must be many people in the black man's country." The white man who said this was the chief white man at F F——; his name was A B; he was a very bad man. Other white men of Bula Matadi who had been bad and wicked were B C, C D, and D E.' 'These had killed us often, and killed us by their own hands as well as by their soldiers. Some white men were good. These were E F, F G, G H, H I, I K, K L.'

"These ones told them to stay in their homes and did not hunt and chase them as the others had done, but after what they had suffered they did not trust more any one's word, and they had fled from their country and were now going to stay here, far from their homes, in this country where there was no rubber.

"*Q.* 'How long is it since you left your homes, since the big trouble you speak of?'

"*A.* 'It lasted for three full seasons, and it is now four seasons since we fled and came into the K—— country.'

"*Q.* 'How many days is it from N—— to your own country?'

"*A.* 'Six days of quick marching. We fled because we could not endure the things done to us. Our chiefs were hanged, and we were killed and starved and worked beyond endurance to get rubber.'

"*Q.* 'How do you know it was the white men themselves who ordered these cruel things to be done to you? These things must have been done without the white man's knowledge by the black soldiers.'

"*A.* (P P): 'The white men told their soldiers: "You kill only women; you cannot kill men. You must prove that you kill men." So then the soldiers when they killed us' (here he stopped and hesitated, and then pointing to the private parts of my bulldog—it was lying asleep at my feet), he said: 'then they cut off those things and took them to the white men, who said: "It is true, you have killed men."'

"*Q.* 'You mean to tell me that any white man ordered your bodies to be mutilated like that, and those parts of you carried to him?'

"P P, O O, and all (shouting): 'Yes! many white men. D E did it.'

"*Q.* 'You say this is true? Were many of you so treated after being shot?'

"All (shouting out): 'Nkoto! Nkoto!' (Very many! Very many!)

"There was no doubt that these people were not inventing. Their vehemence, their flashing eyes, their excitement, was not simulated. Doubtless they exaggerated the numbers, but they were clearly telling what they knew and loathed. I was told that they often became so furious at the recollection of what had been done to them that they lost control over themselves. One of the men before me was getting into this state now."

Such is the story—or a very small portion of it—which His Majesty's Consul conveyed to His Majesty's Government as to the condition of those natives, who, "in the name of Almighty God," we had pledged ourselves to defend!

The same damning White Book contained a brief account of Lord Cromer's experience upon the Upper Nile in the Lado district. He notes that for eighty miles the side of the river which is British territory was crowded with native villages, the inhabitants of which ran along the bank calling to the steamer. The other bank (Congolese territory), was a deserted wilderness. The "Tuquoque" argument which King Leopold's henchmen are so fond of advancing will find it hard to reconcile the difference. Lord Cromer ends his report:

"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."

In the same White Book which contains these documents there is printed the Congolese defence drawn up by M. de Cuvelier. The defence consists in simply ignoring all the definite facts laid before the public, and in making such statements as that the British have themselves made war upon natives, as if there were no distinction between war and massacre, and that the British have put a poll-tax upon natives, which, if it be reasonable in amount, is a perfectly just proceeding adopted by all Colonial nations. Let the possessors of the Free State use this system, and at the same time restore the freedom of trade by throwing open the country to all, and returning to the natives that land and produce which has been taken from them. When they have done this—and punished the guilty—there will be an end of anti-Congo agitation. Beyond this, a large part (nearly half) of the Congo Reply (*notes sur le rapport de Mr. Casement, de Dec. 11, 1903*), is taken up by trying to

show that in one case of mutilation the injuries were, in truth, inflicted by a wild boar. There must be many wild boars in Congo land, and their habits are of a singular nature. It is not in the Congo that these boars are bred.

VIII

KING LEOPOLD'S COMMISSION AND ITS REPORT

The immediate effect of the publication as a State paper of the general comment of Lord Cromer, and of the definite accusations of Consul Casement, was a demand both in Belgium and in England for an official inquiry. Lord Landsdowne stipulated that this inquiry should be impartial and thorough. It was also suggested by the British Government that it should be international in character, and separated from the local administration. Very grudgingly and under constant pressure the King appointed a Commission, but whittled down its powers to such a point that its proceedings must lose all utility. Such were the terms that they provoked remonstrance from men like M. A. J. Wauters, the Belgian historian of the Congo Free State, who protested in the *Mouvement Géographique* (August 7th, 1904) that such a body could serve no useful end. Finally, their functions were slightly increased, but they possessed no punitive powers and were hampered in every direction by the terms of their reference.

The *personnel* of the Commission was worthy of the importance of the inquiry. M. Janssens, a well-known jurist of Belgium, was the president. He impressed all who came in contact with him as a man of upright and sympathetic character. Baron Nisco's appointment was open to criticism, as he was himself a Congo functionary, but save for that fact there was no complaint to make against him. Dr. Schumacher, a distinguished Swiss lawyer, was the third Commissioner. The English Government applied to have a representative upon the tribunal, and with true Congo subtlety the request was granted after the three judges had reached the Congo. The Englishman, Mr. Mackie, hurried out, but was only in time to attend the last three sittings, which were held in the lower part of the river, far from the notorious rubber agents. It is worth noting that on his arrival he applied for the minutes of the previous meetings and that his application was refused. In Belgium the evidence of the Commission has never been published, and it is safe to say that it never will be. Fortunately the Congo missionaries took copious notes of the proceedings and of the testimony which came immediately under their own notice. It is from their evidence that I draw these accounts. If the Congo authorities contest the accuracy of those accounts, then let them confute them forever and put their accusers to confusion by producing the actual minutes which they hold.

The first sitting of any length of which there are records is that at Bolobo, and extended from November 5th to 12th, 1904. The veteran, Mr. Grenfell, gave evidence at this sitting, and it is useful to summarize his views as he was one of the

men who held out longest against the condemnation of King Leopold, and because his early utterances have been quoted as if he were a supporter of the system. He expressed to the Commissioners his disappointment at the failure of the Congo Government to realize the promises with which it inaugurated its career. He declared he could no longer wear the decorations which he had received from the Sovereign of the Congo State. He gave it as his opinion that the ills the country was suffering from were due to the haste of a few men to get rich, and to the absence of anything like a serious attempt to properly police the country in the interests of the people. He instanced the few judicial officers, and the virtual impossibility of a native obtaining justice, owing to witnesses being compelled to travel long distances, either to Leopoldville or Boma. Mr. Grenfell spoke out emphatically against the administrative *régime* on the Upper River, so far as it had been brought under his notice.

Mr. Scrivener, a gentleman who had been twenty-three years on the Congo, was the next witness. His evidence was largely the same as the "Diary" from which I have already quoted, concerning the condition of the Crown Domain. Many witnesses were examined. "How do you know the names of the men murdered?" a lad was asked. "One of them was my father," was the dramatic reply. "Men of stone," wrote Mr. Scrivener, "would be moved by the stories that are unfolded as the Commission probes this awful history of rubber collection."

Mr. Gilchrist, another missionary, was a new witness. His testimony was concerned with the State Domain and the Concessionnaire area, principally on the Lulanga River. He said:

"I also told them what we had seen on the Ikelemba, of the signs of desolation in all the districts, of the heartrending stories the people told us, of the butcheries wrought by the various white men of the State and companies who had, from time to time, been stationed there among whom a few names were notorious. I pointed out to them the fact that the basin of the Ikelemba was supposed to be free-trade territory also, but that everywhere the people of the various districts were compelled to serve the companies of these respective districts, in rubber, gum copal or food. At one out-of-the-way place where we were on the south bank, two men arrived just as we were leaving, with their bodies covered with marks of the chicotte, which they had just received from the trader of Bosci because their quantity had been short. I said to the Commissaire, given favourable conditions, particularly freedom, there would soon be a large population in these interior towns, the Ngombe and Mongo."

In answer to questions the following facts were solicited:

"*Unsettled condition of the people.* The older people never seem to have confidence to build their houses substantially. If they have any suspicion of the approach of a canoe or steamer with soldiers they flee.

"*Chest disease, pneumonia, etc.* These carry off very many. The people flee to the islands, live in the open air, expose themselves to all kinds of weather, contract chills, which are followed by serious lung troubles, and die. For years we never saw a new house because of the drifting population. They have a great fear of soldiers. In the case of many the absence from the villages is temporary; in the case of a few they permanently settle on the north bank of the river.

"*Want of proper nourishment.* I have witnessed the collecting of the State imposition, and after this was set aside the natives had nothing but leaves to eat."

Also, that fines, which the Commission at once declared to be illegal, were constantly levied on the people, and that these fines had continued after the matter had been reported to the Governor-General. In spite of this declaration of illegality, no steps were taken in the matter, and M. de Bauw, the chief offender, was by last accounts the supreme executive official of the district. At every turn one finds that there is no relation at all between law and practice in the Congo. Law is habitually broken by every official from the Governor-General downward if the profits of the State can be increased thereby. The only stern enforcement of the laws is toward the foreigner, the Austrian Rubinck, or the Englishman Stokes, who is foolish enough to think that an international agreement is of more weight than the edicts of Boma. These men believed it, and met their death through their belief without redress, and even, in the case of the Austrian, without public remonstrance.

The next considerable session of the Commission was at Baringa. Mr. Harris and Mr. Stannard, the missionaries at this station, had played a noble part throughout in endeavouring within their very limited powers to shield the natives from their tormentors. In both cases, and also in that of Mrs. Harris, this had been done at the repeated risk of their lives. Their white neighbours of the rubber factories made their lives miserable also by preventing their receipt of food from the natives, and harassing them in various ways. On one occasion a chief and his son were both murdered by the order of the white agent because they had supplied the Harris household with the fore-quarter of an antelope. Before giving the terrible testimony of the missionaries—a testimony which was admitted to be true by the chief agent of the A.B.I.R. Company on the spot, it would be well to show the exact standing of this Corporation and its relation to the State. These relations are so close that they become to all intents and purposes the same. The State holds fifty per cent. of the shares; it places the Government soldiers at the company's disposal; it carries

up in the Government steamers and supplies licenses for the great number of rifles and the quantity of cartridges which the company needs for its murderous work. Whatever crimes are done by the company, the State is a close accomplice. Finally, the European directors of this bloodstained company are, or were at the time, the Senator Van der Nest, who acted as President; and as Council: Count John d'Oultremont, Grand Marshal of the Belgian Court; Baron Dhanis, of Congo fame, and M. van Eetevelde, the creature of the King, and the writer of so many smug despatches to the British Government about the mission of civilization and the high purpose of the Congo State. Now listen to some of the testimony as condensed by Mr. Harris:

"First, the specific atrocities during 1904 were dealt with, including men, women, and children; then murders and outrages, including cannibalism. From this I passed on to the imprisonment of men, women and children. Following this I called attention to the destruction of the Baringa towns and the partial famine among the people in consequence. Also the large gangs of prisoners—men, women and children—imprisoned to carry out this work; the murder of two men whilst it was being done. Next followed the irregularities during 1903. The expedition conducted by an A.B.I.R. agent against Samb'ekota, and the arming continually of A.B.I.R. sentries with Albini rifles. Following this I drew attention to the administration of Mons. Forcie, whose *régime* was a terrible one, including the murder of Isekifasu, the principal Chief of Bolima; the killing, cutting up and eating of his wives, son and children; the decorating of the chief houses with the intestines, liver and heart of some of the killed, as stated by 'Veritas' in the *West African Mail*.

"I confirmed in general the letter published in the *West African Mail* by 'Veritas.'

"Following this I came to Mons. Tagner's time, and stated that no village in this district had escaped murders under this man's *régime*.

"Next we dealt with irregularities common to all agents, calling attention to and proving by specific instances the public floggings of practically any and every one; quoting, for instance, seeing with my own eyes six Ngombe men receive one hundred strokes each, delivered simultaneously by two sentries.

"Next, the normal condition has always been the imprisoning of men, women and children, all herded together in one shed, with no arrangement for the demands of nature. Further, that very many, including even chiefs, had died either in prison or immediately on their release.

"Next, the mutilation of the woman Boaji, because she wished to remain faithful to her husband, and refused to subject herself to the passions of the sentries. The woman's footless leg and hernia testify to the truth of her statement. She appeared before the Commission and doctor.

"Next, the fact that natives are imprisoned for visiting friends and relatives in other villages, and the refusal to allow native canoes to pass up and down river without carrying a permit signed by the rubber agent; pointing out that even missionaries are subject to these restrictions, and publicly insulted, in an unprintable manner, when they do so.

"Next point dealt with was responsibility—maintaining that responsibility lay not so much in the individual as in the system. The sentry blames the agent, he in turn the director, and so on.

"I next called attention to the difficulties to be faced by natives in reporting irregularities. The number of civil officials is too small; the practical impossibility of reaching those that do exist—the native having first to ask permission of the rubber agent.

"The relations that are at present necessary between the A.B.I.R. and the State render it highly improbable that the natives will ever report irregularities. I then pointed out that we firmly believe that but for us these irregularities would never have come to light.

"Following on this the difficulties to be faced by missionaries were dealt with, pointing out that the A.B.I.R. can and do impose on us all sorts of restrictions if we dare to speak a word about their irregularities. I then quoted a few of the many instances which found their climax in Mrs. Harris and I almost losing our lives for daring to oppose the massacres by Van Caelcken. It was also stated that we could not disconnect the attitude of the State in refusing us fresh sites with our action in condemning the administration. I then mentioned that the forests are exhausted of rubber, pointing out that during a five days' tour through the forests I did not see a single vine of any size. This is solely because the vines have been worked in such a manner that all the rubber roots need many years' rest, whereas the natives now are actually reduced to digging up those roots in order to get rubber.

"The next subject dealt with was the clear violation both of the spirit and letter of the Berlin Act. In the first place we are not allowed to extend the Mission, and, further, we are forbidden to trade even for food.

"Next the statement was made that, so far as we are aware, no single sentry had ever been punished by the State till 1904 for the many murders committed in this district.

"I next pointed out that one reason why the natives object to paddle for the A.B.I.R. is because of the sentries who travel in the A.B.I.R. canoes, and whose only business is to flog the paddlers in order to keep them going.

"After Mr. Stannard had been heard, sixteen Esanga witnesses were questioned one by one. They gave clearly the details of how father, mother, brother, sister, son or daughter were killed in cold blood for rubber. These sixteen represented over twenty murders in Esanga alone. Then followed the big chief of all Bolima, who succeeded Isekifasu (murdered by the A.B.I.R.). What a sight for those who prate about lying missionaries! He stood boldly before all, pointed to his twenty witnesses, placed on the table his one hundred and ten twigs, each twig representing a life for rubber. 'These are chiefs' twigs, these are men's, these shorter are women's, these smaller still are children's.' He gives the names of scores, but begs for permission to call his son as a reminder. The Commission, though, is satisfied with him, that he is telling the truth, and therefore say that it is unnecessary. He tells how his beard of many years' growth, and which nearly reached his feet, was cut off by a rubber agent, merely because he visited a friend in another town. Asked if he had not killed A.B.I.R. sentries, he denied it, but owned to his people spearing three of the sentry's boys. He tells how the white man fought him, and when the fight was over handed him his corpses, and said: 'Now you will bring rubber, won't you?' To which he replied: 'Yes.' The corpses were cut up and eaten by Mons. Forcie's fighters. He also told how he had been chicotted and imprisoned by the A.B.I.R. agent, and further put to the most menial labour by the agent.

"Here Bonkoko came forward and told how he accompanied the A.B.I.R. sentries when they went to murder Isekifasu and his wives and little ones; of finding them peacefully sitting at their evening meal; of the killing as many as they could, also the cutting up and eating of the bodies of Isekifasu's son and his father's wives; of how they dashed the baby's brains out, cut the body in half, and impaled the halves.

"Again he tells how, on their return, Mons. Forcie had the sentries chicotted because they had not killed enough of the Bolima people.

"Next came Bongwalanga, and confirmed Bonkoko's story; this youth went to 'look on.' After this the mutilated wife of Lomboto, of Ekerongo, was carried by a chief, who showed her footless leg and hernia. This was the price she had to pay for

remaining faithful to her husband. The husband told how he was chicotted because he was angry about his wife's mutilation.

"Then Longoi, of Lotoko, placed eighteen twigs on the table, representing eighteen men, women and children murdered for rubber. Next, Inunga laid thirty-four twigs on the table and told how thirty-four of his men, women and children had been murdered at Ekerongo. He admits that they had speared one sentry, Iloko, but that, as in every other such instance, was because Iloko had first killed their people. Lomboto shows his mutilated wrist and useless hand, done by the sentry. Isekansu shows his stump of a forearm, telling the same pitiful story. Every witness tells of floggings, rape, mutilations, murders, and of imprisonments of men, women and children, and of illegal fines and irregular taxes, etc., etc. The Commission endeavours to get through this slough of iniquity and river of blood, but finding it hopeless, asks how much longer I can go on. I tell them I can go on until they are satisfied that hundreds of murders have been committed by the A.B.I.R. in this district alone; murders of chiefs, men, women and little children, and that multitudes of witnesses only await my signal to appear by the thousand.

"I further point out that we have only considered about two hundred murders from the villages of Bolima, Esanga, Ekerongo, Lotoko; that by far the greater majority still remain. The following districts are as yet untouched: Bokri, Nson-go, Boru-ga, Ekala, Baringa, Linza, Lifindu, Nsongo-Mboyo, Livoku, Boendo, the Lomako river, the Ngombe country, and many others, all of whom have the same tale to tell. Every one saw the hopelessness of trying to investigate things fully. To do so, the Commission would have to stay here for months."

What comment can be added to such evidence as this! It stands in its naked horror, and it is futile to try to make it more vivid. What can any of those English apologists of the Congo who have thrown a doubt upon the accounts of outrages because in passing through a section of this huge country upon a flying visit they had not happened to see them—what can Lord Mountmorris, Captain Boyd Alexander, or Mrs. French Sheldon say in the face of a mass of evidence with the actual mutilated limbs and excoriated backs to enforce it? Can they say more than the man actually incriminated, M. Le Jeune, the chief agent at the spot? "What have you to say?" asked the President. M. Le Jeune shrugged his shoulders. He had nothing to say. The President, who had listened, to his honour be it spoken, with tears running down his cheeks to some of the evidence, cried out in amazement and disgust. "There is one document I would put in," said the agent. "It is to show that 142 of my sentinels were slain by the villagers in the course of seven months." "Surely that makes the matter worse!" cried the sagacious judge. "If these

well-armed men were slain by the defenceless villagers, how terrible must the wrongs have been which called for such desperate reprisals!"

You will ask what was done with this criminal agent, a man whose deeds merited the heaviest punishment that human law could bestow. Nothing whatever was done to him. He was allowed to slip out of the country exactly as Captain Lothaire, in similar circumstances, was allowed to slip from the country. An insignificant agent may be occasionally made an example of, but to punish the local manager of a great company would be to lessen the output of rubber, and what are morality and justice compared to that?

Why should one continue with the testimony given before the Commission? Their wanderings covered a little space of the country and were confined to the main river, but everywhere they elicited the same tale of slavery, mutilation, and murder. What Scrivener and Grenfell said at Bolobo was what Harris and Stannard said at Baringa, what Gilchrist said at Lulanga, what Rushin and Gamman said at Bongadanga, what Mr. and Mrs. Lower said at Ikan, what Padfield said at Bonginda, what Weeks said at Monscombe. The place varied, but the results of the system were ever the same. Here and there were human touches which lingered in the memory; here and there also episodes of horror which stood out even in that universal Golgotha. One lad testified that he had lost every relative in the world, male or female, all murdered for rubber. As his father lay dying he had given him the charge of two infant brothers and enjoined him to guard them tenderly. He had cared for them until he had been compelled at last to go himself into the forest to gather the rubber. One week their quantity had been short. When he returned from the wood the village had been raided in his absence, and he found his two little brothers lying disembowelled across a log. The company, however, paid 200 per cent.

Four natives had been tortured until they cried out for some one to bring a gun and shoot them.

The chiefs died because their hearts were broken.

Mr. Gamman knew no village where it took them less than ten days out of fifteen to satisfy the demands of the A.B.I.R. As a rule, the people had four days in a month to themselves. By law the maximum of forced labour was forty hours in a month. But, as I have said, there is no relation at all between law and practice in the Congo.

One witness appeared with a string knotted in forty-two places, and with a packet of fifty leaves. Each knot represented a murder and each leaf a rope in his native village.

The son of a murdered chief took the body of his father (all names, dates and place specified) to show it to the white agent, in the hope of justice. The agent called his dog and set it on him, the dog biting the son on the leg as he carried the corpse of his father.

The villagers brought their murdered men to M. Spelier, director of the La Lulanga Company. He accused them of lying and ordered them off.

One chief was seized by two white agents, one of whom held him while the other beat him. When they had finished they kicked him to make him get up, but the man was dead. The Commission examined ten witnesses in their investigation of this story. The chief was Jonghi, the village Bogeka, the date October, 1904.

Such is a fractional sample of the evidence which was laid before the Commission, corroborated by every detail of name, place and date which could enforce conviction. There is no doubt that it did enforce thorough conviction. The judges travelled down the river sadder and wiser men. When they reached Boma, they had an interview with Governor-General Constermann. What passed at that interview has not been published, but the Governor-General went forth from it and cut his own throat. The fact may, perhaps, give some indication of how the judges felt when the stories were still fresh in their minds, and their nerves wincing under the horror of the evidence.

A whole year elapsed between the starting of the Commission and the presentation of their Report, which was published upon October 31st, 1905. The evidence which would have stirred Europe to its foundations was never published at all, in spite of an informal assurance to Lord Lansdowne that nothing would be held back. Only the conclusions saw the light, without the document upon which they were founded.

The effect of that Report, when stripped of its courtly phrases, was an absolute confirmation of all that had been said by so many witnesses during so many years. It is easy to blame the Commissioners for not having the full courage of their convictions, but their position was full of difficulty. The Report was really a personal one. The State was, as no one knew better than themselves, a fiction. It was the King who had sent them, and it was to the King himself that they were reporting upon a matter which deeply affected his personal honour as well as his material interests. Had they been, as had been suggested, an international body, the

matter would have been simple. But of the three good care had been taken that two should be men who would have to answer for what was said. Mr. Janssens was a more or less independent man, but a Belgian, and a subject all the same. Baron Nisco was in the actual employ of the King, and his future was at stake. On the whole, I think that the Commissioners acted like brave and honest men.

Naturally they laid all stress upon what could be said in favour of the King and his creation. They would have been more than human had they not done so. They enlarged upon the size and the traffic of the cities at the mouth of the Congo—as if the whole loot of a nation could pass down a river without causing commerce and riches at its mouth. Very early in the Report they indicated that the question of the State appropriation of the land had forced itself upon their notice. "If the State wishes to avoid the principle of the State appropriation of vacant lands resulting in abuse," says the Report, "it should place its agents and officials on their guard against too restrictive interpretation and too rigorous applications." Weak and trimming, it is true, but it was the cornerstone of all that the King had built, and how were they to knock it rudely out? Their attitude was not heroic. But it was natural. They go on:

"As the greater portion of the land in the Congo is not under cultivation, this interpretation concedes to the State a right of absolute and exclusive ownership over virtually the whole of the land, with this consequence: that it can dispose—itself and solely—of all the products of the soil; prosecute as a poacher any one who takes from that land the least of its fruits, or as a receiver of stolen goods any one who receives such fruit: forbid any one to establish himself on the greater part of the territory. The activity of the natives is thus limited to very restricted areas, and their economic condition is immobilized. Thus abusively applied, such legislation would prevent any development of native life. In this manner, not only has the native been often forbidden to shift his village, but he has even been forbidden to visit, even temporarily, a neighbouring village without special permit. A native displacing himself without being the bearer of such an authorization, would leave himself open to arrest, to be taken back and even punished."

Who could possibly deny, after reading this passage, that the Congo native has been reduced from freedom into slavery? There follows a curious sentence:

"Let us hasten," says the Report, "to say that in actual fact so great a rigour has not been shown. Almost everywhere certain PRODUCTS OF THE DOMAIN have been abandoned to the natives, notably palm kernels, which form the object of an important export trade in the Lower Congo."

This palm kernel trade is an old-established one, affecting only the mouth of the river, which could not be disturbed without obvious international complications, and which bears no relation to the great Upper Congo populations, whose inhuman treatment was the question at issue.

The Report then proceeds to point out very clearly, the all-important fact which arises from the expropriation of the native from the land. “Apart from the rough plantations,” it says, “which barely suffice, to feed the natives themselves and to supply the stations, all the fruits of the soil are considered as the property of the State or of the Concessionnaire societies.” This being so, there is an end forever of free trade, or, indeed, of any trade, save an export by the Government itself, or by a handful of companies which really represent the Government, of the whole wealth of the country to Europe for the benefit of a ring of millionaires.

Having dealt with the taking of the land and the taking of its products, the Commission handles with kid gloves the third great root proposition, the forcing of the natives, for nothing, under the name of taxes, for trifles under the absurd name of trade, to work for the sake of their oppressors. It expends many words in showing that natives do not like work, and that, therefore, compulsion is necessary. It is sad to see just and learned men driven to such straits in defending what is indefensible. Do the blacks of the Rand gold mines like work? Do the Kimberley diamond hunters like work? Do the carriers of an East German caravan like work? No more than the Congolese. Why, then, do they work? Because they are paid a fair wage to do so. Because the money earned by their work can bring them more pleasure than the work does pain. That is the law of work the whole world over. Notably it is the law on the Congo itself, where the missionaries, who pay honestly for work, have no difficulty in getting it. Of course, the Congolese, like the Englishman, or the Belgian, does not like work when it is work which brings a benefit to others and none to himself.

But in spite of this preamble, the Commission cannot escape the actual facts.

“Numbers of agents only thought of one thing: to obtain as MUCH AS POSSIBLE IN THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE TIME, and their demands were often excessive. This IS NOT AT ALL ASTONISHING, AT ANY RATE AS REGARDS THE GATHERING OF THE PRODUCE OF THE DOMAIN....

that is to say, the revenues for Government;

For the agents themselves who regulated the tax and saw to its collection, had a direct interest in increasing its amount, since they received proportional bonuses on the produce thus collected.”

No more definite statement could be made of the system which had been attacked by the Reformers and denied by the Congo officials for so many years. The Report then goes on to tell that when the State, in one of those pretended reforms which were meant for European, not for Congolese, use, allotted forty hours of forced labour per month as the amount which the native owed the State, the announcement was accompanied by a private intimation from the Governor-General to the District Commissioners, dated February 23rd, 1904, that this new law must have the effect, not of lessening, but "of bringing about a constant increase in the resources of the Treasury." Could they be told in plainer terms that they were to disregard it?

The land is taken, the produce is taken, the labour is taken. In old days the African slave was exported, but we progress with the ages and now a higher intelligence has shown the folly of the old-fashioned methods when it is to easy to enslave him in his own home.

We may pass the Report of the Commission in so far as it deals with the taxation of the natives, food taxes, porterage taxes and other imposts. It brings out very clearly the curse of the parasitic army, with their families, which have to be fed by the natives, and the difficulty which it causes them with their limited plantations to find the means for feeding themselves. Even the wood to the State steamers is not paid for, but is taken as a tax. Such demands "force the natives in the neighbourhood of the stations in certain cases to an almost continuous labour"—a fresh admission of slave conditions. The Report describes the result of the rubber tax in the following terms:

"This circumstance [exhaustion of the rubber] explains the repugnance of the native for rubber work, which in itself is not particularly painful. In THE MAJORITY OF CASES the native must go one or two days' march EVERY FORTNIGHT, until he arrives at that part of the forest where the rubber vines can be met with in a certain degree of abundance. There the collector passes a number of days in a miserable existence. He has to build himself an improvised shelter, which cannot, obviously, replace his hut. He has not the food to which he is accustomed. He is deprived of his wife, exposed to the inclemencies of the weather and the attacks of wild beasts. When once he has collected the rubber he must bring it to the State station or to that of the Company, and only then can he return to his village, where he can sojourn for barely more than two or three days, because the next demand is upon him.... It is hardly necessary to add that this state of affairs is A FLAGRANT VIOLATION OF THE FORTY HOURS' LAW."

The Report deals finally with the question of the punishments meted out by the State. These it enumerates as "the taking of hostages, the imprisonment of the

chiefs, the institution of sentries or capitas, fines and military expeditions," the latter being a euphemism for cold-blooded massacres. It continues:

"Whatever one may think of native ideas, acts such as taking women as hostages outrage too much our ideas of justice to be tolerated. The State has prohibited this practice long ago, but without being able to suppress it."

The State prohibits, but the State not only condones, but actually commands it by private circular. Again the gap which lies betwixt law and fact where the interest of gain is concerned.

"It was barely denied," the Report continues, "that in the various posts of the A.B.I.R. which we visited, the imprisonment of women hostages, the subjection of the chiefs to servile labour, the humiliations meted out to them, the flogging of rubber collectors, the brutality of the black employés set over the prisoners, were the rule commonly followed."

Then follows an illuminative passage about the sentries, capitas or "forest guards," or messengers, as they are alternatively called. It is a wonder that they were not called hospital orderlies in the efforts to make them seem inoffensive. What they actually were was, as we have seen, some twenty thousand cannibals armed with Albini repeating rifles. The Report says:

"This system of native supervisors (*surveillants*) has given rise to numerous criticisms, even on the part of State officials. The Protestant missionaries heard at Bolobo, Ikoko (Lake Mantumba), Lulonga, Bonginda, Ikau, Baringa and Bongandanga, drew up formidable accusations against the acts of these intermediaries. They brought before the Commission a MULTITUDE OF NATIVE WITNESSES, WHO REVEALED A LARGE NUMBER OF CRIMES and excesses alleged to have been committed by the sentinels. According to the witnesses these auxiliaries, especially those stationed in the villages, abuse the authority conferred upon them, convert themselves into DESPOTS, CLAIMING THE WOMEN AND THE FOOD, NOT ONLY FOR THEMSELVES BUT FOR THE BODY OF PARASITES AND CREATURES WITHOUT ANY CALLING WHICH A LOVE OF RAPINE CAUSES TO BECOME ASSOCIATED WITH THEM, AND WITH WHOM THEY SURROUND THEMSELVES AS WITH A VERITABLE BODYGUARD; THEY KILL WITHOUT PITY ALL THOSE WHO ATTEMPT TO RESIST THEIR EXIGENCIES AND WHIMS. The Commission was obviously unable in all cases to verify the exactitude of the allegations made before it, the more so that the facts were often several years old. However, TRUTH OF THE CHARGES IS BORNE OUT BY A MASS OF EVIDENCE AND OFFICIAL REPORTS."

It adds:

"Of how many abuses have these native sentinels been guilty it would be impossible to say, even approximately. Several chiefs of Baringa brought us, according to the native custom, bundles of sticks, each of which was meant to show one of their subjects killed by the capitas. One of them showed 120 murders in his village committed during the last few years. Whatever one may think of the confidence with which this native form of book-keeping may inspire one, a document handed to the Commission by the Director of the A.B.I.R. does not allow any doubt to remain as to the sinister character of the system. It consisted of a list showing that from 1st January to 1st August, 1905—that is to say, within a space of seven months—142 sentries of the Society had been killed or wounded by the natives. Now, it is to be assumed that in many cases these sentries had been attacked by the natives by way of revenge. One may judge by this of the number of bloody affrays to which their presence had given rise. On the other hand, the agents interrogated by the Commission, or who were present at the audiences, did not even attempt to deny the charges brought against the sentinels."

That last sentence seems the crown of the arch. If the agents on the spot did not attempt before the Commission to deny the outrages who shall venture to do it in their name?

The remainder of the Report, though stuffed with courtly platitudes and with vague recommendations of reform which are absolutely unpractical, so long as the root causes of all the trouble remain undisturbed, contains a few positive passages which are worth preserving. Talking of the want of definite instructions to military expeditions, it says:

"The consequences are often very murderous. And one must not be astonished. If in the course of THESE DELICATE OPERATIONS, WHOSE OBJECT IT IS TO SEIZE HOSTAGES AND TO INTIMIDATE THE NATIVES, constant watch cannot be exercised over the sanguinary instincts of the soldiers when orders to punish are given by superior authority, it is difficult that the expedition should not degenerate into massacres, accompanied by pillage and incendiarism."

Again:

"The responsibility for these abuses must not, however, always be placed upon the commanders of military expeditions. In considering these facts one must bear in mind the deplorable confusion still existing in the Upper Congo between a state of war and a state of peace; between administration and repression; between those who may be regarded as enemies and those who have the right to be regarded as

citizens of the State and treated in accordance with its laws. The Commission was struck with the general tone of the reports relating to operations described above. Often, while admitting that the expedition had been sent out SOLELY FOR SHORTAGE IN TAXATION, AND WITHOUT MAKING ALLUSION TO AN ATTACK OR RESISTANCE ON THE PART OF THE NATIVES, WHICH ALONE WOULD JUSTIFY THE USE OF ARMS, the authors of these reports speak of 'SURPRISING VILLAGES,' 'ENERGETIC PURSUIT,' 'NUMEROUS ENEMIES KILLED AND WOUNDED,' 'LOOT,' 'PRISONERS OF WAR,' 'CONDITIONS OF PEACE.' Evidently these officers thought themselves at war, acted as though at war."

Again:

"The course of such expeditions grave abuses have occurred; men, women and children have been killed even at the very time they sought safety in flight. Others have been imprisoned. Women have been taken as hostages."

There is an interesting passage about the missionaries:

"Often also, in the regions where evangelical stations are established, the native, instead of going to the magistrate, his natural protector, adopts the habit when he thinks he has a grievance against an agent or an Executive officer, to confide in the missionary. The latter listens to him, helps him according to his means, and makes himself the echo of all the complaints of a region. Hence the astounding influence which the missionaries possess in some parts of the territory. It exercises itself not only among the natives within the purview of their religious propaganda, but over all the villages whose troubles they have listened to. The missionary becomes, for the native of the region, the only representative of equity and justice; he adds to the ascendancy acquired from his religious zeal, the prestige which, in the interest of the State itself, should be invested in the magistrates."

I will now turn for a moment to contemplate the document as a whole.

With the characteristic policy of the Congo authorities, it was originally given to the world as being a triumphant vindication of King Leopold's administration, which would certainly have been the greatest whitewashing contract ever yet carried through upon this planet. Looked at more closely, it is clearly seen that behind the veil of courtly phrase and complimentary forms, every single thing that the Reformers have been claiming has been absolutely established. That the land has been taken. That the produce has been taken. That the people are enslaved. That they are reduced to misery. That the white agents have given the capitas a free hand against them. That there have been illegal holdings of hostages, predatory

expeditions, murders and mutilations. All these things are absolutely admitted. I do not know that anything more has ever been claimed, save that the Commission talks coldly of what a private man must talk of hotly, and that the Commission might give the impression that they were isolated acts, whereas the evidence here given and the general depopulation of the country show that they are general, universal, and parts of a single system extending from Leopoldville to the Great Lakes, and from the French border to Katanga. Be it private domain, crown domain, or Concessionnaire territory, be it land of the Kasai, the Anversoise, the Abir, or the Katanga companies, the tale still tells of bloodshed and horror.

Where the Commission differs from the Reformers is in their estimate of the gravity of this situation and of the need of absolute radical reforms. It is to be borne in mind that of the three judges two had never been in Africa before, while the third was a direct servant of the attacked institution. They seem to have vaguely felt that these terrible facts were necessary phases of Colonial expansion. Had they travelled, as I have done, in British West Africa, and had it been brought home to them that a blow to a black man, Sierra Leone, for example, would mean that one would be taken by a black policeman before a black judge to be handed over to a black gaoler, they would understand that there are other methods of administration. Had they ever read of that British Governor of Jamaica, who, having in the face of dangerous revolt, executed a Negro without due forms of law, was recalled to London, tried, and barely escaped with his life. It is by such tension as this that Europeans in the Tropics, whatever be their nation, must be braced up to maintain their civilized *morale*. Human nature is weak, the influence of environment is strong. Germans or English would yield and in isolated cases have yielded, to their surroundings. No nation can claim much individual superiority in such a matter. But for both Germany and England (I would add France, were it not for the French Congo) can claim that their system works as strongly against outrage as the Belgian one does in favour of it. These things are not, as the Commissioners seemed to think, necessary evils, which are tolerated elsewhere. How can their raw opinion weigh for a moment upon such a point when it is counterbalanced by the words of such Reformers as Sir Harry Johnston or Lord Cromer? The fact is that the running of a tropical colony is, of all tests, the most searching as to the development of the nation which attempts it; to see helpless people and not to oppress them, to see great wealth and not to confiscate it, to have absolute power and not to abuse it, to raise the native instead of sinking yourself—these are the supreme trials of a nation’s spirit. We have all failed at times. But never has there been failure so hopeless, so shocking, bearing such consequences to the world, such degradation to

the good name of Christianity and civilization as the failure of the Belgians in the Congo.

And all this has happened and all this has been tolerated in an age of progress. The greatest, deepest, most wide-reaching crime of which there is any record, has been reserved for these latter years. Some excuse there is for racial extermination where, as with Saxons and Celts, two peoples contend for the same land which will but hold one. Some excuse, too, for religious massacre when, like Mahomet the Second at Constantinople, or Alva in the Lowlands, the bigoted murderers honestly conceived that their brutal work was in the interest of God. But here the real doers have sat remote with cold blood in their veins, knowing well from day to day what they were doing, and with the sole object of adding more to wealth which was already enormous. Consider this circumstance and consider also the professions of philanthropy with which the huge massacre was inaugurated, the cloud of lies with which it has been screened, the persecution and calumny of the few honest men who uncovered it, the turning of religion against religion and of nation against nation in the attempt to perpetuate it, and having weighed all this, tell me where in the course of history there is any such story. What is progress? Is it to run a little faster in a motor-car, to listen to gabble in a gramophone?—these are the toys of life. But if progress is a spiritual thing, then we do *not* progress. Such a horror as this of Belgium and the Congo would not have been possible fifty years ago. No European nation would have done it, and if it had, no other one would have failed to raise its voice in protest. There was more decorum and principle in life in those slower days. We live in a time of rush, but do not call it progress. The story of the Congo has made the idea a little absurd.

IX

THE CONGO AFTER THE COMMISSION

The high hopes which the advent of the Commission raised among the natives and the few Europeans who had acted as their champions, were soon turned to bitter disappointment. The indefatigable Mr. Harris had sent on after the Commission a number of fresh cases which had come to his notice. In one of these a chief deposed that he had been held back in his village (Boendo) in order to prevent him from reaching the Commission. He succeeded in breaking away from his guards, but was punished for his enterprise by having his wife clubbed to death by a sentry. He brought with him, in the hope that he might lay them before the judges, one hundred and eighty-two long twigs and seventy-six smaller ones, to represent so many adults and children who had been murdered by the A.B.I.R. Company in his district during the last few years. His account of the methods by which these unfortunate people met their deaths will not bear printing. The wildest dreams of the Inquisition were outdone. Women had been killed by thrusting stakes into them from below. When the horrified missionary asked the chief if this was personally known to him, his answer was, “They killed my daughter, Nsinga, in this manner; I found the stake in her.” And a reputable Belgian statesman can write in this year of grace that they are carrying on the beneficent and philanthropic mission which has been handed down to them.

In a later communication Mr. Harris gives the names of men, women and children killed by the sentries of a M. Pilaet.

“Last year,” he says, “or the year before, the young woman, Imenega, was tied to a forked tree and chopped in half with a hatchet, beginning at the left shoulder, chopping down through the chest and abdomen and out at the side.” Again, with every detail of name and place, he dwelt upon the horrible fact that public incest had been enforced by the sentries—brother with sister, and father with daughter. “Oh, Inglesia,” cried the chief in conclusion, “don’t stay away long; if you do, they will come, I am sure they will come, and then these enfeebled legs will not support me, I cannot run away. I am near my end; try and see to it that they let me die in peace; don’t stay away.”

“I was so moved, your Excellency, at these people’s story that I took the liberty of promising them, in the name of the Congo Free State, that you will only kill them in future for crimes. I told them the Inspector Royal was, I hoped, on his way, and

that I was sure he would listen to their story, and give them time to recover themselves."

It is terrible to think that such a promise, through no fault of Mr. Harris, has not been fulfilled. Are the dreams of the Commissioners never haunted by the thought of those who put such trust in them, but whose only reward has been that they have been punished for the evidence they gave and that their condition has been more miserable than ever. The final practical result of the Commission was that upon the natives, and not upon their murderers, came the punishment.

M. Malfeyt, a Royal High Commissioner, had been sent out on pretence of reform. How hollow was this pretence may be seen from the fact that at the same time M. Wahis had been despatched as Governor-General in place of that Constermann who had committed suicide after his interview with the judges of the Commission. Wahis had already served two terms as Governor, and it was under his administration that all the abuses the Commission had condemned had actually grown up. Could King Leopold have shown more clearly how far any real reform was from his mind?

M. Malfeyt's visit had been held up as a step toward improvement. The British Government had been assured that his visit would be of a nature to effect all necessary reforms. On arriving in the country, however, he announced that he had no power to act, and only came to see and hear. Thus a few more months were gained before any change could be effected. The only small consolation which we can draw from all this succession of impotent ambassadors and reforming committees, which do not, and were never intended to, reform, is that the game has been played and exposed, and surely cannot be played again. A Government would deservedly be the laughing-stock of the world which again accepted assurances from the same source.

What, in the meanwhile, was the attitude of that A.B.I.R. Company, whose iniquities had been thoroughly exposed before the Commission, and whose manager M. Le Jeune, had fled to Europe? Was it ashamed of its bloodthirsty deeds? Was it prepared in any way to modify its policy after the revelations which its representatives had admitted to be true? Read the following interview which Mr. Stannard had with M. Delvaux, who had visited the stations of his disgraced colleague:

"He spoke of the Commission of Inquiry in a contemptuous manner, and showed considerable annoyance about the things we had said to the Commission. He declared the A.B.I.R. had full authority and power to send out armed sentries, and force the people to bring in rubber, and to imprison those who did not. A short time

ago, the natives of a town brought in some rubber to the agent here, but he refused it because it was not enough, and the men were thrashed by the A.B.I.R. employees, and driven away. The director justified the agent in refusing the rubber because the quantity was too small. The Commissioners had declared that the A.B.I.R. had no power to send armed sentries into the towns in order to flog the people and drive them into the forests to seek rubber; they were 'guards of the forest,' and that was their work. When we pointed this out to M. Delvaux, he pooh-poohed the idea, and said the name had no significance; some called the sentries by one name, some by another. We pointed out that the people were not compelled to pay their taxes in rubber only, but could bring in other things, or even currency. He denied this, and said that the alternative tax only meant that an agent could impose whatever tax he thought fit. It had no reference whatever to the natives. The A.B.I.R. preferred the taxes to be paid in rubber. This is what the A.B.I.R. says, in spite of the interpretation by Baron Nisco, the highest judicial authority in the State, that the natives could pay their taxes in what they were best able. All these things were said in the presence of the Royal High Commissioner, who, whether he approved or not, certainly did not contradict or protest against them."

Within a week or two of the departure of the Commission the state of the country was as bad as ever. It cannot be too often repeated that it was not local in its origin, but that it occurred there, as elsewhere, on account of pressure from the central officials. If further proof were needed of this it is to be found in the Van Caelchen trial. This agent, having been arrested, succeeded in showing (as was done in the Caudron case) that the real guilt lay with his superior officers. In his defence he

"Bases his power on a letter of the Commissaire-Général de Bauw (the Supreme Executive Officer in the District), and in a circular transmitted to him by his director, and signed 'Constermann' (Governor-General), which he read to the Court, deploring the diminished output in rubber, and saying that the agents of the A.B.I.R. should not forget that they had the same powers of '*contrainte par corps*' (bodily detention) as were delegated to the agent of the Société Commerciale Anversoise au Congo for the increase of rubber production; that if the Governor-General or his Commissaire-Général did not know what they were writing and what they signed, he knows what orders he had to obey; it was not for him to question the legality or illegality of these orders; his superiors ought to have known and have weighed what they wrote before giving him orders to execute; that bodily detention of natives for rubber was no secret, seeing that at the end of every month a statement of '*contrainte par corps*' (bodily detention) during the month

has to be furnished in duplicate, the book signed, and one of the copies transmitted to the Government."

Whilst these organized outrages were continuing in the Congo, King Leopold, at Belgium, had taken a fresh step, which, in its cynical disregard for any attempt at consistency, surpassed any of his previous performances. Feeling that something must be done in the face of the finding of his own delegates, he appointed a fresh Commission, whose terms of reference were "to study the conclusions of the Commission of Inquiry, to formulate the proposals they call for, and to seek for practical means for realizing them." It is worth while to enumerate the names of the men chosen for this work. Had a European Areopagus called before it the head criminals of this terrible business, all of these men, with the exception of two or three, would have been standing in the dock. Take their names in turn: Van Maldeghem, the President—a jurist, who had written on Congo law, but had no direct complicity in the crimes; Janssens, the President of the former Commission, a man of integrity; M. Davignon, a Belgian politician—so far the selection is a possible one—now listen to the others! De Cuvelier, creature of the King, and responsible for the Congo horrors; Droogmans, creature of the King, administrator of the secret funds derived from his African estates, and himself President of a Rubber Trust; Arnold, creature of the King; Liebrechts, the same; Gohr, the same; Chenot, a Congo Commissioner; Tombeur, the same; Fivé, a Congo inspector; Nys, the chief legal upholder of the King's system; De Hemptinne, President of the Kasai Rubber Trust; Mobs, an Administrator of the A.B.I.R. Is it not evident that, save the first three, these were the very men who were on their trial? The whole appointment is an example of that cynical humour which gives a grotesque touch to this inconceivable story. It need not be added that no result making for reform ever came from such an assembly. One can but rejoice that the presence of the small humane minority may have prevented the others from devising some fresh methods of oppression.

It cannot be said, however, that no judicial proceedings and no condemnation arose from the actions of the Congo Commission. But who could ever guess who the man was who was dragged to the bar. On the evidence of natives and missionaries, the whole white hierarchy, from Governor-General to subsidized cannibal, had been shown to be blood-guilty. Which of them was punished? None of them, but Mr. Stannard, one of the accusing witnesses. He had shown that the soldiers of a certain M. Hagstrom had behaved brutally to the natives. This was the account of Lontulu the chief:

“Lontulu, the senior chief of Bolima, came with twenty witnesses, which was all the canoe would hold. He brought with him one hundred and ten twigs, each of which represented a life sacrificed for rubber. The twigs were of different lengths and represented chiefs, men, women and children, according to their length. It was a horrible story of massacre, mutilation and cannibalism that he had to tell, and it was perfectly clear that he was telling the truth. He was further supported by other eye-witnesses. These crimes were committed by those who were acting under the instructions and with the knowledge of white men. On one occasion the sentries were flogged because they had not killed enough people. At one time, after they had killed a number of people, including Isekifasu, the principal chief, his wives and children, the bodies, except that of Isekifasu, were cut up, and the cannibalistic fighters attached to the A.B.I.R. force were rationed on the meat thus supplied. The intestines, etc., were hung up in and about the house, and a little child who had been cut in halves was impaled. After one attack, Lontulu, the chief, was shown the dead bodies of his people, and asked by the rubber agent if he would bring in rubber now. He replied that he would. Although a chief of considerable standing, he has been flogged, imprisoned, tied by the neck with men who were regarded as slaves, made to do the most menial work, and his beard, which was of many years’ growth, and reached almost to the ground, was cut off by the rubber agent because he visited another town.”

Lontulu was cross-examined by the Commission and his evidence was not shaken. Here are some of the questions and answers:

“President Janssens: ‘M. Hagstrom leur a fait la guerre. Il a tué beaucoup d’hommes avec ses soldats.’

“To Lontulu: ‘Were the people of Monji, etc., given the corpses to eat?’

“Lontulu: ‘Yes, they cut them up and ate them.’

“Baron Nisco: ‘Did they flog you?’

“Lontulu: ‘Repeatedly.’

“Baron Nisco: ‘Who cut your beard off?’

“Lontulu: ‘M. Hannotte.’

“President Janssens: ‘Did you see sentries kill your people? Did they kill many?’

“Lontulu: ‘Yes, all my family is finished.’

“President: ‘Give us names.’

"Lontulu: 'Chiefs Bokomo, Isekifasu, Botamba, Longeva, Bosangi, Booifa, Eongo, Lomboto, Loma, Bayolo.'

"Then followed names of women and children and ordinary men (not chiefs).

"Lontulu: 'May I call my son lest I make a mistake?'

"President: 'It is unnecessary; go on.'

"Lontulu: 'Bomposa, Beanda, Ekila.'

"President: 'Are you sure that each of your twigs (110) represents one person killed?'

"Lontulu: 'Yes.'

"President: 'Was Isekifasu killed at this time?'

"Reply not recorded.

"President: 'Did you see his entrails hanging on his house?'

"Lontulu: 'Yes.'

"*Question*: 'Were the sentries and people who helped given the dead bodies to eat?'

"*Answer*: 'Yes, they ate them. Those who took part in the fight cut them up and ate them.... He was *chicotted* (flogged), and said, "Why do you do this? Is it right to flog a chief?"' Gave a very full account of his harsh treatment and sufferings."

The action was taken for criminal libel by M. Hagstrom against Mr. Stannard, for saying that this evidence had been given before the Commission. Of course, the only way to establish the fact was a reference to the evidence itself which lay at Brussels. But as Hagstrom was only a puppet of the higher Government of the Congo (which means the King himself), in their attempt to revenge themselves upon the missionaries it was not very likely that official documents would be produced for the mere purpose of serving the end of Justice. The minutes then were not forthcoming. How, then, was Mr. Stannard to produce evidence that his account was correct? Obviously by producing Lontulu, the chief. But the wretched Lontulu, beaten and tortured, with his beard plucked off and his spirit broken, had been cast into gaol before the trial, and knew well what would be his fate if he testified against his masters. He withdrew all that he had said at the Commission—and who can blame him? So M. Hagstrom obtained his verdict and the Belgian reptile Press proclaimed that Mr. Stannard had been proved to be a liar. He was sentenced to three months' imprisonment, with the alternative of a £40 fine. Even as I write, two more of these lion-hearted missionaries, Americans this time—Mr. Morrison and Mr. Shepherd—are undergoing a similar prosecution on

the Congo. This time it is the Kasai Company which is the injured innocent. But the eyes of Europe and America are on the transaction, and M. Vandervelde, the fearless Belgian advocate of liberty, has set forth to act for the accused. What M. Labori was to Dreyfus, M. Vandervelde has been to the Congo, save that it is a whole nation who are his clients. He and his noble comrade, Mr. Lorand, are the two men who redeem the record of infamy which must long darken the good name of Belgium.

I will now deal swiftly with the records of evil deeds which have occurred since the time which I have already treated. I say "swiftly" not because there is not much material from which to choose, but because I feel that my reader must be as sated with horrors as I who have to write them. Here are some notes of a journey undertaken by W. Cassie Murdoch, as recently as July and September, 1907. This time we are concerned with the Crown Domain, King Leopold's private estate, of which we have such accounts from Mr. Clark and Mr. Scrivener dating as far back as 1894. Thirteen years had elapsed and no change! What do these thirteen represent in torture and murder? Could all these screams be united, what a vast cry would have reached the heavens. In the Congo hell the most lurid glow is to be found in the Royal Domain. And the money dragged from these tortured people is used in turn to corrupt newspapers and public men—that it may be possible to continue the system. So the devil's wheel goes round and round! Here are some extracts from Mr. Murdoch's report:

"I remarked to the old chief of the largest town I came across that his people seemed to be numerous. 'Ah,' said he, 'my people are all dead. These you see are only a very few of what I once had.' And, indeed, it was evident enough that his town had once been a place of great size and importance. There cannot be the least doubt that this depopulation is directly due to the State. Everywhere I went I heard stories of the raids made by the State soldiers. The number of people they shot, or otherwise tortured to death, must have been enormous. Perhaps as many more of those who escaped the rifle died from starvation and exposure. More than one of my carriers could tell of how their villages had been raided, and of their own narrow escapes. They are not a warlike people, and I could hear of no single attempt at resistance. They are the kind of people the State soldiers are most successful with. They would rather any day run away than fight. And in fact, they have nothing to fight with except a few bows and arrows. I have been trying to reckon the probable number of people I met with. I should say that five thousand is, if anything, beyond the mark. A few years ago the population of the district I passed through must have been four times that number. On my return march I was desirous of visiting Mbelo, the place where Lieutenant Massard had been stationed,

and in which he committed his unspeakable outrages. On making inquiries, however, I was told that there were no people there now, and that the roads were all 'dead.' On reaching one of the roads that led there, it was evident enough that it had not been used for a long time. Later on, I was able to confirm the statement that what had once been a district with numerous large towns, was now completely empty....

"With the exception of a few people living near the one State post now existing on this side of the Lake, who supply the State with *kwanga* and large mats, all the people I saw are taxed with rubber. The rubber tax is an intolerable burden—how intolerable I should have found it almost impossible to believe had I not seen it. It is DIFFICULT TO DESCRIBE IT CALMLY. What I found was simply this: The *'tax' demands from twenty to twenty-five days' labour every month*. There never was a 'forty hours per month labour law' in the Crown Domain, and so long as the tax is demanded in rubber, there never will be—at least in the section of it I visited. If that law were applied, no rubber would, or could possibly, be produced, for the simple reason that *there is no rubber left in this section of the Domain*.

"It was some time before I made the discovery that in the Domaine de la Couronne west of Lake Leopold there is no rubber. On my way through I was continually meeting numbers of men going out on the hunt for rubber, and heard with amazement the distance they had to walk. It seemed so impossible that I was somewhat sceptical of the truth of what I was told. But I heard the same story so often, and in so many different places, that I was at last obliged to accept it. On my return I followed up this track, and found that it was all true. And I found also that the rubber is collected from the Domaine Privé in forests from ten to forty miles beyond the boundary of the Crown Domain.

"Once the vines had been found the working of the rubber is a small part of the labour. I have made a careful calculation of the distance the people I met have to walk, and I find that the average *cannot be less than 300 miles there and back*. But walking to the forest and back does not occupy from twenty to twenty-five days per month. They will cover the 300 miles in ten or twelve days. The rest of the time is used in hunting for the vines, and in tapping them when found. I met a party returning with their rubber who had been six nights in the forest. This was the lowest number. *Most of them have to spend ten, some as many as fifteen, nights in the forest.* Two days after I left the Domain on my way back I saw some men returning empty-handed. They had been hunting for over eight days and had found nothing. What the poor wretches would do I cannot imagine. If they failed to

produce the usual amount of rubber on the appointed day they would be put in '*bloc*' (imprisoned).

"The workmen of the *chef de poste* at Mbongo described a concoction which is sometimes administered to capitas when their tale of rubber is short. The white man chops up green tobacco leaves and soaks them in water. Red peppers are added, and a dose of the liquid is administered to defaulting capitas. This wily official manages to get thirteen monthly 'taxes' in the year. At one village I bought a contrivance by which the natives reckon when the tax falls due. Pieces of wood are strung on a piece of cane. One piece is moved up every day. On counting them I found there were only twenty-eight. I asked why, and was told that originally there were thirty pieces, but the white man had so often sent on the twenty-eighth day to say the time was up, that at last they took off two.

"Individual acts of atrocity here have for the most part ceased. The State agents seem to have come to the conclusion that it is a waste of cartridges to shoot down these people. But the whole system is a vast atrocity involving the people in a state of unimaginable misery. One man said to me, 'Slaves are happy compared with us. Slaves are protected by their masters, they are fed and clothed. As for us—the capitas do with us what they like. Our wives have to plant the cassava gardens and fish in the stream to feed us while we spend our days working for Bula Matadi. No, we are not even slaves.' And he is right. *It is not slavery as slavery was generally understood: it is not even the uncivilized African's idea of slavery. There never was a slavery more absolute in its despotism or more fiendish in its tyranny.*"

It will be seen that, so far as the people are concerned, the problem is largely solved, the bitterness of death is past. No European intervention can save them. In many places they have been utterly destroyed. But they were the wards of Europe, and surely Europe, if she is not utterly lost to shame, will have something to say to their fate!

X

SOME CATHOLIC TESTIMONY AS TO THE CONGO

It must be admitted that the Roman Catholic Church, as an organized body, has not raised her voice as she should in the matter of the Congo. Never was there such a field for a Las Casas. It was the proudest boast of that church that in the dark days of man's history she was the one power which stood with her spiritual terrors between the oppressor and the oppressed. This noble tradition has been sadly forgotten in the Congo, where the missions have themselves, as I understand, done most excellent work, but where the power of the Church has never been invoked against the constant barbarities of the State. In extenuation, it may be stated that the chief Catholic establishments are down the river and far from the rubber zones. It is important, however, to collect under a separate heading such testimony as exists, for an unworthy attempt has been made to represent the matter as a contest between rival creeds, whereas it is really a contest between humanity and civilization on one side and cruel greed upon the other.

The organization of the Catholic Church is more disciplined, and admits of less individualism than that of those religious bodies which supplied the valiant champions of right in the Congo. The simple priests were doubtless as horrified as others, within the limit of their knowledge, but the means of expression were denied them. M. Colfs, himself a Catholic, said in the Belgian Chamber: "Our missionaries have less liberty than foreign missionaries. They are expected to keep silence.... There is a gag. This gag is placed in the mouth of Belgian missionaries."

Signor Santini, the Catholic and Royalist Deputy for Rome, has been one of the leaders in the anti-Congo movement, and has done excellent work in Italy. From his own sources of information he confirms and amplifies all that the English and Americans have asserted. Speaking in the Italian Parliament on February 4th, 1907, Signor Santini said:

"I am proud to have been the first to bring the question of the Congo before this House. If at the present day we are spared the shame of seeing again officers of our Army, valorous and perfectly stainless, serving under and at the orders of an association of sweaters, slave-holders and barbarians, it is legitimate for me to declare that I have, if only modestly, at least efficaciously, co-operated in this result."

There is no conflict of creeds in such an utterance as that.

Catholic papers have occasionally spoken out bravely upon the subject.

Le Patriote, of Brussels (Royalist and Catholic), in its issue of February 28th, 1907, has an indignant editorial:

"The rebellion in the A.B.I.R. territory extends. The Government itself forces the rubber, and delivers it on the Antwerp quay to the brokers of the A.B.I.R.... Nothing is altered on the Congo. The same abominable measures are adopted; the same outrages take place.... The Government is adopting the same measures as in the Mongalla, flooding the A.B.I.R. territory with soldiers to utterly smash the people, whom it thinks will then work, and the rubber output be increased.... The memory of these deeds will remain graven in the memory of men, and in the memory of Divine vengeance. Sooner or later the executioners will have to render an account to God and to history."

There is one order of the Catholic Church which has always had a most noble record in its treatment of native races. These are the Jesuits. No one who has read the "History of Paraguay," or studied the records of the Missions to the Red Indians of the eighteenth century, can forget the picture of unselfish devotion which they exhibit. Father Vermeersch, a worthy successor of such predecessors, has published a book, "La Question Congolaise," in which he finds nothing incompatible between his position as a Catholic and his exposure of the abuses of the Congo.

In all points the position of Father Vermeersch and of the English Reformers appears to be identical.

On the rightful possession of the land by the natives he writes in terms which might be a paragraph from Mr. Morel:

"On the Congo the land cannot be supposedly vacant. Presumption is in favour of occupation, of a full occupation. By this is meant that it is not sufficient to recognize to the natives rights of tenure over the land they actually cultivate, or certain rights of usage—wood-cutting, hunting, fishing—on the remainder of the territory; but these rights of usage, which are much more important than with us, appear to imply a full *animus domini*, and to signify a complete appropriation, which is carried out amongst us in different fashion. It is not, in effect, indispensable in natural law that I should exhaust the utility of an article or of land in order to be able to claim it as my own; it suffices that I should make use of it in a positive manner, but of my own will, personally, and that I should have the will to forbid any stranger to use it without my consent. Hence effective occupation is joined to intention, and all the constituent elements to a valid title of property exist. Let us suppose, moreover, that some great Belgian landowner wishes to convert portions of his property into sporting land—that land, nevertheless, remains in his

entire possession. Amongst the Congo natives, no doubt, occupation is usually collective; but such occupation is as worthy of respect as no matter what individual appropriation."

He continues:

"To whom does the rubber belong which grows upon the land occupied by the Congo natives? To the natives, and to no one else, without their consent and just compensation."

Again:

"To sum up, we recognize it with much regret, the State's appropriation of so-called vacant land on the Congo confronts us with AN IMMENSE EXPROPRIATION."

He makes a bold attack upon King Leopold's own preserve:

"Humanity, whose cause we plead, Christian rights, whose principles we endeavour to inculcate, compel us to touch briefly upon a curious and mysterious creation which is peculiar to the Congo State—the *Domaine de la Couronne*."

"What are the revenues of this mysterious civil personality? Estimates, more or less conjectural in nature, elaborated by M. Cattier appear to establish the profits from the exploitation of rubber alone, at eight to nine millions of francs per annum. M. le Comte de Smet de Naeyer reduces this figure to four or five millions. Short of positive data one can only deal in conjectures. But we regret still more that an impenetrable veil hides from sight all that takes place in the territory of this *Domaine*. It is eight or ten times the size of belgium, and throughout this vast extent of territory there is neither missionary nor magistrate."

Only one missionary at that date had entered this dark land, and his exclamation was: "The Bulgarian atrocities are child's play to what has taken place here."

Father Vermeersch then proceeds to deal with the Congo balance-sheets. His criticism is most destructive. He shows at considerable length, and with a fine grasp of his subject, that there is really no connection at all between the so-called estimate and the actual budget. In the course of the State's development there is an excess running to millions of pounds which has never been accounted for. In this Father Vermeersch is in agreement with the equally elaborate calculations of Professor Cattier, of Brussels.

He puts the economical case in a nutshell thus:

"X——, District Commissioner, commits every day dozens of offences against individual liberty. What can be done? These violations of the law are necessitated

by a great enterprise which must have workmen. In such cases the intervention of the magistrate would be a ruinous imprudence, calculated to bring trouble into the region."

"But the law?"

"Oh, law in the Congo is not applicable!"

"But if you offered a decent remuneration, would you not get free labour?"

"That is precisely what the State will not listen to. It maintains that the enterprise must be carried out for nothing!"

And disposes once again of the "forty hours a month" fiction:

"It is impossible for the State to obtain the amount of rubber it sells annually, by labour limited to forty hours a month, especially when it is borne in mind that a number of these hours are absorbed in other *corvées*. Of two things one, therefore. Either the surplus is furnished freely; and if so, how can coercion be logically argued? Or this supplementary labour is forced; and if so, the law of forty hours is shown to be merely a fraud."

He shows the root causes of the evil:

"So long as an inflexible will fixes in advance the quantity of rubber to be obtained; so long as instructions are given in this form: 'Increase by five tons your rubber output per month' (instance given by Father Cus and van Hencxthoven in their report), we cannot await with confidence a serious improvement, which is the desire of all...."

"The Governor-General dismisses and appoints magistrates at his will, suspends the execution of penalties; even sends back, if need be, gentlemen of the gown to Europe. Who does not realize the grave inconvenience of this dependence? That is not all. No proceedings can be attempted against a European without the authority of the Governor-General."

And, finally, his reasons for writing his book:

"The contemplation of an immeasurable misery has caused us to publish this book. The gravity of the evil, its roots causes, had long escaped us. When we knew them we could not retain within ourselves the compassion with which we were imbued, and we resolved to tell the citizens of a generous country, appealing to their religion, to their patriotism, to their hearts."

Surely after such evidence from such a source there must be some heart-searchings among those higher members of the Catholic hierarchy, including both Cardinals

and Bishops, who have done what they could to cripple the efforts of the reformers. Misinformed through their own want of care in searching for the truth, they have stood before the whole world as the defenders of that which will be described by the historian as the greatest crime in history.

XI

THE EVIDENCE UP TO DATE

I shall now append some extracts from the reports of several British Vice-Consuls and Consuls sent in during the last few years. These bear less upon outrages, which have admittedly greatly decreased, but mainly upon the general condition of the people, which is one of deplorable poverty and misery—a slavery without that care which the owner was bound to exercise over the health and strength of the slave. I shall give without comment some extracts from the reports of Vice-Consul Mitchell, which date from July, 1906:

"Most of the primitive bridges over the numerous creeks and marshes had rotted away, and we had some difficulty in crossing on fallen trees or a few thin sticks. This was the case all the way to Banalya, and I may here state that this condition of the roads, even of the most frequented, is universal in this province. The reason is that the local authorities have neither men, means, nor time at their disposal for the making of decent roads. *The parsimony of the State in this respect is the more remarkable in the 'Domaine Privé,' whence large amounts are derived, and where next to nothing is expended.*

"So long as the policy of the State Government is to extract all it can from the country, while using only local materials, and spending the least possible amount on development and improvements, no increase in the general well-being can be expected....

"... At all the posts on the north (right) bank, between Yambuya and Basoko, I found the European agents absent in the interior, and at Basoko itself only the doctor was left in charge, all the rest of the staff *being away* '*en expédition,*' that is, on punitive expeditions.

"I stayed at Basoko for five days, partly at Dr. Grossule's request, and partly in the endeavour to learn something of the operations going on in the interior. Three canoe-loads of prisoners arrived, all heavily loaded with chains. But all I could learn was that they were sent in by Lieutenant Baron von Otter, who had been sent to the promontory lying between the mouth of the Aruwimi and the Congo to enforce the Labour Ordinances.

"In all the Basenji villages through which I have passed on my two journeys, the natives assert that it *takes them three weeks every month to find and make their tale of rubber, besides taking it once every three months to the State post, from four to six days distant.*

"This country is taxed to the utmost, not one penny of the proceeds of which is spent on the roads. This condition of the most important highway in the province is nothing less than disgraceful, and yet this is the road of which the authorities are really proud.

"Thus, with the exception of a trivial payment for some things, the Government carries on the work of the country at no expense beyond the wages and the European rations of the white agents, and these are excessively few in number. It is true there are the *Force Publique* and some *travailleurs*. These are recruited by conscription and receive pay and rations, but it is at the lowest possible rate....

"Coming to the Basenji, the following particulars of a village in the forest will show their liabilities. This village has fourteen adult males; its neighbour, which works with it, the chiefs being brothers, has nine. Each man has to take to the State post a large basket, holding about twenty-five pounds of rubber, once every month and a half. To get this rubber, though they find it only one day's journey distant, takes them thirty days. It then takes them five days to carry it to the State post, and three days to return. Thus they spend thirty-eight days out of forty-five in the compulsory service of the State. For the basket of rubber they receive 1 kilog. of salt, nominally worth 1 fr. The chief receives 1 kilog. of salt for the whole. If the rubber is deficient in quality or quantity, the man is liable to be whipped and imprisoned without trial. As it is supposed to be the equivalent of the forty hours' monthly labour, I fail to see by what right the man can be held responsible for the quality, even if he wilfully adulterates it with other substances.

"The people are all disheartened, and are unanimously of the opinion that they were better off under the Arabs, whose rule was intermittent, and from whom they could run away....

"I must say that during more than nineteen years' experience in Northern and Central Africa, *I have never seen such a miserably poor lot as the Basenji in this State*....

"It is perfectly clear that the Inspectors, however conscientious, hard-working, and faithful they may be, *cannot remedy the excessive impositions on the natives under the present system*....

"The grant of land and seed to the natives is of *absolutely no use* to them *till they are left time to use them*....

"To say that the State cannot afford the expense is absurd. The Congo is taxed unmercifully, and I do not suppose any country has less money spent upon it. The

taxpayer gets literally nothing in return for the life of practical slavery he has to spend in the support of the Government.

“If trade and navigation were really free, and guarded by proper police, German trade through Ujiji, which already exists to some extent, might be greatly developed, as well as that with the British colonies and Zanzibar.

“The operations of the Dutch traders, who up to a few months ago had quite a considerable fleet of steamers on the Upper Congo and its affluents, and of the French at Brazzaville, and of the Portuguese, would also benefit greatly.

“*All these have practically disappeared from the Upper Congo.*

“Here, as elsewhere, the natives appeared to me to be so heavily taxed as to be depressed and to regard themselves as practically enslaved by the ‘Bula Matadi.’ The incessant call for rubber, food and labour, leaves them no respite nor peace of mind.”

The following are extracts from Vice-Consul Armstrong’s report, dated October, 1906:

“As the result of my journey through this portion of the country, I am forced to the conclusion that the condition of the people in the A.B.I.R. territory *is deplorable*, and although those living in the vicinity of the mission stations are, comparatively speaking, safe from ill-treatment by the rubber agents and their armed sentries, those in other parts are subjected to the gravest abuses.

“There is no free labour, the natives being forced to work at a totally inadequate wage. In visiting the various rubber-working towns, one would expect to see some signs of European commodities that had been given in exchange for the millions of pounds’ worth of rubber that has been extracted from them, but the native residents possess actually nothing at all.

“*Their conditions of living are deplorable*, and the filth and squalor of their villages is only too apparent. *The people live in a state of uncertainty as to the advent of police officers and soldiers, who invariably chase them from their abodes and destroy their huts, and for this reason it is impossible for them to better their condition of living by the construction of suitable dwellings.*

“*No change of system to be looked for.*

“No change in the existing system can be looked for until a more reasonable method of taxation is adopted. The present system permits the rubber agents to extract the largest possible quantity of rubber from the native at the lowest possible

wage, and allows the employment of armed sentries to enforce this deplorable system."

In these despatches Vice-Consul Armstrong gives evidence of a plot against the sturdy Mr. Stannard upon the part of the infamous A.B.I.R. Company. Their idea, no doubt, was to break down his health and embitter his existence by successive law-suits. In May of 1906, the natives of a village called Lokongi rose up against his murderous sentries and burned their houses. A charge was at once made against Mr. Stannard of having instigated them to this very natural and commendable action. Natives had been suborned or terrified into giving evidence against him, and it might have gone ill with him had it not been for the prompt action of the Consul. He set off for the village, accompanied by Mr. Stannard and the A.B.I.R. director. The natives were assembled and asked to speak the truth. They said, without hesitation, that Mr. Stannard had had nothing to do with the matter, but that the representatives of the company had threatened to torture them unless they said that he had. The A.B.I.R. director held his peace before these revelations and had no explanation to offer. Consul Armstrong then pointed out to the Public Prosecutor in good, straight terms, which his official superiors might well imitate, that the matter had gone far enough, that English patience was almost exhausted, and that Mr. Stannard should be baited no longer. The case was dropped.

I shall pass straight on now to the most recent reports received from the Congo, to show that there is no difference at all in the general condition, so far as it is reported by the impartial men at the spot, save that the actual killings and maimings have decreased. The great oppression and misery of the people seem to grow rather than abate. The following extracts are from Consul Thesiger's report of his experiences in the Kasai Company's district. This company, it may be worth remarking, has paid the enormous dividend of seven hundred per cent. The first paragraph may be commended to the consideration of those British or American travellers who, on the strength of a flying visit, venture to contradict the experience of those white men who spend their lives in the country:

"Although from the evidence of State officials it has been proved that individual cases of abuses are not infrequent even at these posts, the chance traveller will certainly see nothing of them, and when he judges of the condition of the country by what he actually sees at these stations, his opinions may be perfectly honest, but they are absolutely worthless. It is as though some well-meaning person, who had heard that a certain fashionable firm was making a fortune by sweated labour, were to venture to deny the facts because a cursory visit to the West End establishment showed that the salesmen behind the counter were well-dressed and

well-nourished, ignoring altogether the festering misery of the sweaters' dens in which every article sold over that counter was made up."

After showing that the Kasai Company, in their haste for wealth (and, perhaps, in their foresight, as knowing that their occupancy may be brought to an end), are cutting down the rubber vines instead of tapping them (illegal, of course, but what does that matter where Belgian Concessionnaires are in question), goes on to show the pressure on the people:

"The work is compulsory; it is also incessant. The vines have to be sought out in the forest, cut down and disentangled from the high-growing branches, divided into lengths, and carried home. This operation has to be continually repeated, as no man can carry a larger quantity of the heavy vine lengths than will keep him occupied for two or three days. Accidents are frequent, especially among the Bakuba, who are large-built men, hunters and agriculturists by nature, and unaccustomed to tree climbing. Large as the Bakuba villages still are, the population is diminishing. Here there is no sleeping sickness to account for the decrease, there have been no epidemics of late years; exposure, overwork, and shortage of proper food alone are responsible for it. The Bakuba district was formerly one of the richest food-producing regions in the country, maize and millet being the staple crops, together with manioc and other plants. So much so was this the case that the mission at Luebo used to send there to buy maize. Under the present *régime* the villagers are not allowed to waste in cultivating, hunting or fishing—time which should be occupied in making rubber.

"In a few villages they were cultivating by stealth small patches in the forest, where they were supposed to be out cutting the rubber vines; but everywhere else it was the same story: the capitas would not allow them time to clear new ground for cultivation, or permit them to hunt or fish; if they tried to do so their nets and implements were destroyed. The majority of the capitas, when questioned, acknowledged quite frankly that they had orders to that effect. These villages are living on the produce of the old manioc fields, and are buying food from the Bakette. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the population is diminishing. As one woman expressed it: 'The men go out hungry into the forest; when they come back they get sick and die.' The village of Ibunge, where formerly the largest market of the district was held weekly, now consists of a collection of hovels, eight of which are habitable, and the market is all but dead."

So the capitas are at their old work the same as ever. The Congo idea of reforming them has always been to change their name—so by calling a burglar a policeman a great reformation is effected.

Read, however, the following passage, which shows that if the capita is the same, so also is the agent. The white race is certainly superior, for when the savage sentry's heart relented the white man was able to scourge him back to his inhuman task:

"Once I had got outside the zone surrounding Ibanj, where the villages are not taxed in rubber, I found the capitas, with very few exceptions, were all armed with cap-guns. I met them frequently, escorting the rubber caravans to the company post, or going from village to village collecting the rubber from the centres under their charge and distributing the trade goods for the coming month. I noticed that they invariably carried their guns, and, in fact, I have seldom seen a capita stir outside his own home without his gun. These are the men who are appointed by the Kasai Company agents to enforce the rubber tax. Chosen always from a different race, they have no sympathy with the natives placed under them, and having the authority of the agent behind them they can do as they please, so long as they insure the rubber being brought at the proper times and in sufficient quantities. In the villages they are absolute masters, and the villagers have to supply them gratis with a house, food, palm wine, and a woman. They exercise freely the right of beating or imprisoning the villagers for any imaginary offences or for neglecting their work in any way, and even go as far as imposing fines in cowries on their own account, and confiscating for their own use the cowries paid over by the plaintiff or defendant's family in the case of trial by poison, which, in spite of statements to the contrary recently made in the Belgian Chamber, are of frequent occurrence in this country. The native cannot complain or obtain satisfaction in any way, as the capita acts in the name of the company, and the company's agent is always threatening them in the name of 'Bula-Matadi.' If the authorities wish to act in the matter, they might profitably make inquiry into the doings of the capitas at Bungueh, Bolong, and into those of the Zappo Zap capita, who appears to exercise the chief control over the villages near Ibunge, though he does not live in the latter town. These appear to me to be among the worst where most are bad. The capitas, however, are scarcely to be blamed, as, if they do not extort enough rubber, they are liable in their turn to suffer at the hands of the agent. Witness a case at Sangela, when it was reported that the capita had some time back been chicotted in the village itself by the agent for not bringing in rubber sufficient. Endless cases could be quoted, but these will probably be sufficient to show the methods pursued under the auspices of the Kasai Company. Yet in a letter dated the eighth of March, 1908, we find Dr. Dreypondt writing reproachfully:

"'You know we have no armed sentries, but only tradesmen going, with goods of every kind, and unarmed, through the villages for the purchasing of rubber. We use only one trading principle—*l'offre et la demande*.'"

The laws at all points are completely ignored, "and many of the agents not only punish the natives in these ways themselves, but allow their capitas the same privileges. It is only by these means that the natives can be kept at their incessant work."

Suicide is not natural with African, as it is with some Oriental races. But it has come in with the other blessings of King Leopold.

"At Ibanj, for instance, only a day's march from a State post, two Bakette from the village of Baka-Tomba were not long ago imprisoned for shortage of rubber, and were daily taken out under the charge of an armed native to work in the fields with ropes round their necks. One of them, tired of captivity, pretended one day that he saw some animal in a tree and obtained leave from the guard to try and get it. He climbed the tree, tied the rope which was round his neck to a branch and hung himself. He was cut down, and, after a considerable time, was resuscitated, thanks to the medical experience of one of the missionaries. I was able to question the man myself at his village, and the story was also confirmed by the Capita."

The American flag presents no refuge for the persecuted.

"About the same time this same man had the effrontery to take some seven armed natives on to the station of the American mission, during the absence of the missionaries, and demand from the native who was left in charge that he should hand over to him a native, not in his own employ, who had run away in consequence of some dispute, and who he declared was hiding at the mission. The overseer, a Sierra Leone man, very rightly declared his inability to do so, and said he must await the return of the missionaries. An altercation followed, and the agent struck him twice in the face. The man being a British subject, I told him if he chose to prosecute I would support him, or else I would insist on the agent paying him an indemnity in cloth. As a prosecution would have entailed his going to Lusambo, a fifteen days' journey, with every prospect of being kept there some four to six months with all the witnesses while awaiting the hearing of his case, he chose the latter method. The cloth was paid."

He continues:

"These cases can all be substantiated, and are typical of a certain class of agent which is unfortunately, although not general, far too common. Numerous complaints were also made to me in different villages against an agent, not only

that he beat and imprisoned the natives for shortage of rubber, but also that he obliged them to supply him with alcohol distilled from palm wine, and was in the habit of taking any of the village women that struck his fancy at the weekly market held on or near his own post. The Company, I believe, promised the American mission last May that this man should be removed, but when I passed through he was still there. Placed in the power of men like these the natives dare not complain to the authorities, and are entirely helpless."

Nominally the Company makes no punitive expeditions. As a matter of fact they have engaged Lukenga, a warlike chief of the neighbourhood, to do it for them. Nominally the capitas are not supplied with guns. As a matter of fact they all carry guns, which are declared to be their personal property. At every corner one meets hypocrisy and evasion of law.

Speaking of the Bakuba, the Consul says:

"Although not wanting in physical courage or strength, they are rather an agricultural than a warlike race, and their villages were formerly noted for their well-built and artistically decorated houses and their well-cultivated fields.

"It is, however, their misfortune to live in a forest country rich in rubber vines, and they have consequently come under the curse of the concessionary Company in the shape of the Kasai Trust. As a result their native industries are dying out, their houses and fields are neglected, and the population is not only decreasing, but also sinking to the dead-level of the less advanced and less capable races.

"There is no doubt that the Bakuba are the most oppressed race to-day in the Kasai. Harassed by their own king in the interest of the Rubber Company, driven by the agents and their capitas, disarmed and deprived even of the most ordinary rights, they will, if nothing is done to help them, sink to the level of the vicious and degraded Bakette.

"One asks oneself in vain what benefits these people have gained from the boasted civilization of the Free State. One looks in vain for any attempt to benefit them or to recompense them in any way for the enormous wealth which they are helping to pour into the Treasury of the State. Their native industries are being destroyed, their freedom has been taken from them, and their numbers are decreasing.

"The only efforts made to civilize them have been made by the missionaries, who are hampered at every turn."

Consul Thesiger winds up with the remark that as the Company has behaved illegally at every turn it has forfeited all claims to consideration and that there is no hope for the country so long as it exists. Straight words—but how much more

forcibly do they apply to that Congo State of which these particular companies are merely an outcome. Until it is swept from the map there is no hope for the country. You cannot avoid the rank products while the putridity remains.

The next document bearing upon the question is from the Rev. H. M. Whiteside, from the notorious A.B.I.R. district. I give it in full, that the reader may judge for himself how far the direct Belgian rule has altered the situation.

“I should like to bring to your notice a few facts regarding the condition of this (A.B.I.R.) district.

“After this extensive journey made through the district recently, and particularly the Bompona neighbourhood, I found the people working rubber in all the towns visited with the exception of those taxed in provisions.

“It is difficult to know which ‘tax,’ rubber or provisions, is hardest. The rubber workers implored us to free them from rubber, and at one village upon our departure they followed us a considerable distance, and it was difficult to get away from them. The amount of rubber collected is small compared with what was formerly demanded, but I have no doubt it requires one-third of the time of the people to collect it. Many of the people of the villages behind Bompona were away collecting rubber. We met many of the Ionji people in the forest, either actually engaged in their work or hunting for a district where the vines might have escaped other collectors. We also met other villagers in the bush in quest of rubber. Almost all the village migrates to the forest—men, many women and children—when rubber is required.

“In the light of these facts, how worthless are the assertions that rubber ‘tax’ has been stopped in the A.B.I.R. territory.

“With regard to the provision tax, it was difficult to get any data, but it is easy for one to see the oppressed condition of the people when one comes into contact with them. Between the provision tax, porterage and paddlers, I believe that the people of Bompona have got very little time to themselves. There is one thing that one cannot help seeing, viz., the mean, miserable appearance of the people residing around the State post of Bompona. The houses or huts are in keeping with the owners of them. A very small bale of cloth could take the place of all I saw worn. In all the district I never saw a single brass rod, nor any domestic animals except a few miserable chickens. The extreme poverty of the people is most remarkable. There is no doubt as to their desire to possess European goods, but they have nothing with which to buy except rubber and ivory, which is claimed by the State.

“It may be thought that I am painting their condition in too dark colours, but I feel it requires strong words to give a fair idea of the utter hopelessness and abject appearance of the people of Bompona, of the people of the villages behind the State post some twenty-five miles away, and in a lesser degree of the rubber workers opposite Bompona.

“H. M. Whiteside.

“Ikau,
“June 15th, 1909.”

Finally, there is the following report from the extreme other end of the country. It is dated June 1st, 1909. The name of the sender, though not published, was sent to the Foreign Office. He is an American citizen:

“I am sorry to say there is need for agitation for the reform of the Belgian Kwango territory along this frontier. Robbing and murder are still being carried on under the rule of the Belgian official from Popocabacca. Last month he came with an armed force to the district of Mpangala Nlele, two days west of here, to decorate with the Congo medal a new chief in the stead of our old friend Nlekani. Nlekani left a number of sons, but none of them were willing to take the responsibility of the Medal Chieftainship. They, therefore, placed their villages under the authority of a powerful chief living to the north of them.

“The official of the Congo Government had been insisting for a year that a younger son of the old chief should consent to be the Medal Chief. This young man, named Kingeleza, was a fine, bright fellow, but thinking that, as a younger son, he would lack the necessary authority over the people and would get into trouble with the Government if he could not satisfy its requirements, he declined. The Belgian official was, however, so insistent that Kingeleza had finally agreed in order to avoid a clash with the Government.

“On his way to make the ‘investiture,’ the Belgian official robbed some villages and killed two men. Kingeleza’s people, who had gathered together to witness the investiture, hearing of the treatment meted out to the other villages, took fright and fled from their own villages, which the Belgians, upon arriving, found deserted. Whereupon the soldiers proceeded to ferret the fugitives out of the woods, where they were hiding. Twenty were seized, among whom was one of Kingeleza’s sisters, a young and attractive looking girl. Four of the villagers were subsequently released, and the balance marched off with other spoils to Popocabacca. The evangelist attached to the American mission, who was absent in the Lower Congo, had his house broken open and a tent and school materials carried off.

“As for Kingeleza, some of the Belgian soldiers met him in the path and shot him. They did not know that he was Kingeleza, and Kingeleza is still being sought for by the Belgian official.

“This same ‘Chief of Brigands,’ as I prefer to call him, has just been on another raid for which he even entered Portuguese territory within a few hours of where I am writing, wantonly destroying all that he could not carry off. The people had, happily, all escaped before he arrived. The Portuguese are reporting this outrage to the Governor-General at Loanda.”

XII

THE POLITICAL SITUATION

I have not in this statement touched upon the financial side of the Congo State. A huge scandal lies there—so huge that the limits of it have not yet been defined. I will not go into that morass. If Belgians wish to be hoodwinked in the matter, and to have their good name compromised in finance as well as in morality, it is they who in the end will suffer. One may merely indicate the main points, that during the independent life of the Congo State all accounts have been kept secret, that no budgets of the last year but only estimates of the coming one have ever been published, that the State has made huge gains, in spite of which it has borrowed money, and that the great sums resulting have been laid out in speculations in China and elsewhere, that sums amounting in the aggregate to at least £7,000,000 of money have been traced to the King, and that this money has been spent partly in buildings in Belgium, partly in land in the same country, partly in building on the Riviera, partly in the corruption of public men, and of the European and American Press (our own being not entirely untarnished, I fear), and, finally, in the expenses of such a private life as has made King Leopold's name notorious throughout Europe. Of the guilty companies the poorest seem to pay fifty and the richest seven hundred per cent. per annum. There I will leave this unsavoury side of the matter. It is to humanity that I appeal, and that is concerned with higher things.

Before ending my task, however, I would give a short account of the evolution of the political situation as it affected, first, Great Britain and the Congo State; secondly, Great Britain and Belgium. In each case Great Britain was, indeed, the spokesman of the civilized world.

So far as one can trace, no strong protest was raised by the British Government at the time when the Congo State took the fatal step, the direct cause of everything which has followed, of leaving the honest path, trodden up to that time by all European Colonies, and seizing the land of the country as their own. Only in 1896 do we find protests against the ill-usage of British coloured subjects, ending in a statement in Parliament from Mr. Chamberlain that no further recruiting would be allowed. For the first time we had shown ourselves in sharp disagreement with the policy of the Congo State. In April, 1897, a debate was raised on Congo affairs by Sir Charles Dilke without any definite result.

Our own troubles in South Africa (troubles which called forth in Belgium a burst of indignation against wholly imaginary British outrages during the war) left us little time to fulfil our Treaty obligations toward the natives on the Congo. In 1903 the matter forced itself to the front again, and a considerable debate took place in the House of Commons, which ended by passing a resolution with almost complete unanimity to the following effect:

"That the Government of the Congo Free State, having, at its inception, guaranteed to the Powers that its native subjects should be governed with humanity, and that no trading monopoly or privilege should be permitted within its dominions; this House requests His Majesty's Government to confer with the other Powers, signatories of the Berlin General Act, by virtue of which the Congo Free State exists, in order that measures may be adopted to abate the evils prevalent in that State."

In July of the same year there occurred the famous three days' debate in the Belgian House, which was really inaugurated by the British resolution. In this debate the two brave Reformers, Vandervelde and Lorand, though crushed by the voting power of their opponents, bore off all the honours of war. M. de Favereau, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, alternately explained that there was no connection at all between Belgium and the Congo State, and that it was a breach of Belgian patriotism to attack the latter. The policy of the Congo State was upheld and defended by the Belgian Government in a way which must forever identify them with all the crimes which I have recounted. No member of the Congo administration could ever have expressed the intimate spirit of Congo administration so concisely as M. de Smet de Naeyer, when he said, speaking of the natives: "They are not entitled to anything. What is given them is a pure gratuity." Was there ever in the world such an utterance as that from a responsible statesman! In 1885 a State is formed for the "moral and material improvement of the native races." In 1903 the native "is not entitled to anything." The two phrases mark the beginning and the end of King Leopold's journey.

In 1904 the British Government showed its continued uneasiness and disgust at the state of affairs on the Congo by publishing the truly awful report of Consul Casement. This document, circulated officially all over the globe, must have opened the eyes of the nations, if any were still shut, to the true object and development of King Leopold's enterprise. It was hoped that this action upon the part of Great Britain would be the first step toward intervention, and, indeed, Lord Lansdowne made it clear in so many words that our hand was outstretched, and that if any other nation chose to grasp it, we would proceed together to the task of

compulsory reform. It is not to the credit of the civilized nations that not one was ready to answer the appeal. If, finally, we are forced to move alone, they cannot say that we did not ask and desire their co-operation.

From this date remonstrances were frequent from the British Government, though they inadequately represented the anger and impatience of those British subjects who were aware of the true state of affairs. The British Government refrained from going to extremes because it was understood that there would shortly be a Belgian annexation, and it was hoped that this would mark the beginning of better things without the necessity for our intervention. Delay followed delay, and nothing was done. A Liberal Government was as earnest upon the matter as its Unionist predecessor, but still the diplomatic etiquette delayed them from coming to a definite conclusion. Note followed note, while a great population was sinking into slavery and despair. In August, 1906, Sir Edward Grey declared that we "could not wait forever," and yet we see that he is waiting still. In 1908 the long looked-for annexation came at last, and the Congo State exchanged the blue flag with the golden star for the tricolour of Belgium. Immediate and radical reforms were promised, but the matter ended as all previous promises have done. In 1909 M. Renkin, the Belgian Colonial Minister, went out to inspect the Congo State, and had the frankness before going to say that nothing would be changed there. This assurance he repeated at Boma, with a flourish about the "genial monarch" who presided over their destinies. By the time this pamphlet is printed M. Renkin will be back, no doubt with the usual talk of minor reforms, which will take another year to produce, and will be utterly futile when reduced to practice. But the world has seen this game too often. Surely it will not be made a fool of again. There is some limit to European patience.

Meanwhile, in this very month of August, 1909, a full year after the annexation by Belgium (an annexation, be it mentioned, which will not be officially recognized by Great Britain until she is satisfied in the matter of reforms), Prince Albert, the heir to the throne, has returned from the Congo. He says:

"The Congo is a marvellous country, which offers unlimited resources to men of enterprise. In my opinion our colony will be an important factor in the welfare of our country, whatever sacrifices we will have to make for its development. What we must do is to work for the moral regeneration of the natives, ameliorate their material situation, suppress the scourge of sleeping sickness, and build new railways."

"Moral regeneration of the natives!" Moral regeneration of his own family and of his own country—that is what the situation demands.

XIII

SOME CONGOLESE APOLOGIES

It only remains to examine some of the Congolese attempts to answer the unanswerable. It is but fair to hear the other side, and I will set down such points as they advance as clearly as I can:

1.—*That the Congo State is independent and that it is no one else's business what occurs within its borders.*

I have, I trust, clearly shown that by the Berlin Treaty of 1885 the State was formed on certain conditions, and that these conditions as affecting both trade and the natives have not been fulfilled. Therefore we have the right to interfere. Apart from the Treaty this right might be claimed on the general grounds of humanity, as has been done more than once with Turkey.

2.—*That the French Congo is as bad, and that we do not interfere.*

The French Colonial system has usually been excellent, and there is, therefore, every reason to believe that this one result of evil example will soon be amended. There, at least, we have no Treaty obligation to interfere.

3.—*That the English agitation is due to jealousy of Belgian success.*

We do not look upon it as success, but the most stupendous failure in history. What is there to be jealous of? Is it the making of money? But we could do the same at once in any tropical Colony if we stooped to the same methods.

4.—*That it is a plot of the Liverpool merchants.*

This legend had its origin in the fact that Mr. Morel, the leader and hero of the cause, was in business in Liverpool, and was afterward elected to be a member of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce. There is, indeed, a connection between Liverpool and the movement, because it was while engaged in the shipping trade there that Mr. Morel was brought into connection with the persons and the facts which moved him to generous indignation, and started him upon the long struggle which he has so splendidly and unselfishly maintained. As a matter of fact, all business men in England have very good reason to take action against a system which has kept their commerce out of a country which was declared to be open to international trade. But of all towns Liverpool has the least reason to complain, as it is the centre of that shipping line which (alas! that any English line should do so) conveys the Congo rubber from Boma to Antwerp.

5.—*That it is a Protestant scheme in order to gain an advantage over the Catholic missions.*

In all British Colonies Catholic missions may be founded and developed without any hindrance. If the Congo were British to-morrow, no Catholic church, or school would be disturbed. What advantage, then, would the Protestants gain by any change? These charges are, as a matter of fact, borne out by Catholics as well as by Protestants. Father Vermeersch is as fervid as any English or American pastor.

6.—*That travellers who have passed through the country, and others who reside in the country, have seen no trace of outrages.*

Such a defence reminds one of the ancient pleasantry of the man who, being accused on the word of three men who were present and saw him do the crime, declared that the balance of evidence was in his favour, since he was prepared to produce ten men who were not present and did not see it. Of the white people who live in the country the great majority are in the Lower Congo, which is not affected by the murderous rubber traffic. Their evidence is beside the question. When a traveller passes up the main river his advent is known and all is ready for him. Captain Boyd Alexander passed, as I understand, along the frontier, where naturally one would expect the best conditions, since a discontented tribe has only to cross the line. To show the fallacy of such reasoning I would instance the case of the Reverend John Howell, who for many years travelled on one of the mission boats upon the main river and during that time never saw an outrage. No doubt he had formed the opinion that his brethren had been exaggerating. Then one day he heard an outburst of firing, and turned his little steamer to the spot. This is what he saw: “They were horrified to find the native soldiers of the Government under the eyes of their white officers engaged in mutilating the dead bodies of the natives who had just been killed. Three native bodies were lying near the river’s edge and human limbs were lying within a few yards from the steamer. A State soldier was seen drawing away the legs and other portions of a human body. Another soldier was seen standing by a large basket in which were the viscera of a human body. The missionaries were promptly ordered off the beach by the two officers presiding over this human shambles.” And this was on the main river, twenty years after the European occupation.

7.—*That land has been claimed by Government in Uganda and other British Colonies.*

Where land has been so claimed, it has been worked by free labour for the benefit of the African community itself, and not for the purpose of sending the proceeds to Europe. This is a vital distinction.

8.—*That odious incidents occur in all Colonies.*

It is true that no Colonial system is always free from such reproach.

But the object of the normal European system is to discourage and to punish such abuses, especially if they occur in high places. I have already given the instance of Eyre, Governor of Jamaica, who was tried for his life in England because he had executed a half-caste at a time when there was actual revolt among the black population, of which he was the leader. Germany also has not hesitated to bring to the bar of Justice any of her officers who have lowered her prestige by their conduct in the tropics. But in the Congo, after twenty years of unexampled horror and brutality, not one single officer above the rank of a simple clerk has ever been condemned, or even, so far as I can learn, tried for conduct which, had they been British, would assuredly have earned them the gallows. What chance would Lothaire or Le Jeune have before a Middlesex jury? There lies the difference between the systems.

9.—*That the British charges did not begin until the Congo became a flourishing State.*

Since the Congo's wealth sprang from this barbarous system, it is natural that they both attracted attention at the same time. Rising wealth meant a more rigidly enforced system.

10.—*That the Congo State deserves great credit for having prohibited the sale of alcohol to the natives.*

It is true that the sale of alcohol to natives should be forbidden in all parts of Africa. It is caused by the competition of trade. If a chief desires gin for his ivory, it is clear that the nation which supplies that gin will get the trade, and that which refuses will lose it. This by way of explanation, not of apology. But as there is no trade competition in the Congo, they have no reason to introduce alcohol, which would simply detract front the quality and value of their slave population. When compared with the absolute immorality of other Congo proceedings, it is clear that the prohibition of alcohol springs from no high motive, but is purely dictated by self-interest.

11.—*That the depopulation is due to sleeping sickness.*

Sleeping sickness is one of the contributory causes, but all the evidence in this book will tend to show that the great wastage of the people has occurred where the Congo rule has pressed heavily upon them.

So I bring my task to an end.

I look at my statement of the facts and I wince at its many faults of omission. How many specific examples have I left out, how many deductions have I missed, how many fresh sides to the matter have I neglected. It is hurried and broken, as a man's speech may be hurried and broken when he is driven to it by a sense of burning injustice and intolerable wrong. But it is true—and I defy any man to read it without rising with the conviction of its truth. Consider the cloud of witnesses. Consider the minute and specific detail in the evidence. Consider the undenied system which must *prima facie* produce such results. Consider the admissions of the Belgian Commission. Not one shadow of doubt can remain in the most sceptical mind that the accusations of the Reformers have been absolutely proved. It is not a thing of the past. It is going on at this hour. The Belgian annexation has made no difference. The machinery and the men who work it are the same. There are fewer outrages it is true. The spirit of the unhappy people is so broken that it is a waste of labour to destroy them further. That their conditions have not improved is shown by the unanswerable fact that the export of rubber has not decreased. That export is the exact measure of the terrorism employed. Many of the old districts are worked out, but the new ones must be exploited with greater energy to atone. The problem, I say, remains as ever. But surely the answer is at hand. Surely there is some limit to the silent complicity of the civilized world?

XIV

SOLUTIONS

But what can be done? What course should we pursue? Let us consider a few possible solutions and the reasons which bear upon them.

There is one cardinal fact which dominates everything. It is that *any* change must be for the better. Under their old savage *régime* as Stanley found them the tribes were infinitely happier, richer and more advanced than they are to-day. If they should return undisturbed to such an existence, the situation would, at least, be free from all that lowering of the ideals of the white race which is implied by a Belgian occupation. We may start with a good heart, therefore, since whatever happens must be for the better.

Can a solution be found through Belgium?

No, it is impossible, and that should be recognized from the outset. The Belgians have been given their chance. They have had nearly twenty-five years of undisturbed possession, and they have made it a hell upon earth. They cannot disassociate themselves from this work or pretend that it was done by a separate State. It was done by a Belgian King, Belgian soldiers, Belgian financiers, Belgian lawyers, Belgian capital, and was endorsed and defended by Belgian governments. It is out of the question that Belgium should remain on the Congo.

Nor, in face of reform, would Belgium wish to be there. She could not carry the burden. When the country is restored to its inhabitants together with their freedom, it will be in the same position as those German and English colonies which entail heavy annual expenditure from the mother country. It is a proof of the honesty of German colonial policy, and the fitness of Germany to be a great land-owning Power, that nearly all her tropical colonies, like our own, show, or have shown, a deficit. It is easy to show a profit if a land be exploited as Spain exploited Central America, or Belgium the Congo. It would always be more profitable to sack a business than to run it. Now, if the forced revenue of the Congo State disappeared, it would, at a moderate estimate, take a minimum of a million a year for twenty years to bring the demoralized State back to the normal condition of a tropical colony. Would Belgium pay this £20,000,000? It is certain that she would not. Reform, then, is an absolute impossibility so long as Belgium holds the Congo.

What, then, should be done?

That is for the statesmen of Europe and America to determine. America hastened before all the rest of the world in 1884 to recognize this new State, and her recognition caused the rest of the world to follow suit. But since then she has done nothing to control what she created. American citizens have suffered as much as British, and American commerce has met with the same impediments, in spite of the shrewd attempt of King Leopold to bribe American complicity by allowing some of her citizens to form a Concessionnaire Company and so to share in the unholy spoils. But America has a high moral sense, and when the true facts are known to her, and when she learns to distinguish the outcome of King Leopold's dollars from the work of honest publicists, she will surely be ready to move in the matter. It was in crushing pirates that America made her first international appearance upon the world's stage. May it be a precedent.

But to bring the matter to a head the British Government should surely act with no further delay. The obvious course would appear to be that having prepared the ground by sounding each of the Great Powers, they should then lay before each of them the whole evidence, and ask that a European Congress should meet to discuss the situation. Such a Congress would surely result in the partition of the Congo lands—a partition in which Great Britain, whose responsibilities of empire are already too vast, might well play the most self-denying part. If France, having given a pledge to rule her Congo lands in the same excellent fashion as she does the rest of her African Empire, were to extend her borders to the northern bank of the river along its whole course until it turns to the south, then an orderly government might be hoped for in those regions. Germany, too, might well extend her East African Protectorate, so as to bring it up to the eastern bank of the Congo, where it runs to the south. With these large sections removed it would not be difficult to arrange some great native reservation in the centre, which should be under some international guarantee which would be less of a fiasco than the last one. The Lower Congo and the Boma railway would, no doubt, present difficulties, but surely they are not above solution. And always one may repeat that any change is a change for good.

Such a partition would form one solution. Another, less permanent and stable—and to that extent, as it seems to me, less good—is that which is advanced by Mr. Morel and others. It is an international control of the river, some provision for which is, as I understand, already in existence. The trouble is that what belongs to all nations belongs to no nation, and that when the native risings and general turmoil come, which will surely succeed the withdrawal of Belgian pressure, something stronger and richer than an International Riverine Board will be needed to meet them. I am convinced that partition affords the only chance of solid, lasting amendment.

Let us suppose, however, that the Powers refuse to convene a meeting, and that we are deserted even by America. Then it is our duty, as it has often been in the world's history, to grapple single-handed with that which should be a common task. We have often done so before, and if we are worthy of our fathers, we will do it again. A warning and a date must be fixed, and then we must decide our course of action.

And what shall that action be? War with Belgium? On them must rest the responsibility for that. Our measures must be directed against the Congo State, which has not yet been recognized by us as being a possession of Belgium. If Belgium take up the quarrel then so be it. There are many ways in which we can bring the Congo State to her knees. A blockade of the Congo is one, but it has the objection of the international complications which might ensue. An easier way would be to proclaim this guilty land as an outlaw State. Such a proclamation means that to no British subject does the law of that land apply. If British traders enter it, they shall be stopped at the peril of those who stop them. If British subjects are indicted, they shall be tried in our own Consular Courts. If complications ensue, as is likely, then Boma shall be occupied. This would surely lead to that European Conference which we are supposing to have been denied us.

Yet another solution. Let a large trading caravan start into the Congoland from Northern Rhodesia. We claim that we have a right to free trade by the Berlin Treaty. We will enforce our claim. To do so would cut at the very roots of the Congo system. If the caravan be opposed, then again Boma and a conference.

Many solutions could be devised, but there is one which will come of itself, and may bring about a very sudden end of the Congo Power. Northern Rhodesia is slowly filling up. The railhead is advancing. The nomad South African population, half Boers, half English, adventurers and lion hunters, are trekking toward the Katanga border. They are not men who will take less than those rights of free entry and free commerce which are, in fact, guaranteed them. Only last year twelve Boer wagons appeared upon the Katanga border and were, contrary to all international law, warned off. They are the pioneers of many more. No one has the right, and no one, save their own Government, has the force to keep them out. Let the Powers of Europe hasten to regulate the situation, or some day they may find themselves in the presence of a *fait accompli*. Better an orderly partition conducted from Paris or Berlin, than the intrusion of some Piet Joubert, with his swarthy followers, who will see no favour in taking that which they believe to be their right.

But whichever solution is adopted, the conscience of Europe should not be content merely with the safeguarding of the future. Surely there should be some

punishment for those who by their injustice and violence have dragged Christianity and civilization in the dirt. Surely, also, there should be compulsory compensation out of the swollen moneybags of the three hundred per cent. concessionnaires for the widows and the orphans, the maimed and the incapacitated. Justice cannot be satisfied with less. An International Commission, with punitive powers, may be exceptional, but the whole circumstances are exceptional, and Europe must rise to them. The fear is, however, that it is the wretched agents on the spot, the poor driven bonus-hunters who will be offered up as victims, whereas the real criminals will escape. The curse of blood and the scorn of every honest man rest upon them already. Would that they were within the reach of human justice also! They have been guilty of the sack of a country, the spoliation of a nation, the greatest crime in all history, the greater for having been carried out under an odious pretence of philanthropy. Surely somehow, somewhere, they will have their reward!

APPENDIX

NOTE I—THE CHICOTTE

Chicotting is alluded to in Congo annals as a minor punishment, freely inflicted upon women and children. It is really a terrible torture, which leaves the victim flayed and fainting. There is a science in the administration of it. Félicien Challaye tells of a Belgian officer who became communicative upon the subject. “One can hardly believe,” said the brute, “how difficult it is to administer the chicotte properly. One should spread out the blows so that each shall give a fresh pang. Then we have a law which forbids us to give more than twenty-five blows in one day, and to stop when the blood flows. One should, therefore, give twenty-four of the blows vigorously, but without risking to stop; then at the twenty-fifth, with a dexterous twist, one should make the blood spurt.” (“Le Congo Français,” Challaye.) The twenty-five lash law, like all other laws, has no relation at all to the proceedings in the Upper Congo.

Monsieur Stanislas Lefranc, Judge on the Congo, and one of the few men whose humanity seems to have survived such an experience, says:

“Every day, at six in the morning and two in the afternoon, at each State post can be seen, to-day, as five or even ten years ago, the savoury sight which I am going to try to depict, and to which new recruits are specially invited.

“The chief of the post points out the victims; they leave the ranks and come forward, for at the least attempt at flight they would be brutally seized by the soldiers, struck in the face by the representative of the Free State and the punishment would be doubled. Trembling and terrified, they stretch themselves face down before the captain and his colleagues; two of their companions, sometimes four, seize them by their hands and feet and take off their waistcloth. Then, armed with a lash of hippopotamus hide, similar to what we call a cow-hide, but more flexible, a black soldier, who is only required to be energetic and pitiless, flogs the victims.

“Every time the executioner draws away the chicotte a reddish streak appears upon the skin of the wretched victims who, although strongly built, gasp in terrible contortions.

“Often the blood trickles, more rarely fainting ensues. Regularly and without cessation the chicotte winds round the flesh of these martyrs of the most relentless and loathsome tyrants who have ever disgraced humanity. At the first blows the unhappy victims utter terrible shrieks which soon die down to low groans. In

addition, when the officer who orders the punishment is in a bad humour, he kicks those who cry or struggle. Some (I have witnessed the thing), by a refinement of brutality, require that, at the moment when they get up gasping, the slaves should graciously give the military salute. This formality, not required by the regulations, is really a part of the design of the vile institution which aims at debasing the black in order to be able to use him and abuse him without fear."—"Le Régime Congolais," Liége, Lefranc.

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