

The Congo State

*A Survey of the Belgian Congo in the Light of
the Suggestion That the United States Accept
It in Payment of Belgium's Debt to Her.*

By
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THE Third Congressional District of Mississippi having adopted a resolution endorsing the acquisition of the Belgian Congo by the United States, (the majority in the convention were Negroes) in payment of Belgium's war indebtedness to America, intelligent and progressive Negroes will no doubt be anxious to know something about this immense territory in Central Africa.

The area of the Congo State is estimated at over 900,000 square miles. (That of Belgium itself is but little over 11,000.) Except for its very short coast line and for a small area on its eastern frontier, the Congo State lies wholly within the basin of the giant Congo system. With the probable exception of Brazil, the Congo State has the finest river system in the world. The possibilities of this system for cheap transportation are little short of marvelous. The Congo River is the largest river of Africa, and exceeded among the rivers of the

world by the Amazon only. It has a length of fully 3,000 miles. With its tributaries it affords over 6,000 miles of navigable waters, which have played an important part in the exploitation of the country under the Belgians. As compared to Liberia with its small extent and few navigable rivers, the Congo State offers magnificent opportunities for rapid and inexpensive development. With its many navigable rivers or "flowing roads," the Congo State has an immense advantage over the average "new" or undeveloped country. As an example, before Colombia, Venezuela or Mexico can be properly developed there must be built up vast and expensive railway systems. In the Congo State, on the other hand, the Belgians found it possible to exploit the country without having to build expensive railways, except in the case of the Cataract Railway which was necessary to connect the navigable reaches of the Middle Congo, above Stanley

Pool, with the navigable Lower Congo and the sea. The intervening distance is unnavigable by reason of a series of cataracts and rapids. Below these rapids the river is navigable 85 miles to the sea. Above the rapids are thousands of miles of navigable waters, both on the main stream and on its great tributaries—the Kasai, the Ubangi, the Aruwimi and the Lomami. To this magnificent system of waters the country owes its unequalled fertility as well as its easy accessibility.

The Congo State is unsurpassed in respect to natural resources by any other part of the world. There are immense forests of "rubber trees," which yield the valuable India-rubber of commerce, timber trees such as mahogany, ebony, teak, lignum vita, African cedars and planes, while oil, borassia and bamboo palms are also abundant. "In many districts the coffee and cotton plants are indigenous and luxuriant. Of fruit trees the banana and plantain are plentiful and of unusual size" (Encyclopaedia Britannica). In minerals the State is peculiarly rich. Iron is widely distributed. There are immense deposits of copper, particularly in the Katanga, where large deposits of tin are also found. Gold mines are already being worked at Kilo. Lead ore, sulphur, mercury and other minerals have been discovered. The chief exports are rubber, ivory, palm oil and palm nuts, copal, cocoa, gold and copper. In 1910 the value of exports was over \$31,000,000, and has since increased.

In addition to its superb river system, the Congo State is also blessed with several large lakes, notably Tanganika, on its eastern frontier. Over Lake Tanganika, the State is connected with the Indian Ocean through the railroad of former German East Africa. There is already a goodly fleet of shipping on Tanganika and a busy commerce.

The rich Katanga district is connected by rail with Rhodesia and South Africa. There are short railway links in several parts of the State, and many good motor roads.

The climate of the Congo State varies according to the topography and altitude of the country. The short coastal zone, like most of the coastal districts of Africa south of the Sahara, is extremely unhealthy for Europeans and will probably be so for the non-acclimated Negroes of North America as well. But the plateaux of the interior, where altitude modifies the influence of latitude, are as healthy as any part of North America. In the Katanga, for instance, the climatic conditions are said to be "well adapted to the needs of the white race." The Katanga is also described by travelers as "a land flowing with milk and honey." It is one of the richest mineral territories of the world. The mountainous Manyema country west of Lake Tanganika is also noted for its invigorating climate. The Uelle District at the northern end of the State is famous both for its good roads and its fine climate. Dr. H. Schubotz, a member of the Duke of Mecklenburg's German Central African Expedition of 1910-1911 reports that "all the Belgian officers that I had met who were experienced travelers in this part of the country (the Uelle District) painted it in the most glowing colors, and assured me . . . that the necessities of life were easily obtained, bananas, maize, goats and even cattle being plentiful, and that the good roads culminated in the well-kept main road connecting the Congo and the Nile." Of the Mangbettu country (in the Uelle District)

the same writer says: "Every one who visits the Mangbettu country agrees in describing it as an earthly paradise. It is about three thousand feet above the sea level, and many swiftly flowing streams rise in the hills and pour their waters into the three great rivers—the Uelle, the Bomokandi, and the Aruwimi. The vegetation is everywhere luxuriant, and in the neighborhood of the rivers the soil is particularly fertile. The Mangbettus are agriculturists only in a comparatively restricted sense, for the natural fertility of the ground causes crops to grow almost of their own accord. Bananas constitute their chief food, also manioc, yams and ground-nuts, with luxuries such as sugar-cane and tobacco."

The population, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, is estimated variously at from 14,000,000 to 30,000,000. (The population of Belgium, with an area of a little over 11,000 square miles, is 7,000,000.) The European population is now over 5,000, with a steady tendency to increase by immigration as a result of the opening of the mines in the Katanga. The natives are of the great Bantu-Negro stock and highly intelligent, and in ancient times developed many vast empires of whose existence and glories recent explorations and excavations attest.

Under American protection, with the Communistic customs of the natives untroubled and with equality of opportunity assured to American Negroes (in the Congo State, if not in the United States); what could not be accomplished in this rich land of incomparable wealth and fertility for the advancement of the Negro in particular and the human race in general?

Musical Department

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out strength of thought or charm of style or the pith of force, wit or humor is as futile as a puff ball in battle. A newspaper must have character, and its character is determined by its editorials. A newspaper without character is a cross between a demagogue and a vagabond.

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Current number of Negro Musician received. As before, Henry T. Grant of Washington, D. C., certainly edits a wonder of a magazine, well worth more than the price (fifteen cents). Members of the National and Local Associations of Negro Musicians should rally to his support. Sooner or later the Negroes of America will be driven to get together. Why not now?

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Questions.

1. What do you know of the musical scales of the Greeks?
2. From whom did the Greeks derive the rudiments of their musical knowledge?
3. In what sense is the term "harmony" employed by the Greek writers?

Read Galatians 5, 1.

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So much as we ourselves consider and comprehend of truth and reason, so much we possess of real and true knowledge.

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The superior control of music over the