Leaving the township of Coquilhatville on the 11th of September I reached Stanley Pool on the 15th September.

I have the honour to be Your Lordship's obedient servant, ROGER CASEMENT.

EDMUND D. MOREL

[Property and Trade versus Forced Production]†

"I admit that labour is imposed upon the natives (le travail est imposé), but it is in the interest of all, and when the work is done, the native is paid."

-M. DE FAVEREAU, Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs

"They are not entitled to anything: what is given to them is a pure gratuity."

—M. SMET DE NAEYER, Belgian Premier

The twistings and wrigglings of Congo State diplomacy, whatever attraction they may have for learned gentlemen like Professor Descamps, who recently devoted a volume to proving "judicially" and to his entire satisfaction that the Congo State represented the perfectibility of human foresight and goodness in the treatment of native races, can only inspire the plain man with contempt and repulsion. Stripped of its trappings, the policy of King Leopold stands

naked before the world, a loathsome thing. It is the old, old story: the story of evil and greed and lust perpetrated upon a weaker people, but never before, assuredly, has the hypocrisy with which such deeds have been cloaked, attained to heights so sublime. Never before has hypocrisy been so successful. For nearly twenty years has the Sovereign of the Congo State posed before the world as the embodiment of philanthropic motive, high intent, humanitarian zeal, lofty and stimulating righteousness. No more marvellous piece of acting has been witnessed on the world's stage than this.

And let us remember that if the story in itself is old, it nevertheless contains distinctive features of peculiarity. The conquistadores of Peru were, after all, the repositories of the national purpose, and their ruthless cruelties were but the concomitants of the national policy. The over-sea slave-trade, first started by Portugal under the plea of religious zeal, and afterwards continued by her, and adopted by other Powers for frankly material reasons, was acquiesced in by the national conscience of the times, and was put to national ends. But what nation is interested in the perpetuation of the system which has converted the Congo territories into a charnel-house? Not Belgium, whose Congo turn-over * * * amounts after nearly twenty years, to I per cent of her total trade! Such a thing has never been known as one man with a few partners controlling, for his benefit and that of his associates, one million square miles of territory, and wielding the power of life and death over many millions of human beings.

And what has rallied to his side the support of a certain class of latter-day colonial politicians and amateurs of all that is bad in the frenzied expansionism of the hour? I do not speak of paid journalistic or legal hacks. How can one explain the fascination which a policy absolutely selfish has nevertheless exercised over the minds of many? To those whose business it has been to follow the evolution of European thought concerning tropical Africa during the last decade, the answer to the question need not be sought for. The Sovereign of the Congo State is the living personation; and the administrative system he has conceived and applied is the working embodiment, of the theory that the Negro will not produce without compulsion; and that if tropical Africa can ever be developed, it must be through a régime of forced labour. Thus has the Sovereign of the Congo State become a sort of point d'appui! for the thoughtless, the inexperienced, the inhumane. He has been the one strong man, resolute in his views, inflexible in carrying them out. His would-be imitators have never been deceived by the "Property" quibble. They have known what his policy meant, although they

[†] Edmund D. Morel, King Leopold's Rule in Africa (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1905), pp. 89–101. Morel (1873–1924) was founder of the Congo Reform Association and the leader in Britain of the campaign against the atrocities in the Congo Free State. He was not an opponent of all forms of imperialism, however, and combined a belief in free trade with a romanticized view of pre-colonial African societies. See Hochschild, pp. 209–224, for a balanced assessment of Morel's achievement and his limitations. Morel's book includes excerpts from a letter Conrad wrote to Roger Casement condemning Leopold's atrocities. See Alan Simmons, this edition, on Morel's use of Conrad in his campaign. The epigraphs to this selection come from the Congo debate in the Belgian parliament (July 1903). Unless indicated, notes are the Editor's.

^{1.} Point of support, prop (French).

may have conveniently shut out some of its unpleasant details from their mental vision. As Mr. Stephen Gwynne has justly remarked, "This new servitude has in it the worst of all elements, in that the slave-owner no longer sees the slaves at work, but sits at home and receives his dividends." But the success of the Sovereign of the Congo State in maintaining with marvellous ability and resource the New African Slave Trade has enlisted the support and the sympathies of all those who, in their haste to get rich, would to-morrow convert the black man throughout Africa, if they could, into a tenant on his own land, a serf doomed to ceaseless and unremunerated toil, in the interests of cosmopolitan exploitationists in Europe.

The peculiar conditions under which the Congo State was created have greatly intensified the mischief, already considerable, of the existence of such a focus of pernicious influence. Its neighbours in Europe and Africa-for if the arms of the Congo State are in Africa, its brain, it cannot be too often stated, is in Brusselshave seen within the last decade the growth of a great revenue through direct "taxation," so-called: the sudden upspringing of an enormously valuable export of raw material which the unremitting labour of literally millions of men could alone have produced; the acquisition of colossal profits by nominally trading Companiesand this while their own possessions were advancing but slowly. They have seen Belgian colonial securities leap to heights undreamt of; fortunes made in a few hours; huge dividends earned after a year or two's working:-all these striking results accomplished by Belgian tyros² at colonisation, by a so-called State run to all intents and purposes by a single man. And so, greatly in ignorance, urged on by designing men who had their own ends to serve, two of the Congo State's neighbours in Africa thought they would try their hands at a system which could yield such magnificent material returns. But being civilised nations, they have found, or are ascertaining, that the system cannot be carried out in practice without unending barbarity and they have but added to their difficulties.

The doctrine of forced production is based upon data deliberately falsified. The whole thing, to put it bluntly, is a lie—a mere excuse to palliate the exploits of the buccaneer. The two essentials of this doctrine are, denial to the native of any rights in his land and in the products of commercial value his land produces; to which is added physical force to compel the native to gather those products for the European.

It is simply untrue that the native of Western Africa will not work unless compelled. Experience, facts, the existence of which cannot

be disputed because they are there palpably and unmistakably before us, disprove the assertion, which is not believed in by those who make it.

Experience, reason, common sense, and justice tells us that it is as wrong as it is foolish, and as foolish as it is wrong, to treat native rights of land-tenure as non-existent. "In dealing with the natives," says Sir William MacGregor, one of our most experienced West African administrators, "one must never touch their rights in land." Similarly we find Doctor Zimmerman, an eminent German colonial authority, declaring that the "protection of property is the surest means" to develop Africa rationally. No student of African questions needs to be reminded of the passionate insistence with which the late Mary Kingsley³ urged the conservation of native land-tenure, with a force of conviction and a scientific perception of the needful which has never been equalled. Wherever native law and custom have been studied in tropical Africa, we find the same doctrine preached, "If you want to govern successfully and justly, respect native land-tenure."

Says M. Bohn, one of the ablest Frenchmen who have handled West African affairs:

"Land laws exist in these countries as they do in Europe, and have not been overthrown by wars of conquest or change of rulers. There is nothing more antagonistic to the native mind, whether in the case of Chiefs or subjects, than to have their rights of land-tenure discussed, let alone taken from them."

Or take another experienced Frenchman, M. Fondère:

"The right to sell his products to whomsoever he may please cannot be denied to the native, because he has always possessed it. Moreover, all stipulations to the contrary notwithstanding, it would be quite illusory to think of taking this right away from the native. That could only be done by force of arms."

Wherever their forms have been examined, native laws of land-tenure have been found to repose upon just principles, to be thoroughly well understood, recognised, and adhered to by the people of the land, and to be worthy of serious and sympathetic study. Tropical Africa is an immensity, and much of it has never been trodden by the white man's foot, let alone observed by the white man's brain, and consequently native laws of land-tenure in a very small portion of it only have been gone into. The results of such

^{3.} Mary Kingsley (1862–1900), author of the best-selling memoir Travels in West Africa (1897).

study as has been made are on record, and not only do they exclude the idea that native land-tenure is the imaginary product of certain so-called negrophiles in this country, but they prove that it is part and parcel of the social organisation of the people, a knowledge of which, as every competent official knows, is essential to good government in tropical Africa. Such knowledge, however, is not essential to slave-driving, and we need not be surprised that the Congo State dismisses the idea that such a thing as *native* rights in land can by any possibility be held to exist at all, and affectedly ignores any other proprietary rights to land but the ones which it has vested in itself or in its associates.

A European Government may be justified in evolving theoretical paper rights of sovereignty over land which—and such land does exist in many parts of tropical Africa-is, through pestilence, intertribal warfare, emigration, or some such cause, really and truly "vacant." It is the clear duty of the European over-lord in tropical Africa to draft such laws and regulations affecting land duly held under native tenure, which shall make it difficult, if not impossible for the native owner to be cheated out of his land by adventurers and swindlers. But to treat native land-tenure as a factor of no account in Afro-European relationship, on the plea that native owner ship disappears with the simple enunciation of a theoretical right of proprietorship in Europe, or by signing a piece of parchment conveying the proprietorship of some thousands of square miles of African territory and all that therein is to a group of financiers, is merely an attempt to cover spoliation, robbery, and violence under legal formulæ.

To sweep away native land-tenure is the preliminary step to forced labour, and forced labour in tropical Africa means the enslavement of the African by the European-armed and European-directed African; and that, in tropical Africa, spells the coming destruction of European effort.

And so, from denying the rights of the natives to their land, we come by natural sequence to the doctrine of forced production. The Congo State claims that, by its system—

"it is permissible for the native to find by work the remuneration which contributes to augment his well-being. 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. It can be imagined that Governments conscious of their moral responsibility do not advocate among inferior races the right to idleness and laziness with, as their consequence, the maintenance of an anticivilising social state." Could hypocrisy reach serener heights? The Congo State's consciousness of "moral responsibility" compels it to keep on a war footing an army of nearly 20,000 men, so that the "regeneration of the race" shall not be hindered by this inbred "idleness and laziness."

The Congo State authorities, however, do not appear to have been particularly impressed with the "laziness and idleness" of the native when, in June, 1896, they attached to their own Bulletin Officiel the report of an agricultural tour undertaken by M. Emile Laurent, before the completion of the Matadi-Stanley Pool Railway. This gentleman was sent on an extensive survey to report upon the "agricultural" possibilities of the country, the characteristics of the various tribes, etc. His testimony to the "idleness" of the native is emphatic. Referring to the region of the Cataracts (Lower Congo, between Matadi and Stanley-Pool), he says:

"It is here that the natives often build their villages; they plant the palm tree and the sofa, which grows well. In this neighbourhood they cultivate sweet potatoes, manioc, and ground-nuts. . . . There is also sandy ground in the district; they form rather large plains, often utilised for the cultivation of the ground-nut. This plant gives abundant crops. Formerly the natives brought the ground-nuts to Matadi to the Dutch factory, in exchange for salt, which they in turn sold to the people of the interior."

Not much sign of "idleness" there, at the time that particular report was penned, apparently. A little later on there was "idleness"; but it was the inertia of death, for death and depopulation had stalked through the land in the shape of forced labour and forced porterage. * * * The ground-nut trade of the Lower Congo region, it is useful to remember, was a very large one before the Congo State assumed the reins of government in the river. It has now virtually disappeared. The Congo Government has recently inaugurated a system of forced labour in the Cataracts region, in order to revive the cultivation of this nut. * * *

We will follow M. Laurent on his journey. Of the Stanley-Pool and Eastern Kwango region he writes as follows:—

"From what Messrs. Costermans and Deghilage, two officials who have visited this district, tell me, the ground rubber covers vast extents of sandy soil, and the natives exploit it on a large scale. Not long ago the rubber from this region was exported to Portuguese Angola, and there was a considerable trade in it. M. Deghilage tells me that he has seen on the native markets of Kenghe-Diadia thirty tons of this rubber exposed for sale every four days."

That was before the Congo State was paramount in the land; the days when the native could sell his produce on legitimate commercial lines; the days when the native either bartered his rubber with other native traders from Portuguese territory, who afterwards sold it to the Portuguese on the coast, or direct with European merchants established in Portuguese territory. Compare the above pass sage-which, mind you, is an official report-with the claim of the Congo State put forward to-day, to have taught the native of the Congo territories how to collect rubber! "The policy of the State." says the official reply to the British Note, "has not, as has been asserted, killed trade; it has, on the contrary, created it." It did not create the ground-nut trade of the Lower Congo, or the rubber trade of the Kwango, on the testimony of its own expert! But it has certainly killed the former; and as for the latter, the rubber which used to belong to the native, and which the native sold, is now the property of the Kwango Trust, for which the native is expected to collect it, on the usual regenerating lines. One fails to detect any signs of "idleness" in the Kwango region at the time of M. Laurent's report.

From the Kwango district, M. Laurent takes us to Lake Leopold II. district. Here we learn that:

"I saw a rubber vine which was ten centimetres in diameter and bore numerous transversal incisions, which is a proof that the natives know and practice the right method of extracting rubber. . . . I also noticed the large quantities of gum-copal which is to be found in the neighbourhood of the lake, and which the natives extract from the ground at the foot of the trees along the river."

Always the same peculiar form of "laziness." The district of Lake Leopold II. is now the centre of the secret revenues department, the *Domaine de la Couronne*, the scene of the horrors and desolation so graphically described by Consul Casement * * *. In the Kasai and Lualaba region the "idleness" of the native becomes still more apparent from this report:

"The population is comparatively dense, and is distinguished for its truly remarkable trading and labour capacities."

* * * The "idleness" of the native, "from the Sankuru River to Nyangwe," is simply deplorable, for, according to M. Laurent:

"Around these truly negro towns the bush is cultivated for a distance of an hour and a half's walk, and the plantations are often as carefully cultivated as they are in Flanders. The natives cultivate manioc, maize, millet, rice, voandzou, and ground-nuts. The latter yield magnificent crops."

So much for the "idleness" of the Congo native, as observed by a trained "agriculturist" employed by the Congo State and as embodied in an official report. It is always well to confound the Congo State authorities with their own published documents; but men who traded with, or travelled among, the Upper Congo natives in many parts of the territory before the grip of Africa's regenerator tightened upon the land, know well that these unfortunate people are no more idle than any of the tropical African peoples, among whom labour other than the labour required for the supply of foodstuffs is not an economic necessity; that their commercial instincts were very highly developed, that they were eager to trade with the white man, and did trade indirectly with the white man; and that, given a fair chance, a large and legitimate trade would have sprung up there, as it has everywhere else in West Africa, when the native has been given markets and decent treatment.

Is this a general statement easy to make, but difficult to prove, so far as the Congo natives are concerned? Let us see. Well, in the first place, we have the official report of M. Laurent. But, after all, that is one man's statement. One of the earlier pioneers of the Congo was M. Herbert Ward. Here is a passage from his book, which rather bears out M. Laurent:

"The rocky banks and tree-hidden bays concealed no worse foe than the keen Bateke or Byanzi trader, thirsting, not for the white man's blood, but for his cotton cloths and bright brass rods, and anxious only to get the better of him in bargaining, when his natural timidity and suspicion had been lulled to sleep by the exhibition of such 'inconsidered trifles' of this description as my fast-failing and scanty stock enabled me to display whenever my own wants or the necessities of my men induced us to call at any of the villages we might pass."

There we have the picture of a riverain population of keen trading instincts.

With Mr. R. E. Dennett, whose ethnological studies are well known, and who is probably an unrivalled authority on the commercial capacities of the Congo tribes, among whom he has lived for some twenty years, I have exchanged occasionally a friendly correspondence. Some few weeks ago I wrote to him—he was then in Africa—pointing out the State's claim to have introduced commerce in the Upper Congo, and asking him what he thought of it. His reply is now before me.

"Certainly most of the trade," he writes, "done in the Lower Congo came from the Upper Congo from beyond the Kasai. In 1879 I assisted —— to trade in Kinsembo, and we bought

quite a lot of ivory and rubber coming in from the Upper Congo. In 1880 I was in Ambrizette, and we bought large quantities of the same produce coming from the same district and passing through 'Moaquita's' town. About 1881 most of the traders on the South-West Coast opened up above Musuku, at Noki, Ango-Ango, Kola-Kola, and Matadi, and as a proof that the Coast trade came, for the most part, from the Upper Congo, it may be stated that as soon as these firms commenced buying at these places great quantities of rubber and ivory, the Coast trade fell off enormously. This can again be proved by the fact that as soon as the Belgian Companies went into the interior (i.e. the Upper Congo, above the Cataracts, which divide the Upper from the Lower Congo, now connected by a railway) the factories below Matadi (i.e. in the Lower Congo, below the Cataracts) fared very badly, only getting that trade which came from the Portuguese Upper Congo."

So, on this evidence—the competency of which no one acquainted with West African affairs will presume to discuss—we find that long before M. Laurent went on his tour of inspection, long before Mr. Ward recorded his experiences, the natives of the Upper Congo were selling large quantities of African produce to the Ba-Congo peoples—ivory and rubber—who in turn carried that produce to the Lower Congo along the caravan road of 200 odd miles, which their feet had trodden and made. And this testimony, let us bear carefully in mind, is amply corroborated in the Protest drawn up by the Belgian companies alluded to in Mr. Dennett's letter * * * when they declared:

"To forbid the natives from selling the ivory and rubber from their forests and plains, which constitutes their hereditary birthright, and in which they have traded from time immemorial, is a violation of natural rights."

Is any more proof needed to confirm the accuracy of my contention, that the natives of the Upper Congo, if they had been decently treated, would have built up a trade of infinitely greater volume, so far as the export of raw material is concerned, than the quantity wrung from them to-day by massacre and outrage; while that produce, legitimately acquired, bartered for, traded for, would have necessitated an import "the counterpart of its value," bringing prosperity to the producer, progress, and development? Whether the reader considers additional proof to be necessary or not, I propose to adduce it, and from no less an authority than the late Sir Henry M. Stanley. Speaking at the London Chamber of Commerce in 1884, Stanley remarked:

"The fixed and permanent way (he was referring to a railway) which would be such a benefit to the Cataract region just described, would be of still greater benefit to the Upper Congo and its plain-like lands, and to the keen, enterprising, high-spirited peoples who occupy them. Even now many a flotilla descends the great river 500 miles down to Stanley-Pool, to wait patiently for months before their goods can be disposed of to the Lower Congo caravans."

That was before a single European merchant had established himself beyond Matadi, and, therefore, long prior to the rubber "faxes" of "Bula Matadi"!5

I began with a Belgian authority to drive my point home. I will end with another. In an official publication printed in Brussels in 1897 (in connection with the Brussels Exhibition of that year), under the auspices of "M. le Commandant Liebrechts," one of the principal Secretaries of State of the Congo Administration in Brussels, I find the following reference to the trading instincts of the great riverain tribe of the Batekes⁶ above Stanley-Pool:—

"To this incessant movement produced for long years is due that, much before the arrival of Europeans, the Congo river tribes as far even as the Aruwimi had European goods which had passed from hand to hand from the Coast, and had acquired extraordinary value."

That is a true statement, and the European merchandise was paid for by the native producer in rubber and ivory. Purchased from the factories in the Lower River by natives, transported by them for 200 weary miles along the Cataracts to the Upper River; sold by them to Upper River natives at the Pool against rubber and ivory, which rubber and ivory was carried down to the factories by the native middlemen who had brought up the goods to buy those articles; while the native middle-men in the Upper River, who, Stanley tells us, sometimes waited "for months," having disposed of their

^{4.} Will any one who was acquainted with those peoples in 1884, and who has seen them recently, apply those adjectives to them now? Mr. Casement's report is peculiarly illuminating on this point. Will the reader bear also carefully in mind the word "occupy," and compare it with that convenient term "vacant" so dear to Congolese jurists? [Morel's

Native name for the Congo State—Stanley's old name. The origin of this name is not generally known. Stanley was so christened in the year 1883 by the inhabitants of the village of M'Fufu near Vivi. One day a man came rushing into the village with the news a horizontal road for the transport, in sections, of his boat the L'en Avant. In the Ba-Congo language, Ntadi means stone; the plural being formed by prefixes, Ntadi is Matadi in the plural. Thus Bula Matadi, the man who broke the stones; and the place note!

^{6.} These Batekes have now nearly all emigrated to the French Congo, abandoning Congo State territory. [Morel's note]

rubber and ivory, started off with full canoes to their customers along the banks of the mighty river and its branches. Such the trade—viewed in its native aspect—which "Bula Matadi" has wiped out by declaring the rubber and ivory of the Upper Congo to be its property, and by compelling the natives to produce it for nothing; such the natural commercial instincts of a people that it has crushed; such the commerce which the Berlin Act was intended not only to preserve, but even to keep unhampered by vexatious customs dues. What are we to think of the honesty of a Government which can declare in 1903 that it has "created trade" and taught the natives the art of collecting rubber, when it has destroyed trade which European enterprise and native energy had established?

Leaving the Congo, the commercial proclivities of the Negro meet us wherever we care to pursue our inquiry, and his alleged idleness vanishes into the mists of mendaciousness whence it originates. Every year the voluntary labour of the West African Negro supplies Europe with nearly four millions sterling of palm-oil and kernels alone, requiring infinite time, infinite toil, and infinite trouble in their preparation; employing hundreds of thousands of African men and women. The voluntary labour of the natives of the French Colony of Senegal and the British Colony of Gambia supplies Europe every year with ground-nuts to the tune of over one million sterling.

Last year the voluntary labour of the natives of the Gold Coast supplied Europe with £100,000 worth of high-class cocoa, and they and their relatives on the French Ivory Coast sent us £500,000 worth of mahogany. From West Africa the Negro sends us even year thousands of tons of precious cabinet woods, involving the expenditure of an enormous amount of physical labour in felling and squaring the logs, and floating them down the rivers and creeks to the sea. Europe, and especially Great Britain, rely to-day upon the voluntary labour of the Negro to relieve the intolerable strain of the cotton industry, groaning under the dead weight of dependence upon America for the source of the raw material, and the Negro is responding right gallantly to the demand. After only a few months effort, Lagos is beginning to send us cotton, and Nigeria will do so just as soon as we can give her the light railway that she needs. In the five years ending with 1900 the trade of the British West African Possessions amounted to 43 millions sterling.

These are facts, and they are not got over by calling a man who points them out a "sentimentalist." But the apostles of coercion, and the upholders of the New Slave Trade, do not care for facts, they prefer legal conundrums in which to wrap their selfish creed, and give it an appearance of respectability. Now, as in the days when the conscience of the world awoke to the iniquities of the

over-sea slave-trade, we are flooded with hypocritical arguments drawn from false premises, with specious pleadings and judicial compositions designed to confuse the judgment, cloud the understanding, and distort the teachings of history. The Congo State, as I have said before, is the incarnation of all this callous and pernicious humbug. We have fought it, a handful of us, from different standpoints for many a long year, and at last we have dragged the Government and public opinion along with us. We must go on fighting it until the diseases it has introduced into Africa and the virus with which it has temporarily saturated a portion of European thought are utterly destroyed. The one bulwark of the Negro in tropical Africa against the worst excesses of European civilisation is the determination of Europe to conserve his rights in his land and in his property. In helping him to develop his property on scientific lines; in granting him internal peace; in proving to him that he is regarded not as a brute, but as a partner in a great undertaking from which Europe and Africa will derive lasting benefit—Europe will be adopting the only just, right, and practical

That was the policy laid down by the Powers in Berlin in 1885. Any other policy is doomed to ultimate failure and disaster to Europe, and must result in untold misery to the peoples of tropical Africa. Any other policy must be resisted to the uttermost by all those who believe in the great future which is in store for tropical Africa wisely administered by the white man, and who have some regard for the honour of Europe and the just and humane treatment of the races of Africa.

ADAM HOCHSCHILD

At the beginning of August 1890, several weeks after he wrote his furious (Open Letter) to king Leopold II, George Washington Williams finished the long return journey down the Congo River to the station of Kinshasa, on Stanley Pool Either in the waters of the pool or when docked on the riverbank at Kinshasa, Williams's steamboat crossed paths with a boat that was at the start of its voyage upstream, the Roi des Belges, a long, boxy sternwheeler with a funnel and pilot house on its top deck. Had Williams managed to catch a glimpse of the other boat's crew, he would have seen a

Chrocogainst honoring "Coined phase

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