SOUTH AFRICA Drying Up

CONCERNING a specific instance of the continuous decrease of surface water from the earth, especially in Asia and Africa, the "dry continents," Advocate Eugene N. Marais, R. J. P., writes from Rietfontein, Waterberg, South Africa, an astonishing article recently published in a report of the Smithsonian institution.

After mentioning some of the general facts relative to the drying up of the whole earth, which, according to the French astronomer Flammarion, will ultimately cause the end of the world, the author cites a number of appalling instances of the increasing dryness of Africa. Ngami, a real lake less than fifty years ago, is now no more than a marsh threatened with speedy extinction, and Lake Rudolph is rapidly shrinking, which fact is alarming when it is realized that this body of water feeds the Nile and waters Egypt. Mr. Marais believes false the old doctrine regarding the perfect cycle of moisture—evaporation and precipitation being equal—and thinks that the earth is sucking up moisture like a gigantic sponge.

PRIMITIVE IRRIGATION

The name Waterberg was given originally when this country was very fertile, watered by lakes, streams, springs and dotted with marshes. According to the writer, its name was synonymous with a sort of lotus land of fertility; it literally overflowed with milk, honey and fruits. It was also the last stronghold of the big game of the northern Transvaal. Today, after the culminating drought of 1913, it is practically a desert, with dried up water courses and springs, dead orange groves, some of them over fifty years old, trees three centuries old now lifeless, desolate pasture lands devoid of cattle and other life. There is no game, either birds or animals, and the fields where fat crops once grew are now parched and dead.

No Running Water There.

It is hard to believe, but true, that in the entire district of Waterberg, which is larger than the Free State, there was last year no running water, and in the north of the district there is a tract over 4,000 square miles in extent where there is no single drop of water, running or stagnant, above the surface of the ground. The great Limpopo itself is dry for all the distance that its course covers in this district and only by digging deep in its sandy bed can drinking water be found. Even after a very heavy rain in the neighborhood of its source, which flooded its tributaries at the time, the stream reached but a little way down the Limpopo and not one drop of the water which fell in the upper regions reached the sea. All lost in the burning sands of the river's bed. Only the fairly numerous thermal springs of the district remain unattacted by the drought and on them the dwellers depend for drinking and irrigation. The famous sweet grass of this region is nearly gone, though in its place has come a coarser "sour" grass with peculiar drought resisting qualities.

The life history of this "sour" grass is only a fair tale of botany. Its seeds are hardly specialized having a tuft coiled like a torpedo with a long, tapering tail.

An opportunity of seeing a similar process of plant life is offered when one shears a sheep in case of these seeds [illegible] by the wind. [illegible] is particular or even [illegible] the seeds [illegible] to [illegible] north practically a desert. Over everything lies the silence of absolute lifelessness. It seems as if the desert had reached out an arm and taken unto itself for all time this great extent of once fertile country, where for four and a half hours daily in no spot is the temperature less than 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

The terrible heat and the absence of all moisture cause singular effects; the hair is so electrified that when stroked lightly a crackling shower of sparks is evoked, and the finger nails become so brittle they break constantly; both hair and nails seem to have lost all power of growth. All celluloid substances break up, and rubber becomes a useless stringy mass. The horses' swishing tails crackle fiercely and stand out in dishevelled bushes, each individual hair as if wired, and in the night their flanks seem to be surrounded by miniature auroras of electric discharges.

The big game have nearly all disappeared, most of them having trekked to more fertile country. Some of the remaining animals have had to change their natural habits; the nocturnal ant-bear is forced to search its food in broad daylight on account of the fact that the ants in the hard ground can not be dug out during the night. Most nocturnal beasts of prey also hunt during the day as well as by night; some leopards raided a nearby camp in the early afternoon, and the baboons, usually so afraid of the dark, seem never to sleep, but walk about both day and night in search of food in any form. A crocodile was unearthed by the author's party when digging for water in the dried up stream, four and a half feet beneath the surface. This specimen was very long and fresh, although apparently lifeless, and, together with some fish which were found near by, was revived in a short time by the application of water. Animals not well acclimated to life in the water follow those more fortunate and use their water horse; some of the warthogs are followed all day long by a retinue of other animals awaiting an opportunity to slake their thirst. The village of the district known as the terrible hunting dogs, drive day and night, attacking all animals and are credited with having slaughtered fifteen antelope, previously so [illegible] as [illegible]

INDUSTRIAL POLAND HAS MANY TROUBLES

When the Shortage in Coal is Overcome Raw Materials Scarce.

Lodz, Poland, Dec. 28.—When the Germans first occupied Lodz permanently they found the industries in a bad way because of a shortage of coal, due to the crippling of the mines by dynamiting, and to the difficulty of getting freight cars in which coal could be imported. This difficulty was overcome, but coal no sooner began to come in than a shortage of raw materials again tied things up, and, if it continues, will bring every factory in Lodz to a standstill not later than March it is estimated. If this condition of affairs comes it is feared that the present very great need will increase, and that thousands will face actual starvation.

Lodz in the past has been a large importer of cotton, both from America and from Turkestan. Neither market is now open to them. The little that remains from old supplies is being doled out in quantities sufficient to allow a few of the mills to operate three days a week. About 40 per cent of the full quota of laborers in the textile mills now work 30 hours a week.

In addition to the food, and fuel shortage that exists today everywhere in Poland, Lodz was particularly handicapped from the very start by a shortage of cash. The Russians had taken every rouble they could lay their hands on, and such factories as were running could pay off their hands only with difficulty.

The city accordingly was necessitated to issue paper currency in 20 and 50 kopeks, and one and five rouble notes. A total of 12,000,000 roubles was put out. Of this sum, 1,650,000 roubles were issued on the strength of the promised loan of 2,000,000 roubles from the Russian government. This sum had been promised before the German occupation to help Lodz bear the expenses of the war, but only 350,000 roubles had been paid.

The balance of the issue was guaranteed by industrial firms and merchants, who were required to back the paper with securities and credit in twice the sum of the issue. This paper flows back and forth and temporarily supplies the needs of the population, but will be taken up gradually by the notes of the proposed national bank which is to be established for all Poland about the first of January.

Lodz's debt gradually piled up because with the withdrawal of the Russians all taxation ceased. The Germans found it out of the question to impose taxes for the simple reason that the people had no money with which to pay them. In place of collecting taxes in fact, the Germans have had to pay out some 3,000,000 marks to the wives of reservists and pensioners, whose incomes from the Russian government have stopped, and in addition are feeding between 100,000 and 150,000 of the population.

A force of 900 German-speaking Polish policemen has been appointed to take the places of those who fled with the Russians. The old force consisted, on paper and the payrolls, of 400 men, in actuality of only 300, hardly one of whom remained on December 6, 1914.

Until February of this year the administration of Lodz was purely military. Hindenburg at that time ordered the creation of a city government after the German model, with a mayor and a city council. This latter body, which at the start is to be appointed, eventually will be elected from the Polish, German and Jewish population. There are at present some 500,000 persons living in Lodz and its suburbs. About one-third are Jews, 100,000 Germans and the balance Polish.

The industrial crisis has been helped by the emigration of some 30,000 Lodz workers to Germany, where working conditions are more favorable than ever before in history. Thirty thousand, however, are little better than a drop in the bucket in a city where not only men but women and children have always been workers.

The government has installed both a coal and a meat monopoly, for the purpose not only of regulating the distribution of the available supply but also to stop the pernicious activity of speculators. The police president of Lodz, von Oppen, has charge of the distribution of coal to wholesalers and factories, while the civil magistrate of Lodz watches over the distribution to the people direct.

New Ills Sterilized Eggs.

In Farm and Fireside we read of the latest thing in sanitation:

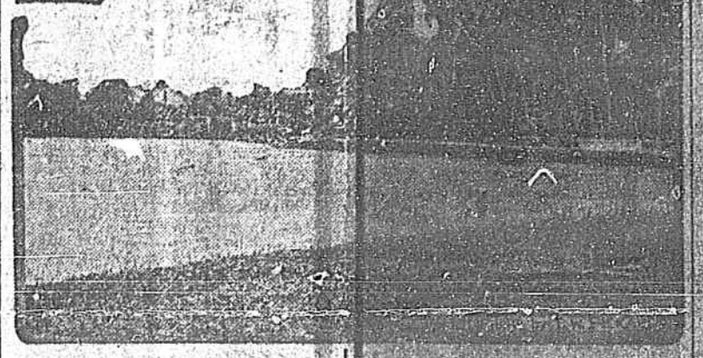
"A sterilized egg company has been formed at Alexandria, Minnesota, for treating eggs so they will keep for a so-called indefinite period. The machine which does the work destroys the embryo of the egg, making it infertile, sterilizes the shell and then hermetically seals it to prevent shrinkage by evaporation, and also to keep germs from reaching the contents.

"The machine has a capacity of twelve thousand dozen a day. Eggs in California are said to have been thoroughly satisfactory. A government expert is now investing the matter to learn whether the new method is likely to affect seriously the egg trade of the country."

The American Language.

The American language is [illegible] Lansing Freeman, of Detroit, [illegible] as much a possession of our charming secretary of state [illegible] his departure for Mexico, Cuba and Canada.

Island of Enchantment



AN ISLAND of fragrant spices, a land of enchantment that fulfills the romantic dreams of youth, a veritable paradise of emerald verdure, bordered by the sheen waters of a tropical sea—that is Ceylon. And of Colombo, what can be said? It is there that the world travelers from the four winds meet; it is there that one hears the languages of almost every land in the two hemispheres spoken, writes W. D. Hornaday in Grit.

In no city of the world is there to be found day by day a more cosmopolitan transient population than in Colombo. It is a port of call for many steamships that ply regularly between points in the far East and Europe, and between Australia, New Zealand and Europe. It is there one meets elephant and tiger hunters of India, tea planters, spice buyers, officers of the army and navy of many nations, wool buyers who pass to and fro between England, France and the far-off lands of Australia and New Zealand. The island kings—the cocoanut princes—from the coral dots of the Indian ocean and the South Seas gather there for a season of social pleasures; the American millionaire comes into the harbor in his yacht and lends to the gayety of the scene ashore by the prodigal way in which he scatters his money around.

Every Singalese man and boy is a natural merchant and trader. From the youngest to the oldest they ever have an eye to business. Even the street arabs—little fellows not yet in their 'teens—have an ability to size up the white visitor with a degree of accuracy that is almost uncanny.

On the way to the post office I was surrounded and followed by crowds of men and boys, all wanting me to step in their shops. It is remarkable how they could tell I was an American I am unable to say, but it was not unusual for one of them to say:

"Marster, step in and let me show you things very cheap; make most beautiful present for marster's family in America."

I said to one of them: "What do you mean by calling me an American? I live in Bombay."

The youngster smiled knowingly and replied:

"Oh, no; me know marster is American—me can tell."

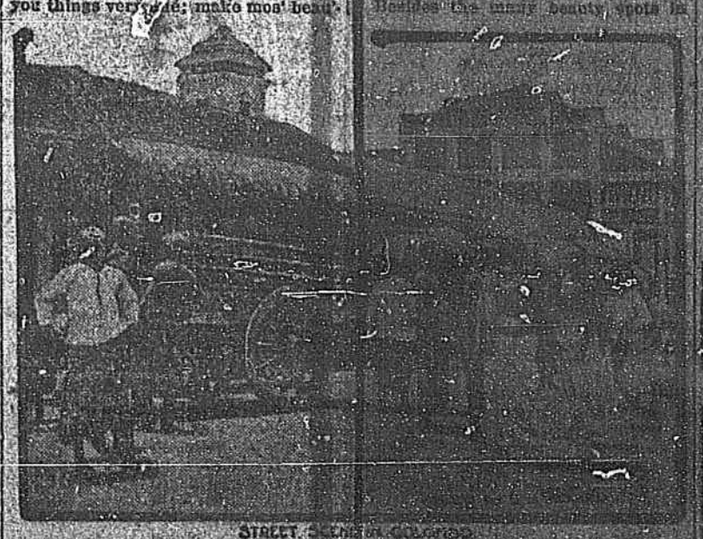
"How can you tell?" I asked.

The fellow shrugged his shoulders and smiled, but did not explain the secret.

Seeing the Sights of Colombo.

Coming to a long row of waiting rickshaws I selected one. The driver of the vehicle came running up and I gave him directions that I wanted to go to Mount Lavinia, the Cinnamon gardens, the Buddhist temples and through different parts of the city, the charge was a shilling an hour. We started off at a brisk trot and kept up for several miles.

Reggan described me for guide along the route and once in a while a boy would throw a lot of fruit into my rickshaw and then trot along for some distance begging for a cent. The first stop was at the Kalligana Buddhist temple. I alighted and spent a few minutes there. I was met by a priest in robes, who led me to a large, dimly lighted room, where there was a colossal [illegible] of Buddha. [illegible] I expected to see [illegible] seen [illegible] that I must [illegible]



STREET SCENE IN COLOMBO

[illegible] the holy place. In the first room was an image of Buddha. It is about twenty-five feet long and in a reclining position. Upon the walls at this and other rooms of the temple are paintings representing various phases of the religion. From the temple I was escorted to another building that is used as the Oriental college and library. It was a stuffy, ill-smelling room where I was shown ancient emblems and rolls and shelves of books. As I was ready to leave, the man said: "Marster will now give me a present."

I greatly enjoyed the experience of a visit to the big native market. Strange to western eyes were most of the products on sale there. At one of the stands was a dealer who was calling in a loud voice something like this, as he handed oranges to a customer:

"Ely, ely, ely, ily, ily, ily, oly, oly, oly."

To my ears it sounded like an attempt at singing.

"What kind of song is that fellow singing?" I asked the interpreter who accompanied me.

"Tis's not singing, sahib; he is counting the oranges," replied my man.

It was too good a joke on me to keep, and soon the crowd around the stand was laughing at my mistake.

There are motor cars to be had for hire in Colombo, but the favorite way of going is in a many-colored rickshaw or in a little cart which is pulled by what is known as a "trotting hackery," that animal is a little bullock that travels about twelve miles an hour. The rickshaw men have a peculiar custom. They are quick to discover a newcomer, whether their services are needed or not. I found this out when I [illegible] on his fee. Unless I kept [illegible] to keep up his pace he followed me [illegible]

Kandy, the "Hill Capital."

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