

**LIFE IN THE TROPICS
WILL BE CLOSELY STUDIED**

Can White Man Make Home There?

SCIENTISTS TO KNOW

Congress Will Assemble in Hawaii Next Summer to Gather Important Information.

Washington, Jan. 27.—Can the white man live in the tropics? Can he raise his children there without detriment to their health and that of succeeding generations?

This is one of the important questions which will probably be considered by a congress of distinguished scientists in Hawaii next summer, according to Alexander Hume Ford head of the Pan-Pacific union with headquarters in Honolulu. He is now in the United States arranging for the scientific conference. It will probably be organized by Prof. H. E. Gregory of Yale, who will be given an appropriation of \$10,000 for the purpose of calling together about 40 scientists qualified to study and discuss the problems confronting the islands which border upon the Pacific.

Although a great deal has been said

and written on the subject of the white man's health in tropical lands it has never been determined exactly what effects, good or bad, the tropical climate has on the man with a light skin, nor to what those effects are due, nor how they may be guarded against. And the question is becoming a more important one every day, because the man who wants to own land and establish himself in a new country is looking more and more to the tropics. Take the situation in this country. Our own West longer offers to the home seeker any considerable bodies of free or cheap agricultural lands. On the other hand in Central and South America, in Mexico and such islands as Santo Domingo there is vast undeveloped wealth of the very kind that drew adventurous men to the West 50 years ago—rich land that has never been plowed, undiscovered mineral wealth, virgin forests.

Americans have been going to these countries as salesmen, promoters, and especially as investors of capital seeking concessions, for a great many years. But they have not been going as home seekers. In the first place, unsettled political conditions have kept them out, and in the second place they have feared the climate and the tropical diseases.

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are becoming steadily less friendly to exploiting capital, but they are not shutting the doors to the man who wants a home. Mexico, for example, if the present government had its way would make it nearly impossible for large capital to exploit Mexican resources, but it would not make it impossible or even difficult for a man to get a farm and establish a home. Some thing of the same tendency may be noted in other Caribbean countries. In all of these countries political conditions are pretty sure to be stabilized in the relatively near future and there is some reason to believe that they will be stabilized in a way more acceptable to the little man looking for a home than to the big man looking for a fortune.

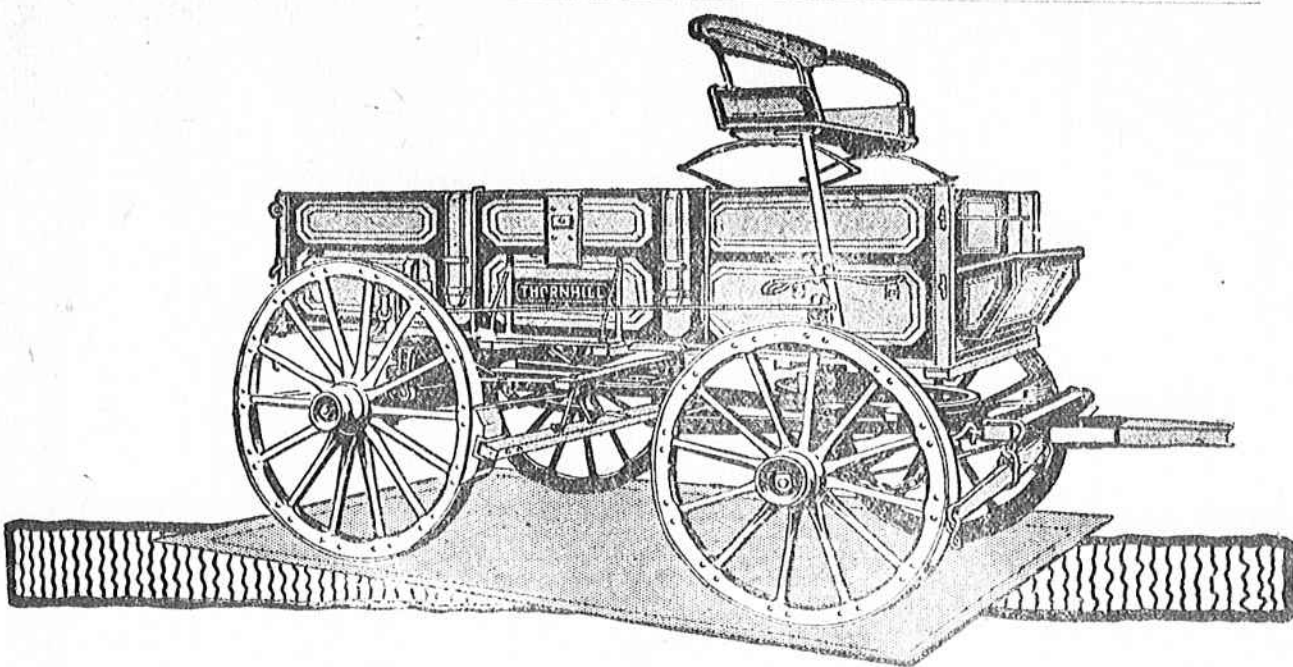
It should be said at once that there is much evidence against the tropics as a place for white men to live. The white man who goes to the tropics to live without very carefully considering the conditions he is to face and how he may best guard against them is very likely to meet with disaster. And he should be still more circumspect about taking his wife and children to the Southern countries.

It used to be the well recognized tropical diseases that kept white men away from the equatorial wealth. Yellow fever and malaria long closed many tropical countries to Europeans. They defeated the French in Panama. Then Colonel Gorgas went down there and showed that yellow fever and malaria could be defeated, too. He wrote a book in which he prophesied that the tropics, freed of these diseases, would become the bread basket of the world.

But it soon became apparent that the problem was not so simple. The British in India had also done much to ward conquering tropical disease, but they had found that even when free from specific disease, it was hard to raise children in tropical India. Those stationed in the hottest parts of India found that unless they sent their children back to England before they were seven years of age, the children often died, and still more often grew up to nervous wrecks. It has been said by some authorities and denied by others that there is no third generation of Englishmen in India. In other words a man may go to a tropical country and lead a fairly healthy life there but his children may show the bad effects of the environment, and their children, if there are any, may show them still more. Some authorities say that very often white people born in the tropics do not have any children. This is ascribed by some observers to the action of the ultra-violet ray, to which the brilliant sunshine of the tropics greatly exposes a man. White men are native to a climate in which the sun shines less than half the time, and even then is often partly veiled by mist or cloud. Continual exposure to the ultra-violet or actinic ray is unnatural to him, just as continual exposure to the x-ray is intolerable to any human being. It is interesting to note that many men who have worked with the x-ray without adequate protection have been thereby rendered sterile.

Whether the effect is due wholly or even mainly to the actinic ray or not it has been pretty well established by experience that continuous life in equatorial countries is bad for the white man. No white man should go to such a country unless he is assured of ample vacations in more northerly lands. He should be especially careful about accepting work in tropical countries which exposes him much to the sun.

But while parts of the tropics are probably uninhabitable to the white man, and while continuous life there may be dangerous for him there are various mitigating conditions to be considered. The actinic ray may destroy the nervous system, if the exposure is long enough, but in small doses it is evidently a stimulus. Every one who has taken a winter vacation trip to the tropics is aware of this peculiar stimulating effect. A sense of delightful physical well being is experienced by almost anyone on first going to the tropics, and a short visit there is almost always beneficial to the health. Suppose, then, that a man owned a coconut planta-



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tion somewhere in the West Indies which required his attention only five or six months in the year and enabled him to go to New England for the summer and fall. Such a life might be far healthier than one all of which was spent in the variable climate of the Middle Atlantic states.

Then again there are tropical lands which have mountains that reach literally out of the tropics by reason of their great elevations. And there are other tropical lands, especially islands which are so tempered by sea breezes that their climates are not really tropical at all.

Hawaii is an excellent example of this latter class. The island is just within the tropics, in the first place, and it is cooled by winds in the second. Its temperature varies between 65 and 85 degrees. There is now a fourth generation of white Americans in Hawaii, and this generation is not only healthy but has produced a number of men of very exceptional physique. American boys of this generation in Hawaii are among the star athletes of Yale and Harvard.

Mr. Ford believes that these young men, who seem decidedly to have gained rather than lost in strength and stamina by being born in the tropics, illustrates a method by which the white man may adjust himself to tropical climates when they are not too severe.

Mr. Ford firmly believes that the actinic ray is a large factor in the effect which the tropics have on the man with a light skin. He also believes that this light ray up to a cer-

tain point, is a valuable stimulus. He says with regard to himself for example, that he can do much more work in Hawaii than in the United States, and that he needs only five hours sleep out of every 24 there, while in this country he requires, or at least takes, a great deal more.

The reason that negroes, Polynesians and other peoples native to tropical countries are not affected adversely by the actinic ray is that the dark color of their skins neutralizes its effect. Now the young Hawaiian athletes of Anglo-Saxon blood, who have spent so much of their time riding the surf, with their skins exposed to the full action of the sun, seem not to have suffered thereby. And it is noticeable that all of them are tanned to a very dark hue—darker indeed, than the native Polynesians. In other words, provided he can endure the initial exposure to the sun the white man may protect himself in the tropics by acquiring the dark skin of the native. The Englishman in India seeks to survive by wearing a pith helmet and staying in the shade as much as possible. The American in Hawaii has reversed the process by going right out into the sunlight and adjusting himself to it.

Of course this latter process would not be possible in a country like India where exposure to the sun usually results in death by sunstroke. But it suggests that in many of the more healthful tropical countries the white man may adjust himself to his environment, not only without damage, but with positive benefit. The whole sub-

ject is one upon which nothing positive can be said, and of which a careful scientific study should be made. Mr. Ford believes that a study of the fourth generation of Americans in Hawaii should now be made. Meantime, any American who contemplates going to a tropical country to live should realize that he faces a radical change of environment and one which can safely be made only with a full knowledge of its conditions.

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