

## XXXII

### CAN THE WHITE MAN AND HIS WIFE FLOURISH IN THE TROPICS

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*"We belong to that race whose obvious task it is . . . to spread civil liberty . . . in every part of the earth, on continent and isle."* FRANCIS LIEBER, "Civil Liberty and Self-government," p. 21.

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Railways and Sanitation Essentials to the White Man's Happiness  
in the Tropics—Heat Itself not Dangerous

UP to within this generation, which we may roughly designate as the period of universal steam communication, white man's efforts in the tropics have been largely measured by English experience in the East Indies and Africa under circumstances not calculated to give this question a fair test. Up to 1855, British India was a practical monopoly in the hands of a vast chartered trading company, which built forts, maintained troops on land and sea, and sent out agents, with no other object than producing dividends for shareholders in London. Before the general use of steam in those regions, when a journey home around the Cape meant the best part of a year at sea, a colonial official was forced to remain at his post, however unhealthy it might be; for it was not possible, as it is to-day, to run off by rail for change of air in the hills, or by the sea-side.

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So it was with the Philippines. The white merchants there did not dare take their wives out with them, because of the monotonous conditions enforced by isolation. In the early part of this century invalids from the East Indies had the Cape of Good Hope as their nearest recruiting station, which, though less than half the distance to Europe, was yet a long and costly journey at best. To-day the merchant of Singapore or Manila can take an annual holiday with his wife and children to many bracing resorts, comparatively near at hand; as, for instance, the hill country about Nagasaki, the shores of the Gulf of Pitchili, or, due south to New Zealand. Even the journey to Europe is only thirty days, as against a hundred and thirty at least, fifty years ago, in the days of sailing ships.

The great Dark Continent was, in my childhood, a land of horror, into which a few daring, if not reckless, enthusiasts had penetrated, only to emerge with tales of pestilence and human savagery far from encouraging to would-be colonists. Here and there along the coast were trading stations, to which men ventured at a very high salary, with a clear understanding that the chances were rather opposed to their coming home alive.

It is also notable that while the closing years of the eighteenth century were almost exclusively occupied in savage struggles for the possession of colonies, the close of the Napoleonic wars left Europe, and notably England, strangely apathetic on the subject. In the great "Seven Years' War," which closed in 1763, half the world had been ablaze; war was waged in Canada,

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the West Indies, India, and the Malay Islands; every sea was alive with the war-ships of European powers, staking their last drop of blood in the violent acquisition of mainly tropical territory. Barely two generations later, and we find England declining to accept New Zealand when offered to her by English settlers; treating Australia as a financial burden, useful only as a dumping-ground for criminals; discussing in Parliament whether India be worth defending; questioning the value of Hong-Kong, and even refusing to be responsible for territories in South Africa which in 1900 were deemed worth fighting for with 200,000 British troops.

This strange apathy regarding colonies which ruled from the close of the Napoleonic wars down to the time when the German Government provoked the partition of Africa in 1890, was based in the first instance upon the general depreciation in value of tropical land, consequent upon anti-slavery agitation. This sentiment was fortified by Englishmen like Cobden and Bright, who opposed Imperialistic measures. But, above all, at least so far as the tropics were concerned, the home country felt it to be a waste of money to bother about countries that promised returns only to a few traders and missionaries. To-day, however, men yet in the prime of life can mark a revolution on this subject, and we need not be more than fairly sanguine to anticipate a still greater one in the lives of our children. We have seen equatorial countries once condemned as uninhabitable grow to contain a busy and vigorous white population. Let us give credit to the brave Boers who first demonstrated that the white

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man could bring up large families and found healthy communities in the interior of South Africa. Natal, on the coast, is a tropical country, yet, thanks to an excellent sanitary administration, its white population is flourishing. The citizen of Durban can in a few hours take his wife and family to an elevation of four or five thousand feet, where the nights are dry and cold as in the Adirondacks. This was impossible ten years ago, and in the days when you and I went to school this colony was looked upon as unfit for white habitation. So far as I know, Natal is the only tropical colony in Africa where white people live in comfort with wife and children; but if others do not, it is not because God has been unkind to them, but that they have not shown the same energy in draining the land and building railways to the high lands of the interior.

In British Guiana, where Demerara suggests a tropical Holland—a colony showing its Dutch ancestry by the excellence of its canals and the tidiness of its streets—the white man is within seven degrees of the equator, between the Amazon and the Orinoco, yet such eminent authorities as Darnell Davis have given me assurance that generations of white people have flourished there, thanks to the local sanitary condition fortified by the constant breezes of the Atlantic Ocean. On the occasion of my visit to that colony I found no inconvenience from moving about at night in a manner that would have stretched me out with a fever in French Guiana, which is practically the same geographical bit of country. British Guiana is the Natal of South America, a clean, healthy, well-governed oasis in a wilderness of alleged republics. She enjoys

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the advantage of rapid and frequent intercourse with Barbados and the rest of the world, but it would be of enormous service if a railway were constructed through Demerara to the mountains at the head waters of the Esequibo; for then her people would have the means of rapidly reaching a bracing mountain air at comparatively slight cost of time and money. Hong-Kong and Manila are practically in the same latitude, so far as the thermometer is concerned, and, therefore, what the white man could do in the one he should be able to do in the other as well. The British Government occupied Hong-Kong in 1841, less than sixty years ago, and of course it is too soon to generalize. But so far as the testimony of old merchants is concerned, it is an island where white children are born and reared, and while the climate is not to-day as favorable to them as that of the mother country, still each day brings about an improvement in the means of making life there better worth living. In the early years of that colony the English Government seriously discussed its total abandonment on the ground of its unhealthiness. Since then drainage and an excellent water supply have made the place satisfactory for short residence, while a railway, which runs to the top of the mountain at the centre of the island, now enables the white merchant to keep his wife and children in a bracing atmosphere, to which he resorts every night after business hours.

At Manila, the white man finds life agreeable enough, provided his house be on the shore where he gets the benefit of the breezes from the bay. But we need more than this; and the Government should immediately

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construct and operate, for military as well as other purposes, a railway with frequent and rapid train service to the mountains in the neighborhood. Our fleet and army need a health resort in the tropics, and the money spent in this way would be saved a hundred-fold by the increased efficiency of our forces in Chinese waters. The white merchant needs a comfortable home for his wife and children, and no step taken by our Government would tend more to the civilization of the country, than properly organized white homes. The white man in the Philippines has so far given the natives a sad picture of immorality—of concubinage with native women—of gambling and drunkenness. This state of things we are apt to attribute to the climate, when, in fact, it proceeds from our own indifference to sanitary laws. During my stay in Manila, at the time of the war with Spain, I found the hospitals where American troops were cared for—to say nothing of the barracks—so foul, from a sanitary point of view, that an epidemic should reasonably have been anticipated. I tried to paddle my canoe through the canals opening from the Pasig River, and at points where the stench arrested my further progress mothers were bathing their children and American volunteers were absorbing foul germs. Is it a wonder that mortality is high at such places? Is it not a miracle that any of our troops should return alive?

We hear much of the tropical communities where quarantine takes the place of sanitation, but the newspapers have no time to tell of the many quiet and prosperous communities that clean their streets and flush their drains, and therefore live in the tropics as well

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as in Boston or Liverpool. Manila, under Spanish rule, was a filthy, unhealthy place, and it will remain so under American rule unless our administration profits by experience.

In the West Indies, Havana has been in a chronic state of contaminating filthiness ever since it had enough people there to poison the soil, the water, and the air. The harbor has no tide worth mentioning, and the filth that flows into it remains at the doors of the city. Cuba needs a strong sanitary government in Havana, as do the Philippines. In both cases railway construction in all directions should be regarded as the most effective means of developing the interior and asserting the beneficent supremacy of our Government. We should be able to do with ease in Cuba and Porto Rico what other white men have done in other parts of the West Indies, notably at Jamaica, St. Kitts, Antigua, and Barbados, where white Englishmen live and have lived for many generations.

Nor let us omit to notice one factor that has injured the West Indies no less than English possessions in other tropical countries. It has been the policy of the Crown to fill colonial offices very largely by men born in the home country. This has its advantages for certain high posts where it is necessary that an executive officer be raised well above local party differences. But it is the part of political wisdom to encourage as far as possible the colonists themselves to take an interest in their own government, by opening to them careers in their own colony, rather than by forcing them to look elsewhere for recognition. While England has for many years been sending to

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the West Indies officials from the home country, those islands have been at the same time furnishing to the United States a number of creole emigrants that have risen to eminence, and would have been most useful colonial officials had the opportunity offered itself to them.

Officials who come to the West Indies from Europe, remain as a rule but for a limited number of years, cannot identify themselves closely with the colony, do not as a rule bring a family with them, and frequently carry away their salary to spend it at home. Were it the rule to reserve such posts for men born in the colonies, or at least educated there and identified with creole needs, England would be better instructed in regard to many of her children and we should have fuller evidence regarding the capacity of our race to make the tropics their home.

It is of great importance to us to note that in nearly all the West Indian islands are lofty mountains eminently suitable for health resorts. In most of these islands white people could live as comfortably as in Virginia or Kentucky, if the Government did but open the high land of the interior to settlement, as has been done in South Africa, thanks to the Boers and the government railways.

Of course all extremes of heat, as well as of cold, are, in general, prejudicial to happy life, and far be it from me to advocate white man's migration to places unsuited to his daily comfort. But, as I have pointed out, many places that were once universally regarded as uninhabitable, or, at least, dangerous to health, have proved to be suitable after a few years of common-



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sense administration. And it is equally clear that many places which to-day have an evil name, notably Manila and Cuba, will, under proper administration, become satisfactory places for white men and women. I do not say that they will prove merely equal to New Orleans or Marseilles—that would not be saying much—but rather that they will resemble Durban in Africa or Georgetown in Demerara.

The present state of life in the tropics, where sanitary conditions are not satisfactory, is apt to produce a community, mainly of young men, who lend themselves naturally to the doctrine that whiskey is a preventive of malaria. Indeed, it is noticeable that people who yield to an appetite usually find a plausible pretext for so doing. At any rate, nowhere in the world have I noted so much promiscuous cocktailing at all hours of the day as in tropical colonies where, of all places, water should be regarded as the one safe drink. Of course, in most cases, the man who indulges remarks that he feels the need of something for the sake of his stomach. It is not by accident that Arabs, Chinese, Malays, and Hindoos, to say nothing of negroes, regard water as man's natural drink. The universal use of tea in China arises from the pollution of the water and the consequent necessity of boiling it first as a preventive against enteric complaints. China and Japan are not free from dysentery, but the marvel is, in China at least, that there is any population at all, seeing that the wells are nearly all contaminated. Such as have studied the question of white expeditions in Africa assure me that the worst water is better than alcoholic drink—that in all cases where

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alcohol has been kept from the men, the advantages have been fully acknowledged subsequently.

Now, when a tropical community is composed, as it frequently is to-day, mainly of young bachelors with large salaries and abundant animal spirits, it is but natural that such a community should convince itself that after all it is better to enjoy a short and merry life, than take any chances of a long one. And, in many cases, thanks to a good sweat every day on the tennis or polo field, the young men on tropical stations have not only known how to live a merry life, but a tolerably long one as well, though the most of them have returned home with permanently enfeebled constitutions.

Every white woman to-day, if she realized the interests of her sex, would agitate politically for the sanitation of the tropical world and the building of railways to the hills, for only when that is done can something be accomplished for the unhappy surplus of womanhood which has to stay at home, while brothers, husbands, and sweethearts are off in India, Borneo, Sumatra, Jamaica—throughout the hot belt—earning the money on which they hope to come home and marry—usually at an age when they are uninteresting to women and a bore to themselves. It is a maxim in the theatrical and literary world that when woman wants a thing she finds means of securing it. Now let her realize that under certain conditions she can follow her sweetheart in safety to the tropics—that she can marry and have her home perched up in the hills overlooking the harbor where her husband must spend the day with a pith helmet on his head. Let her once

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understand clearly that every evening she can play lawn tennis or have a scamper on horseback, and indulge in the many pastimes that make life sweet, and, take my word for it, the Government will have to do her bidding.