

FROM PHOTOGRAPHS, CONGO STATE

“The pictures get sneaked around everywhere.”— Page 40.

KING LEOPOLD'S SOLILOQUY

Graveyard. It is a majestic thought: that is, this ghastliest episode in all human history is the work of *one man alone*; one solitary man; just a single individual—Leopold, King of the Belgians. He is personally and solely responsible for all the myriad crimes that have blackened the history of the Congo State. He is *sole* master there; he is absolute. He could have prevented the crimes by his mere command; he could stop them today with a word. He withholds the word. For his pocket's sake.

It seems strange to see a king destroying a nation and laying waste a country for mere sordid money's sake, and solely and only for that. Lust of conquest is royal; kings have always exercised that stately vice; we are used to it, by old habit we condone it, perceiving a certain dignity in it; but *lust of money—lust of shillings—lust of nickels—lust of dirty coin*, not for the nation's enrichment but for *the king's alone*—this is new. It distinctly revolts us, we cannot seem to reconcile ourselves to it, we resent it, we despise it, we say it is shabby, unkingly, out of character. Being democrats we ought to jeer and jest, we ought to rejoice to see the purple dragged in the dirt, but—well, account for it as we may, we don't. We see this awful king, this pitiless and blood-drenched king, this money-crazy king towering toward the sky in a world-solitude of sordid crime, unfellowed and apart from the human race, sole butcher for personal gain findable in all his caste, ancient or modern, pagan or Christian, proper and legitimate target for the scorn of the lowest and the highest, and the execrations of all who hold in cold esteem the oppressor and the coward; and—well, it is a mystery, but *we do not wish to look*; for he is a king, and it hurts us, it troubles us, by ancient and inherited instinct it shames us to see a king degraded to this aspect, and we shrink

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from hearing the particulars of how it happened. *We shudder and turn away* when we come upon them in print."

Why, certainly—*that* is my protection. And you will continue to do it. I know the human race.



FROM PHOTOGRAPH, IKOKO, CONGO STATE

"To THEM it must appear
very awful and
mysterious."—
Joseph Con-
rad

AN ORIGINAL MISTAKE

“ This work of ‘ civilization’ is an enormous and continual butchery.” “ All the facts we brought forward in this chamber were denied at first most energetically ; but later, little

by little, they were proved by documents and by official texts.”

“ The practice of cutting off hands is said to be contrary to instructions ; but you are content to say that indulgence must be shown and that this bad habit must be corrected ‘ little by little ’ and you plead, moreover, that only the hands of *fallen* enemies are cut off, and that if hands are cut off ‘ enemies ’ not quite dead, and who, after recovery, have

had the bad taste to come to the missionaries and show them their stumps, it was due to an original mistake in thinking that they were dead.” *From Debate in Belgian Parliament, July, 1903.*

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Since the first edition of this pamphlet was issued, the Congo story has entered upon a new chapter. The king's Commission concedes the correctness of the delineation contained in the foregoing pages. It affirms the prevalence of frightful abuses under the king's rule. For eight months the king held back the Report but his commissioners had been too deeply moved by the horrors unfolded before them in their visit to the Congo State and the testimony presented to them had reached the world through other sources. The digest of the report, as forwarded from Brussels to the European and American press, was skilfully edited; and the report itself does its best to gloss over the king's responsibility for the shame; but the story told in the genuine document is essentially as hideous as anything found in the depositions of plain-speaking missionaries. So the facts are clear,—indisputable, undisputed. The train of revilers of missionary testimony, whose roseate pictures of conditions under the king's rule have beguiled the uninformed, hurries out at the wings and Leopold is left to hold the stage, with the skeleton that refuses longer to stay hidden in his Congo closet.

One thing the report omits to do. It does not brand or judge the system out of which the foul breed of iniquities has sprung,—the king's claim to personal ownership of 800,000 square miles of territory, with all their products, and his employment of savage hordes to realize on his claim. Judgment of this policy the Commission holds to be beyond

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its function. Being thus disqualified for striking at the roots of the enormity, the commissioners propose such superficial reforms as occur to them. And the king hastens to take up with their suggestion by calling to his assistance in the work of reform a new Commission. Of this body of fourteen members all but two are committed by their past record to defense and maintenance of the king's Congo policy.

So ends the king's investigation of himself; doubtless less jubilantly than he had planned, but withal as ineffectively as it was foredoomed to end. One stage is achieved. The next in order is action by the Powers responsible for the existence of the Congo State. The United States is one of these. Such procedure is advocated in petitions to the President and Congress, signed by John Wanamaker, Lyman Abbott, Henry Van Dyke, David Starr Jordan and many other leading citizens. If ever the sisterhood of civilized nations have just occasion to go up to the Hague or some other accessible meeting place, a foreordained hour for their assembling has now struck.

SOME THINGS THE REPORT OF THE KING'S COMMISSION SAYS.

“ Apart from the rough plantations which barely suffice to feed the natives themselves and to supply the stations, all the fruits of the soil are considered as the property of the State or of the concessionaire societies. . . . It has even been admitted that on the land occupied by them the natives cannot dispose of the produce of the soil except to the extent in which they did so before the constitution of the State.”

“ Each official in charge of a Station, or agent in charge of a factory, claimed from the natives, without asking himself on what grounds, the most diverse imposts in labor or in kind, either to satisfy his own needs and those of his Station, or to exploit the riches of the *Domaine*. . . . The agents themselves regulated the tax and saw to its collection and had a direct interest in increasing its amount, since they received proportional bonuses on the produce thus collected.”

“ Missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, whom we heard at Leopoldville, were unanimous in accentuating the general wretchedness existing in the region. One of them said that “ this system which compels the natives to feed 3000 workmen at Leopoldville, will, if continued for another five years, wipe out the population of the district.”

“ Judicial officials have informed us of the sorry consequences of the portage system ; it exhausts the unfortunate people subjected to it, and threatens them with partial destruction.”

“ In the majority of cases the native must go one or two days' march every fortnight, until he arrives at that part of the forest where the rubber vines can be met with in a certain degree of abundance. There the collector passes a num-

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ber of days in a miserable existence. He has to build himself an improvised shelter which cannot, obviously, replace his hut. He has not the food to which he is accustomed. He is deprived of his wife, exposed to the inclemencies of the weather and the attacks of wild beasts. When once he has collected the rubber he must bring it to the State station, or to that of the Company, and only then can he return to his village where he can sojourn for barely more than two or three days because the next demand is upon him.”

“It was barely denied that in the various posts of the A. B. I. R. which we visited, the imprisonment of women hostages, the subjection of the chiefs to servile labor, the humiliations meted out to them, the flogging of rubber collectors, the brutality of the black employees set over the prisoners, were the rule commonly followed.”

“According to the witnesses, these auxiliaries, especially those stationed in the villages, convert themselves into despots, claiming the women and the food ; they kill without pity all those who attempt to resist their whims. The truth of the charges is borne out by a mass of evidence and official reports.”

“The consequences are often very murderous. And one must not be astonished. If in the course of these delicate operations, whose object it is to seize hostages and to intimidate the natives, constant watch cannot be exercised over the sanguinary instincts of the soldiers, when orders to punish are given by superior authority, it is difficult to prevent the expedition from degenerating into massacres, accompanied by pillage and incendiarism.”

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND THE CONGO STATE.

The International Association of the Congo was recognized by the United States April 22, 1884. Nine months afterward, recognition was secured from Germany and, later, successively from the other European Powers. Two international conferences were held at which the Powers constituted themselves guardians of the people of the Congo territory, the Association binding itself to regard the principles of administration adopted. In both these conferences the United States government prominently participated. The Act of Berlin was not submitted by the President of the United States for ratification by the Senate because its adoption as a whole was thought by him to involve responsibility for support of the territorial claims of rival Powers in the Congo region. The Act of Brussels, with a proviso safeguarding this point, was formally ratified by the United States. Whether we are without obligation to reach a hand to this expiring people, the intelligent reader will judge for himself.

“Stanley saw neither fortress nor flag of any civilization save that of the United States, which he carried along the arterial water course. . . . The first appeal for recognition and for moral support was naturally and justly made to the government whose flag was first carried across the region.”—*Mr. Kasson in North American Review, February, 1886.*

“This Government at the outset testified its lively interest in the well-being and future progress of the vast region now committed to your Majesty’s wise care, by being the first among the Powers to recognize the flag of the International Association of the Congo as that of a friendly State.”—*President Cleveland to King Leopold, September 11, 1885.*

“The recognition by the United States was the birth into new life of the Association, seriously menaced as its existence

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was by opposing interests and ambitions.”—*Mr. Stanley, “The Congo,” vol. I, page 383.*

“He (the President of the United States) desires to see in the delimitation of the region which shall be subjected to this beneficent rule (of the International Association of the Congo) the widest expansion consistent with the just territorial rights of other governments.”—*Address of Mr. Kasson, U. S. Representative at Berlin Conference, 1884.*

“So marked was the acceptance by the Berlin Conference of the views presented on the part of the United States that Herr Von Bunsen, reviewing the action of the Conference, assigns after Germany the first place of influence in the the Conference to the United States.—*Mr. Kasson in North American Review, February, 1886.*

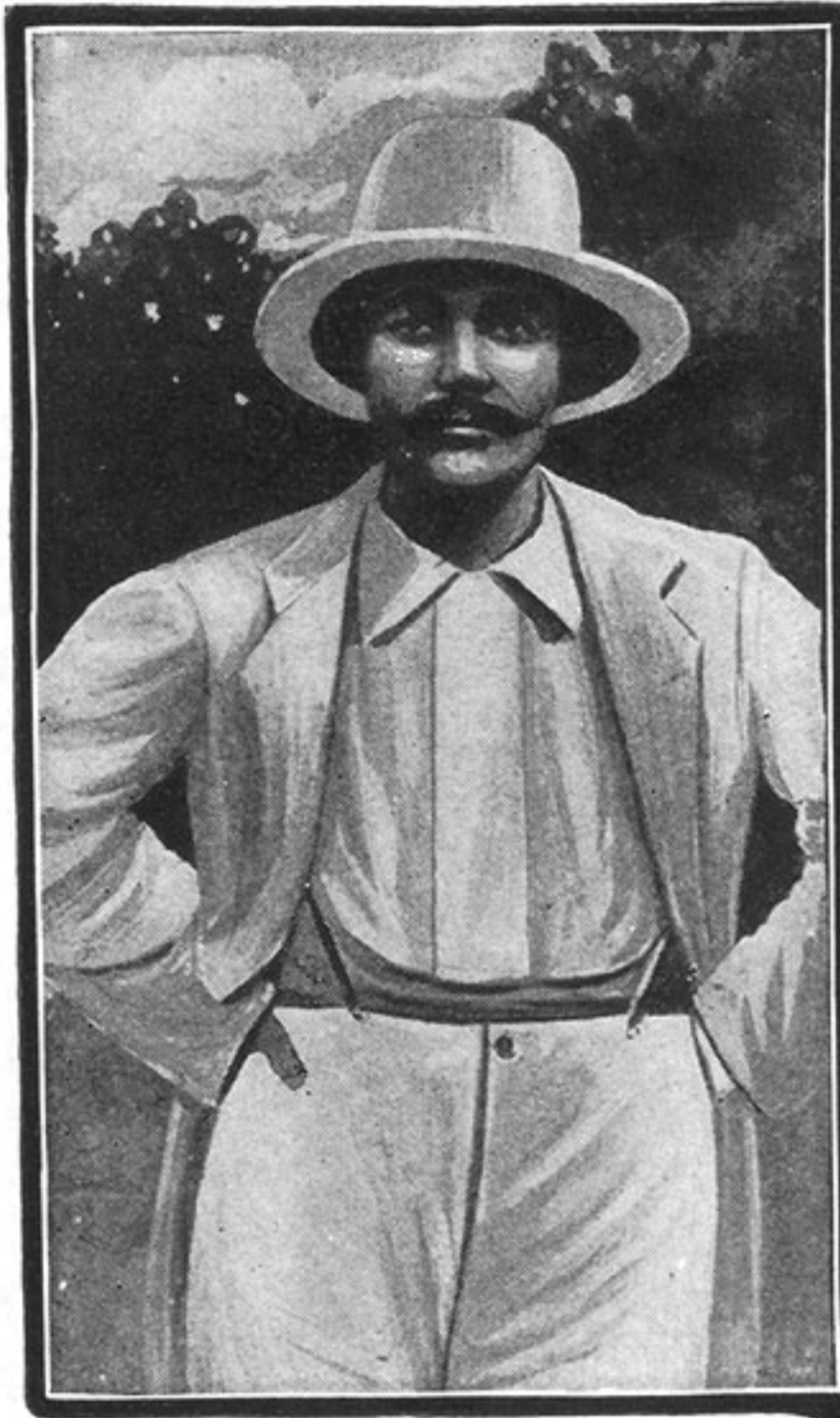
“In sending a representative to this Assembly, the Government of the U. S. has wished to show the great interest and deep sympathy it feels in the great work of philanthropy which the Conference seeks to realize. Our country must feel beyond all others an immense interest in the work of this Assembly.”—*Mr. Terrell, U. S. Representative at Brussels Conference, 1st session, November 19, 1889.*

“Mr. Terrell informs the Conference that he has been authorized by his Government to sign the General Act adopted by the Conference.

“The President says that the U. S. Minister’s communication will be received by the Conference with extreme satisfaction.”—*Records of Brussels Conference, June 28, 1890.*

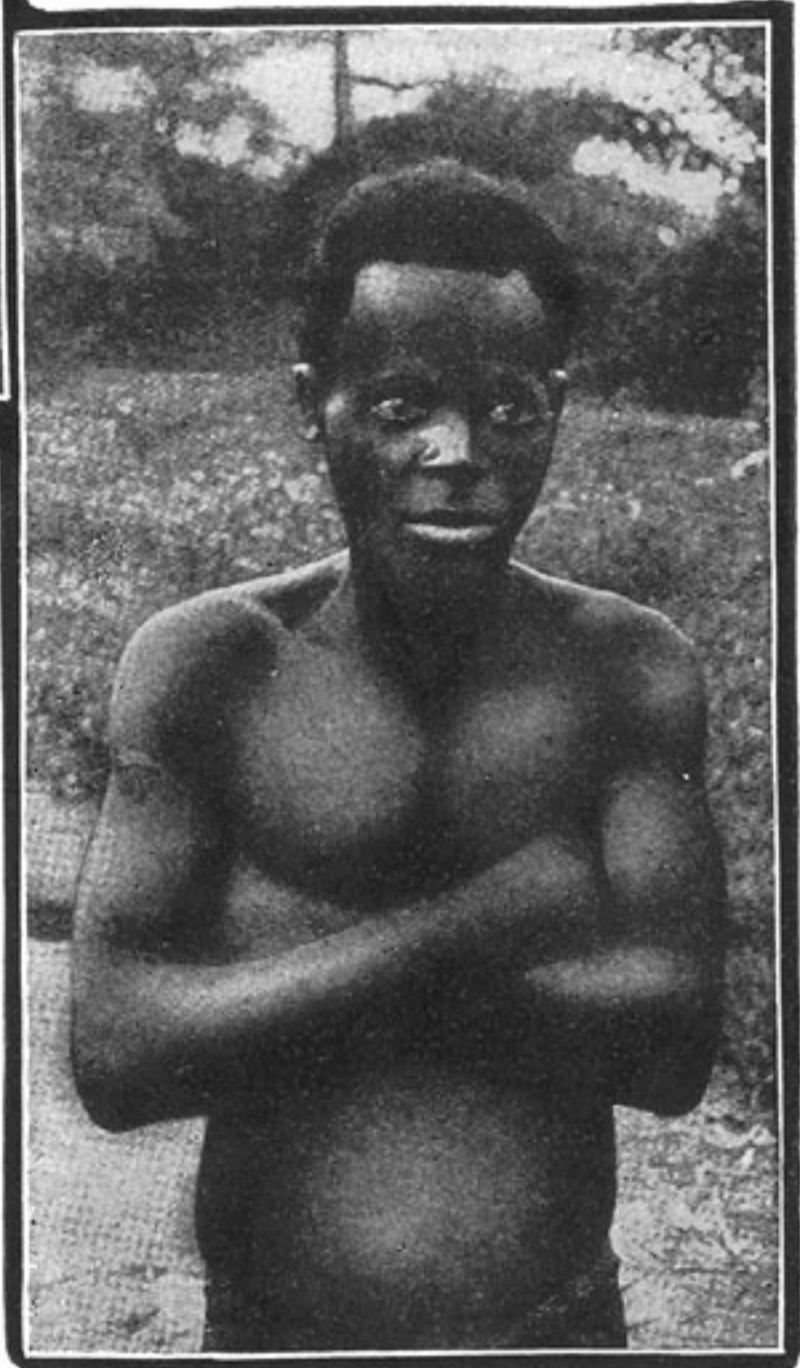
“Claiming, as at Berlin, to speak in the name of Almighty God, the signatories (at Brussels) declared themselves to be ‘equally animated by the firm intention of putting an end to the crimes and devastations engendered by the traffic in African slaves, of protecting effectually the aboriginal populations and of ensuring the benefits of peace and civilization.’ ”—“*Civilization in Congo land,*” *H. R. Fox Bourne.*

“The President continues to hope that the Government of the U. S., which was the first to recognize the Congo Free State, will not be one of the last to give it the assistance of which it may stand in need.”—*Remarks of Belgian President of Brussels Conference, session May 14, 1890.*



A WITNESS
BEFORE THE COMMISSION
LOMBOTO
A NATIVE OF BARINGA,
CONGO STATE

A WITNESS
BEFORE THE COMMISSION
REV. JOHN H. HARRIS
MISSIONARY AT BARINGA,
CONGO STATE



“There, great chiefs from Europe, stands the man who has murdered our fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters for rubber. Why, why I say, has he done this?”—*The witness Lomboto, confronting the Director of the A. B. I. R. Society at the hearing at Baringa.*

OUGHT KING LEOPOLD TO BE HANGED? *

INTERVIEW BY MR. W. T. STEAD WITH THE REV. JOHN H. HARRIS,
BARINGA, CONGO STATE, IN THE ENGLISH REVIEW OF
REVIEWS FOR SEPTEMBER, 1905.

For the somewhat startling suggestion in the heading of this interview, the missionary interviewed is in no way responsible. The credit of it, or, if you like, the discredit, belongs entirely to the editor of the *Review*, who, without dogmatism, wishes to pose the question as a matter for serious discussion. Since Charles I's head was cut off, opposite Whitehall, nearly two hundred and fifty years ago, the sanctity which doth hedge about a king has been held in slight and scant regard by the Puritans and their descendants. Hence there is nothing antecedently shocking or outrageous in the discussion of the question whether the acts of any Sovereign are such as to justify the calling in of the services of the public executioner. It is not, of course, for a journalist to pronounce judgment, but no function of the public writer is so imperative as that of calling attention to great wrongs, and no duty is more imperious than that of insisting that no rank or station should be allowed to shield from justice the real criminal when he is once discovered.

The controversy between the Congo Reform Association and the Emperor of the Congo has now arrived at a stage in which it is necessary to take a further step towards the

*The above article which came to hand as the foregoing was in press is commended to the king and to readers of his Soliloquy.—M. T.

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redress of unspeakable wrongs and the punishment of no less unspeakable criminals. The Rev. J. H. Harris, an English missionary, has lived for the last seven years in that region of Central Africa — the Upper Congo — which King Leopold has made over to one of his vampire groups of financial associates (known as the A.B.I.R. Society) on the strictly business basis of a half share in the profits wrung from the blood and misery of the natives. He has now returned to England, and last month he called at Mowbray House to tell me the latest from the Congo. Mr. Harris is a young man in a dangerous state of volcanic fury, and no wonder. After living for seven years face to face with the devastations of the vampire State, it is impossible to deny that he does well to be angry. When he began, as is the wont of those who have emerged from the depths, to detail horrifying stories of murder, the outrage and torture of women, the mutilation of children, and the whole infernal category of horrors, served up with the background of cannibalism, sometimes voluntary and sometimes, incredible though it seems, enforced by the orders of the officers, I cut him short, and said :—

“ Dear Mr. Harris, as in Oriental despatches the India Office translator abbreviates the first page of the letter into two words ‘after compliments,’ or ‘a.c.,’ so let us abbreviate our conversation about the Congo by the two words ‘after atrocities,’ or ‘a.a.’ They are so invariable and so inonotonous, as Lord Percy remarked in the House the other day, that it is unnecessary to insist upon them. There is no longer any dispute in the mind of any reasonable person as to what is going on in the Congo. It is the economical exploitation of half a continent carried on by the use of armed force wielded by officials the aim-all and be-all of whose existence is to extort the maximum amount of

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rubber in the shortest possible time in order to pay the largest possible dividend to the holders of shares in the concessions."

"Well," said Mr. Harris reluctantly, for he is so accustomed to speaking to persons who require to be told the whole dismal tale from A to Z, "what is it you want to know?"

"I want to know," I said, "whether you consider the time is ripe for summoning King Leopold before the bar of an international tribunal to answer for the crimes perpetrated under his orders and in his interest in the Congo State."

Mr. Harris paused for a moment, and then said:—
"That depends upon the action which the king takes upon the report of the Commission, which is now in his hands."

"Is that report published?"

"No," said Mr. Harris; "and it is a question whether it will ever be published. Greatly to our surprise, the Commission, which every one expected would be a mere blind whose appointment was intended to throw dust in the eyes of the public, turned out to be composed of highly respectable persons who heard the evidence most impartially, refused no *bona fide* testimony produced by trustworthy witnesses, and were overwhelmed by the multitudinous horrors brought before them, and who, we feel, *must* have arrived at conclusions which necessitate an entire revolution in the administration of the Congo."

"Are you quite sure, Mr. Harris," I said, "that this is so?"

"Yes," said Mr. Harris, "quite sure. The Commission impressed us all in the Congo very favorably. Some of its members seemed to us admirable specimens of public-spirited, independent statesmen. They realized that they were acting in a judicial capacity; they knew that the eyes

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of Europe were upon them, and, instead of making their inquiry a farce, they made it a reality, and their conclusions must be, I feel sure, so damning to the State, that if King Leopold were to take no action but to allow the whole infernal business to proceed unchecked, any international tribunal which had powers of a criminal court, would upon the evidence of the Commission alone, send those responsible to the gallows.”

“Unfortunately,” I said, “at present the Hague Tribunal is not armed with the powers of an international assize court, nor is it qualified to place offenders, crowned or otherwise, in the dock. But don’t you think that in the evolution of society the constitution of such a criminal court is a necessity?”

“It would be a great convenience at present,” said Mr. Harris; “nor would you need one atom of evidence beyond the report of the Commission to justify the hanging of whoever is responsible for the existence and continuance of such abominations.”

“Has anybody seen the text of the report?” I asked.

“As the Commission returned to Brussels in March, some of the contents of that report are an open secret. A great deal of the evidence has been published by the Congo Reform Association. In the Congo the Commissioners admitted two things: first, that the evidence was overwhelming as to the existence of the evils which had hitherto been denied, and secondly, that they vindicated the character of the missionaries. They discovered, as anyone will who goes out to that country, that it is the missionaries, and the missionaries alone, who constitute the permanent European element. The Congo State officials come out ignorant of the language, knowing nothing of the country, and with no other sense of their duties beyond that of supporting the concession com-

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panies in extorting rubber. They are like men who are dumb and deaf and blind, nor do they wish to be otherwise. In two or three years they vanish, giving place to other migrants as ignorant as themselves, whereas the missionaries remain on the spot year after year; they are in personal touch with the people, whose language they speak, whose customs they respect, and whose lives they endeavor to defend to the best of their ability."

"But, Mr. Harris," I remarked, "was there not a certain Mr. Grenfell, a Baptist Missionary, who has been all these years a convinced upholder of the Congo State?"

"'Twas true," said Mr. Harris, "and pity 'tis 'twas true; but 'tis no longer true. Mr. Grenfell has had his eyes opened at last, and he has now taken his place among those who are convinced. He could no longer resist the overwhelming evidence that has been brought against the Congo Administration."*

"Was the nature of the Commissioners' report," I resumed, "made known to the officials of the State before they left the Congo?"

"To the head officials—yes," said Mr. Harris.

"With what result?"

"In the case of the highest official in the Congo, the man who corresponds in Africa to Lord Curzon in India, no sooner was he placed in possession of the conclusions of the Commission than the appalling significance of their indictment convinced him that the game was up, and he went into his room and cut his throat. I was amazed on returning to Europe to find how little the significance of this suicide was appreciated. A paragraph in the newspaper announced the suicide of a Congo official. None of those who read that

* Mr. Grenfell's station is in the Lower Congo, a section remote from the vast rubber areas of the interior.

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paragraph could realize the fact that that suicide had the same significance to the Congo that the suicide, let us say, of Lord Milner would have had if it had taken place immediately on receiving the conclusions of a Royal Commission sent out to report upon his administration in South Africa."

"Well, if that be so, Mr. Harris," I said, "and the Governor-General cuts his throat rather than face the ordeal and disgrace of the exposure, I am almost beginning to hope that we may see King Leopold in the dock at the Hague, after all."

"I will comment upon that," Mr. Harris said, "by quoting you Mrs. Sheldon's remark made before myself and my colleagues, Messrs. Bond, Ellery, Ruskin, Walbaum and Whiteside, on May 19th last year, when, in answer to our question, 'Why should King Leopold be afraid of submitting his case to the Hague tribunal?' Mrs. Sheldon answered, 'Men do not go to the gallows and put their heads in a noose if they can avoid it.'"