

WILD SOUTHEASTERN MINDANAO

Strange Pictures of Life and Scenery in a Land of Parrots, Monkeys and Wild Hogs, in Uncle Sam's New Possessions in Philippines.

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DAVAO, island of Mindanao, April 20. I am in the town of Davao, at the head of the Gulf of Davao, in the southeastern part of the great island of Mindanao, in the wildest region of our Philippine possessions. In coming here I sailed 200 miles from the Bay of Manila, about the Province of Cotabato, going southward to about 800 miles above the equator, then turning to the north and steaming through the enormous bay almost to its head.

We had mountains in sight all the way. The country is more rugged as you go toward the east, and we are now right under the shadow of Mount Apo, the highest of the Philippine peaks. It lies nine miles almost due south of Davao town, but its slopes are populated with savages, and, as far as is known, only one white man has ever gone to its top. This Juan M. Montano, who ascended it in 1898. He estimates its altitude at 10,350 feet, but the Spanish authorities claim that it is 700 feet higher, or more than two miles above sea level.

Mount Apo is a volcano, with an enormous crater, which promises at any time to break out into eruption. As I write I can see great clouds of vapor rolling out of its side toward the east, and early this morning I noticed the vapor was mixed with flames of fire. The lower part of the volcano is wooded. There are huge ferns at its base, and its sides are almost covered with a mass of such green. The summit looks chalk-like in the distance, and on the south side there are no trees whatever. The land at the foot of the mountain slopes down toward the gulf. It is a natural pasture covered with a rich growth of grass, falling so gently that it would seem to be an excellent place for a town. There are, I judge, about eight or ten miles of such slopes, a mile or so wide, all covered with masses of green. It would be a profitable site for a stock-grazing ranch.

Monkeys, Parrots and Hogs.
The country surrounding Davao is almost a wilderness. Only a short distance back from the town the jungle begins. If you walk a few miles in any direction you come into a land of monkeys, parrots and wild hogs. There are monkeys everywhere, even in the town itself. Nearly every one of our soldiers has his pet monkey, a little brown or drab animal with a weak-winked face and short tail. There are some tall monkeys in this part of the world, and some little ones not bigger than your two fists. One of the company cooks has a monkey named Bob which lives in the outdoor kitchen and makes war on every white stranger that comes within reach. A pet pig belonging to the company has been adopted by Bob and the person who touches the pig at once has a fight on his hands. Bob goes for him and the offender is lucky if he does not find the monkey's teeth in his leg.

There are parrots here of many colors, the most common being large white parrots with tufted heads. They fly about in flocks of 20 or more and may be seen

am told, has his regular hunt during the season. The pigs are black, fierce-looking animals, of the kind known as razor-backs, such as you find in the mountains of the South. They will fight when brought to bay, so that the sport is by no means unaccompanied by danger. The flesh of the wild hog is delicious. It is exceedingly sweet, and has a gamier flavor.

Larger Than Massachusetts.

I am surprised at the extent of this island of Mindanao. The Province of Davao is larger than the State of Massachusetts, but I doubt whether its cultivated portion is greater than the District of Columbia. The country is almost all wild. The mountainous portion is covered with forests, interspersed here and there with strips of natural pasture. The grass is rich and it forms excellent grazing. There are many herds of from 50 to 100 cattle, and near Mati, a town about 20 miles east of Davao, there is one man who has about 200 herds of stock.

The cattle of this region are like those I saw about Zamboanga, a cross between the sacred cow of India and what is probably the Australian cow. The animals look like leopards. They give milk in small quantities, but of the richest quality. The people do not use the milk for cheese or butter. They let the calves run with the cows, and as a result they have but small udders.

The country is especially well watered; it has cold springs and mountain streams furnishing as good water as the dairy counties of Oregon and Delaware in New York. The cattle thrive, and it would seem that this might become a great dairy land and supply the butter and cheese of this part of the world. Such articles have been imported chiefly from Europe and the United States, but of late a large amount of Australian dairy products and Australian beef is being brought in.

These dairy lands extend all along the foothills of the mountains, and they are found in spots in the mountains themselves. I am told that there are rich grass lands in the interior along the streams and about the numerous lakes for which Mindanao is noted.

Valuable Timber.

The timber here is excellent, and the mountains are covered with it. The trees are large and straight, many of them extending upward for 20 or 25 feet without a knot or a limb. There are 50 varieties of wood, soft and hard, including mahogany, teak, ebony, walnut and cedar. The cedar is of a delicate pink, and could be used for cigar boxes. There are also trees which yield valuable dye woods. They are red, yellow and of other colors. It is said that rubber trees exist, but I see no rubber in the markets, and have no reliable information regarding it. A great deal of resin is brought into Davao. Some comes from a tree called almaciga. It is a transparent wax, and is shipped to Paris, where it is used for making varnishes. The trees are tapped, and the thick sap that runs out hardens before it falls to the ground. It is pulled from the trunks

One was upon trees and two natives were sawing it by hand into boards. I am told that the workmen have been laboring upon this house for two years, and that it has already cost \$400.

Even with good saw mills the difficulties of lumbering in this country will be great. It will be almost impossible to get some of the wood out. The trees in many places are bound together with long lianas or vines, making an almost impenetrable jungle. There are frequent streams, but many varieties of the wood are so heavy that they will not float, although I should think that they might be brought to the

short time he will have a better garden than you can find in the States.

It would be a good idea for the Secretary of Agriculture to send seeds to all of our permanent ports in the Philippines. Each station would start its own garden and we would thus have a large number of experimental farms at no cost whatever to the Government. The people would learn something of our methods of farming, and the seeds would serve as little agricultural schools, which would be of great value in aiding the work of civilization.

What the natives especially need just now are agricultural implements. They

are hard to understand the precise meaning of the words, and they will frequently give the three citations of the words at once. They also say "Americanos muy buenos," and seem very much pleased to have the soldiers here. Major Laggett will open school for them next week, and he is now having a new roof put on the schoolhouse. He will have one hundred and sixty children of school age to start with, and will have with him two female teachers and one male. He expects to have them taught English and to make English the principal study. He says the children are very quick to learn, and he believes they will be made into American citizens in the future.

I find here at Davao, as at every other place where I have been, that the soldiers have made great improvements. As soon as they take charge of a post the men are set to work cleaning the streets. They remove all the garbage open up the gutters and cut down decaying vegetation. There are, I venture, no cleaner towns in the United States than those occupied by our soldiers in Mindanao.

While I was at Zamboanga Colonel Pettit was having a canal stripped of its vegetation and garbage. This was done by natives, who went through and pulled up the weeds with their hands and occupied the fifth in the same way. Pollok, on the Gulf of Illana, is as clean as a new pin and the same may be said of Davao.

Major Laggett is repairing the public buildings. He has put a new roof on the hospital and he is now having a roof sewed onto the building occupied by himself and his staff as headquarters. The building covers at least a quarter of an acre. It has several large rooms with a great porch, twelve feet wide, running about it, and a veranda in front. It would take 10,000 nipa shingles to cover it. Each of these shingles is made of leaves fastened together with strips of rattan, and all are being sewed to a framework of bamboo poles which forms the foundation of the roof. There will probably be 5,000,000 stitches in the roof, but when completed it will be as tight as any steel roof of the United States and cozier than any covering that can be made here.

Soldiers Are Well.

I have had a talk here with Captain A. L. Haines, the surgeon of the post, as to the health of the troops. He tells me that they are in good physical condition, and that they stand the climate remarkably well. He says the statements as to the unhealthiness of the Philippines are greatly exaggerated, and that the soldiers are more healthy here than in most parts of the United States. Those who are stationed at Davao came to this place almost directly from the States, and went at once into camp and barracks. So far there have been but two sick in quarters, and scarcely any in the hospital. Captain Haines says that the diseases that they have are not the result of their residence here, but of things contracted in the past. He says that there is some intermittent malaria fever, which yields readily to treatment. Typhoid and consumption are practically unknown among the natives, and although the people have no medical attendance, they live to a good old age. The mortality among children is great, largely owing to their ignorance, as to the laws of health, and also that little trouble is taken to save the sickly child's life. There are no intestinal diseases to speak of, and ordinary care as to fruit and water is all that is necessary. Captain Haines thinks that white men can live and work in this country quite as well as in the southern part of the United States. I have heard similar statements from others. I think, however, such statements should be carefully weighed before being accepted, as I find that one grows tired much more quickly than at home. The sun is hot at midday, and I doubt whether our people can live in the tropics and do as much manual labor. If one can merely act as an overseer, keeping indoors, in the middle of the day, there is no reason why he should not live just as comfortably as at home, but the working of the islands by American labor would seem to me to be still a matter of experiment.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

SWITZERLAND'S SONGBIRDS.

Laws Enacted for Their Protection Vigorously Enforced.

It is asserted every little while by those who ought to be in a position to know that songbirds are not slaughtered for military purposes. Facts to the contrary are given in a report to the State Department by James T. Dubois, our Consul General in St. Gall, Switzerland. He says that Switzerland has not many feathered songsters, but those which do exist are protected carefully not only by law, but by the fostering care of the people, particularly the German-speaking people. In the law which prohibits the killing or trapping or molesting of their nests in any part of the Alpine Republic. But in Northern Italy, Italy, the murder of songbirds and this spirit has spread over the Swiss-Italian cantons of Tessin, where the willow wren, nightingale and little singers of all kinds are victims of the trap, the net and the gun.

As the seasons come, and go the Swiss birds make their pilgrimages south, and in going and returning across the land of the Alps they are persecuted by the hunters of all ages and all classes. On the lake of Maggiore it is estimated that at least 100,000 of the feathered songsters are trapped or killed every year, and in the region round about Bergamo, Verona, Chiavenna and Brescia many millions are slaughtered in order to satisfy the demand of the tables and of the millinery establishments of the world.

One of the schemes is to cover the limbs of trees and the rocks and even the telegraph wires along the line of the bird migrations, with a certain paste of such adhesive qualities that whenever the birds stop in their flight for rest or food they are held helpless captives. Hundreds are captured often in a small space by this simple means.

During the last year the border police of Tessin captured and destroyed 12,000 bird traps set to imprison these weary little flyers. Authorities are being urged to take the most rigorous measures to suppress the evil. The criminal courts are having many more bird-law violation cases than formerly, and bird-catching and killing crimes, which in former years were either overlooked or punished only slightly are now dealt with seriously. The excellent laws are being enforced, and the songbirds of Switzerland may yet survive the attempt to exterminate them.

In 1900 buildings worth, with the property in them, over \$150,000,000, were destroyed by fire in the United States.

Flowers and Orchids.

Let there be flowers of strange shapes and colors. Hang an orchid here and there upon a dead branch, and under all put a turf as thick and as green as that of the blue grass of Kentucky, and you have some idea of Davao, which has but a few weeks been occupied by our troops. You must add, however, the houses, cottages more picturesque than any you find in the mountains of Switzerland. Some, in fact, look like Swiss chalets, except that they are built upon high poles, and you must mount stairs to reach the first floor. Some have walls of a basket work of woven bamboo or twigs, and others have walls of boards, and not a few walls of gray thatched composed of grass or nipa. The roofs of all the houses are of the nipa palm sewed to a framework of bamboo poles in such a way that it comes out over the walls with wide, extending eaves. There is not a glass window, a chimney or a bit of plaster in the whole town. The windows are mere holes in the walls with shutters which can be raised or slid back, and the floors of most of the houses are of strips of bamboo, in some cases

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