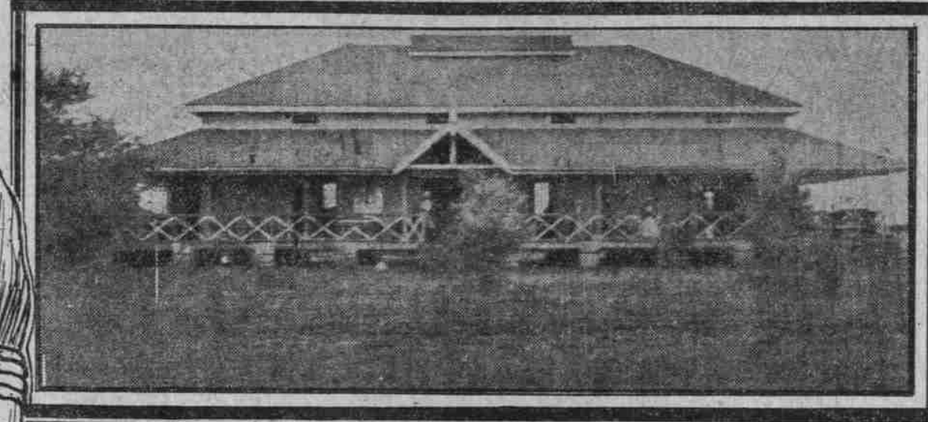
AN AMERICAN ALADDIN IN AFRICAN WILDS

He Has 20,000 Acres Swarming With Zebras, Antelopes and Gnus



A NABOB'S HOUSE IN THE AFRICAN WILDS

"THE NATIVES MAKE GOOD HERDSMEN"

"ZEBRAS ARE SOMETIMES RIDDEN BY THE NATIVES"

NATIVE AFRICAN CATTLE. "OBSERVE THE LENGTH OF THE ANIMALS' HORNS"

BY FRANK G. CARPENTER.

BRITISH EAST AFRICA has an American Aladdin. He comes from St. Louis, and, like his prototype of Bagdad, in the days of Haroun Al Raschid, he has created a great estate in a night. He has rubbed the golden lamp of his fortune, and the genii who serve it have chopped down the jungle and fenced in the wilds. A year ago all was a wilderness. Now 20,000 acres are under his pastoral or agricultural control, and many miles of wire fences have gone up about it. He has erected stables for hundreds of horses and ponies, has a dairy supplied by over 100 cows, and a magnificent bungalow home, with electric lights, ice-making machines and the other comforts which the nabobs of St. Louis must love. All this in one of the wildest parts of the Black Continent, where antelope are as thick as sheep in Ohio, where there are more zebras than there are cows in Kentucky, where the gnus are more numerous than horses in Virginia, and where the lion still roars night after night and the leopard lies in wait for his prey. The estate itself teems with wild animals; and it is one of the great private game preserves of the world.

A Pike County Millionaire.

The man I refer to is Mr. William N. MacMillan, of Missouri. I have called him a Pike County millionaire, although I am not sure that he comes from Pike. Like all Missourians, he usually registers from St. Louis. He is about 33 years old, is dark complexioned, tall, straight and fine looking, and he weighs, I judge, about 170 pounds. He is a man of culture as well as a man of muscle and enterprise, and he is also evidently a man of great wealth. He has already spent a fortune on his African estate, and I am told that he is now putting out from $60,000 to $100,000 a year in improvements. He is supposed by the citizens here to be worth some tens of millions of dollars and to have an income running into the hundreds of thousands a year.

As to these things, however, I know only from hearsay. Mr. MacMillan is a modest man, and when I took tea with him at his city home here in Nairobi the other day I did not feel at liberty to ask him personal questions. Indeed, a large part of the information which I give in this letter concerning his farm and his operations comes from other sources, although considerable cropped out in our chat about farming, landholding and big game hunting on this great African plateau.

The Juja Ranch.

The name of Mr. MacMillan's big ranch is the Juja farm. I see a posting notice concerning it in the Nairobi Globe Trotter of this week, stating that its boundaries are unmistakable, that shooting is absolutely prohibited and that trespassers will be prosecuted. The farm lies right in the heart of the big game country. It is on the Athi plains more than a mile above the sea, in a region which is high and healthy.

The Juja ranch is bounded by three rivers, and is now surrounded by a wire fence. Inside the fence are thousands of antelopes, great droves of zebras and a large number of gnus, or wilde beeste, which are a combination between a horse and a cow and are of the antelope species. There are also rhinos and hippos unnumbered. The hippopotamuses infest the lands along the rivers, and these streams are also inhabited by crocodiles. The other day Mrs. MacMillan's favorite terrier attempted to swim a creek not far from the house, and was gobbled up by a crocodile. A day or two before that a rhinoceros attacked one of the negroes who was hoeing the lettuce in the garden and damaged him considerably, and every now and then a hippopotamus from the swamps of the Athi River breaks in and has a meal off the peanuts or sweet potatoes. The amount that these animals eat is not so great, but they tramp over the garden, crushing the vegetables into mush with their giant feet, and they are apt to wallow in the flowers.

A Palace in a Wilderness.

I don't suppose I ought to call Mr. MacMillan's country home a palace. It would not be one in London, Paris, Washington or Berlin, but it is certainly palatial in this land where, until within a dozen years ago, there were nothing but mud huts thatched with straw, and where the natives are still conspicuous by their nudity. The home is a low bungalow, painted in a cool green and white, with wide halls, spacious verandas and long, easy chairs all whispering comfort to the saddle-tired hunter who may have just come in chased by a lion or from a long hunt on the plains. The house itself was imported from England in sections, the material being brought 30 miles by oxen over flooded rivers through almost impassable swamps, and through a country filled with wild beasts. This is so also of the furniture, the wall papers and the beautiful engravings and books, and also of the modern farm implements of various kinds which are now used on the estate.

The same is true of the machinery of the pumping station and electric light plant, which are down near the river and carry light and water to all the buildings on the homestead. The structures include an engine-house and rooms for dynamos, storage cells and an ice chamber.

The Dairy and Its Hundred Cows.

In talking with me, Mr. MacMillan said he had now 100 milch cows in his dairy. Each gives only a gallon of milk a day, but the milk is almost pure cream, and far richer than that of our American cows. Mr. MacMillan tells me that he is now making a great deal of butter and that the most of it finds a ready market in Nairobi. He speaks confidently of the future of British East Africa as a dairying country, saying that the grass is rich in its butter-producing qualities, and prophesying that this colony will some day export butter to India, South Africa and London.

Mr. MacMillan's dairy on the Juja ranch is a wonder to the people here. It is equipped as well as any of the cowhouses belonging to our millionaires of the United States. Its fittings are of white enamel; it has a boiler for sterilizing the utensils; a steam separator with white enamel fittings and everything is managed in the most sanitary way. On one side of the dairy is a bacon room containing flitches and hams, and down on a marshy bend of the river nearby are piggeries, in which are swine of all sizes, fattened on the refuse milk.

Stables and Their Abyssinian Ponies

The Juja stables have quarters for 100 horses and ponies, with box stalls and all other conveniences. The floors are paved and drained and the loose boxes are netted against mosquitoes, which during the rainy season are death to horses in this part of the world. Outside the stables are chicken runs and not far from them are a large number of farm wagons lately imported from Wisconsin for use on the estate. Among the animals used for draft are Bombay mules and East Indian oxen, both of which seem to thrive here. Mr. MacMillan has recently brought in about 100 ponies and mules from Abyssinia. He has altogether 600 cattle, having just began to stock the ranch. His cattle have humps on their backs; they are descendants of the sacred bulls of India, but he is now importing Hereford and Guernsey bulls to improve the breed.

The Question of Labor.

In my talk with Mr. MacMillan I asked him as to the African natives as an available labor supply. He says they do well, and that the wages paid average about $1.33 a month per man. He has about ten white foremen and something like 700 Hindus, Somalis, Masai and other native Africans. The Masai are a stock-rearing people and they are valuable upon the ranches, as they know how to care for cattle. They will do nothing in the way of cultivation or other hard labor. The Wakikuyu, on the other hand, are fond of farming, and can use the hoe fairly well. Such men as are working away from their own country have to be fed; but this costs only about 75 cents a month over their pay. Those who are employed from the tribes nearby and are allowed to go home every night, feed themselves.

Most of the farmers here use African or Indian servants. The Somalis are good boys and the Swahilis are in great demand. The wages of a fairly good house boy are about 10 cents a day and his food. The better class cooks, however, sometimes get as much as $13 a month, and such wages are rising.

Domesticating the Zebra.

There are great droves of zebras running about over the wilder parts of Mr. MacMillan's big farm. He permits no shooting upon it by strangers, and as a result these animals are remarkably tame considering their character and locality. After the farm is in good running order, an attempt will be made to domesticate the zebra, and experiments in cross-breeding will be carried on. Indeed, this has already been attempted here and there throughout the country and especially at the Government agricultural farm at Naivasha Lake between here and Uganda. I have gone through Naivasha and the wild zebra about there look fine and healthy. It is different with the tame ones on the government farm. The experiment was begun in 1904, when 100 head were brought in from the wilds. They fell off, one by one, being attacked by parasites and disease, and the experiment is now considered a failure. The Secretary of Agriculture says that he has great hopes from the zebra colts born in captivity, and thinks they may eventually be handled like donkeys and horses. As to the wild zebras, he says it is impossible to take them from the plains and use them for farm animals, and he advises the settlers that oxen and mules are better and cheaper. A wild zebra never becomes docile and the natives cannot possibly handle it. The colts, if treated kindly, seem to change their nature, and I have seen zebras driven about hitched to carriages and spring wagons, and in some places even ridden by natives.

How to Break the Zebra.

I have before me the report made by the farmer in charge of the government ranch giving his conclusions as to zebra training. After saying that the animals need a wide range he tells how he broke five zebra stallions, after they had been haltered and stabled for more than a year. He says that one of these was savage to ferocity and unsafe to approach in the stall or outside. The others he hitched up to an old military wagon, using a set of mule harness reversed, with the breeching acting as the breast-collar, and with rope tugs. It took him one whole month before he could run a pair of these zebras together, and six weeks before a good team could be depended upon. After that they went fairly well. He worked them for several weeks hauling brush and wood, and at the end they became thin. They would eat only grass, and turned up their noses at bran and corn. They were good pullers and strong. Shortly after turning them out on pasture they picked up and grew fat once more.

One of the chief troubles of keeping the zebras in captivity is that they become infected with worms and parasites of various kinds. Old settlers, who understand the country, say that the zebra has these same parasites when he runs wild on the plains, but that he knows certain plants and grasses which are antidotes for them and seeks them out and eats them. This keeps him in health, notwithstanding the parasites. When in captivity such wide ranging is not possible, he can not find his medicine and as a result grows sick and dies.

Big Farms in Africa.

The farm of Mr. MacMillan which I have described is one of the big estates which are springing up here on the high African plateau. There are a number of the kind, and the papers are filled with warnings to hunters that they must not shoot upon these large properties. The division of the land into big holdings, through favoritism or in other ways, is creating a great deal of comment, and it is denounced by the smaller settlers. Among the big estates are those of Lord Hindlip, who has over 100,000 acres; of the East African syndicate, which has 500,000 square miles, or 320,000 acres, and of Lord Delamare, who has 100,000 acres and more. Lord Delamare's estate is 7000 feet above sea-level, and the equator runs through it. He has already 1000 acres under cultivation, and has stocked his pastures with 8000 native sheep and 600 imported Merinos. He has also imported rams and 200 Ryland-crossed native lambs. He is experimenting in cattle rearing, and has a herd of 17,000 native head, including 800 oxen. He has 14 Shorthorns and a number of Herefords. He has also a model dairy. Other farmers are bringing in European stock for breeding purposes. There is a settler not far from Nairobi who has recently imported 30 Merino rams and 100 Merino ewes. This man is also engaged in dairying, and has several fine Guernsey bulls.

No Place for Poor Americans.

There is one thing I should like to say about British East Africa: It is no place for poor Americans, and the poor Englishman who can do well here is a wonder. The land seems to be good, and it can be bought comparatively cheap; but everything is far from the markets, and all imports are high. Labor is exceedingly low. A native can often be employed for 5 to 10 cents a day, and hundreds work for 3 cents a day. But it is difficult to control them, and the conditions are impossible for the ordinary American farmer who has but little money and relies largely on his muscle and brains. The British East African government advises no one to come to the country unless he has at least $1500, and it says he should have $5000 to do well. The cost of land ranges from 65 cents to $1.20 an acre, according to whether it is near or far from the railroad. This is for farm lands. Pastures can be bought for as low as 30 cents an acre and homesteads of 160 acres, with the right of preempting 480 acres more, can be purchased by installments, spread over 16 years. The right of preemption lapses at the end of three years, if 48 acres out of the 160 have not been cultivated. As a general thing the government will not grant more than 5000 acres to any one man, although 10,000 acres may be acquired by special arrangement. It would take about 3000 sheep to stock 1000 acres of good grazing land; and the government estimates that the capital needed to start with 500 sheep and 20 cows would be in the neighborhood of $2000.

Dissatisfied Settlers.

As it is now the settlers who have taken up small holdings are dissatisfied with the prospects. This country is a world of undeveloped possibilities, and if it were thrown open, as was our great West, each man being given 160 acres outright and aided as Canada is now aiding its settlers, the land would soon be taken up and a considerable white population would result. As it is now most of the best tracts along the railroad are in the hands of English nabobs, and the hundreds of comparatively poor men who came here from South Africa at the close of the Boer war have left.

Nevertheless there is no reason why this should not some day be a white man's country, settled by white men. Everywhere above 5000 feet the climate is healthy, and at 8000 feet ice is usually seen in the early morning. A great part of the highlands has a good rainfall, and almost any kind of crop common to the temperate zone will grow. Farther down near the coast patches of cotton have been planted, and are yielding 300 to 400 pounds of lint to the acre. I have already spoken of the coffee plantations about Nairobi. I am told there are also good coffee lands on the slopes of Mount Kenia. Some tobacco farms have been set out along the Ramisi River, and vegetables are now being raised here for Mombasa and the other ports farther down the coast. The people hope to raise European vegetables for South Africa, and it is their idea that they will eventually export meat to that country. The greatest obstacles now in sight are the insect pests and animal diseases, but they will probably be conquered, and these vast plains, which are now supporting thousands upon thousands of antelopes, zebras, gnus and other wild animals, will eventually be teeming with cattle and sheep.

Nairobi, British East Africa.

Unconventional Publicity Methods of Idaho

Candid Catechism Over Best Plan for Advertising the Resources of a Western State.

WHAT did Idaho do with that $104,000?

She spent it advertising.

What, spend it advertising the money appropriated to prosecute the assassins of Governor Steunenberg?

Yes.

Didn't the lawyers get pay?

Yes.

Didn't the detectives get some of it?

Yes, they got a good-sized chunk of it.

What do you mean by "advertising," then?

That Idaho is the best advertised state in the Union today.

All coming from this Steunenberg case?

No, not all of it, but the greater part of it.

What is the result of so much advertising?

People are getting off the trains everywhere in Idaho and they buy property before they get back on the trains to go on West.

Do you really think they are doing much of that?

A great deal of it and more since our latest advertising.

Are not people afraid to stop in a state where they kill their Governor?

It doesn't look like it from the immense sales in Idaho that are just now being made, and besides Idaho people did not kill the Governor.

What other source of advertising has Idaho?

Every town has its commercial club or board of trade.

What of that?

Every commercial club or board of trade has out a little book.

What of that?

Every one of these little books tell the same tale.

What do they tell?

They all say: "This town is the Magic City or the Hummer City or the coming center."

Do they think they can make people think that every place is the coming hub of the state?

Every wheel has a hub.

Are you any better fixed in Idaho than Oregon or Washington?

No.

What makes you think Idaho is getting an advantage over us, then?

We never said anything about advantage over you or any one else.

Is Idaho building any railroads?

Two transcontinental lines will open new territory in Idaho within one year.

What of that?

You are silly.

Why, silly?

Markets, man, markets. See what that will do for the state?

Do you advertise on the trains?

A man entering the state on the east has forty little books put in his hands before he gets to Huntington, Oregon.

He is not going to quickly purchase property, is he?

Quicker than a wink, sometimes.

Don't you think they recall the assassination of your Governor?

Not one man in ten thousand ever recalls the incident.

You suppose really now, on the square, that Oregon loses out by the hard work you Idahoans are doing to show what you have over there?

Oregon does not need to lose out if she uses her printer's ink.

Where are you going to get this $104,000?

We already had it.

Did not some Eastern bonding concerns refuse to bid on Canyon County bridge bonds for no other reason than that Idaho was broke?

Yes, I think somebody said they did.

What does that look like?

Looks like a pretty thorough system of advertising.

The kind you want, think you?

It's as good as any.

Don't you think it will keep people out of Idaho?

Not a bit of it.

You say they never recall the assassination of Steunenberg?

They, every one, think of it, of course, but not in the sense you had in mind a moment ago when you asked about it.

Why didn't you convict the men when you had all this money to spend?

We couldn't.

Why?

There you are, silly again.

What are the Socialists doing in Idaho?

Distributing their papers by the hundred thousands and making a convert every six hours.

Four a day, you suppose?

Just about.

That's 1460 per annum, you remember. That's about the figure.

Does that advertise the good qualities of Idaho?

Yes, that sort is O. K., so far as Idaho is interested.

Now, on the square, how are values in Idaho?

The entire State of Idaho is held at present to be just about twice the value it was held at two years since.

Will the Assessor's roll show it?

No.

Why?

You are silly again.

Is property moving in Idaho?

Every town, nearly, is developing rapidly; some, of course, more rapidly than others.

How about the farm lands?

Three years since all the land in the state could have been purchased for about half what it is selling for today.

Do you tell the passengers on the trains this story?

Yes.

And they will stop off in the face of it?

Yes, and buy property right along.

How is that?

We have "Try-to-get-the-old-place-back" clubs in Idaho.

What are they?

They are the fellows who are trying to get the old place back for twice what they sold it for three years since.

Can they do it?

Sometimes they do, and sometimes they don't.

What other kinds of clubs have you in Idaho?

We have men standing around pointing to certain corner lots and certain tracts, saying, "Two years ago I could have bought that for half what it sold for yesterday." We don't know what to call this club yet.

Is everything on the square in Idaho?

No, not everything, of course.

What's wrong?

There are some irrigation schemes that are fakes.

What are you doing with them?

Turning them over to Uncle Sam for a spanking.

What about this old sore we hear so much of nowadays that the state capital is going to move away from Boise?

That's dead in Idaho now. We don't want to move the capital.

Who would get it if you did move it?

Probably Moscow, probably Caldwell and even Nampa still looks that way.

Idaho don't have a big city, does she?

Not yet.

Do you people look for one?

Yes, before long the die will be cast.

Where will the city be?

Silly again, aren't you?

Suppose it is admitted that there is room for a good city between Salt Lake and Portland, where will it be?

Barring the fact that Baker City might get it, which is not likely on account of Baker being in Oregon, when the city would noturally take place in Idaho, we think it will be at the point of junction Short Line and the North and South road, and if Boise should get that, of course Boise gets the 75,000 city.