

Valuable Resources Of the Philippines

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MANILA, Feb. 14, 1900.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—I visited one of the biggest sawmills of the Philippines today. It is owned by a Chinese and Chinese laborers were turning the great logs into boards. The Pasig river, on which the mill stands, was lined with logs. Other sawmills above and below were busily working, and the scratch, scratch of the saw as it cut through the hard wood could be everywhere heard. Each sawmill had scores of men employed and the scenes in all of them were far different from anything you will find in the United States. In the first place, the logs had been barked in the forests, some having been straightened by chipping. All were of the heaviest of hard wood and all had a grain and color which would have made them exceedingly valuable could they have been sold in our country. The most wonderful thing about the mill was its absolute lack of machinery. It was an immense building covering almost an acre and consisting of merely a roof and the poles which upheld it. The floor was the earth and there were no walls at the sides.

The logs were placed upon trestles about as high up from the ground as your waist, and at each log four half-naked Chinese were sawing away. With a pencil they marked off the width of a board from the top of the log and then at each end began to pull crosscut saws across it. The log lay horizontally on the trestles, and the handles of the saws were so arranged at right angles with the blades that by pulling them back and forth the men could saw a strip of board off the log. The two pair of men were sawing toward each other, beginning at the opposite ends of the log and carefully watching the lines till they met in the center. They then made a second mark and went on to saw off the next board. Such work requires careful watching to saw straight and a long time to cut a single board, but it is in this way that all the lumber used in this city of 350,000 people is made. The planing is also done by hand and so are all classes of woodmaking operations.

Hardwoods of the Philippines.

When I was told in the United States that there were in the Philippines rosewood logs nine feet in diameter, and that the ties of the Manila-Dagupan railroad were made of mahogany, I was inclined to doubt the statements. Now that I am on the ground I doubt them no longer. There is enough mahogany here to furnish ties for a railroad across the continent, and the varieties of hardwood are so numerous that a nine-foot rosewood log would not surprise me. I talked yesterday with an army officer who has traveled extensively in the mahogany forests of the West Indies and Central America and who has just returned from a march through the woods of northern Luzon. He says the mahogany trees there surpass in size the trees of Santo Domingo, Mexico and Honduras. I hear similar stories of the eastern provinces and also of those which face the Pacific. All this is on the island of Luzon, which is less timbered than many of the southern islands.

There are said to be more than 300 varieties of hardwood on the islands, of which at least fifty have a high commercial value. I have seen many of the different kinds, but know the names of but few. Yesterday I visited a piano manufacturer, where the instruments are made from the ground up. The metal is cast, the sounding boards sawed out and the polished cases dressed and finished. The results are as good as in the best piano factories of the United States, and in all cases native woods are used. Our ordinary piano woods will not stand the Philippine climate. The sounding boards in this damp, moist air lose their resonance, and within a few months the best instruments become thin. There is wood here which stands the climate and which this piano maker thinks will eventually be used for musical instruments in all damp regions.

Floors of Mahogany.

Nearly all of the floors of the best houses of Manila are of narra, a wood much like mahogany. It has the same grain and takes a beautiful polish. The Oriente hotel, where I am staying, is a great building of three stories, with wide staircases and immense halls. Its floors are made of these Filipino mahogany boards, each of which is from eighteen inches to two feet in width and from fifteen to twenty feet long. The stairs are of the same rich material and the railings have a polish equal to that of a piano. The beds are of hardwood, with great hardwood canopies over them, and such of the furniture as is not imported is of the same material.

There are churches here which have columns and floors and ceilings of mahogany and I see that this same wood forms most of the timbers in the barges and boats of the Pasig river, boats an hundred and more feet long being made of it. The churches are floored with it and it is in fact as common as pine in the United States.

This wood is, however, only one of the hardwoods. There are others of different colors. Some woods take a polish like the finest rosewood, but have a grain and a color like bird's-eye maple, others are of a coffee hue, others red and others much like black walnut. Some of the woods are hard like teak, and some are so heavy they do not float. In the Island of Mindoro one, thirty miles from here, it is said there are 106 different varieties of woods, of which

fifty are hard, many being fitted for shipbuilding and fine furniture making.

Ants Which Eat Wood.

There are several varieties of wood here which the white ants will not eat. These are the only kinds that are of much value for furniture or building in the Philippines. The white ants are little insects about as large as our common small ant. They feed upon wood and they will eat up a trunk or store box in a night. They make a little hole in the wood and then go on eating away until it is nothing but a shell. Last week among the goods which arrived on one of the transports were a dozen rolling pins for making bread. When the box which contained them was opened only a pile of white dust and two pins were discovered. When the pins were picked up one of them broke in two and the other dropped into pieces. The white ants had liked the flavor of the wood and eaten them.

These ants sometimes attack warehouses when they are not made of hard woods, and a slight earthquake shock brings the buildings to the ground. They are fond apparently of mucilage and paste, for they have eaten the labels off the bottles in the hospital dispensaries and attacked the corks. Not long ago one of our surgeons upon opening a box of bottles containing alcohol found that the bottles were only half full. He suspected that the box had been tampered with until it was found that the ants had honeycombed the corks and that the liquor had evaporated. There was not a sign on the outside of the box to show it had been touched. The ants had made a very small hole and crept through one at a time. They usually do their work on the inside of the wood, leaving the surface untouched. They may eat the legs of a chair, leaving little more than the paint, so that when you sit down you find the legs go to dust and yourself on the floor. They will eat clothing and pasteboard cartridge wrappings, and it is even said they sometimes scratch iron. It may be for this reason that in buildings and furniture the hardwoods only are used here.

Pine in the Philippines.

I have seen it often stated that there is no pine in the Philippines. Captain Batchelder, who has lately returned from a march of about 300 miles through the Cagayan valley and the mountains along it, tells me this is not so. The captain is a North Carolina man, and he knows a pine tree when he sees one. He says he marched for days through pine forests, using pine knots to make torches for his men when they camped at night. He tells me the trees are large and as full of resin as the turpentine pine trees of the south Atlantic coast.

There is also a soft cedar wood here like that we use for cigar boxes. It is cut from logs from thirty to forty feet long and almost a yard square. Another wood is called bullet wood, because it is as hard as a bullet; it is so hard that it can be driven right

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were imposed. The question of getting labor to cut the trees and haul the logs out has been a serious one, and one which requires considerable capital. The labor used has been almost entirely Filipino labor, which is very uncertain. The men will stop work on the slightest pretext, and it is only by getting them into a sort of debt slavery or peonage that steady work can be secured. There are but few roads and no railroads. The only beasts of value are the water buffaloes, which are the freight cars and lumber haulers of the islands. Much of the timber lies near the sea, and now that Uncle Sam has the islands measures will probably be undertaken to get it out. I am told that the best of the forests are in the southern islands, and that great part of Mindanao is one vast woods made up of valuable virgin forest trees.

Gold in the Philippines.

There is no doubt that gold exists all over the Philippines, but whether it is in paying quantities remains for the prospector to settle. I have reports every day of the existence of small placer deposits and of streams the beds of which when washed show color.

The most of the stories are from the troops who have been in the mountainous districts—districts which are inhabited chiefly by savages and some of which have not been accessible to the ordinary prospector. The average Filipino, it must be remembered, is not a traveler. He sticks to his home and seldom goes five miles beyond it. The head-hunting natives have to some extent kept the Spaniards out of the mountains, so that the country is to a large extent unexplored.

A few weeks ago General Grant led his regiments across the mountains northeast of Luzon into the province of Zimbales. The men tell me their way was through the woods and across streams which bore good indications of carrying gold. At one place Captain Pardie and some other officers washed a double handful of gravel and in it found five flakes of gold. In most of the beds of the streams color was found, but nowhere were there any signs of quartz deposits.

About 200 miles by sea north of Manila is a port called Vigan. There are now soldiers there and expeditions have been recently made into the mountains at the east. In this region gold is also to be seen in the hands of the natives. They wash it, it is said, out of the beds of creeks and trade the dust and little nuggets to the Chinese, who give them about \$35 Mexican money an ounce. I have heard it said that the Chinese are able in places to exchange silver for gold at the same weight, but this, like many of the stories told here, is probably without foundation.

How the Savages Sell Gold.

It is impossible for one to understand how gold could exist here for hundreds of years with the country in the hands of the Spaniards without its being discovered and mined unless he knows the conditions which prevail in most parts of the mountains. They are wild and without roads of any kind.

Their only inhabitants are the Negritos, Igorrotes, Gaddenes and other savages. The more peaceful parts of the islands have always had their thieves and brigands, so that

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mining has been, to say the least, extremely dangerous. Such gold as has been discovered has also been kept secret for fear of robbery.

From the American, one of the daily papers of Manila, I give an extract from a report of a correspondent who has just returned from the Zimbales region. Said he: "I saw a long rosary of gold in the hands of one of the natives. It was made up of nuggets of virgin gold, the smallest of which was as big as a pea. Holes had been pierced through the nuggets and they were strung on a silk cord. The gold was of a light yellow color and had evidently come from the surface of the ground. Its owner had purchased the nuggets of a Negro, but he could not learn where they had come from."

At this same time a rich Filipino of one of the towns near the foot of the mountains, finding that the soldiers did not intend to steal from him, pulled out a small buck-skin sack and showed about three ounces of gold, which he had recently bought from the Negritos. This was coarse gold, most of the grains being about the size of a kernel of rice. The man said he understood that the Negritos picked the grains out of the clear mountain streams, and that they had no other methods of mining, nor did they seem to wish to engage in mining.

Gold in Mindanao.

General Bates tells me he has heard reports of gold being found in the Island of Mindanao. This is the second largest of the Philippine group, being almost as large as Kentucky. It is practically unexplored and is inhabited chiefly by savages. The chief washings are now on the northern part of the island, far away from the part occupied by our troops. The gold finds its way into the hands of the petty sultans and datus, who sell it to the foreigners. It is said that

the amount of alluvial gold which has been thus sold leads to the belief that there must be quartz veins in Mindanao.

I have not visited the island of Mindoro. This lies only a few miles east of southern Luzon and is inhabited almost entirely by savages. Its name is a corruption of "mina-de-oro," or mine of gold. It is reported that the island has many placer deposits. When Dean Worcester visited it he was told by the natives that they could take him to a place where there was so much gold that it would dazzle his eyes, but he does not say that he accepted their offer.

There are mines in Luzon which have produced considerable gold in the past. The Spanish government kept records of the mining operations, and for a long time a certain percentage of all the gold mined went to the king of Spain. According to the records, so I am told, the mines at Mambulo once produced weekly as much as 1,000 ounces. This, at the rate of \$20 an ounce, would be \$20,000 worth of gold per week. These mines were worked by the Indians before the Spaniards came and later on by the Spaniards and by an English syndicate.

I understand the English could not get the natives to co-operate with them and that their mining was for this reason unsuccessful. It is said, in fact, that none of the attempts by foreigners at mining in the Philippines has paid. Foreman, who is one of the best authorities, estimates that \$1,300,000 has been spent in vain experiments of one kind and another and that so far nothing has been made.

That there is gold in many places, however, there is no doubt. When the Spaniards first took possession of the islands after the discovery by Ferdinand Magellan they sent home great quantities of it in the shape of gold bracelets, chains and ornaments. Two of their ships were captured by Sir Francis Drake and the booty was so great, it is said, that Drake fitted out his vessels with silken sails and silk ropes and thus sailed into London.

The mining now being done by the natives is of the rudest character. They use wooden bowls to wash the gold from the gravel. They pound the larger pieces of gold-bearing rock to pieces on anvils and then grind them to dust between millstones, the stones being pulled around by water buffaloes. In the few mines of Luzon the water is taken out by hand by the natives, who pass it up from one to another in buckets of palm leaves. Each bucket holds about two gallons, and it takes hundreds of natives to make the human chain which thus drains a mine.

Points for American Prospectors.

I hesitate to advise Americans to come out here to prospect. As far as present indications go it is all a gamble and the man who comes risks everything. The field may, however, soon develop into one of great possibilities. Just now nothing in the interior can be done from lack of roads and facilities for getting machinery into the mountains. There are some placer regions near the sea,



WATER BUFFALOES.



IN THE WOODS OF LUZON.

(Continued on Eighth Page.)