

NEGROES' PROMISED LAND.
How June Moore, of York, has Prospered
in Liberia.

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Twenty-five years ago a poor day laborer in the cotton fields of York County, today a merchant prince and one of the leading citizens of a flourishing little republic. Such, in brief, is the romantic story of June Moore, a negro who left this country in 1871 for Liberia, and who is just now making his first trip back. June is a splendid specimen of physical manhood: he is six feet high, weighs about two hundred pounds, and is 52 years of age. Though he has had but few school advantages he is very intelligent, a good talker, and seems to be unusually well informed.

I have just had a talk with him. And he has a wonderful story to tell. I have reason to believe that what he says is true. For most of it he furnishes the proof, and notwithstanding the fact that he is only a negro he does not fail to make an impression that he is also a man.

"I left York," he said, "on account of the Ku Klux and went to Liberia. There were 166 in our party, all from the same section of the county. We sailed on the Edith Rose. Two or three died on the way, and thirty-six grew faint hearted and returned to America. Of the balance nearly all are doing well, and not one of them would be willing to come back to this country to live."

Moore was well dressed in a neat and substantial outfit from head to foot. There was in his face and in his general appearance that which unmistakably indicated the well to do business man, and I remarked the fact.

"Yes, sir, bless the Lord, I am doing well. When I first went out to Liberia, I had nothing but good health, but now I am comfortable."

I asked him to tell me his story from his landing in Liberia until now. He did so willingly. "When we first went out there," he commenced, "Solomon Hill

and myself-we were partners then, and have been partners ever since-took up twenty-five acres of land apiece. The government gave it-to us. It still gives twenty-five acres to heads of families and ten acres to single men.

We had no money, so we planted our land in ginger and coffee, and then commenced to saw lumber with a whip saw for 50 cents a day. After three years our ginger began to yield a little something, and then after five years we also began to realize from our coffee. We got a little money ahead and went into merchandising. As we were able we bought land and set out more coffee trees. We now have fifteen hundred acres of land apiece, and two hundred acres of it are yielding coffee.

"This year our coffee crop amounted to 50,000 pounds, and we have sold it at 15 cents a pound. The cost of putting it on the market is about 5 cents. In addition to our coffee plantation we also have three stores, one at Arthington, another at Monrovia and another at Millsburg, but our principal place of business is Monrovia."

"Here," said Moore, producing a small paper box, "is a sample of our coffee." I noticed the unusually large size of the grain, and asked him if the coffee was not especially selected for show.

"No," he said, "I just took that out of a bag that I brought home to my people. I sold two hundred bags in Liverpool and brought one home. It was to get an American market for our coffee that I left Liberia. This is called elephant coffee. We have been selling it in England and Germany. It is there regarded as ranking with the finest in the world. We have never sold any to this country direct, but before I go back I expect to make arrangements to do so."

I asked Moore about the efficiency of the Liberian Government. He replied: "You would, of course, be willing to make some allowance for us on account of our ignorance, but we will not ask much allowance. Of course, you know we have a Republic just like the United States. Our President is J.J. Cheeseman, a son of an American slave, but a native Liberian. He is an able, just and patriotic executive. There is very little corruption in any part of the Government, and our people are always quick to tear it down whenever they become convinced of its existence. Crime is punished quickly and surely. Murderers are usually hanged. It is only an exceptionally clear case of

self-defence that will warrant an acquittal, and there is very little distinction between murder and manslaughter. Where there seems to be any question the jury generally calls it, murder.

"Our laws against immorality are very strict. No man is allowed to have more than one wife at a time, and if a man is found living in a single-roomed house with two women he is severely punished for lewdness. Drunkenness is as common in Liberia as it is here, but I am pleased to say that it is not more so."

Moore showed photographs of the residences of himself and Hill. They were frame structures, two stories high and neatly painted. One contains sixteen rooms, and the other seventeen. He also had photographs of the wives and children of himself and partner, and they all appeared to be in good circumstances.

"What about the opportunities for a man now who is willing to work, but is without means?"

"They are just as good as they ever were. We pay the native laborer 25 cents a day and the American laborer 50 cents a day. The native laborer is good, but the American is worth more for the reason that it is more intelligent. Of course it is hard for a laboring man to get a start, but if a man has intelligence, along with a willingness to work, he can certainly accomplish something. For the educated negro it is the best place in the world."

"Any white men there?"

"A few English and (crinan traders, representatives of their home houses. We do not allow white men to own real estate. We recognize that we are the inferior race, and that if we let the whites come in it will not belong until we belong to them; but we are making progress, and after a while we will throw down the bars and tell the white man that he can come in and be entitled to all that he can eel."

Speaking of farming Moore said that but little work is required, A man goes out, digs a lot of holes, puts in some seed potatoes, and after a couple of

months goes back and linds a crop. After sowing rice there is nothing else to do until you cut it. ('ollee re? juircs five years lo uni ure. but after some time it continues to produce in definitely and perpetually, and each succeeding crop is larger than the one which went before. The regular coffee gathering time is January and February, but since last season lie has gathered more than twenty barrels. The people there do not use hog lard. Instead they usc palm oil. Palm nuts are boiled down, the white oil is collected, and it is splendid for cooking purposes. The only lard that is sold in the country cornea from abroad, and goes to the missionaries and traders. Palm oil is sometimes put in the earth, where it is allowed to become rotten, when it is taken out and exported for use as soap. Foreigners, as a rule, do not take kindly to palm oil for cooking purposes."

"Do you have any idea of coming back to this country to live ?" I asked.

"No, sir ; Liberia is my home. God made Africa for the negro and the negro for Africa. I am a son of the tropics. Nowhere else can the negro thrive as there. Why, don't I remember when I used to go out in the cold frosty weather to pick cotton with Mr. Stewart's boys? My skin would turn white and roughen up, while theirs would get red and smooth. They could pick all the faster, and I could only shake and shiver. But put us under the tropical sun of Liberia, and those broiling rays that will rob them of every energy will give to me the snap and vim that was imparted to them by the cold in the cotton field. No more cold weather for me. I saw snow as I came out, from the deck of the steamer, on top of the Tenerife Mountains for the first time in twenty-five years. I have not seen any frost since I left here, and I hope that as long as I live I will never see any more.'

Among the presents that Moore brought was an African powder horn that his partner, Hill, had sent to Sheriff Glenn. When he learned that Sheriff Glenn had passed away, he turned the present over to the sheriff's sons. Moore will start back to Liberia tomorrow.

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026965/1896-08-05/ed-1/seq-1/>