

# The Isle of Spice.

*The Clove Industry—The Beauty of a Plantation—A First Visit—The Labour Question—The Possibilities of Artificial Heat—The Government and the Clove Industry—The Primeval Forest.*

By LASCELLES HASBROUCK.

**T**WENTY-SEVEN miles north of Zanzibar, and about the same distance from the African mainland, lies the great clove-growing island of Pemba. Its coast abounds with bays and narrow inlets, and above the dense greenery of its heights, towers everywhere the graceful coconut palm. In the not very remote days, when stealing slaves from the mainland was a popular and profitable business, these shelters once gained, ensured safety to the dhows; anyone attempting pursuit unacquainted with their tortuous currents and shelving reefs, was simply courting disaster. The sea is decked with innumerable green isles, where the

begun, henceforth until its close, you talk, live, breathe, and dream cloves. The yield, price, and supply of pickers, become one burning question, to the exclusion of all other topics.

### A FIRST VISIT.

Whoever forgets his first visit to a clove plantation; when, turning from the blinding glare of the fierce tropical sunshine, he finds the welcome shade of cool, leafy arcades. An exquisite sweetness greets him, in which all the perfumes of Araby are surely blended. Unknown until now, it is yet faintly reminiscent of scents which haunt the memory, and touch the imagination.

and you become a veritable pagan. As the night progresses you begin to realise how teeming with life is this equatorial land. A thousand voices, mute by day, awake and swell into a chorus; the myriad many-toned insect pipe blending with the sharp cry of the lemur, the

erally suffices, but, in exceptional years, there is sometimes a second and even a third gathering. Unpicked buds flower, and develop largely in size, until they resemble long, slender plums, which, as they are seed-bearing, are known as "Mother of cloves." The ordinary clove



NATIVE WOMEN POUNDING RICE AND COOKING.



(1) NATIVE WOMEN STEMMING CLOVES. (2) THE BANANA MARKET AT PEMBA. (3) STEMMING CLOVES AND LAYING THEM OUT TO DRY.

wild guinea-fowl is at home; and large monkeys utter endless protests whenever man invades their domains. Shells of great beauty and rarity, as well as coral and flower-like sponge growths, are found all around the coast.

Pemba, an important part of the Sultan of Zanzibar's dominions, has known Persian and Portuguese rulers, neither of whom have left deep imprints behind; but the Arab, who succeeded them, has stamped his character and influence deeply upon the life of the island. Its importance dates from the introduction of the clove, about one hundred years ago, when soil and climate proving congenial, its cultivation progressed so rapidly that Pemba soon became a recognised source of clove supply, and now, with Zanzibar, yields seven-eighths of the world's entire product.

Harvest brings with it a sudden transformation in the easy-going life of the island. Of men, women, and children, few are too old, or too young, to be pressed into service. Picking having

Certain old-time flowers are recalled, but only to be dismissed in quick succession; perhaps the carnation, but no, this subtle fragrance is too dainty, too delicate for comparison; it is sui generis.

Clove trees, slight, elegant, and many-branched, attain a height of sixty or seventy feet; and so dense is their foliage that only at intervals does a stray sunbeam filter through, to bring light and shadow into play, and change the dark leafage into vivid shimmering green.

The stillness and beauty of those lofty, far-reaching avenues, recall the solemnity and grace of Gothic cathedral aisles, and linger in the memory with the same unforgettable charm. At sunset, looking along a darkening glade, you find it framing a circle of gold; gold so manifestly palpable that you have but to hasten onwards to gather up the fairy treasure.

And, lastly, walk there under the moonlight, in ebon shade or silversheen,

angry chatter of the monkey, and the wailing howl of the pariah dog, and unfortunate animal which has become such an outcast that he no longer barks.

### THE CLOVE TREE.

Like all Pemba's trees, excepting that ghost of the woods, the Baobab, the devil's peculiar property, the clove is evergreen, its oval leaves suggesting thornless holly, by their smooth, shining surface.

Unlike tree products in general, cloves do not succeed the blossom, but are unopened flower buds, re-sembling honey-suckle in form, passing from palest green, through faint shades of pink, to rose red. An average stalk bears from eight to fifteen, but crowning bunches often reach double that number. Should they flower, the value of the clove is impaired, the cap, which marks the perfect product, falling off in drying. Five months usually intervene between budding and picking, and harvest lasts about three months. One picking gathering the undeveloped bud, and consequently immature, will not germinate.

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A walk through the avenues which picking has begun gives the impression that a host of invisible Dryades has taken possession; chatter, laughter, and song have vanished silence. The picker (clove harvest recognises no disabilities of sex) climbs a tree, and securing foothold in the clefts of the branches, which grow upwards like those of the poplar, hooks the outer end towards him with a hooked stick, and snaps off the bunches which he deposits in a bag. A rope thrown round the boll enables him to swing out, and lessens his liability to fall. Small branches and leaves suffer considerably, but this provokes little censure, as it reduces the necessity for pruning. The ground underneath is kept bare save for beds of pineapples, which grow wild in abundance. Occasionally there is a coconut palm, Arabs believing that, unless it is planted, cloves will not bear.



THE OLD METHOD OF PICKING CLOVES.