

5594

Forest Office,
 Rec^d
 Rec^d 15 FEB 08
 Nairobi.

British East Africa,

January 22. 1908

My dear Read,

I am afraid I must trouble you again about my report on the forests of B. E. A. We shall want orders on the tenure of the reserved forests at once. The Lari business shows that it will not be safe to leave this important point unsettled until the report is printed and authorised generally. In fact, after this Lari business I blame myself for not having had so important a point settled before I came out. of course, without fixity of tenure for the forests there can be no systematic forest conservancy.

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that it was decided by the Colonial Office that the pig syndicate (Uplands of East Africa) were to receive all forest facilities, timber, grazing, etc, but no forest land. Now I am instructed that they are to receive 2,000 acres out of the heart of our most valuable forest. This is a blow I must confess, and it comes rather disheartening after the proposed reduction in our funds below the point of efficiency.

It is true, that much of the 2,000 acres which they are now taking does not contain trees at present, but of course there can be no systematic forestry if portions of a forest under regeneration and temporarily without trees can be swooped down upon and annexed by land speculators. It is the land speculation in this business which I so dread as a precedent. Owen Thomas' case, when I suggested full facilities in the forest for timber and grazing and 10 acres as a site

for the pig factory, was a sight! The pig business is but a pretext. My report dated the 15th inst shows the possibilities of the Lari Swamp as an industrial centre. Its value in a few years may run into millions! This happened at Woodstock, near Cape Town, under somewhat similar conditions. Cape Town, like Nairobi, was unsuited for industrial white development and this took place at a village near it called Woodstock. In a few years land at Woodstock rose from a value of a few pounds per acre to £1,000, and in some cases, to £2,000 per acre. This may happen here. I have pointed out officially that there may be a matter of two million pounds at stake. $2,000 \text{ acres} \times \text{£}1,000 = \text{£}2,000,000$. My friend Wilson is in Nairobi to start a brewery. He has selected the Lari Flat as the best site for a brewery. The pig syndicate are buying him out with the offer of a brewery site free. The position of Lari is

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467

unique. Of all the wonderful country opened up by the Uganda railway it is the crown and summit in two senses - industrially as well as physically. Last month, when I was in camp there, there were two feet of ice (congealed hail) filling the railway ditches.

It is undoubtedly fitted for White colonization and White industrial settlement in a sense that Nairobi never can be. White skilled labour in ~~this~~ ^{our} country has a value.

The subject seems important enough for the Colonial Office to send out a special agent to report. Would it not be possible for you to make this the determining factor in your projected visit? In any case, I hope you will let us have instructions regarding the position of the demarcated forests here. I feel that things cannot go on as

they are. The Itri business strikes at the root of all satisfactory forest management. Our Forest Surveyors and demarcators are

at work on the forest boundaries; we are checking the destruction by natives. It is not logical to let the White speculators come in and ruin the forest estates we are building up.

Ross and I are leaving for the Kenia forest estimation early next month. This will take us about three weeks. Then we have three weeks or so in Uganda for the Ripon Falls forest report, then there will be an accumulation of Office work and then I hope ^{to submit} the completed draft of my forest report, sometime in April. Lord Waleran came to see me to-day. He seems very pleased with his tour through the coast forests and quite agreeable to work on the general lines arranged at the interview you and I had with him at the Colonial Office.

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I arranged for one of the Foresters to meet him when he landed and go through the coast Forests with him.

If you can come out; April, May and June, would be three good months. April is pleasant enough in the drier parts of the country and by May and June the rains are over and the weather is the pleassest and healthiest of all the year. I am due for a tour through the coast forests in May. It would be very nice if you could come with me!

Sincerely yours,

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H. J. Read, Esq

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