

# Went Barefoot to Hold Plantation—Now Dwells in Palace in Midst of Paradise

One of these days the Chamber of Commerce will receive a shipment of melons from Lapuan Plantation, Davao. They will be Tom Watsons, Georgia Rattlesnakes and the other aristocrats of the melon world. They promise to be as large and have the flavor of the best States-grown melons. Skeptics are to be convinced. They will be sent by the grower, Henry Pahl, owner of Lapuan, and there won't be any charge: Pahl is one of the half-hundred fine fellows who have turned the coast of Davao from jungle into hemp and coconut fields and written American pioneer history in the orient, with certain tragic chapters sandwiched between endeavor, success and achievement.



Henry Pahl, Owner of Lapuan Plantation

They make light of the tragedy, of course, and are equally reticent about the successful part; for they haven't been playing a four-flusher's game.

Pahl went to Davao September 27, 1911, and took up Lapuan plantation, 264 hectares, under lease from the government. He had three partners in Manila, each of whom was to send him P75 a month, and on this P225 a month he was to maintain himself and family, employ labor and develop the plantation. The jungle came square down to the shore, not an acre was plowed and not a marketable thing was growing. It was a question whether the wild people *Bilanes* and *Manobos*, could be induced to work. Pahl of course did not know a syllable of their language. The first problem was shelter: material was cut from the jungle and a temporary shanty built. The next problem was to get some hemp planted, which in 18 months would yield fiber and bring in revenue. So a clearing was made and planting undertaken. Fortunately the *Bilanes* and *Manobos* would work.

But soon there was no money to pay them. One partner lost his job in Manila and quit putting in his money. Another, with less excuse, grew discouraged and quit sending his P75 a month. Only one lived up to his contract: Pahl's resources

soon shrank to P75 a month. It just wouldn't go round, that's all. Pahl was soon in rags. He sold his shoes off his feet to buy food for his family. He sold a Stetson hat for ten pesos with which to get to Davao, where he borrowed the fare to Manila. He had to come back and get more backing. What had become of his first partners he did not know. But arrived in Manila he soon learned. They would agree to put in no more money; on the contrary one wanted to sell. There were not two horns to the problem; it was no dilemma. Pahl had to have money; he had to get back to the family and the plantation and get crops to growing.

His faith in Davao was not shaken in the least. He tramped the streets of Manila, found within 24 hours a man who would loan him P3000. With part of this he bought his partner's stock; the rest he took back to Davao as working capital. The

firm became Pahl and Henderson, Inc. Aside from this money, during five years some P12000 went into the plantation; and everything else came from the soil.

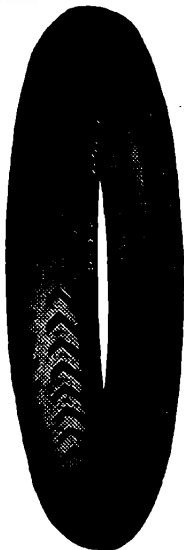
It is good soil, as good as there is in the world. But when drouths come, crops fail; so after all it is much like soil everywhere—just one factor in successful tilage. Pahl's early crops failed because of drouth. Seeing irrigation was necessary, he put the whole place under an irrigation system, making the land pay the bill. Naturally he lived no princely life during those long, tedious years of the development period. He was looking ahead, beyond to the horizon of present circumstances, to a dream he saw coming true—as acre after acre of the jungle was turned into productive fields.

Lapuan comprises 264 hectares, but in 1919 Pahl bought Kalian plantation, 113 hectares more, from Johnson and Chester, so his present plantation embraces 382 hectares, 955 acres. On this place he has 21,000 coconut palms and 50,000 hills of Manila hemp; the monthly production averages 100 piculs and hemp and 100 piculs of coconuts. Launches of the Columbian Rope Company call at the plantation dock

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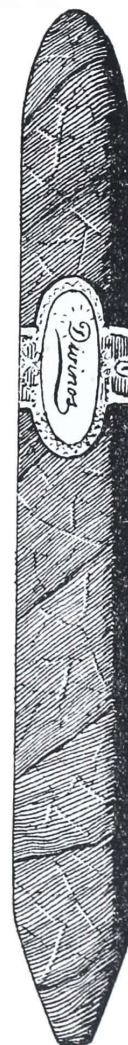
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and take the product away regularly. The situation today is quite different from what it was when Pahl hiked barefoot to Davao to catch a smudgy steamer to Manila to raise a bare grubstake.

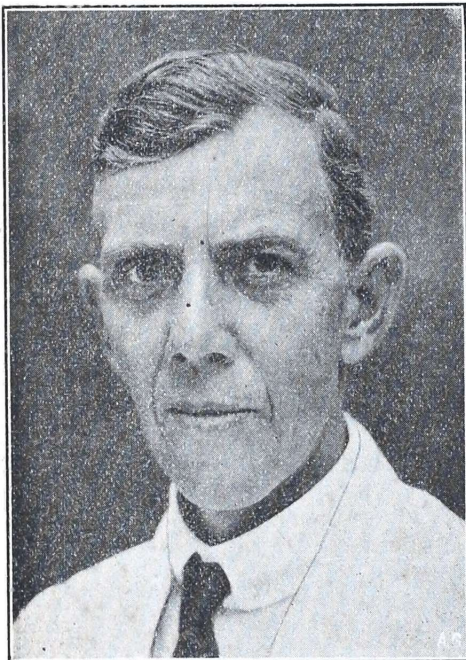
The little thatch shanty is gone. In its stead has risen the finest plantation house, perhaps, in all south Mindanao. Every bedroom has running water, lights and a private bath. The plantation paid for them; they are what Davao land has given one man who had the faith to play the game out to the end. Development of the plantation has brought prosperity to the whole community—which is, almost without exception, the experience of every Davao community where an American has taken up land. Far all among the *Bitanes* and *Manobos* who wish to work, Pahl provides something to do; even children are paid

ten cents, the wages of men in the adjacent tropics. Men earn regularly P45 to P60 a month. Besides, they have their perquisites from the orchard and gardens. No cold storage shipping space is to be had; the surplus of vegetables and fruits can only be given away or allowed to rot. Florida grapefruit, even when sent to Davao, bring 3-1/3 centavos each; three fine ones sell for ten centavos. It is the same with oranges, mandarins, mangosteens and lemons, the same with melons and figs.

Rather a paradise, isn't it?—a place ideally situated on an inland sea, so thoroughly developed and so well equipped? If there were 200,000 such places in the Philippines carved out of the United States public domain as this one was, the islands would begin to take on the aspect of partial development.

## Independence on Davao Homestead—What May Be Done with Sixteen Hectares

It is believed interesting to include in the material for this special issue of the Journal on the port and province of Davao a narrative of what an American has done on a homestead there, a mere sixteen hectares, or forty acres; not in any sense of the



George R. L. Pond, of the Moro Improvement Co., Davao. Also a Successful Homesteader, making 40 Acres pay P5,000 a Year

word a plantation, and commonly thought too meager a tract for the American to bother to take up. When a homestead of 16 hectares has been put into cultivation, another tract half the size can be added to it by application to the bureau of lands. Twenty-four hectares or sixty acres is the maximum homestead tract, but on the basis of what it can be made to produce it is much larger than the tract of 160 acres granted in the United States under the homestead law.

This is the story of what George R. L. Pond, a Davao planter, has been able to do with sixteen hectares. He has it all under cultivation and will take up the eight hectares additional which the law allows him.

Pond's more important interests are in the Moro Improvement Company, of which

C. M. Simmons is manager, Pond being employed as assistant. The company has a tract of 1005 hectares, taken up in 1906. On it are 100,000 hills of hemp and 3000 coconuts. The land was first taken under lease, but application to purchase was made in 1918, seven years ago, when the purchase price was deposited with the government. Since then matters have waited upon the land administration, either tangled in red tape or equally confused by other absurd impedimenta making delays interminable.

Seven years since the purchase application was filed—and no title yet! If such matters were stressed in official reports to Washington and in testimony before congressional committees, possibly there would be a national awakening to a realization of what the situation really is. More Filipinos are affected than Americans: the former, however, being mere peasants have no voice in public affairs, and the latter have little influence because they don't vote in the home elections.

The problem is not in the home district; ergo, there is no problem!

Pond has infinite patience, together with 23 years' experience. He took up his homestead of 16 hectares some years ago. It adjoins the plantation of the Moro Improvement Company. Practically speaking it can all be cultivated, and is cultivated. After Pond got possession of it he was looking about for workmen to put it into cultivation. In Davao, Japanese do this sort of thing. When they have finished one job they move on to the next. One day a group of them came to Pond's and Simmons' place. Did they want any planting done? No, not on the plantation; on Pond's homestead, yes. The usual bargain was struck, after due parley, and the Japanese moved onto the plantation and began operations, first building their thatch houses from materials everywhere at hand.

They cleared off the jungle and planted the place to coconuts. For every palm planted, Pond gave them fifty centavos. For every palm living at the end of one year, he gave them another half peso; for every one living at the end of two years, a peso; and for every one living at the end of three years, another peso, making three pesos per palm brought to the age of three years, at which time plantings are out of danger and begin to thrive with very little further cultivation. In this way the whole place planted up. Some 2000 coconuts are growing on it.

Of 100 of the first palms planted, Pond kept a careful record, numbering each

Pahl, of course, is a veteran. He is from Parkersburg, West Virginia, and came to the Philippines in 1900 with the 11st U. S. Volunteers on the Army Transport Logan via the Suez Canal, the Logan sailing from New York late in 1899 and arriving in Manila in January, 1900. From soldiering in Mindanao, Pahl learned of the great fertility of Davao lands and their untouched resources. He has made a first rate planter of himself; he reads the literature of agriculture and supplements the knowledge thus gained with his own experience. Leaving Manila a few days ago, he took with him a shipment of young plants of Liberian coffee, intending to develop coffee as a third important product of his plantation.

in order to do so. When at the bearing age, these palms averaged 60 nuts each per year, and 185 of the nuts made a full picul of copra. This is remarkable, nothing less; for in the great Laguna-Tayabas coconut country, the largest single coconut-area in the world, 290 nuts to the picul are figured as the average. Pond's record, on the other hand, cannot be questioned; it merely proves the fertility of Davao farm lands. It may be safely estimated that on his homestead four palms will produce a picul of copra per year. Roughly calculating, the entire homestead will produce 500 piculs of copra per year, which cannot be figured at an average less than ten pesos the picul, net, making an income of P5000 from the sixteen hectares. On the same basis the maximum homestead tract in Davao will yield an annual income of P7,500. Excepting in special branches such as orcharding, the best farm in the United States does not compare with this, no matter what hard work may be expended upon

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