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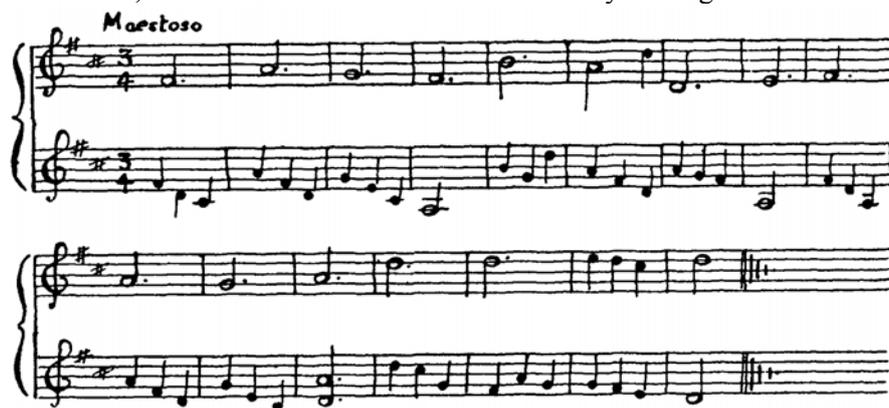
SONGS OF THE BALUBA OF LAKE MOERO

By Emile Torday. Communicated by T. A. Joyce.

It becomes ever more difficult to collect the songs of the different tribes; soldiers, who are never garrisoned in their own country, bring their songs and teach them to the natives. The most striking example of this is the song "O Lupembe," which, certainly originating in the Stanley Falls region where was residing Major Lothaire (in whose honour it has been composed), is sung through all the Congo Free State territory. Another, and by far the most unfavourable, circumstance, is that a European has scarcely any opportunity of hearing natives sing, except when travelling, so that from all their songs he can collect only marches, if he takes that trouble, and he very seldom does.

These songs are invariably composed of a recitative followed by a chorus, which, though nearly always the same, is slightly modified and adapted to the recitative. The improvisation is generally made by the man who possesses the strongest voice, by no means the best; but I have known certain men famous for their wit, who, whenever they were in a "safari" (caravan), had the right to lead the other singers.

The subject of these songs is very often the European who travels with the caravan, and all honours are bestowed on him by the negro bard.



SONG NO. 1.

Though he be the most peace-loving of mortals he will be mentioned as a famous warrior who has killed hundreds of enemies; though he be as thin as a lath, his embonpoint will be highly praised. Whoever he be, he must, in the

song, slay people, lions, elephants, eat for two drink for three, have scores of wives; in fact, do and have anything that makes him appear wealthy and powerful in the eyes of natives. The improvisatore must not forget to mention the numerous countries the great man has traversed, and will with the greatest *naiveté* make terrible geographical confusions.

Allegretto

Solo 

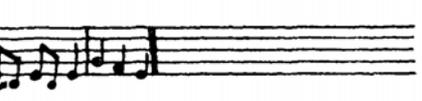
Chorus 

SONG NO. 2.

It is surprising how well the harmonisation of the choruses is done, and if a man sings out of tune he may be sure of being forcibly corrected by his neighbour, provided the said neighbour is stronger than he.

They generally sing in thirds, but sometimes fifths complete the accord. On one single occasion I heard a more complicated form of the chorus, sung by Balubas, who came from the Upper Luapula, near Johnston Falls.

Allegretto

Solo 

Chorus 

SONG NO. 3.

I append some bars (all I remember) of this song, which I consider very greatly in advance of any negro song I ever heard at Moero. I must at the same time mention that it was sung with great correctness by about twenty men (No. 1).

One might suppose that the measure of these marches would always be 4/4 or 2/4 as in the following song, No. 2; but this is not consistent with the facts, for the example of No. 3 proves not only that 3/4 is equally used, but that even in the same song the tempo may change.



SONG NO. 4.

This song is among the most popular, and any European having travelled on the Moero cannot fail to remember it. Every bar is marked by a sforzando.

Even triolas are used in the song No. 4, which is very popular among women, who sing it when grinding corn for flour, or groundnuts for oil.

You find hardly any save tenor voices among the men, and the compass of these is very small. Baritones are scarce, and I never came across a real basso. The voice generally breaks at nine or ten years, and is, I think, seriously affected by the frequent use of the head-voice.

I never knew a woman to have a really good singing voice; they have a child-like soprano, and use only the throat- and head-voice, never the chest-voice. This is probably due to the belief that it is more *distingué* for a lady to speak in a falsetto voice. It should be pointed out that there is a well-marked distinction between ladies (*bibi*) and women (*malamuke*), and that all women crave to rank with the former.

But the days of the native songs are, I fear, limited; civilisation will soon sweep them away. I remember with horror my cook, who had grown up among missionaries, singing all the day Gounod's "Ave Maria", and Haydn's "Tantum ergo", and I am sure that the time is not far distant when the widely-spread military bands contributing European comic songs will drive away the dear old native tunes. E. TORDAY.