

HOME FROM EAST AFRICA

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Councillor J. E. Stevens' son, Private J. E. W. Stevens, A.S.C., M.T., returned home a few days ago from East Africa. In spite of occasional touches of fever and one attack of dysentery while out there, he is enjoying good health.

He left on the 27th November. News of the armistice had then been sent up country to the German commander, who had surrendered. In the course of the fighting the Germans had been broken up and "chivvied" all over the country. Some of them even got in Portuguese East Africa, where the bush is very thick and the country unhealthy. Private Stevens on first going out landed in British East Africa, but he was in German East Africa most of the time. For the last twelve months or so he was at Dar-es-Salaam, working in the local transport. Dar-es-Salaam has a fine natural harbour. The goods were landed from the steamers by fighters and were sent up country. Private Stevens has a number of photos which show some very fine buildings at Dar-es-Salaam. Most of those used for hospitals, etc., were converted hotels, and the Church Army had one as an institute. A fine hospital near is made mosquito-proof with gauze. The town has a wide front to the waterside with avenues of acacia trees. Large cocoon plantations are in the vicinity. A Ford motor converted into a tractor is run for three miles on a railway from Dar-es-Salaam. This plan of using motors as tractors has been successfully applied in several places.

German East Africa is enormously rich in rubber and has already a considerable extent of coffee and cotton plantations. In a few years the value of the products will be very large. At present the difficulty of transport is great in many places. One part of East Africa is pre-eminently the lion country, and these animals are far more daring than those in South Africa. Sometimes when motor lorries broke down the men had to sleep in trees to avoid the lions. Private Stevens knew of one man who was carried off by a lion at night but the lion dropped him when the other men fired. It is not surprising that the man, who had been carried by the coat, suffered afterwards from nerves. German East Africa is a fine big game country, and Private Stevens occasionally gratified the national love of sport on his own account.

"Work like a nigger" is a well-known phrase which, unfortunately for the white men in Africa, is not founded on fact. Private Stevens found them very lazy. His experience was that the British were too easy with the blacks and, from what he could hear, the Germans were too harsh.

Among many photos in Private Stevens' possession is one of the "Konigsberg". After the British had finished with the vessel up the Rufiji River not much was left. Some other views are of Kikuyu, which is remembered for the ecclesiastical controversy caused by a now famous missionary gathering there.

The experience of having one's motor pulled across shallow rivers and sometimes up the mountains by negroes with ropes was not uncommon. With improved communications the country should have a great future.

On the way back Private Stevens had a fine time at Durban, Natal, where the people were very kind to soldiers. Durban is, of course, quite a fashionable watering place. At Cape Town also the homeward-bound soldiers were treated very well in a brief visit.