



CAMINHO DE FERRO DE BENGUELA
BENGUELA RAILWAY
LOBITO BAY
THE GREAT WEST GATE TO CENTRAL AFRICA

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A BRIEF HISTORY of the BENGUELA RAILWAY. Describing its Construction through Angola, Portuguese West Africa, and the important role it is destined to play in the development of SOUTHERN & CENTRAL AFRICA.

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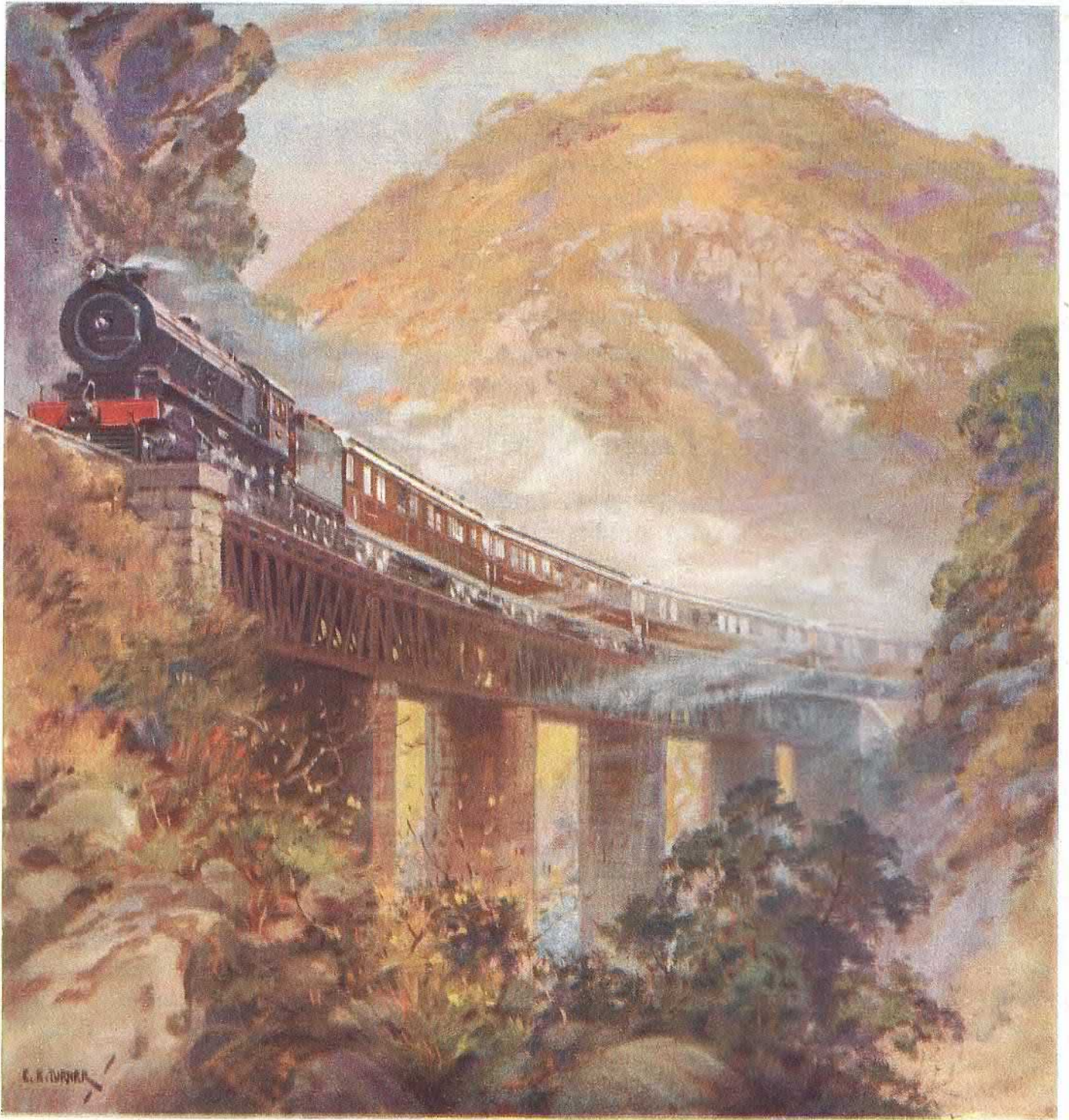
SIR ROBERT WILLIAMS, Bt.,
The originator of the project.



The late **GENERAL SIR J. J. MACHADO, K.C.M.G.**
For many years Managing Director in Lisbon.

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MAIL TRAIN PASSING THROUGH THE LENGUE GORGE.



CONCEPTION of the PROJECT

AFRICA has been the last of the great areas of the world to become civilized. Had the great Sahara and Libyan deserts, an impenetrable ocean of sand extending across the northern part of the continent from east to west, not blocked the way, the central and southern parts of Africa would not have remained so far behind in this respect. These deserts offered no inducement to industrial development through which, as Livingstone rightly predicted, would come the civilization of Africa. This has been amply demonstrated by the great mineral discoveries at Kimberley, on the Rand, in Rhodesia, and in the latest and probably the greatest discovery which has so far been made—the copper deposits in Katanga.

“Drive the road and bridge the ford” is the first injunction of good government, and hand in hand with these discoveries came the demand for transport facilities to enable the mines to export their output to the world’s markets, which in turn led to schemes of considerable magnitude for the extension of existing railways and construction of new lines wherever extensions were unable to provide economic outlets to the sea.

The main trunk line pushing its way northwards through the heart of Africa from Cape Town, by which through rail connection to Cairo is no longer a remote possibility, has in each case been extended to meet these demands and the industrial development of the countries opened up by the line has followed in rapid succession.

But as the construction of the Cape to Cairo railway proceeded northwards so the distance between railhead and the sea increased until the minefields in the interior found that Cape Town could no longer provide them with an economic outlet to the sea, and



ARRIVAL OF MAIL TRAIN AT BENGUELA.

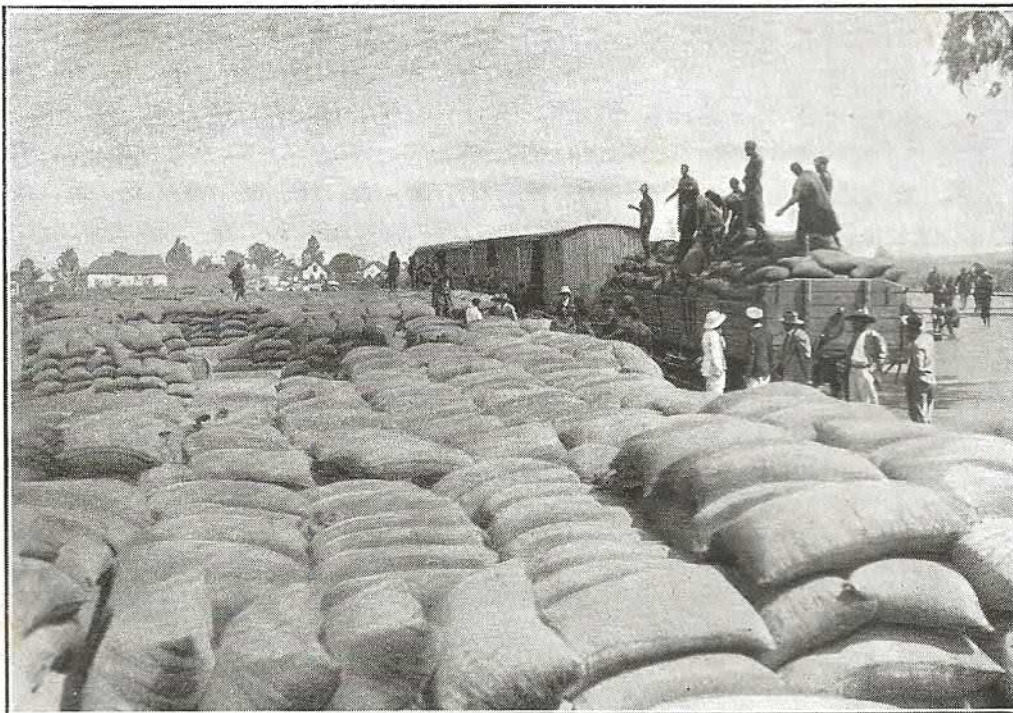
each in turn had to look for other routes whereby the lower cost of transport would enable them to pay their way.

Happily the geographical structure of Africa permitted this achievement. Lourenço Marques and Durban provide an outlet for the Rand, the Rhodesian fields export their output at Beira, and it is now only a matter of months before Katanga will be able to ship its many thousand tons of copper from Lobito Bay owing to the construction of the Benguela Railway.

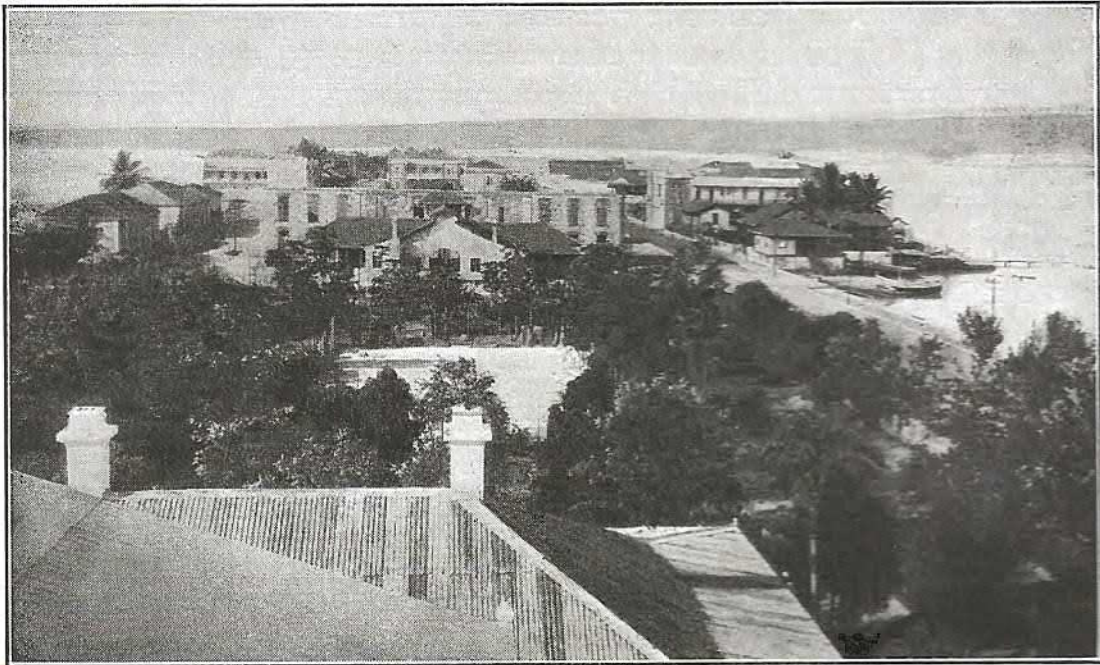
This Railway, which is the latest addition to the existing feeders to the main trunk line from the Cape to Cairo, will afford Katanga with an economic outlet to the world's markets and will with certainty facilitate the rapid industrial development of Angola and those districts of Central Africa in its vicinity. Apart from the obvious saving in transport charges directly and indirectly affecting costs of production, the Benguela Railway will serve as an insurance of the essential supplies of fuel and other requirements of these districts, in the event of their present sources failing owing to a strike, breakdowns or other contingencies. When the Benguela route is completed, supplies of the best Welsh coal could be delivered in Katanga at a cost little, if any, in excess of the cost of Wankie fuel and of a better quality.

At present it is hardly possible to forecast with any accuracy the general effect its construction will produce on existing African trade routes, but suffice it to point out that it will provide many territories with a western outlet to the sea at Lobito Bay some thousands of miles nearer to European ports than the outlets on which they now have to rely, and as the industrial development of these territories expands all railway systems in Africa will benefit by the increased demand for transport facilities.

The conception of the Benguela Railway and the development of the harbour of Lobito Bay emanates from a Scotsman, Robert Williams, on whom a baronetcy was conferred in 1928 for his work during the last half century in the development of Africa. It was Williams who first discovered the copper fields of Northern Rhodesia and realized the true value of the vast copper deposits in Katanga. He extended the southern section of the Cape to Cairo Railway from Broken Hill to the Belgian Congo, thereby providing Rhodesia with a valuable market for its products and with traffic for its railways. Had it not been for this the railhead might have remained at Broken Hill to this day like a limb withering



LOADING MEALIES AT HUAMBO.



LOBITO—A VIEW LOOKING OVER THE TOWN TOWARDS END OF SAND SPIT.

from lack of exercise with its extremity paralysed in the wilderness for want of freight, whereas since the opening of this extension the copper mines in Katanga have contributed some £14,000,000 to the takings of Railway and Shipping Companies and Wankie Colliery for copper freights and fuel which have passed over this line, and owing to arrangements made by Williams about 100,000 tons of copper were supplied to the Allies for munitions during the war thereby keeping down American prices for the metal.

It is only possible to appreciate the events which led up to the construction of the Benguela Railway by giving a brief summary of the various operations undertaken by its originator in Africa, since these have a direct bearing on its conception and on the formation of a company to carry out the project.

Sir Robert first sailed for Africa from Aberdeen in 1881, and was for some years associated with Cecil Rhodes and various mining enterprises in Kimberley and on the Rand. It was not, however, until 1891 that he became intimately connected with Rhodes' Cape to Cairo railway scheme and laid the first foundations for the great projects in Katanga and Angola which are now reaching their final stage of fruition.