

LOGGING IN SOUTHERN NIGERIA.

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In a previous article* some account of the forestry and timber operations in West Africa was given. Logging in every country is a most fascinating work, both to take part in and to watch. In this tropical country the vegetation in the real forest belt is so dense that before actual felling operations can begin a large clearing is made near the river, which is to be used for floating logs. Here are native huts for the wood cutters, including a mat-roofed house for the white manager in charge. Such a view, with the typical "bush" in the background, is shewn in illustration number one.

It must be remembered, too, that in such a forest, only perhaps one tree in a hundred is a mahogany of mature growth, which makes it extremely difficult to control the varying felling parties, each under its native foreman. The trees having been felled, "roads" are made, i. e., the bush is cut up to 6 feet from the ground, and any very bad hollows filled in with small billets of wood. The whole gives the appearance of a large tunnel-like arbour. The swamps which occur at intervals have to be bridged by ramming in a number of small stakes and fastening with various vine stalks and crosspieces, making the whole a strong, though very elastic structure. Illustration number two shews one of these fully half a mile long. In crossing one, about a year ago, the writer saw a carrier go clean through, leaving his load, which he was carrying on his head, on the bridge. He was subsequently pulled out of the reeds and mud into which he had fallen.

In the ordinary bush, skids, made of small billets of very hard wood, are laid on the tracks already cut. Along these the logs are drawn by other gangs of natives. A log 4 feet square and, say, 12 feet long on an average, takes 70 or 80 "boys," as the haulers are termed, to drag it at all, and then only with pauses every now and then and continuous shouts from the foreman, and a kind of "song" from the men. When a log really gets stuck, and this is not seldom, levers are supplied at the back and a tremendous lot of "human" energy uselessly expended. It is very difficult to get natives to haul together. Illustration three, though a poser, shews this to advantage.

* Canadian Forestry Journal, Vol. I, pp. 173 - 175.