

SIDELIGHTS ON THE CIVILIZATION OF
WEST AFRICA.*By C. A. Mitchel.*

The question is frequently asked, is the vast expenditure of missionary lives and foreign mission money warranted in the case of Africa? In other words, is the African worth saving? If he is an imbruted fool, the next remove from the monkey, as he is usually represented, one might grant the possibility of wasted effort; but when it is seen that he has a civilization of his own developed without the aid of either Christianity or Islam, a further development seems probable and worth an effort on the part of the followers of Jesus, even if it does entail the loss of many valuable lives and a vast expenditure of money.

In the Hinterland of Sierra Leone and the Western Soudan the form of government is a strictly limited monarchy. A king may say he is the father of his people and all the land is his, but this is only brag, for when it comes to securing land for missionary purposes a general convention of the kingdom is held, and the assembly has to agree to the proposition, price and the boundaries of the land. The owner of the land gets a good large share of what it brings, and the remainder goes to the king, who usually shares it with some of his most important Santagis. The royal family is quite well known to everyone, but have only an importance derived from their character, unless it be the king's next eldest brother. A son never succeeds his father, but may sit on the throne, in succession later of an uncle or cousin, but only if elected.

The laws are quite well known and when a case is being tried every free man has a very frequently exercised right to have a say in the matter. These laws refer to both civil and criminal cases, land disputes being very common.

Every village has its head man—Pa Kafir—who acts as presiding officer, prosecuting attorney or constable, as the case may be. From his decision, acquiesced in by the majority of the men of his village, an appeal may be taken to the court of Pa Santagi. Pa Santagi is a sort of secondary king, or rather a justice of the supreme court, and is set apart to the office with a great deal of