

WEST AFRICAN FORESTS AND FORESTRY.

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In days gone by when Portugese and British adventurers sailed along the above named coast no one thought very much about the trees they saw, and less about starting any forestry operations there.

Since then times have changed and the Coast (as it is termed) now produces, besides its well known palm oil, quite an appreciable quantity of the world's mahogany supply.

In the above term is included not only six large British Colonies but also several French, German, Portugese and Belgian territories, besides finally the practically independent country of Liberia. The following remarks are, however, confined to the portion extending from Lagos, along the "Bight of Benin" to Calabar reaching back about 200 miles on both banks of the Niger to Idah, usually termed Southern Nigeria, a Protectorate of the British Empire.

Its products are largely palm oil and kernels, but also many others, including especially timber (mahogany, cedar, walnut) and rubber of several kinds.

The forests containing these latter export commodities are of vast extent, but present quite a different picture to either Canadian deciduous forests or the northern coniferous areas, where one so easily gets so many thousand logs of waney timber per mile, besides saw logs. Here one is content with about 400 per mile, and a maximum yield of perhaps 1,200 logs!!!

The tropical forest is in fact a vast arboricultural collection. On one square mile quite 50 or even 100 different species of trees (they have not been actually counted) might be found, besides shrubs, creepers, vines and small flowering plants and ferns. Such endless variety alters the forest problem considerably. In the aggregate there are many of each kind, especially of the commoner kinds such as mahogany.

All the land nominally belongs to the people, and is worked through their chiefs, and finally now by the white man with the consent of these latter. Anyone may put in an application for a large or small area (9 square miles up to 400 as recently granted), and lease it for usually seven years. It may, however,