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THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF WEST AFRICA.

By EDMUND D. MOREL, Editor of the *West African Mail*.

As has been noticed in our pages, Mr. Morel read a paper on this subject before the Southport Meeting of the British Association. In the report of the Meeting (vol. xix. p. 519), a general abstract of the paper will be found, but by the courtesy of Mr. Morel we are now enabled to reproduce in full the portion of the paper which relates to the best methods of improving existing native industries and founding new ones in West Africa.

As regards the general characters of the region, it is to be noted that a considerable portion of the country is covered with dense forests, which, roughly speaking, take the form of an inverted axe. Travelling down the coast in one's mind's eye, from Sierra Leone southwards, we pass along the handle of the axe, which, after the Cameroons have been left behind, begins to broaden into the blade, covering almost the entire region of the Upper Congo. North of the handle, the forest gradually gives way to open park-like country, to vast plains and grassy uplands, broken here and there by irregular mountain ridges. Two mighty rivers, in one case with affluents which, together with the main stream, make perhaps the finest fluvial system in the world, flow through the forests and the plains, fertilising the latter with beneficent yearly inundations. In this vast region, the most varied ethnological elements are distributed:—in the handle of the forest, Negro; in the blade, Bantu and Negro; in the open, cross races, Negro-Berber and Negro-Semite side by side with the pure forms of each invading race, now in political predominance, anon in political subjection. Tribes of warriors, agriculturists, manufacturers, cattle-rearers and traders, fishermen, hunters, all are represented. We find states, more or less homogeneous; nomadic confederations, agricultural communities; multitudes of independent peoples in all stages and conditions of mental development, speaking their own languages, having their own customs, their own unwritten laws, their special and peculiar characteristics. Into this vast region, capable of yielding almost every vegetable product of commercial value known to man—and, doubtless, many of which the value is unknown or insufficiently appreciated—the European has come with his superior knowledge of arts and crafts, investing him with the natural attributes of over-lord, although he is physically incapable of long sojourn, let alone permanent settlement, because the climate is not suited to his race; seeking new markets for his manufactures, new markets for his industrial activity; seeking that raw produce which he requires and which nature has so lavishly bestowed. Thither he has gone; there he is solated, in the midst of the surging waves of a prolific indigenous humanity; of a boundless, fiercely luxuriant vegetation.

To the natives of these regions trade is second nature. Wherever trade has become established, wherever trade has penetrated, however far inland, ay, even to the very centre of the continent; wherever the

European with his goods has appeared, wishful of bartering those goods against raw products of commercial value, the inhabitants have embraced the opportunity with alacrity. The commercial instinct of the Negro is not of to-day, nor of yesterday. When, several centuries before the birth of Christ, Carthaginian navigators visited the West Coast of Africa, they found the natives willing to trade—in gold dust. About fifteen centuries later the nations of the “higher culture”—to use a favourite expression of that splendid woman, the late Mary Kingsley—once more set sail for the then mysterious Western shores of the Dark Continent. They found the natives willing and eager to trade—in gold dust, in ivory, and in spices. Then legitimate trade gradually gave way before the first great iniquity perpetrated by the nations of the “higher culture” upon the African. The African had welcomed the men with white faces who came from the unknown, in mighty canoes with wings even as the wings of a bird. The superior people rewarded hospitality by seizing the African and transporting him across the seas to teach him in the first place the doctrine of love, and then the dignity of labour; they added fuel to sporadic inter-tribal warfare by flooding the Coast tribes with muskets and ammunition, sending them a-warring against their fellows of the hinterlands, while long files of manacled prisoners of war found their way to the Coast, and on to the decks of the slavers. For centuries this abominable traffic went on, until a handful of men—Englishmen—rose up and said that this thing must cease. After incredible labour those great men succeeded in winning over their countrymen, and the world; for when England leads resolutely a movement for reform, the world follows.

With the disappearance of the over-sea slave trade—you may see elsewhere the gradual working out of the Nemesis of that evil—legitimate trade revived all down the Coast, the trade in palm-oil leading the van. That particular trade had, indeed, begun before the abolition of the over-sea slave traffic, but at precisely what period I have been unable to discover. Trade in other articles sprang up, or was renewed. The native gathered the produce of his soil which the European required: the European paid for that produce in merchandise and the produce of Europe. Ivory, spices, gums, red-wood, ebony, palm-kernels—imported into England for the first time, I believe, in 1860—fibres, ground nuts, rubber, mahogany, and so on. Hampered by inefficient means of communication, with the interior unopened, with the reactionary effects of past wrongs, of administrative errors, of tribal disputes; with a hundred and one things to hinder and retard development: the climate, the absence of railways and ports, the paucity of roads—the commercial relationship between the European and the Negro has nevertheless increased by leaps and bounds. This great trade which has grown up out of European enterprise and industry, out of Negro labour and commercial aptitude, employs thousands of Europeans and hundreds of thousands of Negroes. The trade of the British West African Possessions, which form but a small portion of Tropical Western Africa (albeit one of the most valuable portions) amounted during the five years ending 1900 to £43,000,000 sterling, and the voluntary labour of British protected Negroes sent to the mother country £11,000,000 sterling of raw material.

In the same period the voluntary labour of French protected Negroes produced £9,000,000 worth of raw material, and the voluntary labour of German protected Negroes produced £4,500,000 worth of raw material.

Now let us touch for a brief moment upon the question of native land tenure. It is a difficult and complex one, and I shall only venture to put two considerations before you. The first consideration is this, that although our information is still lamentably short of what it should be, so far as our information does extend, so far as collected data enable us to form an opinion, we may say without fear of going far wrong that where there is population in Tropical Africa, there is no such thing as "vacant," "uninhabited," or "unappropriated" land. And on that premise, which I believe to be generally sound, we may assert that a policy based upon the appropriation by a European State of all land not built upon or in actual cultivation in Tropical Africa, on the assumption that such land is "vacant," "uninhabited," and "unappropriated," is a mistaken policy. It becomes a dishonest as well as a mistaken one when the corollary is put forward, viz.: a claim by that European State over all products of commercial value found in the so-called "vacant," "uninhabited," or "unappropriated" land; for if the land is "vacant," "uninhabited," and "unappropriated," the products of economic value it contains might rot on from year's end to year's end for all the use they would be to the European State. Appropriating land in Africa, calling it "vacant," and then summoning the inhabitants of that so-called "vacant" land to collect revenues for the benefit of the European State in the shape of raw produce is an anomaly, and provides its own condemnation.

The second consideration is this: that again, so far as our knowledge extends, native land tenure in Tropical Africa, wherever it has been examined, has been found to repose upon just principles, to be thoroughly well understood, recognised and adhered to by the people of the land, and to be worthy of serious study. It has been found in many cases that attachment to his land is, perhaps, the ruling passion of the Negro. Tropical Africa is an immensity, and much of it has never yet been trodden by the white man's foot, let alone studied by the white man's brain; and consequently, native laws of land tenure in a very small portion of it only have been gone into. The results of those studies are on record, and not only do they forbid the idea that native land tenure is the imaginative product of certain so-called sentimental negrophiles in this country, but they prove that it is part and parcel of the social organisation of the people, a knowledge of which, as every practical statesman in Europe, and every competent official in Africa knows, is essential to good government in Africa. I, therefore, submit that this land question in Tropical Africa is a very great one, and that although a European State is justified in claiming land which—and we know such land does exist in some of our Tropical African Protectorates—has by pestilence, through inter-tribal warfare, emigration or some such cause, become really and truly uninhabited; and while it is the duty of the European over-lord in Tropical Africa to make such laws and regulations affecting land duly held under native tenure, which shall make it difficult, if not impossible, for the native owner to dispose of his land to adven-

turers, or be swindled out of his inheritance; and which shall on the other hand prevent the native, through ignorance and lack of instruction, from damaging certain products of economic value growing upon his land in his eagerness to trade with the European merchant; yet such legislation should be most carefully considered, its working in practice most vigilantly watched, while a study of native land tenure should be made one of the very first objects of every European Administration in Tropical Africa. Only in that way, it seems to me, can our action in Tropical Africa be free from injustice, even though it be quite involuntary injustice, and European requirements be brought into line with native ideas of communal property, with native rights, customs, and beliefs.

I spoke a little while back of the results achieved by commerce in Tropical Africa, notwithstanding many drawbacks and hindrances. Those difficulties are gradually being lessened and removed by the construction of indispensable public works, by the great scientific discovery of Ronald Ross in regard to malaria, by improved methods of sanitation and the adoption of safeguards against disease, both in the coast towns and in up-country stations, whither the European official, trader and miner is brought by the necessities of his profession or calling. Coupled with these improvements, the need of increasing, widening and perfecting the cultivation and gathering of the raw produce of the country comes up for serious consideration. It must be borne in mind that up to the present the great native industries which feed the European machine in Western Africa have been conducted in very primitive fashion, in a fashion corresponding on the one hand with the knowledge possessed by the native, and on the other hand with the agricultural implements possessed by the native. Now the native's knowledge of the requirements of a particular industry is only that which has been imparted to him by his European instructor; and the agricultural implements he uses in the furtherance of any particular industry are merely such as may have been distributed to him by his European instructor, or such as his own ingenuity, his own acquaintance with the fashioning of iron, may have suggested. In the former case instruction has in most cases been practically *nil*; in the latter case agricultural implements are almost totally lacking. Both are badly needed, and so far as instruction is concerned, there is an immense amount of patient, systematic work to be done.

It will not, I think, be denied that the future of Tropical Africa is essentially agricultural and arboricultural, and in view of this undisputed fact, it strikes one as a matter for surprise that the European Powers do not, in the main, spend more money upon this indispensable branch of their administration of Tropical African dependencies, and less upon other branches not so indispensable. Take for instance our own West African possessions, and the two Nigerias in particular. I find that out of a total expenditure of £189,644, 12s. 7d. in Southern Nigeria for the year 1900-1, only £2420 13s. 8d. was devoted to forestry and botany; while in Northern Nigeria, Sir F. Lugard has recently been compelled to declare—obviously much to his regret—that he has no funds for an “economic department.” I have just learned with much pleasure that

he hopes to start one on a small scale before very long. Now seeing that in the last resort the commercial prosperity and financial stability of our West African possessions depends upon their economic development, it does seem rather curious that more is not done to further that development.

Object lessons in the advantages derivable from a systematic and scientific study of these matters, and, inversely, in the disadvantages which arise from their neglect, are provided in the history of the cocoa industry of the Gold Coast, and the rubber industry of Lagos. In 1890 a Botanical Station was established by the Gold Coast Government at Aburi, and efforts were made to stimulate the interest of the natives in coffee and cocoa growing. Coffee the natives found did not pay to grow. Cocoa growing at that time was not absolutely unknown, but as an industry it did not exist, only 121 pounds weight of cocoa having been exported from the Colony prior to 1890. In 1892, 240 pounds were shipped. In ten years the cocoa industry has grown to such proportions that last year 5,367,405 pounds weight were exported, valued at £94,944, 2s. 0d. That is a little bit of West African history which proves to demonstration what results may be achieved by economic instruction. Now take the case of Lagos and its rubber *debacle*. The discovery of the *ire* rubber tree (*Kivia Africana*) first became generally known throughout the Protectorate in 1894. The Yoruba shares with the Haussa, the Mandingo and the Fan the reputation of being one of the keenest traders in Africa. The rubber trade was practically new to him. He saw there were large profits to be made in it. What did he do? Flung himself into the business with intense eagerness, tapped and retapped the rubber-producing tree with sublime ignorance, and worked with such a will that while in 1894 only 5,867 lbs. weight of rubber, valued at £324, 6s. 4d., was exported from Lagos, the figures rose next year to no less than 5,069,576 lbs., valued at £269,893. But what was the result? In his ignorance the Yoruba had killed the goose in getting the eggs, the rubber-producing capacity of Lagos has fallen almost to *nil*, acres and acres of rubber forest land are almost ruined, and forest legislation, obnoxious to the people, has had to be passed to save what little remained from the wreck. Now if, instead of sending a few Fanti rubber collectors from the Gold Coast wandering about the country, a properly equipped Economic Department had existed in the Colony, the history of the Lagos rubber trade would not be the sorry one it is.

What is needed is a thorough equipment for studying the undeveloped resources of those vast Protectorates, trained forestry inspectors—men who really know their work—trained botanists, not theoretical but practical men. Coupled with admirable institutions such as the Botanical Gardens at Aburi in the Gold Coast, the Botanical Gardens and Model Farm at Oloke Meji in Lagos, numerous small centres of instruction should be created, each in charge of a practical expert attached to the local government and recognised by the natives as such, but remaining totally outside political affairs. To these small centres the native producer in the neighbourhood could come with samples of his forest products, for assistance, guidance, and instruction. It would be the duty

of the expert appointed to make an exhaustive study of the capacity of the area allotted to him in the way of vegetable production ; to discover and report upon products of economic value not yet worked ; to improve, if possible, the methods of production of such articles as are already handled by the natives ; to suggest the advisability of supplying rough agricultural implements at present lacking, the possession of which would be a stimulus to production, and the quality of which could be improved when the natives became better acquainted with their usage. Of course, all those who affect to look upon the native as a brute beast, only to be converted into a human being, and taught the dignity of labour, by the application of the boot, the stick, and the gun, will look upon all this as nonsense : the dream of the arm-chair theorist. But those who care for facts, and will take the trouble to ascertain the facts for themselves, will have no difficulty in finding out that the arguments here advanced are sound.

As one example of the keenness of the native to take advantage of improving and increasing the economic development of his land, allow me to read you a short extract from a letter I received the other day from Professor Hoffman, the agricultural expert in Lagos of the British Cotton Growing Association. Professor Hoffman writes from Abeokuta, which, as you all know, is a great and populous centre of Yoruba agriculturists in the Lagos Protectorate :—

"The people are keen on the subject of advanced agriculture. Just as soon as the people can be convinced that cotton will be a permanent industry for West Africa, the English markets will get all the cotton they want. I have found the Yorubas, as you told me I would, most progressive and intelligent farmers, and I look to the future with confidence."

Another correspondent, writing to me from the same place, says :—

"The support of the Alake—the Chief of Abeokuta and a person of considerable importance—has been enlisted. He takes an active part in encouraging the farmers to take up seed and commence cultivation. That his is more than a passive interest he has plainly shown, by attending from early morning till dusk, on a day specially appointed for the distribution of seed."

From every part of West Africa comes encouraging letters of a similar description. All this only concerns one indigenous product of Tropical Africa—cotton, and the stimulus has been given by the cotton-spinners and operatives of Lancashire, and by certain gentlemen connected with West Africa who foresee the great benefit which will accrue to West Africa from the initiation of a great cotton industry for export.

The thing is being tackled earnestly and scientifically, and you see how the native is responding. Results of an equally encouraging kind in other indigenous products have been obtained, as I have already shown with cocoa in the Gold Coast. In Senegal the cultivation of the ground nut, thanks to the encouragement—extending over a considerable period—shown to the natives by the local authorities and the great Bordeaux merchants, has grown to enormous proportions, notwithstanding that even now the Joloff cultivators are unprovided

with the necessary agricultural implements, the possession of which would probably double the industry. These are gradually being introduced. I will say no more about the Senegal Ground Nut industry at present, as I shall be referring to that subject again later on. All this shows what has been done: it shows what could be done if there existed a well-defined, well mapped-out scheme in each Colony for the development not of one product only, but of every product of commercial value yielded by the land. The necessity and importance of such an organisation cannot be overestimated. Even the great palm oil and palm kernel industries would well repay scientific examination. From the experiments recently conducted by that very able German botanist, Dr. Preuss, it seems clear that the yield of palm oil from a given number of trees can be largely increased by scientific methods of working, and also that the *Elais Guineensis* is not the only oil-bearing palm in West Africa which can be exploited with advantageous results. Other questions connected with the oil palm industry could be investigated with profit: such, for example, as the relative processes whereby oils known as soft oils and hard oils are produced; whether it would not be useful to encourage the production of greater quantities of the first-named, which is the more valuable of the two, and which I understand is entirely attributable to a specific process of preparation. Then there is the subject of the enormous waste of time and energy in native labour in regard to the primitive methods of breaking the kernels, and the advisability of supplying machinery to lessen this wastage. A Glasgow firm of West African merchants has recently been enterprising enough to invent a hand-cracking machine for this purpose, and I believe the experiment is working well. Then again there is the question of the timber trade. Thousands of immature logs are shipped to Liverpool every year from the Gold Coast and Ivory Coast, which is bad alike for the forests and for the trade. Here once more the need of an organisation such as I have spoken of is apparent. It is infinitely better to avoid wastage and errors by a systematic course of instruction, rather than to find oneself compelled after a certain period (take the case of the rubber industry in Lagos, for instance) to adopt restrictive legislation, which always causes dissatisfaction and suspicion among the natives. As for the methodical study of the country for the discovery of new products, and for setting on foot industries in products known to exist but which are at present unworked, the field is vast indeed.

We require something in this country corresponding to the *Kolonial Wirtschaftliches Komitee* of Germany, an Association of merchants, manufacturers and others, backed by Government and supported by the great majority of German Colonials, and by the Chambers of Commerce. It would be difficult to overestimate the importance and usefulness of this Association. It sends out botanical and agricultural expeditions to the German Colonies, and to the Colonies of other Powers in West Africa and elsewhere, to make reports upon forestry and economic possibilities generally. The members of the numerous missions it sends out study existing native industries, suggest means of improving and increasing them by scientific methods of cultivation, and report upon new products

discovered. They collect and analyse soils, study ethnological questions in their effect upon labour and consequently upon production, and so on. By this means data are being accumulated and circulated which will be of immense future benefit to German trade with Tropical Africa generally. The results of this painstaking labour are already apparent, and will make themselves felt to an increasing extent in the future. We have no similar organisation in this country; but there has recently been created the nucleus of what may become a British organisation for the methodical study of the economy of Western Africa, resembling in some respects the German scheme.

I refer to the alliance between the Board of Trade and the Imperial Institute, and the further extension of the Scientific and Technical Department, under the able and energetic guidance of Professor Wyndham Dunstan, F.R.S., to investigate and report upon all samples and specimens sent home by officials in the British possessions of Tropical Africa, and other parts of the Imperial dominions. It is hoped that the Scientific Department may be brought into direct touch with the Chambers of Commerce, and so provide a medium hitherto lacking between officialdom and the commercial community. The initiative is a most interesting one, and should secure the warm support of the Colonial Office. It will be welcomed by all who are interested in the economic development of British Tropical Africa. I would venture to suggest that definite steps be taken, in the form of a series of explanatory lectures, to bring the subject and its possibilities before all the Chambers of Commerce in the country. A scheme such as this should be popularised and ought to be supported by British merchants and manufacturers. A strong and useful organism might be evolved, co-operating on the one hand with the manufacturing and industrial interests at home, and with the economic branches of the administration in the West African Colonies on the other; branches which should be strengthened where existing and created where lacking. By this means all sections interested in the development of our Tropical African possessions would be drawn together in a common aim, and the Imperial Institute might well become a focus of knowledge, the centre of a really intelligible propaganda, fertile in good results for national interests.

In conclusion, I would like to refer just to one other point. We hear a good deal of talk sometimes in favour of a system of plantations managed by Europeans to develop the agricultural possibilities of Western Africa, as against the system of native industries at present existing and being created. The idea is that better results can be obtained by leasing land from the natives, or even purchasing it outright where possible, and employing native labour to cultivate it. That system must necessarily involve a large amount of European capital with all its attendant risks, which, in such a country and in the climatic conditions prevailing, are very considerable. In the Cameroons the plantation system for cocoa cultivation has been adopted, and has worked fairly satisfactorily; although the results do not compare with those achieved on the Gold Coast, where the native, with Government encouragement, has built up the industry himself. Personally, I do not think that the European-

managed plantation system will give results commensurate with the system of native industries. In fact, I do not believe it is possible for any but the most restricted application. Some of the Cameroon planters have not done badly, but the outbreak of an insect plague might easily ruin the plantations; all the money invested in them would be lost, and the Colony would probably fall into disfavour. It is argued with some justice that the native labourers employed in the plantations acquire knowledge and spread it far and wide. That is an argument which may be used both ways; because, if the contention is accurate, the former labourers will in due course become competitors of the planters themselves. On the other hand equal and better results, without the attendant disadvantages, risks and expenses, have been secured in the Gold Coast by the simple expedient of establishing a botanical station, and placing men in charge of it imbued with zeal, common-sense, and tact. The question was worth raising, because the European-managed plantation system has been recommended by some in regard to cotton.

If the cotton-growing movement in West Africa grows and expands to large proportions, as I firmly believe will be the case, there may be room here and there for a Company to lease lands from the natives, and employ native labour. But that the movement cannot assume the character we all want it to assume of a regular, permanent expanding export of cotton under any other system but that based upon a native industry, I feel convinced. The Cotton Growing Association view the matter in the same light. I believe all the Governors of our West African Colonies are of the same opinion. The Lagos experiments will, I hope, conclusively demonstrate in a very short time the practicability of promoting cotton growing on a large scale in West Africa as a native industry. Apart from cotton, the existing great native industries in West Africa which feed our trade, constitute the strongest argument which can be advanced in support of the system of native industries. It may be urged that the majority of the existing native industries are arboricultural and not agricultural. That is true, but there are notable exceptions. The cultivation of the ground nut is agricultural, not arboricultural. That, I suppose, can be said, in the earlier stages at any rate, also of the cocoa industry in the Gold Coast, which has already been dealt with. Wherever the ground nut is cultivated in Western Africa, it is a native industry. The gallant little Colony of the Gambia, governed by one of the kindest of men, is entirely dependent upon the cultivation of ground nuts. So is the French Senegal, where the Jollofs, who used to be looked upon as the most untractable material, have, with European encouragement, built up a native industry which produces ground nuts to the tune of nearly one million sterling per annum, and has made of Senegal one of the foremost vegetable-oil producing countries in the world.

And after all, is it not common-sense that such should be the case? Is a man, whether white or black, likely to take as much interest in cultivating land which has ceased to be his, and for a fixed wage, as if he is owner of the land, and vendor in his own person of what he makes that land produce? Which course is calculated to be more stimulating;

to embody the greatest amount of vitality and promise? The answer, I think, is not in doubt. To teach the native to take pride in his own property; to guarantee him from molestation in his ownership of that property; to assist him in the task of developing it for his advantage and ours; to make it perfectly clear to him that he is looked upon not as a fool, still less as a brute, but as a partner in a great undertaking from which he stands to derive benefit for himself and his descendants: that, it seems to me, is at once the only right and the only practical ideal which should govern the economic development of Western Africa by the European, if ultimate success and not ultimate failure is to attend it.

ROUND KANGCHENJUNGA.¹

MR. D. W. FRESHFIELD is already well known to us as one of the most eloquent and successful of the intrepid corps of mountain climbers; and those who have enjoyed his two volumes on "the Caucasus" will hail with delight his latest work, describing a tour round Kangchenjunga in North Sikkim. The party who achieved this remarkable feat of mountaineering consisted of Mr. Freshfield, the brothers Vittorio and Erminio Sella, Mr. Garwood, the geologist, Mr. Dover, a subordinate official in Sikkim, and Maquignaz, an Italian guide; and they set out from Darjiling on the 5th September 1899. Mr. Freshfield states the purpose of the expedition in these words: "To get round Kangchenjunga was not the only object I set before me. I hoped also to be able to obtain, what the Indian Survey had been too fully employed elsewhere to be able to give geographers, a fairly accurate delineation of the main glacial features of the group, and some material for comparing them with those of the Alps and the Caucasus. I trusted to be able to ascertain the number and length of the trunk ice-streams, to form an approximate estimate of the amount of ground covered by snow and ice, and to recognise any peculiarities that might distinguish the glaciers of Sikkim from those of more temperate regions." The results of the expedition are embodied in the volume now before us; and we can congratulate Mr. Freshfield most cordially on having accomplished so successfully the objects he had in view. Regarded simply as a narrative of mountain-climbing the work is extremely interesting. It is true that the ground gone over presented no unusual difficulties in the way of actual climbing, and it had been trodden by others before Mr. Freshfield. Indeed, one of the pleasantest features of the book is his generous, enthusiastic recognition and acknowledgment of the splendid work done by those who had preceded him, more especially by natives of India, Babu Sarat Chandra Dass, and Rinsing, a surveyor, the latter of whom accompanied him in the expedition which he now describes. Starting from Darjiling, the party marched to the Teesta river, and ascended it in a northerly direction to

¹ *Round Kangchenjunga*. By Douglas W. Freshfield. London: Edward Arnold, 1903. Price 18s. Pp. xvi+367.