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THE SCOTTISH GEOGRAPHICAL MAGAZINE.

SOUTHERN NIGERIA.

By JAMES WATT, M.A., District Commissioner in Southern Nigeria.

(With Illustrations.)

THE Protectorate of Southern Nigeria was formed in 1900, when the Niger Coast Protectorate, and that portion of the territory administered by the Royal Niger Company which lay to the south of Idah on the River Niger, were united under one administration and placed under the control of the Colonial Office.

The Protectorate is bounded upon the east by the German colony of Kamerun, upon the north by the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria, upon the west by the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos. The political and commercial interests of Southern and Northern Nigeria and Lagos are closely allied, and one step was taken in the direction of the amalgamation of the three administrations in 1904, when the offices of High Commissioner of Southern Nigeria and Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Lagos were united in the hands of Mr. (now Sir) Walter Egerton.

The estimated area of the three protectorates is 413,910 square miles, or about half that of the British territories in India. That of Southern Nigeria is 65,000 square miles, or more than half that of the British Isles.

No attempt can yet be made to form even an approximate estimate of the native population. Rough estimates give 41,000,000 as the population of the three protectorates, and 3,500,000 as that of Southern Nigeria. I think it is probable that the native population of Southern Nigeria is very largely in excess of the latter number.

Southern Nigeria is peculiarly fortunate in the number of ports which it possesses. There are nine ports on the coast-line of Nigeria. Of these that of Lagos, which is the poorest of the nine, is the only one not in Southern Nigeria. The remaining eight lie at the mouths of the Niger or of the rivers which flow through its delta into the Gulf of Guinea.

The principal port of Southern Nigeria is Forcados. Owing to the difficulties at present attending the crossing of the Lagos bar, the sea-borne trade of Lagos is taken to Forcados and there trans-shipped to branch-boats—small steamers which convey the cargo from Forcados across the bar to Lagos. Forcados is also port for Northern Nigeria, and receives a considerable portion of the trade of Southern Nigeria. Other ports are Calabar, Opobo, and Warri.

Forcados is about eighteen days' steaming from Liverpool. But it must be remembered that the voyage is interrupted by calls at various ports upon the African coast. Passenger steamers usually call at Grand Canary or Tenerife, and proceed thence to Free Town, the capital of the colony of Sierra Leone, and Monrovia, the capital of the independent

The Port of Calabar, the Capital of Southern Nigeria.

negro republic of Liberia. Soon after leaving Monrovia, the course is laid almost due east through the Gulf of Guinea. Passing the French Ivory Coast, the steamers call at Axim, Sekondi, Cape Coast Castle, and Accra on the Gold Coast. Then passing the narrow strips of German Togoland and French Dahomey, they call at Lagos roads and reach Forcados after a further run of 150 miles.

Some of the ports mentioned have a picturesque appearance. Free Town does not appear to merit its ill-omened name of the "White Man's Grave." It is well situated at the foot of the hills which give their name to the colony. Fortunately much has been done in recent years to improve the health of the Europeans, and particularly by removing their dwelling-houses from the proximity of the native town to the hills. Axim and Cape Coast Castle also have an interesting appearance. But the outline of the West African coast, upon the whole, as it

appears on the map, and as one looks at it from the deck of the steamer, is unprepossessing, and conveys no idea of the romantic history of the country and of the lives that have been spent in unveiling its secrets, in opening up its commerce, and in pacifying the savage races who inhabit it.

The River Niger flows almost due north and south through Southern Nigeria. On both sides of the main channel which issues through the Nun mouth, it finds its way by a network of creeks through many outlets into the sea. There is uninterrupted communication by means of these creeks from Lagos on the west to Eket on the east. Of the outlets the most important is the Forcados mouth, which, owing to the deep water to be obtained upon its bar, has now for several years been the principal entrance to the Niger. But the Nun branch was formerly the more important; and there is a possibility that the bar at the Nun mouth may again improve, and that at the Forcados mouth become more difficult. A similar estuary on a very much smaller scale occurs on the Cross River in the eastern part of the Protectorate.

These estuaries are the best-known parts of Southern Nigeria, and it is from them that the popular impression of the fever-haunted mangrove swamps of West Africa is derived.

The coast-line generally is low and sandy, fringed with trees. The rollers from the Atlantic break unceasingly upon the coast, and the sound carries far into the interior.

The estuaries of the rivers and the innumerable creeks which connect them are lined with mangrove-trees. These trees, with an average girth of about two feet, have numbers of stout roots raising their stems high out of the black mud of the Delta, where myriads of land crabs and "mud-skipppers" (*Periophthalmus*) scurry to and fro, and an occasional crocodile is seen basking in the hot sun.

The mangrove grows only in the brackish tidal water, and, on the Niger and Cross rivers, ceases at about sixty miles from the sea. Beyond that point the main rivers flow between high banks, with small villages or trading markets at frequent intervals. The tributary streams which flow into the main rivers or their estuaries, such as the Osse, the Ossiomo, and the Adofi in the west, and the Akpa Iyefe, the Kwa, and the Calabar in the east, flow, in their upper reaches, through well-wooded country; and many of the valuable forest trees whose timbers are to an increasing extent coming into the market are found on or near their banks.

It will be observed that between the River Benin upon the west and the River Opobo upon the east, for a considerable distance inland, few names of towns appear, and, in fact, the settled population in this part is very small. Such native villages as there are lie upon the banks of the rivers and creeks. The inhabitants are a waterside people, engaged as middlemen in conveying the produce collected by the dwellers in the interior. The country is a vast network of creeks, with patches of solid ground here and there where a solitary fisherman builds a little hut to watch his fish-traps, conveying his catch from time to time to the nearest market, or to some settlement where the fish are sun-dried and fastened upon wooden skewers for sale in the up-country markets.

Beyond this network of creeks a region of solid ground begins, densely populated, as appears from the map. This is perhaps the most fertile portion of the Protectorate, is rich in palm-trees, and for the most part under cultivation. No system of rotation of crops is practised; it is left to nature itself to restore the elements which are required for future crops. A piece of land which has been farmed this year will be allowed to lie fallow for the five or six following years. So quickly is the soil overgrown with luxuriant vegetation that it is often not without difficulty that one finds one's way after the interval of a year. The whole aspect of the country seems changed, and there are few objects to serve as landmarks. As one advances north more undulating ground appears, and when the rolling hills are crowned with villages, as is frequently the case, the large trees which are usually found in their vicinity add picturesqueness to the landscape, and it is possible, from some hill higher than the rest, to get a wide prospect over a distance as great as thirty miles.

The Delta may be said to end, and the true African continent to begin, at Onitsha on the River Niger and Ungwana on the Cross River. At these points a rocky formation is first met, and inland from the rivers are rocky hills attaining a much greater height than the low rolling hills of the Delta.

Possibly the most interesting part of the country to the geologist lies in the extreme east near the German colony of Kamerun.

On a clear morning in the early or late rainy season, as one rounds the bend of the Calabar River into the estuary of the Cross River, one sees the whole mouth of the river blocked by the giant peak of Kamerun, and the whole eastern horizon filled with peak after peak of clearly defined mountains. Four rivers issue from this mountain region and break their way over falls of about thirty feet in height. The formation consists of crystalline rocks, granites, gneiss, and the like, and no minerals of great commercial value have as yet been discovered. A deposit of tin has been found upon the Calabar River. It has not, however, as yet been examined with any completeness. The mountainous region is thinly populated, and densely forested with ebony, mahogany, and other valuable timbers. Here the elephant wanders, and it is to be hoped that the protection now provided by the game-laws will preserve it for many years. No more interesting natives are to be met than the hunters who face many dangers in the laborious pursuit of their game; but it is very necessary that restrictions should be put upon the indiscriminate killing of wild animals.

The mountain region now described is an isolated feature peculiar to the eastern part of the Protectorate. To the west of the Cross River no similar formation occurs. The rocky hills which extend from the Cross River to the Niger and thence to the Lagos boundary are sedimentary in their formation.

The Customs Report for 1904 shows imports of the value of £1,792,468: exports of the value of £1,718,717. Of the imports, Great Britain sent goods to the value of £1,416,554, and of the exports received produce to the value of £1,079,544. British vessels conveyed

imports of the value of £1,651,447 and exports of the value of £1,509,190.

The following table shows the value of the principal exports during 1904:—

Palm-oil	£710,055
Palm-kernels	597,953
Rubber	158,990
Timber (including ebony)	60,312
Ivory	3,468
Cotton	2,501
Cocoa	4,981

All these products, with the exception of ivory, show a steady increase in the four years ending 1904.

It appears from the table that the oil-palm is the principal source of wealth: timber is already a considerable industry and is likely to increase still farther in importance: the value of the cotton exported must be taken to indicate only that cotton of that value, and possibly of a very much larger value, can be produced. The industry is as yet only in its experimental stage.

The oil-palm is found in profusion in all parts of the Protectorate. The palm-nuts grow in thick clusters of two or three feet in length, and are of a bright scarlet colour when ready to be picked. When the nuts are ripe the clusters are cut and left upon the ground for some days, until the nuts are loosened in their cups. The nuts are then taken out and boiled until the oil from the fleshy outer covering is extracted: it is then reboiled and skimmed, and when it has been thus refined has a clear deep claret colour. Palm-oil, produced in the Niger towns by a somewhat different process, is thicker and yellow in colour.

The palm-nuts, after yielding the oil from their outer covering, are cracked in order to obtain the kernels which form a valuable article of trade: they are exported to England or Germany and manufactured into oil. The cracking of the nuts is a laborious process, and, as yet, the primitive method of cracking each nut separately between two stones is that almost universally followed by the natives. No machine as yet devised has been entirely successful in separating the kernels from the shells. In proportion to the oil produced a much larger quantity of kernels should find its way into the market. Doubtless as time goes on less wasteful methods of producing both oil and kernels will be devised.

In the Delta, where the finest oil is produced, the oil and kernel trade is almost entirely in the hands of the rich native middlemen, who collect the produce in small quantities in the up-country markets, refine it, and bring it down in their canoes to the factories, as the local agencies of the British firms trading upon the West Coast are called. In the old days, when might was right, a big trader might bring down as much as a hundred puncheons of oil, of the value of about £12 each, in one season. But the up-country people are learning every year the advantages of trading direct with the European factory; for there is no

end to the trickery of the native middlemen, as the European merchants have often found to their cost.

The oil-markets frequented by the native middlemen are usually situated on small creeks, where the native traders build their sheds. The natives from the interior come down in large numbers to these markets, bringing their oil and kernels in exchange for the trade goods brought up by the middlemen. The market-places are either in the centre of the little market towns or on a main path in the bush. They are busy, noisy places: the women, who do most of the petty trading, are ready to run at a moment's notice. It is not many years since there was real danger for a woman travelling to distant markets, but now kidnapping, murder, and robbery, though not unknown, are comparatively infrequent, and the women walk twenty or thirty miles to market with their baskets on their heads containing kernels or pots of palm-oil.

The European factories or trading-stations upon the banks of the rivers have grown up within the last thirty or forty years. Formerly business was transacted upon the hulks of old trading-vessels moored in the rivers. When trade was first established the practice was for the ships to load up at home with such trade goods as seemed most suitable; and remarkable collections these cargoes must have been, of old hats, uniforms and helmets, cannon and cotton-goods, powder and gin, which then, as now, formed a considerable item of the trade. The ship then went round the various trading towns at which it was proposed to call, and the supercargo made arrangements with the native traders to collect oil and kernels for him, giving them goods on credit or "trust," to use the expression current upon the Coast. When the vessel had made the circuit it would be time for her to return to her first port of call in order to pick up the produce collected. Often enough the supercargo had great difficulty in collecting the full value of his "trust," but the profits in these golden days were very great. Alas! the climate played havoc with the crews. The West Coast of Africa had in those days a terrible reputation: the traditions of the rough lives of the adventurers, who began the trade of West Africa three hundred years ago by conveying slaves to the West Indies and America, long survived, when to the perils of the climate were added those of a consumption of spirits which would have tried any but a constitution of iron. West Africa is not likely ever to be a healthy place of residence, but the conditions of life have improved enormously, and, though invaliding is frequent, it often saves lives and must not be taken to mean that the constitution is ruined.

The oil-trade was the staple trade which took the place of the slave-trade. It is true, no doubt, that slavery was a punishment inflicted upon criminals by the natives, and many of those shipped to the West Indies were men who left their country for their country's good. Even if none others had been shipped, the slave-trade would have left an indelible stain upon the reputation of the civilised nations who took part in it, but it would not in that case have produced the disastrous results which flowed from the state of inter-tribal war which it induced: a war which had no elements of romance, which was waged

upon women and children, and which contributed very largely to that state of terror in which the natives of the interior still live.

Of the other exports referred to in the list given upon p. 177, rubber and timber deserve special mention. The Government has assumed the charge of the forests. A forestry department has been established, the officers of which see that the forest rules are observed, that only trees of sufficient maturity are cut, and that seedlings are planted and maintained in place of each tree cut down. Rubber-collecting remains in the hands of the native traders, who are obliged to comply with the rules made for the preservation of the rubber vines and trees. The royalties collected from the holders of timber concessions and the rubber-collectors are divided between the Government and the native owners of the forests.

The Government is engaged in establishing nurseries and plantations of rubber in the principal villages, and the natives are beginning to take an intelligent interest in an industry which promises much prosperity to the country.

The British Cotton-Growing Association has established two experimental farms in Southern Nigeria, at Onitsha in the Central division, and Ugboha in the Western division. On these experiments are being tried with a view to ascertaining the most suitable species and the best season of the year for planting. It is not anticipated that European-conducted cotton plantations will ever be commercially successful, but the hope is entertained that the planting of cotton may be extensively taken up by the natives themselves, who already plant for their own use native cotton of a good variety. Efforts have been made with considerable success by the Government to get the chiefs of the various towns to clear a few acres of land and to plant them with selected seed under adequate supervision. These are intended to provide object lessons, from which the people may learn the advantages of the trade in cotton and the best methods of cultivation.

The Government has under serious consideration the improvement of transport throughout the Protectorate. Much has been done to improve communication by clearing waterways which were impeded by vegetation. Facilities are now offered to the natives for transport by Government launches on the Niger and Cross rivers. Roads are being constructed which will be available for wheel traffic, and the native paths are being straightened and improved. The question of railway development is under consideration, and surveys are being undertaken with a view to ascertaining the routes which are most practicable and best calculated to open up trade throughout the Protectorate: the larger question of railway policy for the whole of Nigeria is engaging the attention of the Colonial Office, and is the more important in view of the enterprise of the French, who are constructing a line from Dahomey to Say on the Niger, and of the Germans, who have now made arrangements for the construction of a railway in Kamerun.

It would be impossible within the limits of this paper to give an account of the native races of Southern Nigeria. The Protectorate differs from the other British possessions in West Africa in being

inhabited by a great variety of tribes. It seems as if the stronger races of the interior had pushed down into the Delta the inferior races which preceded them, and this process was apparently still going on within the brief time covered by native tradition. In general, the lowest races are to be found nearest the seaboard of the Protectorate.

Of the great native states of West Africa, Benin alone is in Southern Nigeria. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to come into relation with Benin, and *Hakluyt's Voyages* contain several vivid narratives of early visits made to the city by English sailors and merchants. The recollection of the horrors discovered by the Punitive Expedition which took place in 1897, a few weeks after the massacre, is still fresh. But this recollection ought not to obscure the recognition of the

Native Dance, Calabar.

comparatively advanced culture to which the Binis had attained. The Benin work in bronze and ivory far surpasses any similar work in Southern Nigeria, and the collections in the British Museum and the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh are well worth inspection. The Binis are an intelligent race; they have dances and songs far superior in grace and melody to the uncouth and often indecent contortions and dreary monotony of those of other tribes. They have shown also greater appreciation of the methods of administration, for, under the rule of the old "king," an organised executive existed.

In the administration under the British Protectorate the authority of the native chiefs is maintained as far as possible. The country is divided into districts, and, under the commissioner in each district, are native councils, upon which the chiefs sit. Criminal and civil cases between natives are tried before these councils, and the fees and fines

collected are expended upon the maintenance of the councils and upon measures for the improvement of sanitation, roads, and bridges.

The development of the country is slow, for the natives are conservative of their old superstitions and ideas; but, with the progress of sound education and the material changes which are taking place, much more may be expected.

A large number of Government schools have already been opened, and a system of Government inspection has been inaugurated in those mission schools which are in receipt of grants.

The principal missions in the East are the United Free Church, the Primitive Methodist, and the Irish Presbyterian; in the West the Church Missionary Society and the Roman Catholic.

No statistics afford a measure of the results of the work of good missionaries; but the work of Great Britain in Africa would be incomplete if it were not for the intimate influence of their upright and self-devoted lives.

See Stanford's Map of Southern Nigeria : 1905.

Colonial Report No. 459, Southern Nigeria : 1904.

HANOI AND KWANG-CHOW-WAN : FRANCE'S LAST ACQUISITION IN CHINA.

By Mrs. ARCHIBALD LITTLE.

HANOI is so prettily and brightly laid out, that I shall always think of it as of a patchwork of green sward picked out with ornamental shrubs and statues by the side of coquettish lakes with many reflections.

There are, of course, grotesquely over-decorated Annamite temples, as well as the picturesque watch-tower, sole remnant of the old Palace; there is an Annamite quarter full of women with enormous hats, a big black tassel hanging down on either side, and for the rest, dressed in a symphony of shades of brown, the material of which their long tunics are made being of a lighter colour in the inside, so that when they girdle themselves with a bit of it they at once get two shades, often adding a dash of deep orange. The becoming cut of this easy-fitting long tunic; the distinguished carriage of the women, owing to their always having to balance their enormous hats upon their heads, and often carrying heavy weights upon them again; the freedom with which they step out, and their elastic tread, make it an immense pleasure to see them after the cramped, sickly, ill-developed women of China. If only both men and women would not blacken their teeth they would be a singularly good-looking population. As it is, they are always laughing or smiling, and thus displaying what appear like toothless gums, owing to this practice of blackening.