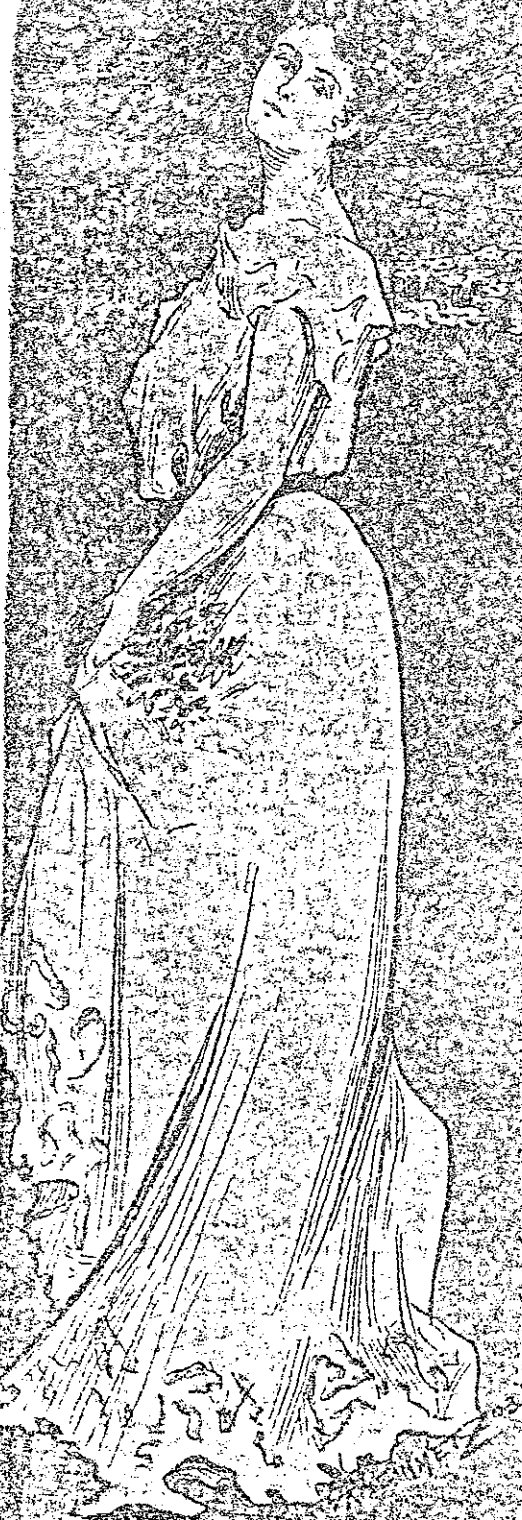


With the Gold Seche in
Darkest Africa



The ERA MAGAZINE

ILLUSTRATED
MONTHLY

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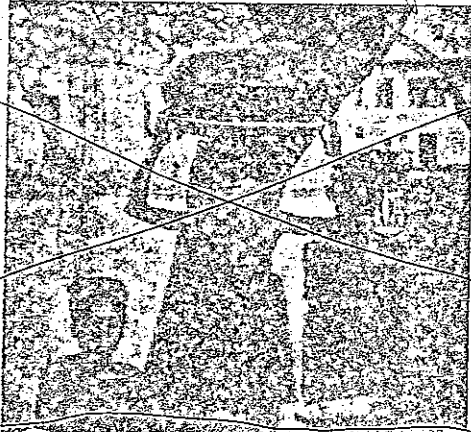
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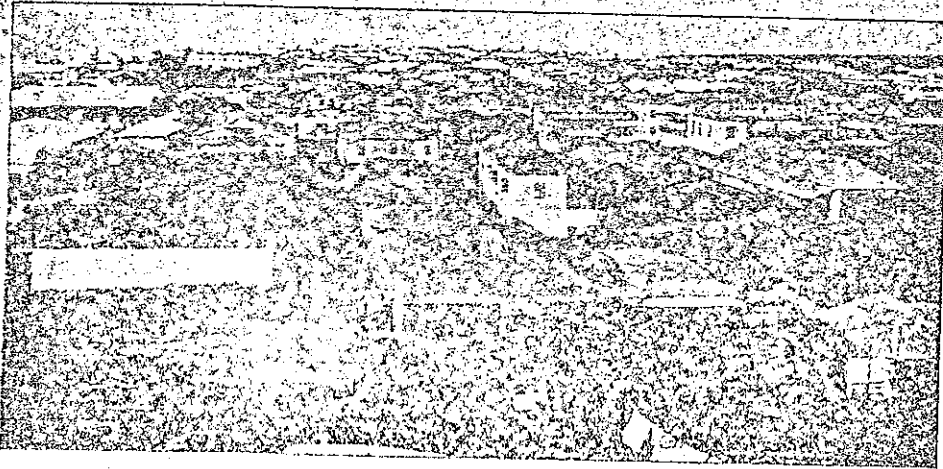
In this year over
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Thousands of tons
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ing to the west coast of Africa. The
Klondike has been taken up and offers
but little attraction to the men who search

sent out parties of engineers to make
reports for the government; and these
reports tend to show that the richest gold



TOWN OF AKKRA, ON THE GOLD COAST, THE MOST INTERESTING PLACE IN WEST AFRICA

It is here that all the converts are brought by the missionaries. The town is now thronged with whites who are bound for the gold fields.

for new fields, the mines of South Africa
are in the hands of a trust, the vast
regions of gold-bearing Australia have
lost the glamour that they once possessed,
and with the beginning of the twentieth
century the tide has turned toward the
Gold Coast, which is the richest as well
as the most perilous country to human
life on the face of the globe.

From Liberia for 1,000 miles along the
coast the country is rife with stories of
the fabulous riches of the almost impene-
trable hinterland, and hundreds of pro-
spector are leaving the coast towns for

fields in the world to-day are in western
Africa. They do not comprise sandy
rivers of "placer" gold, and neither are
they deposits of yellow nuggets and shale
gold, like that panned in California half
a century ago. They are almost entirely,
in so far as present discovery has gone,
vast areas of rotten quartz, fabulously
rich, and so soft that prospectors may
work it with stones, as the natives have
done for unnumbered centuries.

Never have gold seekers braved the
dangers that will have to be encountered
in western Africa. Wherever gold has

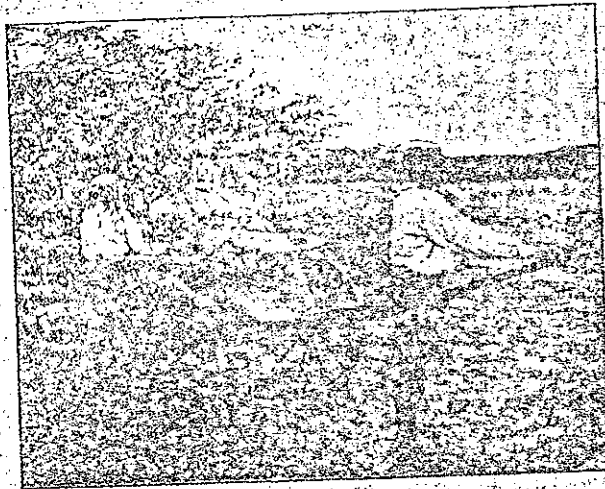
MARKET SQUARE, AKKRA, WHERE THE NATIVES FROM THE BUSH COUNTRY COME TO TRADE WITH THE THOUSANDS OF NEGRO CONVERTS AND THE WHITES

appeared there have always been obstacles and hardships for man to contend with. Australia had its lack of water, Alaska its intense cold, India its deadly fevers, but none of them compare with the perils of Ashantee. Here, from a few miles inland, stretch hundreds of miles of almost impenetrable wilderness. It is filled with fevers, the deadly malaria, and animals and serpents that prey on man. With reeking marshes underfoot and dense foliage overhead the heat averages 120 degrees in the shade. Hostile bands of cannibals still roam the jungles, ever ready and willing to rid themselves of strangers in their domain.

Yet notwithstanding these difficulties miners are rushing to the African coast from all over the world. The fabulous stories of the mines already opened and listed on the London exchange are attracting men known the world over as mining experts. I had not been a

week in Akkra before I learned that among these were such men as William Partridge, or "Sailor Bill," of Klondike fame. At Akkra, fitting out a party of American prospectors, was Louis Janglois, famous because he was one of the first to make the Yukon strike, and because he cleaned up a million the first year. E. W. Samuels, one of the discoverers of the great Coolbardie mines of Australia, had already penetrated to the interior, accompanied by W. W. Reade, perhaps the richest miner in the world. Frank Slavin, the notorious prize fighter, had been last heard of at Coomassie, from where he was just about to go into the

bush country in the direction of the vast concessions held by Sir Alfred Jones, of the Elder-Dempster steamship line. In company with these an army of 2,000 adventurous men have gone into the new gold country within the last 12 months, and it is predicted



THE MOST MODERN METHOD OF TRAVELLING IN AKKRA

that this year over 10,000 prospectors will be found in the new fields. English syndicates are rushing hundreds of Welsh and English coal miners into Akkra and Asaba. These men come on contracts giving them \$150 a month and all expenses. For the most part these hired coal miners are from the ignorant classes, and but very few of them know what they are coming to. Most of them are either invalided home within a few months or die in the bush of dysentery and malaria.

In the face of terrible difficulties, and all within a comparatively few months, the blackest regions of west Africa have been opened to the world. Almost without machinery, which at



THREE NATIVES FROM THE BSHI WHO HAVE COME TO AKKRA TO TRADE

Attention is called to the gold ornaments on the arms, neck, and ankles of one. It was the possession of these ornaments by the natives of the interior that revealed the fact that for centuries they had been mining gold.

present it is impossible to convey through the wilderness, dozens of bonanzas have been opened and placed on the stock exchange. In the Bibiana, Wasseau, Ashantee, Nummassie, Mantrim and Effuanta groups are forty-four listed independent mines. Thousands of tons of rich quartz, so soft that it can be crushed with stones, have been brought to the surface. At the Nummassie mine a visible ledge on the surface, eight feet in diameter, runs seven ounces of gold to the ton, and it is so soft that a native worker can crush and wash a half ton of it a day, or earn \$60 in ten hours. For hundreds of miles prospectors are staking out their claims, many of them



A BUSINESS STREET IN AKKRA



THE AFRICAN ASSOCIATED, LIMITED, AT AKKRA

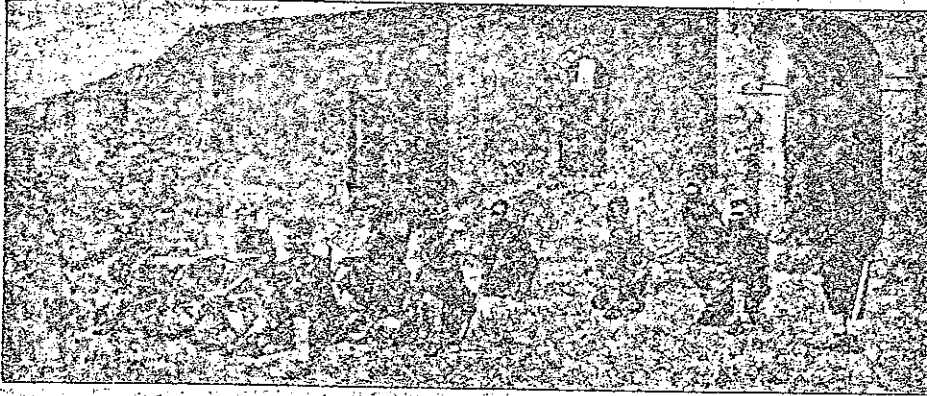
Where the unsophisticated blacks are cheated out of their eye-teeth by white traders. A native from the interior will sell his gold for a hat, will get more and give it for an umbrell, will trade all the ivory he can carry for a pair of gloves, and when he has added to these a pair of shoes he will go back into the bush a monarch.

not taking the trouble to return to the coast to secure rights of them, preferring to crush the quartz with rocks. While less than a million dollars have been taken from these interior fields of Ashantee since their discovery, experts predict that between \$30,000,000 and \$40,000,000 will be taken out during the next year, as it is believed the time is not distant when a way will be found by which machinery, already at the coast, can be carried through the country.

Just now Akkra is the liveliest place on the Gold Coast. It was from Akkra that our party set out for the country of King Taki, 180 miles up in Ashantee. This is as far as the most daring of prospectors have yet penetrated. It would be impossible to go even this far were it not for the fact that Taki is especially friendly to the English, and that for at least a part of the way the famous Hausa troops, though poor fighters, keep the country in comparative peace. But beyond this and between Taki's domain and the coast are tribes still dangerous, notwithstanding that they have been subjugated by the English, and the principal chiefs of many of them made prisoners. Immediately across the river from Seffu, the country of Taki, is the Fantee territory, ruled by a

tribe especially inimical to the whites. Had it not been for Taki it is doubtful if the fabulous riches of the interior would have become known at the coast for many years. It was chiefly through him that the coast trade in gold with the natives reached such proportions that it was immediately concluded that somewhere in the wild interior were mines operated by the natives. Hovering on the outskirts of the great swamps and jungles, companies of traders made fortunes each year in trading with them. Hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of golden ornaments were secured, and it is in this almost unknown bush country that the shrewdest prospectors are predicting finds will be made which will ultimately startle the world as much as did the discovery of the South African diamond fields.

At the very outset the prospector begins to see what he has to contend with. But he does not realize the dangers until it is too late, or a half of the hundreds who are now blindly rushing into the interior would turn back. From Coomassie, nearly one hundred miles from the coast, it is only about a hundred miles to the gold regions of the Yejio river. But this stretch of jungle, forest and swamp has come to be known as "the white man's



DETACHMENT OF THE CELEBRATED HAUSA TROOPS, MAINTAINED BY THE ENGLISH

Five hundred of these are in Akkra, and 3000 others are distributed through the bush. One good American, with a repeater could rout a whole company of them.

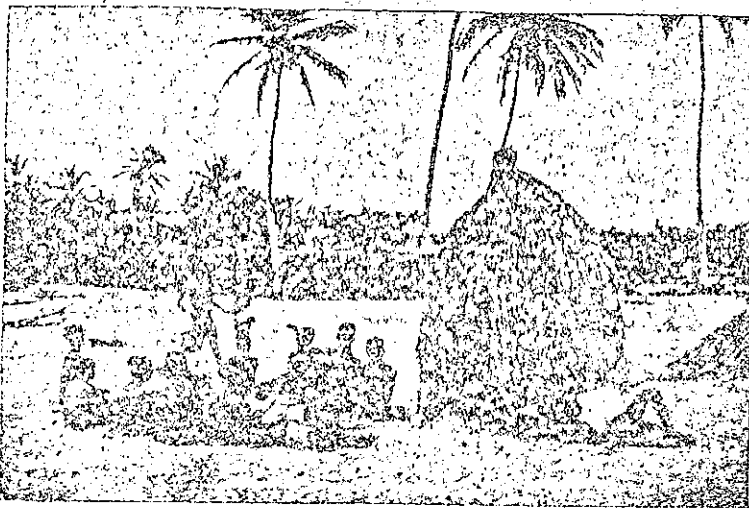
grave." There are no trails, each party selecting its own route, trusting more to the sagacity of the coast natives who accompany them than in themselves.

Through tangled regions of decayed vegetation, marshes and wet forests, every foot of the way has to be fought. Sometimes within a few hours the strongest constitutions begin to succumb to the sun and dysentery. The sun beats down in the tangled swamps unremittingly from dawn until dusk, and not a breath of air can stir in the dense vegetation. Occasionally in the marshy regions a hillock

rises out of the land, and these are the oases of the adventurous men who are braving death in their search for gold.

Where the ground is higher, almost impenetrable forests and tangled jungle cover it, the only paths being those beaten out by wild beasts. The sickening odors, the heat of the sun, and the black, stagnant drinking water breed the dysentery, malaria and black-water fever sometimes within a few hours.

Nowhere in the world is there a wilder country than this part of Africa. It is the natural home of the fiercest animals and



CANNIBAL CHILDREN BROUGHT DOWN TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF AKKRA FROM UPPER ASHANTER, AND SLOWLY UNDERGOING CIVILIZATION

The tribe to which these children belonged was nearly annihilated by hostile neighbors. The hut is an example of the shelter in which they sleep, and protect themselves from a too hot sun.



A NATIVE MINE

The rotten quartz may be seen sticking out of the hillside. From this ledge two prospectors took out \$1,000 in ten days, crushing the quartz in the old native fashion, with stones. This is in Upper Ashantee, as far as the most daring prospectors have yet penetrated. The road to this point leads through 200 miles of darkest Africa, and it is estimated that only six in ten white men who enter this country come out again alive. This is on account of malaria, black-water fever, beasts, serpents, and the hostile natives.

the deadliest serpents on the Dark Continent. In our journey through these regions every foot of the way was guarded. In single file the natives moved slowly ahead, ever alert, with their weapons prepared for instant use. Whether in swamp or comparatively dry land, the dense vegetation above and about us was constantly alive with wild life.

Among the serpents the particular dread of prospectors and their native companions is the deadly, treacherous little viper, whose sting is certain death. Next to this, and even more feared than the great black-maned lion, is "the gentleman in the tree." By this appellation goes the black jaguar, who follows the traveler and springs upon him from the tree tops. Not so dangerous, but always a menace, are the huge, brown panthers, elephants, crocodiles and rhinoceroses. The wet ground is filled with lizards and vermin, and for ten days' journey to the native village of Effuanta the screeching of parrots and monkeys is never silenced, except at night, when the bullfrogs take it up with a clamor that drowns the human voice.

While the capture and deportation of three of the unfriendly chiefs shown in one of the accompanying illustrations, has broken the power of the rebellious tribes

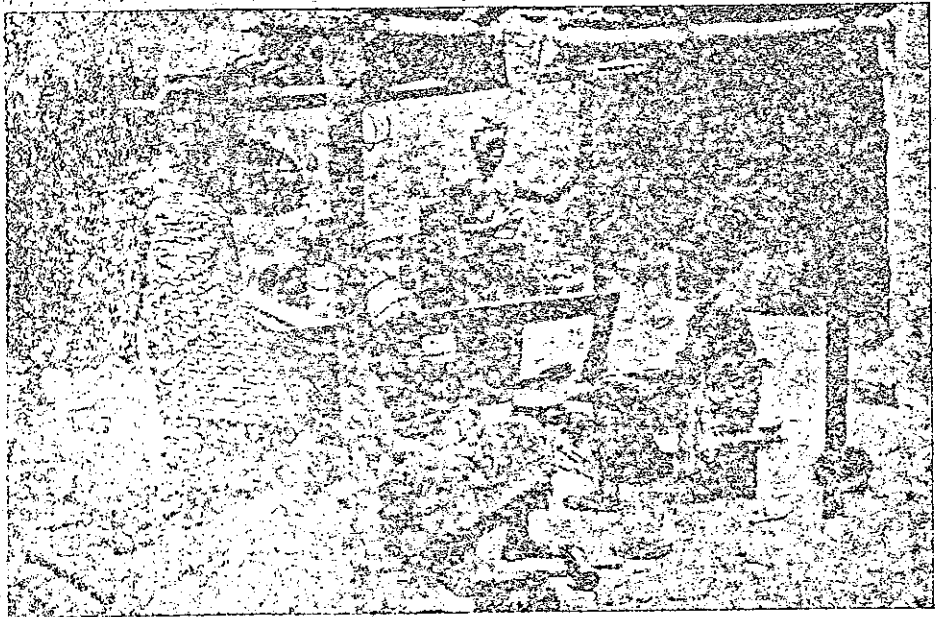
of Benin, Asaba and the lower Niger district, the blacks farther inland, especially in Ashantee, are always on the lookout to surprise the whites. Stories of desperate battles with them are reported in the coast towns by almost every returning party. The Fantees are especially hostile, believing it is the purpose of the invaders to oust them from their dominions. We had hardly reached the friendly village of Effuanta when we came upon the scene of a battle where four English government engineers, under Major Roxford, and their fifty attendants, had been attacked by the natives, who had been driven off.

The stretch of country from Effuanta to the scene of the new Eldorado, while much higher and healthful, is in one respect the most dangerous in the path of the gold-seekers. This is a region where cannibalism still exists in all its horrors. For hundreds of miles all of the tribes met with are cannibals. It is in this region that many of the missionaries sent in from the coast are killed. In small bands these man-eaters scour the country in search of parties weaker than their own, and no matter of what tribe or color the victims be, one of their number is sacrificed to their gods and the rest eaten.

Once through the Fantee territory the



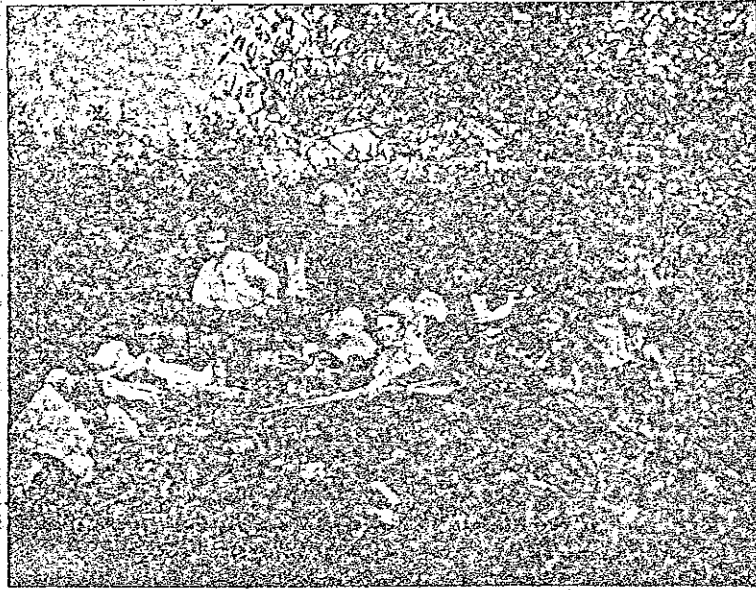
At different times the English have been compelled to make war against hostile tribes, and they have imprisoned many of the once powerful chiefs. This picture was taken back of the walls of Cape Coast Castle. The central figure, in semi-military dress, is the famous king of the Fantees, captured a year ago last February. This king lives in barbaric state in his captivity, and is allowed four wives by the English. The figures at his feet are his servants, while the two figures beside him, on the right, and the two to the left of the tall negro beside him, are his wives. Directly back of these two central figures, with his head in a sort of a hood, is the King of Benin, famous for the horrible Benin massacre. The huge negro on the extreme left, dressed in a black robe, is the notorious priest, now in captivity, at whose instigation the King of Benin gave orders for the massacre. The large figure on the right, with his hand on his breast, is the King of Warri and Sapele, monarch of a cannibal tribe, and who stands six feet, seven inches high. In the background are the wives and servants of these men.



A family of Fantees, nearly 100 miles in the interior, a point in wildest Africa where the most venturesome gold prospectors are just beginning to go. The hut, which is one of many in the kraal, is surrounded by a wall of clay, grass, and sticks, which serves as a protection against hostile tribes, serpents and wild beasts. The presence of the iron pot and bottle indicates that the natives have begun bartering with the whites.

danger, as far as the natives are concerned, is practically ended. It is here in the friendly territory of the Sefus, that the first of the old native mines have been found, and where the new mines opened by white men are situated. It is veritably the land of gold. How far it extends into the interior is only a matter of conjecture. Were it not for the death-dealing malaria and dysentery, fortunes could be made in mining in the native way. The native mines are sometimes only excavations in the sides of hills. At others shafts lead down into the earth, in instances as deep as a hundred feet. Everywhere is

pressed with the tremendous riches of these fields that it has negotiated with King Taki for their mining, the great problem still remains to be solved: How can stamps and machinery for mining on a large scale be carried 180 miles inland through a dense wilderness of swamp and jungle? A syndicate recently formed in London, which has large claims in the new fields, is preparing to attempt to make navigable the Volta river, which runs into upper Ashantee, but which at present defies any attempt to go up it even in small boats. If this is done a half of the danger from fevers, serpents and



A PARTY OF PROSPECTORS IN UPPER ASHENTEE. THE NEGROES ARE INTELLIGENT "KOO BOYS" BROUGHT FROM THE COAST

found the rotten quartz. It is dug out with flints and sharp stones, and then ground up on big smooth stones. The gold is then washed out in calabashes, melted, and then cleverly twisted into the ornaments which the savages wear. The natives have dug hundreds of these shafts. Around these eager gold-seekers are flocking. In the heat of the first excitement most of these are remaining to work the mines in the native way, while the more far-sighted ones return to the coast to establish their claims.

While the government has been so un-

wild animals will be done away with. On the other hand, another syndicate, which recently began the construction of a railway at Secondi, has its engineers at work to see whether it would be possible to run a railroad into the country, a plan that is looked upon as feasible at the coast. That some method of taking machinery into the country will be found before the year is out is not doubted, for not only is the quartz the richest and easiest worked in the world, but the gold itself sells at the coast for \$17.50 an ounce, 25 cents more than that mined in the Klondike.