

American Rubber Firm to Invade African Jungles

Akron, O., Nov. 28.—Clearing away of the Liberian jungle preparatory to the planting of 1,000,000 acres of rich African soil with 100,000,000 rubber trees has been begun by forces marshalled from the ends of the earth by Harvey S. Firestone, president of the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company.

By January 1, 240 representatives of the Akron company will be in Liberia, pushing forward the project which Mr. Firestone said will be supplying between 25 and 33 percent of the world's crude rubber within the next decade.

The leasing transactions already are completed with the Liberian government. The construction of wharfage facilities begun at Monrovia, the Liberian capital, and the planting of the first 50,000 acres is under way.

This first planting will be complet-

ed within the next six months and a quota of at least the same size will be completed in the six months following.

The Liberian acquisition and development by the American company is certain to bring down rubber prices which have bounded upwards in the last several months, in Mr. Firestone's opinion.

"Planters the world over have had the feeling that America has only been bluffing in its rubber projects," Mr. Firestone said. "It has appeared to them that the United States manufacturers have not been willing to invest money with a return no nearer than five or six years. They believe they have noted an American desire to cash in on investments at once and that therefore the Americans are not inclined to make any thorough developments. This attitude is rapidly changing now as our work goes forward in Liberia."

Following the entry of the Fire-

stone forces into the little African republic, the company's head announced that 35,000 acres had been acquired in Tobacco on the isthmus of Tehuantepec in Mexico and that rubber already was being extracted from trees planted there by other interests several years ago.

In addition to these enterprises Mr. Firestone capped his world-wide rubber quest with the announcement that he was seriously considering entering the Amazon basin in South America where millions of acres of rubber lands are undeveloped.

Three concessions have been obtained by the Firestone company from the Liberian government. The first was the lease of 2,000 acres of land, previously held and partly developed by British planters. Twelve hundred acres of this land, now planted in rubber trees, is producing rubber and is to be a nursery and experiment basis for the larger American project.

The second lease, which is the million-acre acquisition, gives the American company not only the right to plant and produce rubber on the acreage, but gives it all other rights, such as mineral, subsoil and timber rights. The timber rights are given the company, tax-free.

A third grant by the Liberian government gives the company the right to construct its own lines of communication within and without the plantation for its private use, without taxation.

In addition to the planting, care-taking and collecting of rubber, the Firestone company is improving the harbor at Monrovia, the seat of Liberian government. From the harbor roads will be constructed to radiate into the hinterlands. In the entire area of the country, which is 43,000 square miles—almost exactly that of the state of Ohio—there are but 100 miles of passable highways. This mileage is segregated and unconnected.

Hospitals also will be built and laborer's huts will be constructed for the housing of the natives who are to be brought from their pagan villages into the modern sanitary areas of American-built towns.

Provision is being made for the importations of foodstuffs to replace the local production that will be lost when the natives cease cultivating their own farms and go to work on the rubber plantation.

Several thousand of these laborers will shortly be at work for the American concern, employment being made on the basis of one man to every two acres. Thus, if 50,000 acres are planted within the next six months as is contemplated, 25,000 natives will be employed for that tract.

The plantation development consists of several operations in its prospect alone. First, the ground must be cleared of the jungle. The brush

is heaped high and is burned in sections covering several hundred acres over which the fires rage for a week or more. Following the burning, the area is staked off, one stake for each rubber tree. Holes are drilled after each stake is pulled, and either seeds are planted or young trees are set out.

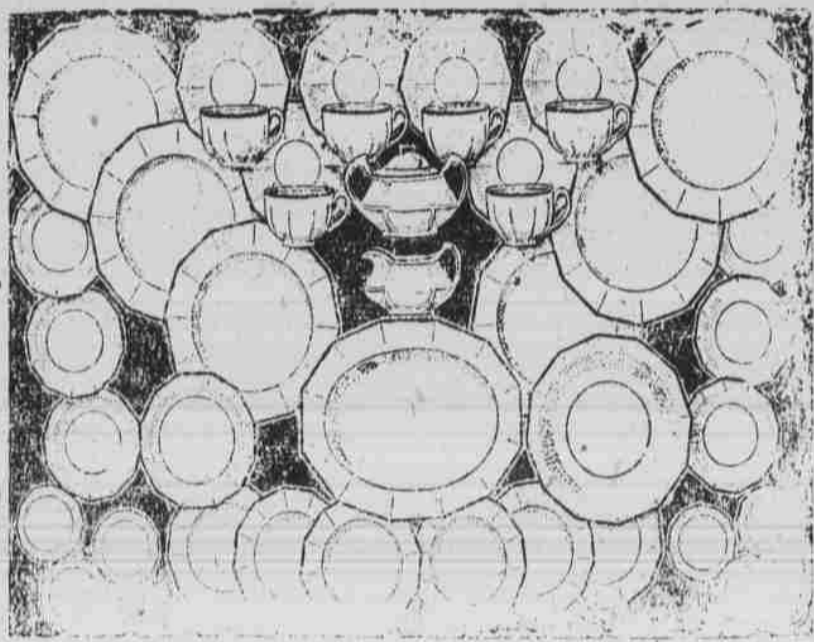
It will cost \$100 an acre to prepare the ground and to plant the trees, Mr. Firestone estimates.

It requires five years for the rubber

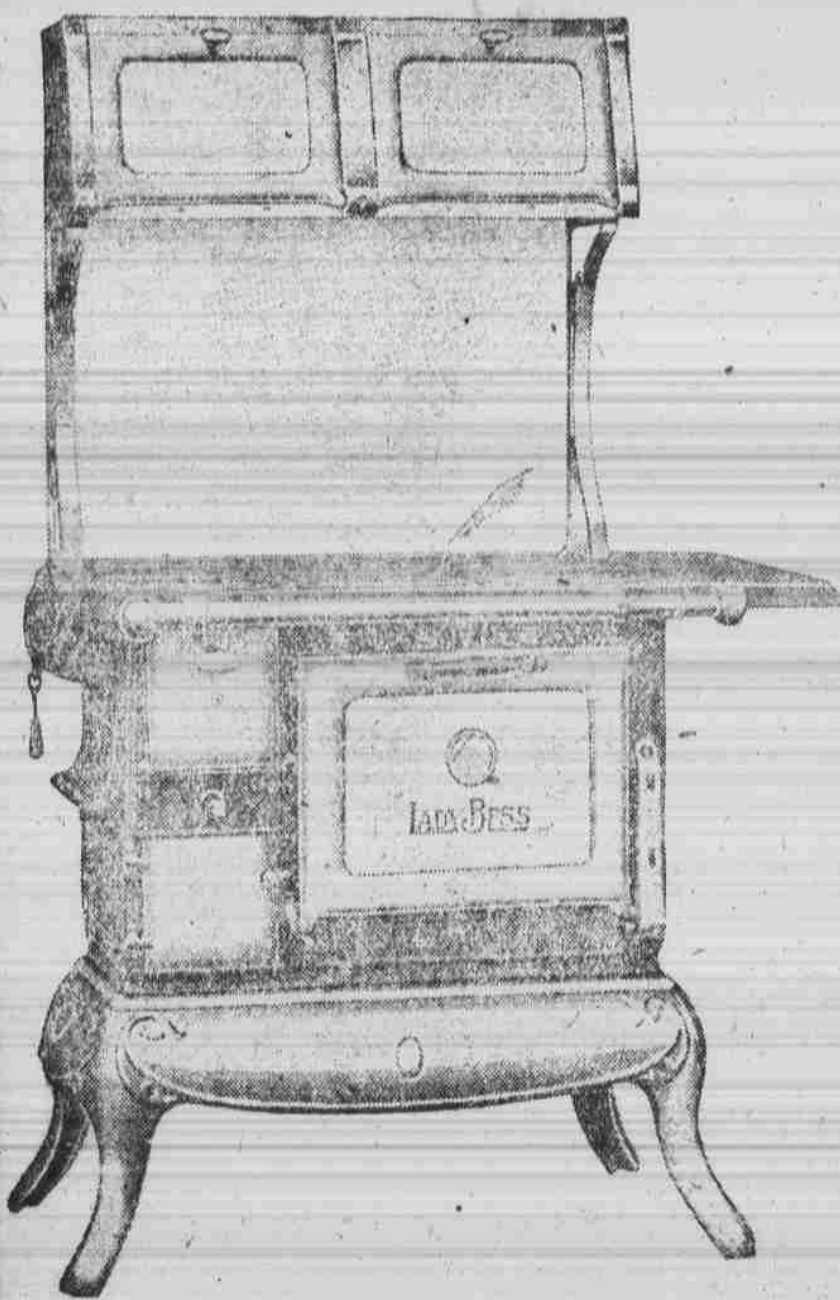
to reach the stage at which they should first be tapped for rubber sap. The trees usually are to be 100 years old, furnishing rubber throughout this period.

For several years, the shipping facilities at present provided in Liberia will be sufficient, Mr. Firestone believes. Ships now ply regularly coastwise from London and other European ports to Monrovia, and from New Orleans and New York to Liberia—Asheville, Tenn.

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