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New Year's Eve in Equatorial Africa

E. L. Vinton, '27
Firestone Rubber Co., Liberia

"It's the same old game, eh Barney? Well, I hate to take the time to go into the sordid details of business, after not having seen you for about a year, but—Boy! bring whiskey, this master got his feet wet. If you'll sit real still and take notes, I'll fill you up in a hurry."

"Toss me that bottle opener and a cigar, Litch; then shoot. Something kinda general, you know. I want to have a little idea of what the dope is on rubber planting."

"Naturally the first move after locating the area to be developed is to fell the jungle. The area is divided into 40's and the 40 lines are felled first to make the place accessible and to aid in supervision of the main felling. Felling is done, if possible, from September 1 'til Christmas, so the big stuff can get well dried. It will cost from 15 to 40 shillings per acre, depending on the kind of bush. A broadcast burn can be made in January or February, followed immediately by clearing. In clearing, all sticks up to about 8 inches in diameter, which were not consumed by the burn, are cut, piled and burned. A piece well felled and lopped may burn so completely that clearing will cost but 10 shillings per acre. On the other hand, if a fire gets in too early and a poor burn is obtained, the clearing may run to 40 or even 60 shillings.

"The 40's are then lined, which is the process of setting 3 foot stakes in 15 foot squares preparatory to holing. In stony or hard gravel soil a hole three feet deep, two feet on top and one foot at the bottom, is dug at each stake. Sandy or clay soils may require but an 18 or 24 inch hole. Varying with size of the hole, this operation may cost from 10 to 20 shillings per acre.

"The holes are then filled with the surrounding surface soil, with all sticks and stones picked out of it. This should be done
several months previous to planting, to insure good, firm soil in which to plant.

"We have planted a lot of stumps and more seeds. Stumps are 1-0 stock pruned to 18 inches above and below the root collar. They are set out by digging about a 4 inch hole, down the center of the previously filled large hole, to the depth needed, and then packing the stump gently into place by hand. Seeds are planted usually 4 to the hole by simply scraping out a little hollow in the center of the fresh filling and, after placing them firmly in the soil they are covered with about one-half inch of earth. Planting is done here between June 15 and October 15, during the rains. Total cost 'til seeds are in the field may run from 50 to over 100 shillings per acre, based on shilling-a-day labor. The seeds will—but say, Barney, tell me about your being Prexy of Cutting College.'"