

**CATALOGUE OF THE PLANTS
COLLECTED BY MR. & MRS.
P.A. TALBOT IN THE OBAN
DISTRICT, SOUTH NIGERIA**

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Catalogue of the plants collected by Mr. & Mrs. P.A. Talbot in the Oban district, South Nigeria
by A. B. Rendle & E. G. Baker & H. F. Wernham

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A. B. RENDLE & E. G. BAKER & H. F. WERNHAM

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SOUTH NIGERIAN PLANTS

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BRITISH MUSEUM, NATURAL HISTORY

CATALOGUE OF THE PLANTS

COLLECTED BY

MR. & MRS. P. A. TALBOT

IN THE

OBAN DISTRICT
SOUTH NIGERIA

BY

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ASSISTANTS IN THE DEPARTMENT

S. MOORE, F.L.S., AND OTHERS

WITH SEVENTEEN PLATES

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PREFACE

THE following account of the plants of the Oban District of South Nigeria has been drawn up from the collections made by Mr. and Mrs. P. Amaury Talbot in the years 1909 to 1912, during Mr. Talbot's period of Government service in the District, and presented by them to the Museum. Mrs. Talbot also made a very large and beautiful series of drawings of the plants, reproductions of which she proposes to publish in a separate book.

The plants have been determined and the novelties described by members of the Department of Botany, with the assistance of Mr. S. Moore in various orders, Mr. H. N. Ridley who has worked out the Zingiberaceae and Marantaceae, and Miss A. Lorrain Smith who has determined the Lichens. For descriptions of a few new species I am indebted to Mr. Sprague and Mr. Hutchinson of the Herbarium of the Royal Gardens, Kew. The authorship of each portion of the work is indicated exactly in the text.

Mr. Talbot has supplied a short account of the district and of the general character of its vegetation; and notes on many of the plants by Mr. and Mrs. Talbot are incorporated with the descriptive matter.

A. B. RENDLE.

DEPARTMENT OF BOTANY,
April, 1913.

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INTRODUCTION

THE following notes on the general character and vegetation of the Oban district have been kindly supplied by Mr. Talbot.

The Oban district of South Nigeria* lies within the bend of the Cross River at a distance of 40 to 100 miles from the Gulf of Guinea. It is bounded on the East by the German Cameroons, of which it is, botanically speaking, an offshoot, though apparently exceeding its neighbour in the luxuriance of its vegetation. Throughout the length and breadth of the land hardly a level spot is to be found. The average height above the sea-line varies from about 300 to 900 feet, with masses of hills rising towards the centre into a clearly marked watershed, nearly 4000 feet high. The greater number of these hills have been climbed by us, but height seemed hardly to influence the luxuriance, or even type, of vegetation.

The rocks of the district are very ancient and consist mostly of gneiss or granite, pierced by veins of iron ore and other minerals. The weathering of these has produced a soil very favourable to growth. This, mixed with the deep accumulation of rich vegetable humus and mould in the dense shade of these tropical forests, forms, in the warm damp climate, a kind of vast natural forcing bed, from which spring an almost inexhaustible variety of flowering plants and trees. These grow up with such incredible rapidity that I have found it difficult to recognise sites, which were under cultivation five years before. The land is drained by a close network of rivers, which meander through the deep green of the "bush," like the veins of some giant leaf, or leap down the hill-sides in a series of cascades and waterfalls.

The forests of Oban are usually described as within the ever-green belt, but, though evergreens predominate, more careful study discloses the presence of a very large proportion of deciduous trees, many of which burst into leaf and flower twice

* A map of the district will be found with Mr. Talbot's communication to the Geographical Journal (xxxvi. 637).

every year. Several are even known to bloom four times in the year, while on the other hand some cauliflorous trees only blossom every two or three years. Natives, whose information in other cases proved trustworthy, declared that certain ones only flower once in seven years.

The number of different species to be found in these forests is immense and may be computed to average at least 400 to 500 distinct species to the square mile. Among these are to be found a large number of valuable economic trees, such as cam-wood, ebony, rubbers and mahoganies of enormous size, scented and otherwise. The state of age gradation among all such trees is more satisfactory too in this district than that in the greater part of the Protectorate.

The annual rainfall, carefully kept during my tenure of office, averages 175 inches, and the humidity may be a contributory cause to the extraordinary large number of cauliflorous trees. The unusual rainfall and the heavy dews, which last all through the dry season, act too as protective agents in rendering impossible destruction by forest fires.

A very considerable part of the district has at one time or other been under cultivation. The system of farming consists in roughly clearing the land in January and February, by cutting and burning the smaller growth, while the great trees are left standing. This has, however, affected the type of forest less than would otherwise have been the case, owing partly to the scanty population, about four to the square mile, and also to the large number of trees, which, according to the superstition of the people, must neither be destroyed nor planted, but left untroubled by human interference. A considerable part of the land may be regarded as virgin bush, and is perhaps the only important survival of that vast primeval belt, which once extended over the greater part of South Nigeria.

In order to be convinced that the forests of Oban are to a great extent true primary forest one has only to leave a native path in the remote parts of the interior and cut one's way for a short distance through the tangle of lianes, often of the girth of our Northern tree-trunks, which hang between giant boles, 200 to 300 feet high, and, in the case of cotton trees, over 80 feet in circumference. Once the path has been lost sight of, one may wander for days without coming across a trace of human habitation.

P. AMAURY TALBOT.

The collection includes 1,016 species and varieties, 195 of which are new; there are nine new genera. The new genera are *Alphonseopsis* and *Deauettia* in the order Anonaceæ, the former allied to the Indian genus *Alphonsea*, the latter to *Melodorum*; *Crateranthus*, a genus of Myrtaceæ intermediate in structure between *Napoleona* and the tropical South American *Asteranthos*; *Afrohamelia* (Rubiaceæ) most nearly allied to the tropical American *Hamelia*, and, in the same order, *Dorothea* and *Diplosporopsis*, new members of the tribe Gardenieæ, and *Globulostylis*, the affinity of which is with *Curiera* in the tribe Vanguerieæ; *Scyphostegnum* (Loganiaceæ) closely allied to *Stychnos*; *Talbotia*,* a member of the tribe Justiceæ in the order Acanthaceæ; and *Amanriella*, a member of the subfamily Philodendroideæ in Araceæ.

Of the new species seven belong to the order Anonaceæ, three to Violaceæ, three to Guttifereæ, one to Malvaceæ, six to Sterculiaceæ, including four new *Colas*, two to Geraniaceæ, two to Meliaceæ, two to Olacaceæ, one to Celastraceæ, three to Sapindaceæ, three to Anacardiaceæ, five to Leguminosæ, one to Rosaceæ, eight to Myrtaceæ six of which belong to the genus *Napoleona*, three to Melastomaceæ, thirty-four to Rubiaceæ, one to Ebenaceæ, one to Oleaceæ, twelve to Apocynaceæ, four to Aselepiadaceæ, nine to Loganiaceæ, one to Convolvulaceæ, one to Pedalineeæ, twenty-one to Acanthaceæ, four to Verbenaceæ, three to Aristolochiaceæ, three to Laurineæ, two to Euphorbiaceæ, twenty to Orchidaceæ, two to Liliaceæ, and three to Araceæ.

A few specimens have been included in the enumeration which were collected on a journey through Nigeria and the North Cameroons to the Bornu Country and Lake Chad; the locality of these is indicated in each case. A full list of the plants collected on this journey forms an Appendix to Miss O. Macleod's "Chiefs and Cities of Central Africa."

Mr. Talbot refers to the extraordinary large number of cauli-florous trees and special attention was paid to these when collecting, and Mrs. Talbot has also made careful coloured drawings of the flowers. Many of them are new. Such are several species of *Cola*, *Napoleona* and *Drypetes*, species of *Tetrastemma*, *Omphalocarpum*, *Diospyros* and others.

* This is equivalent to *Aprofittonia* Lindau in Engl. Jahrb. xlix. 406, published March 28, 1913, and thus too late for notice in this memoir.