

Professional Review.

A SYSTEM OF SYPHILIS.

(Concluded from page 175.)

In the course of an article on "The Treatment of Syphilis," Colonel F. J. Lambkin, R.A.M.C., devotes one chapter to "An Outbreak of Syphilis in a Virgin Soil," this being the Uganda Protectorate. Colonel Lambkin says:—

"Unfortunate as this outbreak would have been at any time, it was doubly so at the precise time when it made its appearance. Before its advent another malady of an even more serious nature had begun to sap the life blood of the tribes. Syphilis was very prevalent in the Protectorate, but the researches connected with sleeping sickness overshadowed all attention to the syphilitic outbreak, attracted to itself all interest, and set back all investigations with regard to syphilis in that part of the world. The consequence was that syphilitic disease gained a firm footing in the Protectorate, and being left to itself, caused devastation everywhere among the inhabitants. Syphilis assumed such a serious aspect that the Governor, Mr. Hesketh Bell, C.M.G., applied to the Secretary of State for the Colonies for an inquiry to be made into the subject of syphilitic disease in Uganda by an expert from this country, who should consult with the medical staff of the Protectorate as to the best means of checking the ravages of the disease. For this purpose the author was selected, and proceeded to the Colony."

Referring to the Baganda, the predominating tribe, Colonel Lambkin says: "What struck me more than anything was their intelligence, and personally I never expected the negro to attain to the level they show in this respect. Their eagerness to learn is also a marked feature. I cannot help here quoting the words of Sir Harry Johnston with reference to the Baganda: 'In my opinion there is no race like them among the negro tribes of Africa. They are the Japanese of the Dark Continent, the most naturally civilised, charming, kindly, tactful, and courteous of black people.'"

The two diseases which at present threaten to exterminate the whole population are (a) Sleeping Sickness, and (b) Syphilis.

Concerning the latter disease, we read that about twelve years ago there was a more or less sudden outbreak among the Baganda tribe, and since that time it has gone on increasing both in frequency and virulence, until at the present time more than half the population of the Protectorate is infected. In some districts such as Ankole, 90 per cent. suffer from it. Infant mortality is as high as 50 to 60 per cent. owing to it, and it is the chief cause of the sterility which exists throughout the country. In fact, as things stand at present, owing to the presence of syphilis, the entire population stands a good chance of being exterminated in a very few years, or left a degenerate race fit for nothing.

Investigation convinced Colonel Lambkin that the causation had a two-fold origin:—

1. The introduction of Christianity.
2. The abolition of the punishments formerly

meted out among the tribes for all immoral offences committed by either sex.

The conclusion is based on the evidence not only of members of the Church Missionary Society and the White Fathers, but also on that of some of the most intelligent native chiefs, who themselves are Christians.

In support of this he quotes the following evidence:—

The Rev. J. Roscoe, C.M.S., who has spent twenty-five years in Uganda, states:—

"The cause of the outbreak was, in my opinion, the following: Among the Baganda up to about twelve years ago, a custom prevailed of keeping the women belonging to the tribe under strict confinement and surveillance: in fact, so strictly was this adhered to, that they were more like prisoners than anything else—hence immorality and promiscuous intercourse did not exist. At, approximately, the time of the outbreak of syphilis, the chiefs of the Baganda tribe, the majority of whom had become Christians, decided to remove these restrictions, as being contrary to Christian teaching, and to set the women free. This was done, and from that time the women were released, henceforth to roam where and whither they willed, and do as they liked. Other Christian tribes followed the example of the Baganda, and even those who had not embraced Christianity followed their example as they usually do in almost all affairs of life—the Baganda being the prominent tribe. The result of the removal of those restrictions was exactly what one would have expected, *i.e.*, promiscuous sexual intercourse and immorality. I consider the above to have been the main cause of the outbreak of syphilis among the tribes of the Protectorate."

The very Reverend Père Laane, Father Superior of the White Fathers, and Sir Apolo Kagwa, K.C.M.G., the very enlightened Prime Minister, gave similar evidence.

The author also says there is strong proof that the abolition of polygamy, and the abolition of punishments for immoral offences, which encouraged the commission of these crimes, contributed to the propagation of the disease among the people.

He attributes the main cause to the opening up of the country from the East, and the free ingress of Indian and Swahili traders from the coast.

Another medium to which Mr. Roscoe and another witness attribute the spread of the disease is the presence in Uganda of a certain number of the Bahima tribe (the Cowpeople) at Ankole, amongst whom some curious customs exist: "Thus, after a woman is married, all sexual restrictions are thrown to the winds. She may welcome to her bed any of her husband's friends or relatives with impunity. When a friend visits a man, he sleeps in the same bed with him and his wife, and the rules of hospitality are such that the host must leave his wife to his friend in the early morning. When a man is absent from home, and a visitor arrives, the wife must entertain him, and if he should so desire it, act as his wife. Thus it can well be imagined what a fruitful source for the dissemina-

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