

## LAGOS, ABEOKUTA AND THE ALAKE

### THE COLONY AND PROTECTORATE OF LAGOS.

The Territory of Lagos, including the Colony proper and the Protectorate connected with it, is nearly of the same area as Ireland. The Colony itself does not form much more than a tenth of that area. Probably three-fourths of the whole may be fit for tropical cultivation of some kind.

Great Britain first came officially into contact with Lagos in connection with the slave trade. A succession of treaties has gradually brought the country into its existing political condition.

At the date of the last census, taken in 1901, the total population of the territory was estimated in round numbers at 1,400,000 inhabitants, exclusive of the Egba country which forms the domain of the Alake, the population of which is believed by the Chief to amount to some 350,000 souls. According to this computation the Lagos territory would contain altogether about one and three-quarter millions of inhabitants.

The town of Lagos, the seat of the Colonial Government, has a population of 42,000, of which about 250 are Europeans, who would probably amount to about 350 for the whole territory. There are about 5,000 people in the country that can speak English, and about 3,500 that can both read and write that language. Some 4,300 scholars attend the Lagos schools that are subsidised by the Government. The Government grant, of about £2,000, is distributed on the results of examination in Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and Sanitation. The teaching of the last subject has been a decided success. It is greatly easier for a Yoruba to learn

English than for a European to acquire Yoruba. It may be doubted that any European ever thoroughly mastered that very difficult language. Not a few books, however, have been printed in Yoruba. It is rather unfortunate that it has been deemed necessary to complicate the English alphabet in printing Yoruba. Some effort was made a couple of years ago towards simplifying the Yoruba alphabet, but though all were agreed that it is not the best possible, yet unanimity as to what changes should be made was not arrived at, and the result will probably be that the alphabet will remain permanently as it is now, unless it is influenced by the typewriter or some similar contrivance in the future.

Rather more than half of the population of the town of Lagos are Muhammadans; the Christians form about a fourth of the whole, while Pagans number somewhat less. There can be no doubt that Muhammadanism is gaining ground rapidly all over the provinces. It is not carried out in rigorous conformity with the precepts of the Coran. Native usage and tradition still require that many of the leading chiefs shall be Pagans. Christian Missions are strongly represented, by the Church of England, by Roman Catholic, Baptist, Wesleyan, and the United African, Churches. Their work is arduous and difficult in the extreme. Originally the whole population was Pagan. Pagan beliefs still dominate the majority of the people.

The inhabitants would seem to be chiefly of negro blood. Judging from the absence of fossil stone weapons and implements in the large amount of earth cuttings connected with railway and other works, it would not appear that this country was long or thickly occupied by a people that lived in the stone age. The few stone axes met with are small, are held to be thunderbolts, and are regarded as sacred. They are used by the priests of Shango, the god of thunder, for the purposes of extorting fees from those whose property may be struck by lightning, for the puteale of the Roman is held in high veneration in most parts of Yorubaland. Probably also not a few of the stone implements may have been eaten, for specimens half cut down into powder to be drunk in water as medicine, are met with. As beds of

laterite containing sometimes a large proportion of oxide of iron lie on the surface of the gneissic rock that forms the basis of practically the whole country, the probability is that camp fires burned on the laterite will have smelted iron soon after the country was first inhabited. Iron smelting was a native indigenous industry, and the smiths there are, numerically at least, as strongly represented and as important and influential as is the case here.

In point of character the Yoruba negro is a very interesting study. What at first sight strikes one most forcibly is the courtesy of the chiefs and people. Taken as a body, the chiefs of Yorubaland might serve as a model of politeness to any people in Europe. This pleasing quality is not confined to the upper classes, for it is very strongly marked in the children, and among the very poorest of the market women. Once in my experience a minor chief was somewhat discourteous in his remarks, but he was so severely brought to task by all the many chiefs of the district, that he bitterly repented having used a few ill-considered words. It is at the same time a fact, that parents and persons in authority complain that children and young people are now less respectful and obedient than was formerly the case. Rightly or wrongly this change is imputed to contact with Europeans. But it may be stated generally that whenever a Yoruba fails to conform to our ideas of courtesy, it is because his customs are different from ours.

The second quality that distinguishes the Yoruba is his patriotism. No race of men could be more devoted to their country. All the principal chiefs are clearly opposed to such hideous things as the slave market, human sacrifice, cruel punishment, and gross oppression of any kind or form. They all entered into undertakings with the Government of Lagos to put an end to such practices, and, in the main, they have done so loyally. But, subject to these fundamental principles of justice and good government, the Yoruba chiefs are possessed with a passionate desire to manage their own domestic affairs in accordance with the usages and customs of their country where those are not found to be incompatible with administration on the lines of civilised government.

Much is spoken and written in Great Britain as to the strong desire of the European colonies of the Empire to be left to manage their own internal affairs in their own way, in the manner that their superior local knowledge may dictate. Perhaps few people really know that this desire is equally strong in a race like that of the Yoruba; and the few that do know this seldom have an opportunity of directing attention to the subject, of showing what an important factor this consideration is in a native administration that is to be carried on in peaceful prosperity and industry. Yoruba chiefs recognise fully the superior education and knowledge of civilisation possessed by European officers, and they have shown themselves most ready and willing to profit by their advice, but they dearly love to be allowed to carry into practice by their own authority the counsel that is thus given to them. If the fatal mistake is not made of humiliating the chief before his own people, he will in the end give effect to what is required of him in the interests of his community, for whom and for his country he will make any sacrifice. As a class the chiefs have an exalted idea of their own position and dignity; and they certainly possess high administrative capacity.

The system of government carried out in Lagos takes native character, native customs, and native susceptibilities into account, and the native authorities are allowed, and required, to take such a large share in their own government that punitive expeditions, or plots against the Government, are unknown. At the beginning of this year there was not a single outstanding political question of any importance between the Government of Lagos and any chief or tribe in the Protectorate. Under such a system a great chief is a very valuable possession; his authority is an instrument of the greatest public utility, which it is most desirable to retain in full force.

Probably many people in this country are unaware of the fact, that this system of Government is being most successfully carried on in the French Colonies of West Africa. France has, with the acute political perception of that great country, been able to see that those Colonies can never become

the home of the European, and that their present occupants must be maintained there and governed exclusively by and through their own chiefs. Frenchmen appear to realise the fact that they do not require white men's colonies, and that their coloured possessions can be, and must be, ruled on scientific principles. The result so far seems to be that France is succeeding commercially and financially in a very remarkable manner in West Africa. These remarks do not apply to French Congo.

On no point does attachment to his country and its customs make itself more conspicuous in the Yoruba than in questions affecting his land. He is inclined to be suspicious of strangers and does not readily give his confidence, though he trusts fully and unreservedly a person in whom he once learns to confide. When the Yorubas once become suspicious of a man, they will continue to suspect him even when he does the right thing. He is more suspicious on questions of land than on anything else. The land question, it may be mentioned incidentally, is, however, not a complex one at Lagos. There the soil remains the undisputed property of the natives. They cannot alienate it in perpetuity without violating the best established of all their laws, but they may grant long leases to natives or others. Thousands of Crown grants have been issued for land formerly ceded to the Crown in and near to the town of Lagos. No such title can be issued in any part of the Protectorate. The Government of Lagos has appropriated no native land beyond what was conceded to it long ago; in fact, could not use it unless it were by leasing it to the natives that now occupy it. The land on which the railway is constructed is leased from the Alake, and from the chiefs of Ibadan. Our neighbours at Dahomey, it appears, contemplated building railways on a system of land concessions, but that policy seems to have been wisely abandoned there. It was never tried, and should never be attempted, in Yorubaland. It costs very much more to build the railway without giving concessions of land, but the just and more expensive method will pay best in the end, as it robs no one of any part of his property. The Yoruba has as clear ideas as to the rights of property as Englishmen have.

The Yoruba is a deeply religious man. He finds religion in anything and everything. The sea, the Niger, palm and hardwood trees, iron, a stick, a stone, a crocodile, or small-pox, for example, may and do contain a deity or the spirit of an ancestor to whom a propitiatory sacrifice is duly and regularly offered. Perhaps the two favourite religious conceptions are connected with the god of iron, and the different forms of ancestral worship. Among the Papuans the absence or weakness of the religious instinct was a great difficulty in the way of the devoted missionaries at work in that country. Superabundance of this instinct creates equally great obstacles to mission work in Yorubaland. Fear of the fetich does in many ways that could be cited exercise a beneficial controlling influence. Many people believe that the Yoruba is a lazy man. It is true that the aristocracy do not, as a rule, participate in manual labour, and this superior caste, in such places as Ondo, for example, embraces the major portion of the community. But the Yoruba farmer is a very hard-working, industrious man, who is an enthusiastic agriculturist. The trading class is equally keen. Perhaps in no country in the world are prices in petty trading cut finer than in the hinterland of Lagos.

All native races have a keen sense of justice, but among none is this higher than with the Yorubas. When he thinks he is unjustly treated he speedily begins to resent it, but not always in a direct manner. From the political point of view the Native Councils are the safety-valves against subterranean intrigue, as they allow of the ventilation of grievances.

It is difficult for one that knows the Yoruba race to believe that in point of intellectual capacity they are inferior to Europeans. The Yoruba court rhymester does not rank high as a poet; the metal worker and the wood carver do not produce elevating works of art; and the farmer has not discovered the silo, so well known in Polynesia, nor does he understand or use irrigation; but the debates of the chiefs in Council are often on a high level. Children learn readily at school; the young men make good progress as artisans, surveyors, and draughtsmen; a considerable number of native ladies and gentlemen have been well educated at home and

in this country, and are quite fit to be put on social equality with any Europeans in the colony; several natives practise successfully as doctors and lawyers; a considerable number are clergymen; and there are many natives in high offices in the Civil Service. The younger men are very prone to overrate their own proficiency, and many youths in consequence of this defect fail to do their intellectual faculties justice. As a race they are undoubtedly susceptible of high culture. They are very strongly conservative, and cling with tenacity to old ways and usages; but an excellent proof was given last year of the fact that they can warmly embrace a new idea. An Agricultural Show was organised and opened at Lagos in November last. It succeeded far beyond the most sanguine expectations, and was visited by great numbers of people from the remotest districts of Yorubaland. An Agricultural Union for the whole country was formed soon after. Each province will have its own branch. The Abeokuta Agricultural Society, for example, now affiliated to the Union, has already 400 members. These facts show clearly that the Yoruba as an agriculturist can be led into new ways.

The Yoruba can fight also. He was able to defend himself from Dahomey. Sir Ralph Moor, for example, entertains a high opinion of the capability of the Yoruba as a soldier.

#### SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONDITION OF THE COLONY AND PROTECTORATE.

The Yoruba race is made up of divisions or tribes that were and are, so far as regards their own affairs, independent of each other. A few years ago, the people of Ibadan, for example, made war on their countrymen of Ekiti, sometimes on their own account, and on other occasions allied with the Ilorins against those of their own race. Similarly Abeokuta made war on Jebu-Ode. Each district or province is ruled over by chiefs who own their position and authority to a combination of the principles of heredity and election. The principal chief of a district bears, in most cases, a

specific title in virtue of his office. To save the trouble of becoming acquainted with these titles, it was common among Europeans to call the highest chief in each province by the inappropriate appellation of "king." They are now known officially by their proper and legitimate native titles. These titles had probably in all cases a natural origin. For example, the title of the chief now present is that of "Alake," a word which may be paraphrased as "Lord of Ake." Ake is the principal and dominant quarter of the town of Abeokuta. The Alake's title is thus an honourable, legitimate, and appropriate distinction. Such a title cannot be improved by the incongruous and unnecessary additions sometimes made to it in this country in the spirit of kindness. The highest or principal ruling chief is always taken in each district from one or two families, the succession in many cases passing with established regularity from one to a second family alternately. There is one instance which appears to be unique of its kind, in which the succession to chiefly primacy seems to be possessed by four ruling families, from each of which the principal chief is selected in rotation. In making the selection primogeniture is not necessarily considered; but sometimes an old and feeble man is intentionally selected by the younger and more energetic chiefs that are themselves ineligible, because they wish to preserve the control of affairs in their own hands. In some places the selection of the ruling chief is made by divine direction, conveyed to the people through the chief priest of the principal deity of the district. The selection of the chief is, however, always made from the privileged families that hereditarily have furnished the community with rulers. These rights of heredity naturally follow the paternal line exclusively in a country where the greatest chief may take to wife a woman of any social degree. But there have been some rare instances of a woman being the ruler of a tribe; and in at least one district the chief deity is a goddess. Generally speaking, however, women's rights have not received much consideration up to quite recent times. It is usual for great chiefs to report or announce their succession to the Oni of Ife, or to the Alafin of Oyo, the intimation being accompanied by a



present. Such appointments now require to be submitted to the Governor of Lagos. They have been almost invariably sanctioned. As might be expected under such a system, contested elections occur not infrequently.

Chiefly families over the whole of Yorubaland claim, as a rule, descent from the Ife family. The Oni of Ife, however, though the head of that most ancient and honourable house, has had very little political power during the present generation. He is still regarded as the fountain of honour, and without his sanction and approval no new man can assume to himself the privilege of wearing a crown. There are altogether nearly a score of crowned chiefs in the Yoruba nation, and four of them belong to Abeokuta. The crown is, in each case, supposed to have been given originally by the Oni chief to the head of each swarm of emigrants that left Oni to settle down in some new district. The privilege of wearing a crown is still jealously guarded. Even the Oni of Ife cannot, through fear of the fetich, grant a crown to any man whose father did not lawfully wear a crown. The crown is sacred, is the shrine of a spirit that has to be propitiated. When the Oni of Ife lately visited Lagos, he had to sacrifice five sheep to his crown between Ibadan and Ife, a two days' journey on foot.

The ruling chief is, in our official language, assisted by a council of elders and leading men in the community. The position of these latter is generally a hereditary one, in a great many cases distinguished by special titles, and accompanied by definite duties and privileges. These Councils, really ancient and natural institutions of the country, have lately been put on a stable legal basis by an Ordinance of the Legislative Council, and charged with the specific duties of managing the affairs, executive and judicial, of their own district. They are assisted by advice and direction from the Government of Lagos whenever this is found to be necessary.

The community consists of freemen and slaves. Slavery as an institution is in an advanced state of decrepitude. No child is now born a slave. It has been fully recognised that any slave that ran away from his owner or master was free on reaching the colony of Lagos. But the truth is that the

position of the slave was among the Yorubas so tolerable that very few of them have fled to Lagos to claim liberty. Yoruba slaves may be natives of their own country, or they may have been brought from the interior and sold to Yoruba masters. The Ibadan people, for example, carried off great numbers of their Ekiti countrymen, and kept them as slaves, or sold them away to Brazil. The result is that Ekiti is greatly underpopulated at the present moment. But even the Ibadan warriors treated their slaves so indulgently that now the Ekitis thus taken to Ibadan by violence seldom care to return to their own country, although they might do so if they wished to. It was quite a common thing in the Yoruba country for a slave to be named by his master in his last will and testament to be the factor or general manager of the estate, and to be left to take care of the entire establishment. They were allowed to trade from the interior, from Abeokuta and Ibadan, to Lagos. In short they occupied a position, and enjoyed privileges, that to our minds are incompatible with the condition or state of slavery as we understand it. Yet all this kindness and consideration notwithstanding, the slave was still a thrall, and not a free man. No slave is bought or sold openly in Yorubaland at the present day, though it is not to be supposed that secret transactions of this nature can be really extinct as yet. A considerable remnant of domestic serfdom no doubt still exists, but that remnant is fast dying a natural death, and its euthanasia is assisted by the fact that any slave or serf can easily purchase his or her freedom. When slaves run away from their reputed owners, and the latter apply for assistance to an officer of the Lagos Government, the slave is never given or sent back as such to an owner. A transaction takes place that ends in the complete freedom of the slave. If it is shown that the runaway was ill-used, this transaction assumes the form of a letter from the officer in question, to state that the slave is henceforth free. The extinction of slavery, even of the mild form of domestic servitude peculiar to Yorubaland, is recognised by the chiefs as inevitable.

Farmers, in consequence of this change, now find difficulty in obtaining labour for cultivation on a large scale. The

farmer that has many children is the most comfortably situated. He almost always cultivates his own land. In some provinces all the land is divided into family lands, and there is no folkland. In others it is all common, but each patch cultivated is recognised as the individual property of the cultivator as long as he uses it. He requires the sanction of the chief to take up any particular portion; when he ceases to use it, the land then becomes part of the folkland again.

All fruit trees have individual owners. Though land cannot be alienated, it may, according to native usage, be lent, leased, or hypothecated, as far as usufruct is concerned.

It has been stated above that a chief may take to wife any woman, irrespective of her social status. It was not the custom of the country to consult the woman in matters of marriage. Some children were betrothed soon after they were born, and dowry paid in whole or in part before the girl became of age. Now young girls frequently object to be bound by these contracts, and many cases of this kind come before the courts. The tendency is to not bring compulsion to bear on the woman, but to enforce restitution of the dowry paid to the girl's father. In Yorubaland, as among many other aboriginal races, the custom is observed of giving liberal gifts to the girl's father, instead of the latter endowing his daughter. Yorubas, like the Papuans, deny that the consideration passed to the father is payment; they contend it is only a present. The term "dowry" has thus at Lagos a meaning that is the converse of its signification in this country. Nevertheless, the Yoruba practice was not unknown to people of Teutonic origin. Before long the term "dowry" will begin to be used at Lagos in the English sense.

#### COMMERCE AND TRADE OF LAGOS.

The total imports into Lagos during the year 1903 were valued at £864,147; the total exports at £1,146,323; thus giving a total trade for the year of £2,010,469.

Of the imports £178,426 came from foreign countries. Half of all the exports went to Germany. A weekly mail is received from Liverpool by the Elder Dempster line, and

many German steamers trade to Lagos. One hundred and twenty-six miles of railway now serve to connect Lagos with the great towns of Abeokuta and Ibadan, having respectively approximately 60,000 and 150,000 inhabitants.

#### THE ALAKE AND ABEOKUTA.

Let us now turn particularly to the Alake and the country and people he rules over. The Abeokuta division of the Yorubas is known by the name of Egba. In recent years they have taken the lead in industrial development and progress. In estimating the population of the Abeokuta province at 350,000, it has to be remembered that it comprises many people that are not strictly speaking Egbas. The authority of the Alake and his Council is recognised over the whole province. The desire for a separate quasi-independent political existence is so powerful all over the country that persistent efforts are made by the chiefs and peoples of subject towns to procure from the Governor of Lagos a sanction to the renunciation of over lordship. Fewer attempts of this kind of decentralisation are made in Abeokuta province than elsewhere, perhaps because it is the best governed. Of all provinces it is the one that enjoys the greatest degree of independence.

The Alake presides over his own Council, which consists at present of eighteen of the leading chiefs and officers of his country. The Council exercises legislative, executive, and judicial functions. It meets regularly once a week, but oftener if required. All matters affecting the public affairs of the province are duly considered in public sittings of the Council. The members are allowed complete freedom of speech. The meetings of Council are conducted with the greatest decorum and regularity. The principal officers are the Government Secretary and the Treasurer. The Egba Government Gazette, printed in Abeokuta, makes known to all that can read either English or Yoruba the work of the Council in connection with the business of the province.

Throughout the Protectorate of Lagos the administration of justice has left so much to be desired that this has been re-

garded as the greatest blot on native administration. The system of uniting executive and judicial functions in the chiefs of the people, its hoary antiquity notwithstanding, is incompatible with our ideas of the administration of justice. The Lagos courts have had up to now no jurisdiction in the hinterland, where justice has been administered in the name of the several local native authorities. No amount of watching by a European resident can prevent a certain amount of oppression and exaction under such a system. The Alake of Abeokuta has been the first chief to recognise the inadequacy of the native council to deal with the more important judicial cases that now very frequently arise. An arrangement was therefore entered into towards the end of last year under which, in future, all cases of homicide occurring in the province of Abeokuta will be tried there by a court composed of the Chief Justice of Lagos, assisted by four Egba assessors. Cases between an Egba and any other person involving an interest of fifty pounds or over will be heard by the same court; while minor cases between Egbas and others will be dealt with by a mixed court, one member of which will be a European officer of the Lagos Service. The lower Egba courts will continue to exercise their jurisdiction over purely Egba cases. These great changes are perhaps the most important ever made in the political state of the hinterland. Nothing could be more certain than that cases would arise sooner or later between Egbas and Europeans that would, if dealt with by the Egba Council alone, create the most serious difficulties. It was quite clear that the chiefs could have no assistance from the traditions or usages of their country that would enable them to deal with commercial cases of magnitude arising between their own people and European merchants. Naturally, many natives of the country thought at first that this change would diminish the authority of the Alake and Council. It seems to be now recognised that some such arrangement was absolutely necessary, in order that the executive control of the province should permanently remain in the hands of the Alake and his colleagues. That this arrangement, more or less modified according to local circumstances, will be adopted in all the other provinces of the Lagos Protectorate there can be no doubt. The gain to

both natives and Europeans will be great. For all this we are in a large measure indebted to the wisdom and firmness of the Alake.

The greater part of the time of the Alake and Council is given to executive work. He visits all parts of his province to assist and encourage the farmers and traders, to direct the formation of new roads, and to see that his officers are properly discharging their duties. He has made over four score miles of good road during the last three or four years. Some 200 paid labourers are employed in the town at this work. Last year a large and very substantial bridge, built of concrete, was opened to traffic in Abeokuta. This was the first structure of the kind ever built by natives in West Africa. Within the last four or five years the Alake has erected two good and substantial prisons, one for males and one for females, in which prisoners are regularly fed and worked under responsible warders, instead of being chained up to a tree under a grilling sun, as was formerly the case. A Prison Board consisting of five members, of whom a clergyman is one, is responsible for the management of the prisons. The Alake began some two or three years ago to form the nucleus of a police force. The experiment has so far been successful, and the force now numbers about thirty men, trained by instructors from Lagos.

The necessary public buildings required for the departments of the Secretary, of the Treasurer, for the administration of justice, and for other purposes, have been, or are being, built.

Great interest is being taken in sanitary improvements. Efforts are being made to combat by vaccination the terrible and deadly scourge of small-pox, the terrors of which cannot be recognised or appreciated in a vaccinated country. A chief vaccinator, trained at Lagos, is assisted by six vaccinators in the town of Abeokuta alone. The large number of thirteen Sanitary Inspectors has been appointed, and the Alake himself frequently supervises their work in person. He hopes to be able to make provision next year for a medical department, at the head of which he will have a duly qualified medical practitioner.

Encouragement is given to education as far as the means

at disposal will permit. Praiseworthy and self-denying efforts are made by the different missionary bodies at work in Abeokuta to educate the rising generation. Their scholars, which number altogether nearly two thousand, take part in the competitive school exhibition held annually at Lagos, and they show there that they are at least equal to Lagos children in the English class competitions. The Alake and Council attach more importance to technical than to any other form of education. A Technical School, in which the different trades useful to the country will be taught, is in process of formation, thanks to the liberality of Mr. R. B. Blaize, a gentleman of Egba descent. Agriculture will also receive much attention there, as well as at a Botanic Station which is to be formed soon.

Perhaps enough has been said to show that the Alake of Abeokuta is a reformer. He will not break with any useful tradition or usage of his country. He has come to England with the double object of doing homage to the King and of learning all he can that may be useful to his people, more particularly in regard to agriculture.

The province of Abeokuta represents in area approximately about one-tenth of the whole Lagos territory. Its most characteristic crop consists of its extensive and luxuriant forests of palm trees. Nowhere can these be seen to greater advantage than in the province of Abeokuta. Exports also embrace timber, rubber, yams, domestic animals, and other minor articles.

It is confidently expected that in the near future cotton will become an important export from this province. The cotton plant is indigenous there. It has been cultivated, spun, and woven from time immemorial all over Yorubaland. Some of the native kinds are of good quality, and seem to withstand the summer drought better than imported varieties.

The Alake takes the deepest interest in the propagation of this industry. Recently he visited and addressed over 2,000 farmers on the planting of cotton, and distributed some 20 tons of cotton seed. About 100 tons have been indented for. Nothing can be more clear than that cotton cultivation in the Lagos territory must be carried on by the chiefs and

people of the country. The social and political organisation existing there; the nature of the climate; the tenure of the land; the questions connected with labour, combine to solve this problem in a clear and definite manner. The Cotton Association are to conduct a model farm at which the Yoruba farmers can see the methods of approved cultivation by the best implements, under the use of suitable manures and perhaps also by irrigation. One great difficulty has been got over by the Association undertaking to buy cotton for three years at a minimum price of a penny a pound. Farmers were terribly afraid of not finding a market for their cotton at a reasonable price, and they hesitated to embark in this industry till a market was assured. The great firm of Elder Dempster have promised, with the patriotic generosity which distinguishes them, to carry cotton for some time free of freight. The Alake and Council, and the farmers of Abeokuta, are all enthusiastic on the cultivation of cotton. They are offering prizes for the best fields, and they are determined to make of it an important industry. Information and instruction to farmers how to cultivate cotton are published from time to time in the *Egba Gazette*. A cotton expert is kept there and paid by the Lagos Government. The Alake delights to make personal visits to inspect the cotton fields. Now he wishes to learn all that is possible concerning cotton in England, such as the most suitable kinds of hand gins and presses for use in his country. The Alake and his suite think that this year probably over 5,000 acres may be put into cotton in the Abeokuta province. The difficult and important question of transport is one to which he is at present giving attention. There can be no doubt that the Egbas are the most hard-working and industrious of all the Yorubas. It is estimated that they produce about one-third of all the exports of Lagos; and it is thought they consume about a fourth to a fifth of the total imports. The present total trade of the province of Abeokuta, imports and exports, would be approximately, according to the above estimate, about half a million sterling a year. You are all aware that one of the principal imports into Lagos territory consists of trade-spirits. Many of the best people of this country regret that



this is so. To this number may safely be added the Alake of Abeokuta. Fortunately, he has both the power and the will to largely diminish the evils connected with the liquor trade. By the Toll Regulations of the Egba Government that came into force at the beginning of the year, and which were approved by the Secretary of State, no spirits exceeding the strength of proof, or containing more than one-half per cent. of the impurities known as fusel oil, can be imported into the province of Abeokuta. The importance of these regulations may be gathered from the fact that a beverage containing from 89 to 98 per cent. of absolute alcohol was being imported into Lagos from Germany in proportions that were increasing with alarming rapidity. At the same time that this prohibition was imposed, the toll collected on spirits was raised from sixpence to ninepence a gallon, and all tolls were removed from exports.

The public funds at the command of the Alake and Council are chiefly derived from tolls, or octroi, on imports to be consumed by their own people. The principal source of these funds is the duty collected on spirits, but even that is light at ninepence a gallon. The tolls collected on other articles are comparatively milder still. Tolls, like taxes of any kind and description, are most undesirable institutions. They are tolerated only because of their obvious necessity. Tolls are as necessary at Abeokuta as municipal rates in any town in the United Kingdom, as indispensable as the octroi of any town in France or Italy. The Alake's Revenue and Expenditure are carefully estimated, considered in Council, submitted to the Secretary of State, printed and published. The Revenue will be from £12,000 to £15,000 a year. Due provision is made for all the different branches of an incipient administration. Nobody would object to this were there no taxes. The Egbas understand perfectly, and nothing will convince them to the contrary, that they, the consumers, and not the importer, pay these octroi duties. So long as they are allowed to expend the money on their own service, they are willing to pay it. The opportunity should be taken here of publicly correcting a statement that has been made more than once with some authority in this country,

that these tolls, or octrois, were revived or invented recently. The contrary is the fact. In all probability they have been collected in Yorubaland ever since there was a chief there. At any rate, they have been collected uninterruptedly at Abeokuta as far back as history or tradition goes. In the time of the present Alake this natural and ancient institution of his country has been regulated and systematised. The rates have been fixed for each article, and they have been printed and published for the information of all concerned; and an octroi service of officers, who are regularly paid and supervised, has been established on a business basis. It is undeniable that since the Tolls of Abeokuta were first regulated and printed in 1900, the trade of that country has largely increased. It may safely be assumed that these dues will be collected in the way least prejudicial to both Egbas and European merchants. The latter the Alake has always treated as friends of his country; in the same spirit he receives missionaries, European officers, and others from whom he and his people can learn anything that will assist them in the development of their native land.

It will thus be seen that a most interesting experiment in native government is being tried at Abeokuta. The Alake is well aware of the difficulties and of the great importance of this task. If he and his colleagues are given a fair chance, it may safely be predicted that the experiment will succeed to such an extent that it will be extended before long far beyond the limits of the Lagos Protectorate.

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