Ed. 4. 10.
[Page 4. 59.]

Drawings by WILHELM BWINDI, a Native of the Cameroons, to illustrate the ideas of the Cameroons People as to the moon and stars.

KNOWLEDGE AND THEORIES OF ASTRO- NOMY ON THE PART OF THE ISUBU NATIVES OF THE WESTERN SLOPES OF THE CAMEROON MOUNTAINS, IN GERMAN WEST AFRICA (KAMERUN)

BY I. KELLER, *Missionary.*

(Translated by permission for the African Society's Journal from the *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung* by MISS M. HUBER.)

THE following notes come from the Mission pupil, Wilhelm Bwindi, an Isubu man from Bimbila. The interspersed pictures are a true rendering of his drawings. In the translation, I have kept as much as possible to the expression of the original, so as to give the unadulterated meaning and idea of the Cameroon negroes :—

A sign, that we have at night time, at dawn and in the morning, is the star Eyombwe (Sombwe). (This means the morning star, the planet Venus.)

From six to half past six o'clock (according to the season of the year), the sun will appear.

Now I will tell about the star, which shows us that day and night have a boundary-line about the time of dawn, the beginning of day. Between four and five o'clock this star reaches his highest point. He begins to be visible quite down on the earth and mounts up the firmament to the heights, till the people see the morning (namely the clear day-light). The star goes out about half-past five o'clock. (As the drawing shows the star is dark at five o'clock, which means, that it is overshadowed by the rising sun in the drawing.)

At three o'clock in the morning when the cock sees this star rise, he begins to tell the people! "Really, day is breaking." His voice sounds then with a loud kokélelū. He begins his

song thus at three o'clock ; then he sleeps a little more till four o'clock, when he then crows for the second time. Now again he falls into a short sleep till about half-past four, but he waits exactly forty-seven minutes and forty-seven seconds after four o'clock and then he begins to crow from time to time till five o'clock.

At half-past five o'clock the said star is no more to be seen. (It gets slowly light.)

If at last it is six o'clock, then many countries see the sun suddenly. But many other countries see the sun full and entire at half-past six, or perhaps also again nine minutes later.

Here I have put down the signs that we have for the year.

We Blacks, we have signs upon the firmament and indeed signs of stars which instruct us about the year. (The seasons.)

A sign exists the name of which is Tolē a Njou = Tolē of the Elephants, also the great Tolē. Tolē a moto = Tolē of Mankind the little Tolē.

Bana ba Nyue = "Orphans" and is so called because the constellation resembles, (according to native ideas), the father of a family, whose wife is dead and whose children stand now abandoned, forlorn and mourning before him.

All this is on one side of the firmament towards the east, our sign for the summer. [See Notes.]

A great sign the Blacks have too and that is the moon, "Mesendi m'ewondo."

The following are our thoughts about it : A woman went on a day of rest (Sunday) in the forest and split wood. (The people carry it home piece by piece.) This woman received a punishment from God. He put her in the moon, to wait for the day of judgement, or to wait (hope) for judgement day.¹

In old, old times all thought this, really everybody, but now, no more everybody, because they are blind.

That is the end of the story of the sign in the moon. This is its end.

Here I have written about a sign of the Blacks. Such a star is called Ngenget' a Sombo.

The sign in the moon.

In olden times we Blacks thought about the moon, that he

¹ That is :—She must split wood, as the picture in the moon shows.

Bana bi Nyue.

Muende m'ewondo.

Modi

(Face p. 61.)

Drawings by WILHELM BWINDI, a Native of the Cameroons, to illustrate the ideas of the Cameroons People as to the moon and stars.

comes at night time like a sheep on the earth and eats around the huts the banana skins which have been thrown aside. But now not many believe in this fact, because they have discovered, that the moon is a light (lamp) which God has given us, to light us on earth.

Here is the end of the thoughts of the Blacks in the old time.

Another story about the moon in olden times and in our days is as follows : If a woman becomes pregnant at the time the moon is full and later bears a child, be it boy or girl, she shows this child the moon and says to it : " This is your Grandfather." Now later on, should this or another child point with its finger at the moon the mother says to it : " Don't point with your finger at the moon lest he cut off your finger, because he is your Grandfather, therefore give him his due honour."

NOTES ON THE ABOVE BY I. KELLER.

The people of the Cameroons have for the different stages of daybreak pretty accurate descriptions. These are :

Mbafa idiba = the time shortly before the first glimmer of the day, but where the night still holds the light enclosed.

mbata = the "joined-together."

mesanedi ma idiba = the break of day, the dawn, when the first rays of light break through the darkness.

ponda kokekelà, the time of cockcrow about three-quarters past four a.m.

ponda nin', [at this the native passes his hand over his face and shakes his hand in such a way as if he wished to fling away a few drops of water, the sign of making his toilette, the sign too of rising about half-past five o'clock a.m.]

ponda wei i ma busa = the time of sunrise, about six o'clock in the morning.

idibadiba, very early, in the early hours of the morning.

idiba, morning itself.

The summer in Kamerūn¹ begins in the commencement of November and lasts until March. This is the hottest season and the driest. Everything that is inland in Kamerūn is called East, so as to distinguish it from the West, which lies towards the sea.

The German official name of the colony of the Cameroons. The English word Cameroons is a corruption of the Portuguese *Camarões* (i.e. "prawns") from the number of prawns caught in that estuary by the first Portuguese navigators.