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Skulls and other remains of Esquimaux, collected by ELIOT CURWEN, Esq., M.D., were exhibited by the President.

Australian (Queensland) skulls from Tree Burials were exhibited by W. L. H. DUCKWORTH, Esq., B.A.

ETHNOGRAPHICAL NOTES *Relating to the CONGO TRIBES.* By
HERBERT WARD, F.R.G.S.

In the following ethnographical notes relating to the Congo tribes, I submit a selection of my personal observations of manners and customs peculiar to the native tribes inhabiting the area between the mouth of the Congo River and Stanley Falls. My information was gathered during the period between 1884 and 1889. In presenting these general notes, I would state that I am prompted by the appreciation of the fact, that no opportunity should be neglected in recording knowledge concerning races whose primitive manners and customs are, in many cases, passing away.

Among the native tribes of the Congo basin there exists no form of history. There is no written language; no tradition of the past; and no indication of an attempt, on the part of the natives, to perpetuate any epoch in their lives by means of monumental erections.

The languages spoken by the native inhabitants of the Congo basin are all of the same grammatical structure; and philologically the Congo tribes are allied to the great Bantu group; one of the most extensive of the African racial divisions. Having before us as an ethnological fact, that the Congo tribes are all, primarily, of the same race, it is the more interesting to observe the great diversity in mental condition, and in general character, prevailing among tribes inhabiting different localities.

Typically, the native inhabitants of the Congo region, to whom I refer, are closely allied to the negro race; although in many individual cases, the physical characteristics of the negro are by no means pronounced. These variations in character and in type will afford an important subject for the student, who seeks to study, and to scientifically analyze, the psychology of African nations. In the absence of information we must content ourselves by inferring that these remarkable divergencies in the type and character of the Bantu race of the Congo region, are attributable to admixture with former negroid

ances, and also in some degree to the phenomena of environment.

Superstition.

Superstition is a strongly pronounced element in the lives of the native tribes of the Congo region. In the open country of the cataract region particularly, the native tribes are much involved in fetichism, and in propitiating the evil spirit. The rites and ceremonies, imposed with a view of propitiating the natural powers, become somewhat weaker in the observance among tribes inhabiting the forest region of the far interior. In disposition, the forest dwellers of the interior are more martial than credulous. The Congo natives are entirely ignorant of the laws of Nature; all sensations are ascribed to the influence of spirits. All that is unaccountable to the native mind is at once enveloped with the property of magic. All ills and misfortunes are supposed to emanate from the evil spirit. Theologically the Congo natives are worshippers of the evil spirit, *i.e.*, a mysterious power, which is supposed to be an arbitrary enemy to man's happiness. In the witchcraft practised by the Congo natives, we have an exemplification of that primitive sorcery, which is said to be a remnant of very ancient Nature worship. The Congo native's creeds are in harmony with his intellect; puzzled by the mysteries of life, he is always ready to accept unhesitatingly the wildest theory to account for natural events. Should a member of a Congo tribe distinguish himself by reason of his superior mental capacity, or by virtue of his individual courage and prowess, he is forthwith regarded as one favoured by the spirits. Availing himself of the opportunity afforded by such a distinction, he institutes himself a professional N'ganga N'Kissi (charm doctor), and professes to be endowed with power of communication with the spirits. The majority of the Congo tribes possess one or more charm doctors by whom their lives and actions are almost wholly swayed. The extravagant observances, and preposterous ordinances, which figure so prominently in native life, are functions introduced by the charm doctors with a view of mystifying their credulous followers; and in order to conceal the limit of their pretended power over evil influences. The charm doctor's ascendancy, and dominion over others is principally derived from the sentiment of respect and uncertainty with which his mystic power is regarded. The charm doctor is considered to be the connecting link between ordinary mortals, and the mysterious powers and spirits. With the Congo population there exists a universal belief in a future existence; the circumstance of the future life varying, according to different tribal beliefs. Death is

regarded in the light of a migration. Health is identified with the word "Moyo" (spirit, Lower Congo), and in cases of wasting sickness, the "Moyo" is supposed to have wandered away from the sufferer. In three cases a search party is sometimes led by a charm doctor, and branches, land shells or stones are collected. The charm doctor then will perform a series of passes between the sick man and the collected articles. This ceremony is called "vutunlanga moyo" (the returning of the spirit). A common belief is prevalent (Lower Congo) to the effect that a man's "moyo" (spirit) can be stolen from his body, and consumed by an enemy. The influence of the charm doctor is directly opposed to all principles of progress: for example; should a man by natural shrewdness, or by personal energy, accumulate native riches, in the form of slaves, guns, or trade cloth, the cupidity of some designing charm doctor would soon be aroused. The charm doctor would publicly accuse his prospective victim of sorcery; with the probable consequence that he would be killed, and his goods divided between the charm doctor and his accomplices. In the event of the death of any person of importance (Lower Congo) a charm doctor is called to discover the person guilty of having exercised an evil influence; for among most Congo tribes death is seldom regarded in the light of a natural event. In most cases the charm doctor accuses an old person, or a slave, of having been the cause. The accused is forthwith secured, and at an appointed time is submitted to a poison ordeal. A decoction is prepared from a poisonous bark (N'Kassa) which is administered to the victim at sunrise. If, during the day, the potion acts as an emetic, this fact is accepted as proof of innocence. If, on the other hand, the poison acts as a purgative, the victim is strangled, and the body is thrown in a river. In the latter case, the action of the test is accepted as a proof of guilt, and the natives by killing the victim, are satisfied that an evil spirit has been exterminated. The Babangi and kindred tribes (Upper Congo) believe that evil-disposed people have the power of changing themselves into reptiles and savage animals in order to take life. The tribes in the vicinity of the Aruimi Rapids (Upper Congo) possess few definite creeds, beyond the belief that the spirits of their deceased kinsmen return to the world in the form of trees. They entertain no hope of a future life for women. Dreams are not usually considered to possess serious significance. Natives (Lower Congo) will frequently relate what they saw in "sleep-land" when recounting a dream. In the event however of a sick man dreaming twice of a particular individual a suspicion is aroused, and the individual who has figured in the ailing man's dreams is liable to be accused of consuming his "moyo" (Lower Congo).

Throughout the Congo region, the natives have a superstitious objection to talk of a deceased person. In the event of their doing so, it is customary to use the past tense of the verb "to live" before his or her name. If this be omitted, the anger of the deceased's relations or friends is immediately aroused. When a person dies, and is buried in the ground, all danger of the deceased being exposed to the caprices of this evil spirit are at an end; and to even mention the deceased's name is considered an unkind action.

Images.

Wooden images, of human shape, are common among the Congo tribes, and more particularly among the inhabitants of the Lower Congo. These are generally carved, in more or less fantastic shapes, by the charm doctors; by whom they are sold, as representing certain peculiar properties, and with power to avert evil, and misfortune. If the images subsequently fail to justify the virtues ascribed to them by the vendor, they are either promptly resold to another, more credulous, or they are disfigured and cut to pieces, in angry disappointment. It is a common custom in the Lower Congo for natives to record an oath by driving a splinter of hard wood, or a piece of iron into the chief's big image. The oath is considered binding as long as the splinter or nail is allowed to remain in the image. These wooden images are called "nkissi" (witchcraft charms), and much ingenuity is displayed in their carving. The faces are frequently endowed with expression; and often the physical characteristics of a tribe are effectively portrayed.

Omens.

It is customary for all Congo natives to believe in omens. Certain birds and animals are supposed to represent good and evil influences. The owl, for example, is known to the Babangi (Upper Congo) as the "evil spirit's spy." It is an evil omen for a man to point at another with his finger; ill fortune is said to be transmitted by so doing.

"The Secret Society" ("N'Kimba" or "Fua-Kongo").

"N'Kimba" or "Fua-Kongo" is the title of a peculiar rite the practice of which is principally confined to the tribes inhabiting the cataract region of the Lower Congo. When the elders of a village consider that the women are not bearing the usual proportion of children, they proclaim an "N'Kimba." The charm doctors, and other active agents of the rite, take up quarters in

an isolated forest, where they are soon joined by numbers of voluntary initiates. Boys and men of any age are eligible as are also girls, and women who have not borne a child. Full sexual license is permitted. Upon entering the "N'Kimba," the body of the initiate is painted with white chalk. A complicated form of language is adopted. The initiate is supposed to die, and to be resurrected, and to have entered upon a new life. At the conclusion of the "N'Kimba," which usually lasts five or six years, the members of the craft take a new name, and pretend to have forgotten their former life, and do not recognise their parents and friends. Through after life, there exists a bond of union between individuals who have been members of this strange fraternity.

Condition of Women.

Proceeding inland from the coast, in point of general physique, the male type improves: the female type however is higher near the coast; far inland, the female type is much lower than that of the male. Throughout the entire Congo population women cultivate the soil, provide and cook food, collect firewood, and attend to all domestic matters.

Broadly speaking, women represent a current value, they are liable at any time to be sold. The proportion of free women is very small. A wide difference exists between men and women in regard to the occupations of daily life. Women, generally, occupy an inferior position in the social scale. The various gradations of the scale of savagery may be fitly estimated by the condition and treatment of women.

Domestic Circumstances of Women.

Throughout the Congo region, ten years is the age at which girls are considered to be eligible for marriage. A sitting posture is adopted for the operation of accouchement. It is a common practice for women to eat clay or sand at childbirth. Twins are generally considered to be an omen of good, and the mother takes pride in the event. When women realise their pregnancy, they take up their quarters in huts built some little distance from the village. Here they reside until their children are weaned; and during this time they are supposed to maintain a life of celibacy. The huts used upon these occasions are "nzo yabuti n'kento." (The house of the bearing women. Lower Congo). Adultery is pronounced a crime and is punishable by death, but in many instances the offence may be condoned by the payment of a small fine. Marriage is invariably a matter of purchase. If a married woman dies before bearing a child, the husband may

demand the repayment of the amount of his purchase currency from the deceased woman's parents.

General Customs.

When taking into consideration the great diversity in the mental condition, and the general modes of living, which exist between tribes who form the population of the Congo, it is obviously difficult to detail even a comprehensive list of customs. The following bare facts may however serve to illustrate a few of the more important of the native customs. The natives of the Congo region are divided into clans, tribes, and small communities under the nominal government of chieftains and head-men. The clans are distinguished by difference of language and type: and in the case of the Upper Congo tribes, by the various designs of their cicatrization marks. Hereditary chieftainship seldom exists, but in the event of blood succession, the eldest son of the chief's sister (by the same mother), is considered to be the heir. Old people are seldom to be met with; they are either sacrificed at witchcraft ordeals, or are allowed to starve, when by reason of their age they are unable to provide for themselves. Among all the Congo tribes of my acquaintance I have ascertained that incest is considered a deadly sin, productive of a loathsome disease. Cases of suicide occasionally occur, and are attributed to anger, which is the principal emotion. Circumcision is largely practised, although it is not universal. Boys between the age of three months and ten years are submitted to the operation, which is frequently performed with a sharp edged flint. Throughout the Congo, the natives are very strict in the observance of their market laws; any infringement renders the culprit liable to death. Upon such occasions the culprit is either buried to his neck in a hole, in the centre of the market place, and his skull crushed by a heavy stone; or he is beaten to death with sticks, and his body is subsequently lashed to a pole, which is erected alongside a native path. Whether natives have business or not, they always make it a matter of conscience to attend the market. (Lower Congo.) If the crime of adultery be committed within the village, both the man and the woman are liable to such punishment as the circumstances warrant (according to individual tribal laws): if outside the village boundary, then the man only is held to be liable. An analogy will be observed between this custom and the ancient Hebrew law. Evidences of symbolism are occasionally to be met with, as in the case of a Balolo chief who sent a spear to the

Congo State Station, to signify that he needed assistance in war. Time is reckoned by the moon. The Aruimi tribes signify the time of day by measuring off portions of the thumb, the middle joint signifying noon. No record is kept of birth or age. The Congo natives have no appreciation of the value of time. The Lower Congo natives divide the period of the moon into weeks of four days: "NKandu," "NKonsu," "NKenge," and "Nsona," and each of these days is distinguished by a market-meeting in different localities. Several tribes of the Upper Congo, notably the Babangi of Bolobo, celebrate the occasion of the settlement of a political dispute between rival chieftains by the sacrifice of a slave as an indication of their seriousness. Upon such occasions the victim's arms and legs are first broken with sticks, after which torture he is buried to his neck at the junction of two paths, where he is allowed to die a lingering death.

Astonishment is expressed by placing the hand over the open mouth and elevating the eyebrows. Placing the first finger upon the eyelid and uttering the word "Nyo" signifies the negative (Babangi). In speaking upon a momentous question, the negative is usually pronounced at the conclusion of the sentence. Breaking a stick, or cutting a bunch of leaves into two portions, are common methods of expressing satisfaction, and the sealing of a bargain. In the Babwende tribe (Lower Congo) passing the open left hand across the open mouth from left to right, emitting at the same time a puff of air, signifies the settlement of any matter. A precisely similar gesture with certain Upper Congo tribes denotes an expression of truthfulness. All Congo natives count in fives, upon fingers and toes, a closed hand signifies ten. It is customary for the men of the Upper Congo to be armed upon all occasions. An unarmed man is treated with contempt, and is told to "go and rear children." In lieu of openly laughing at a companion's shortcomings, the Congo natives usually utter a derisive howl, and tap their mouths with their open hand. Deformed children are usually killed at birth. Albinoes are allowed to live, but they are generally objects of contempt and derision. Whatever may be the inner promptings of their hearts the Congo natives display but little sympathetic feeling or unselfishness. It is considered a sign of weakness for either man or woman to express emotion and sensitiveness.

Ti n'deko (blood-brotherhood) is a ceremony in common practice throughout the greater part of the Congo region, more especially among the tribes of the Upper Congo. It is a form of cementing friendship, and a guarantee of good faith

that is oftentimes respected even by the most unscrupulous. The ceremony even partakes of religious significance. An incision is made in the right arms of the two contracting parties, and as the blood flows, powdered potash is sprinkled upon the wounds; the master of ceremonies at the same time delivers a speech, the gist of which relates to the mixing of blood in brotherhood, and the importance of maintaining the sanctity of the sacred contract. The arms are then rubbed together, so that the flowing blood intermingles, and both parties are then proclaimed to be brothers of one and the same blood. In some tribes the blood of each party is mixed and placed in a broad leaf, together with a sprinkling of mysterious powder. The leaf is then cut into two portions, which have to be consumed by the two individuals who enter into the blood bond.

The natives of the Upper Congo always become much excited at the sight of blood, whether it be blood of man or beast.

Disease and Sickness.

The prevailing maladies to which the Congo natives are exposed, comprise smallpox, sleeping sickness, known as "ntolo" and "Bokono" (Babangi and Bangala languages), which is a very prevalent and fatal ailment, the nature of which has not yet been fully determined. The symptoms are simple; a pain in the spine, and an ever increasing desire to sleep. Within six weeks the sufferer generally becomes wasted and dies. To so great an extent is this malady dreaded, that the direst and most effective curse a native can pronounce is "May you die of sleep." Fever, malarious and bilious, elephantiasis, ulcers, and sores; dysentery, this last being perhaps the most fatal disorder.

The crudest and most extravagant remedies are applied, apparently upon the principle that one ill drives out another. Herbal medicines are used, occasionally with beneficial results, but the nature of the herbs is kept secret by those who derive profit by applying them. Being ignorant even of the primary laws of sanitation, it is remarkable that more epidemics do not ravage the country; indeed, were it not for the scavenging of birds and insects, the cleansing rains, and high winds, life in a native village would be rendered intolerable.

Costume and Ornaments.

Although the native men and women of the Congo indulge in little clothing, barely sufficient in many cases to cover their nakedness, and in some tribes, the Bopoto for example,

complete nudity prevails among the women ; yet as a race, the Congo natives are by no means insensible to the charms of personal adornment. There exists, throughout the Congo population, a marked appreciation of the sentiment of decency and shame, as applied to private actions. The costume and ornamentation prevalent with the Lower Congo men is principally confined to a grass loin cloth, and mutilation of the two incisor teeth of the upper jaw ; the women wear a small apron in front and behind, suspended from a belt of grass cord ; ear decorations of wood and metal, and in many instances a stick 6 inches long is inserted through a hole in the dividing cartilage of the nose. Among the Upper Congo natives the variety in costume and ornamentation is more extensive. The men wear a strip of grass fibre cloth, or beaten bark, suspended in front and behind from a waist belt. Their bodies are frequently marked with lines and designs of pigment ; charcoal, clay, ochre, and lime, or pipe clay, and cam-wood, constituting the basis of colour. The red cam-wood dye, so extensively used by the natives of the Upper Congo, appears to have been in common use in very ancient times in the East. The hair and beard are either shaved, or are plaited with elaborate braids and points, according to the tribal custom in vogue. The hair of the eyebrows and the eyelashes, in men and women, is invariably extracted—a depilatory process which was also a common practice with the ancient Greeks and Romans. A native of the Babangi tribe careless of his personal appearance is dubbed “*Mesu n'kongea*” (hairy eyes). The finger nails are pared and scraped to the quick. Among the cannibal tribes, the front incisor teeth of the upper and lower jaws are chipped to points, by means of an iron chisel. Iron anklets and bracelets, of varied weight, are extensively worn by both men and women. Necklets and bracelets of human teeth are frequently worn in communities where cannibalism is practised.

In explanation of the women's nudity at Upoto, a chief once informed me that “concealment is food for the inquisitive.”

It is a universal custom among the Upper Congo natives to anoint the body with a preparation of palm oil and cam-wood ; by this process the skin is to a certain extent protected against sudden chills. In time of war, the men of most Upper Congo tribes blacken their faces and necks with palm oil and powdered charcoal, in resemblance of a certain species of monkey (*soko*) ; they explain that by so doing they derive “monkey cunning.”

In the districts of the Aruimi and Stanley Falls, the men frequently wear round or conical shaped hats, of monkey or leopard's skin. The same fashion exists in a much smaller extent among the tribes between the Aruimi, and Bukumbi and

Mobeka (400 miles lower down the Congo). The natives who reside upon the banks of the Congo at the mouth of the Lomami, (between Stanley Falls and the Aruimi,) smear their hair, foreheads, and throats with a tar-like substance, composed of palm oil and charcoal. In the upper lip a circular piece of ivory is inserted, in size averaging an inch in diameter.

Cicatrization.

The process of cicatrization is universally practised among tribes of the interior, above Bolobo; each tribe or clan adopts a distinct cicatrized tribal mark. At the age of four or five the process is first commenced, a series of incisions being cut in the skin and flesh of the face, breast, and abdomen, in accordance with the tribal design. Every few months the incisions are re-cut, and are filled with cam-wood powder, or wood ashes. After frequent repetitions of this painful mutilation, extending over a period of years, the flesh protrudes, in the form of excrescent warts. The faces of the Balolo tribe, of the Malinga and Lupuri country, are much disfigured by this process, lumps of flesh, as large as pigeon's eggs, protruding on each temple, above the base of the nose, and upon the chin. The Bopoto, and kindred tribes, are distinguished by an elaborate system of cicatrization, which covers the entire face. Both men and women are similarly marked in all tribes. This custom of cicatrization, or raising lumps of flesh by means of frequent incisions, and filling the wounds with ashes, was practised by the ancient Thracians. The origin of this custom would appear to be based upon a motive for tribal identification.

Nomenclature.

The natives of the Upper Congo seldom bear more than one name, a proper name, which has no connection with parentage or tribe. The natives of the Lower Congo are usually in possession of six names; the clan name, the surname, the Christian name, the native baptismal name, the Fua-Kongo name, and the Kitoko, or fancy name, bestowed upon young men by the girls of their village.

Songs.

The natives of the Congo region, in common with the negro race, possess melody. They frequently indulge in chants, the nature of which is suggestive of primitive origin. In all cases, the native chants are monotonous in tone, and without great variety. A man will frequently sing a solo, and the strain will be taken up by the women. Drums are usually the only musical

accompaniment. The subject matter of the native songs is generally of an impromptu character, and tends to ridicule popular foibles and peculiarities.

Musical Instruments.

Considering the love of music, which is a distinct characteristic of the Congo natives, the limited variety of their musical instruments is remarkable. Drums are composed of goat skin stretched across the ends of a hollowed section of a soft wood tree; and also of sections of hard wood trees, hollowed through a narrow longitudinal crevice, the edges of which are beaten with small drum sticks with balls of rubber attached. It is by means of drums of this latter shape that the wonderful system of "drum talk" is carried on. Rattles and castanets are in common use at witch ceremonies and dances. The Bateke tribe of the Middle Congo use a crude stringed instrument, resembling a lyre in shape. The Lower Congo tribes use the "mbichi," a small instrument composed of tongues of iron, attached to a sounding board, which is held in the hands and played by both thumbs.

Smoking.

Both men and women smoke tobacco in all the tribes from the coast, as far as Bukute, (the equator district) from thence proceeding inland, the practice of smoking becomes less prevalent. The tobacco plant, introduced from the West, flourishes in Congo soil. Pipes are composed of clay bowls, cane, eland horns, gourds, banana stalks, iron, and elephant tusks. Each tribe boasts of a pipe of distinctive shape and composition. In smoking, the smoke is inhaled; and after two or three deep draughts, the pipe is generally passed on to a neighbour. The tobacco leaf is merely plucked and dried. In the district on the north bank of the Congo, opposite Lukolela, however, the tobacco leaf is rolled, tied, sometimes saturated with wine, and prepared in a coil. Wild hemp smoking (liamba) is practised by the natives of the Lower Congo, with sad results. The practice of wild hemp smoking, however, is not extensively indulged in, and it would appear to be a habit of comparatively recent origin.

The natives of the Lower Congo indulge largely in snuff. Snuff is prepared by drying tobacco leaves over a fire, grinding them in the hands, and mixing the powder with the white ashes of a hard wood fire. Snuff is generally applied to the nostrils upon the blade of a knife.

Proverbs and Fables.

There are but very few maxims in use among the Congo tribes. I have failed to obtain any examples from the people of the Upper Congo; and the following represent the extent of my success among Lower Congo tribes:

“All things are pleasant to the young.”

“If you have to sleep there on a bed, sleep in the middle.” (The beds are composed of bamboo, with three cross battens. Generally 4 feet long, 3 feet wide, and raised 6 inches from the ground.)

“My mother-in-law is angry with me: but what do I care? we do not eat from the same dish.”

Disu kungsi lukaya—An eye under a leaf.

Kiesi vana n'dabu—Happiness on the eye lid.

These two expressions (Bakongo) are illustrative of insincerity and hypocrisy.

The various tribes of the Lower Congo are familiar with a version of our nursery fable “The goose with the golden eggs.” “Four fools owned a fowl. The fowl laid blue glass beads instead of eggs. (Blue glass beads, introduced probably by the Portuguese; have been the chief medium of currency with the tribes near the coast, since the seventeenth century.) A quarrel arose concerning the ownership of the fowl. The fowl was subsequently killed, and divided into four equal portions. The spring of their good fortune dried up.”

The natives of the Babangi, and adjacent tribes (Upper Congo) relate a fable regarding the origin of monkeys. Many generations ago, a tribe of natives who lived upon the banks of the Congo River, near Bolobo, fell into a condition of debt and difficulties with their neighbours. In order to escape the persecutions of their wrathful creditors, they retired into the Great Forest. Time passed, but they still remained poor. Forest life degenerated them. Hair grew upon their bodies. They arranged to forego speech, lest they should be recognised. They are now still in the forest, and they are known as “Bakewa” (monkey men). This fable applies principally to chimpanzees.

Upon being asked if they ate chimpanzees, a member of the Babangi tribe replied, “No! We are not cannibals!”

The natives of the Lower Congo in the earliest days of Congo exploration (1878, 1879) related a fable concerning the inhabitants of the far interior: “Far away inland, many moons’ journey, there dwell a tribe of small people. Their heads are so big and heavy that when they fall down, they cannot get up again without assistance.” It is interesting to note this knowledge of

the dwarf race among the Lower Congo tribes, on account of the entire absence of communication between the intervening tribes ; and also on account of the extreme isolation of the dwarfs who inhabit the heart of the Great Forest region.

Food.

It appears obvious that the present inhabitants of the Upper Congo cannot have occupied the country until within comparatively recent times. At no very distant date the physical conditions of the Great Forest region were such as to prevent extensive settlement, the region being largely submerged. A consideration of the native diet alone, indicates that great changes have taken place in this part of the African Continent within the last two or three centuries. The staple food of the present inhabitants of the Congo region is almost all of American origin. The dwarf tribes of the Great Forest region are the only natives who appear able to subsist entirely upon indigenous foods. In the event of the failure of their crop of exotic food, a Bantu tribe will be reduced to a condition of absolute starvation. Many instances of this latter fact can be cited. In the far interior, in districts situated around the Aruimi and Lomami rivers the staple food consists of plantains, manioc, and fish. Towards the west coast, the natives cultivate, in addition to plantains and manioc, maize, sweet potatoes, sugar cane, peanuts, egg fruit, bananas, pumpkins, yams, pine-apples, and tobacco, and obtain nuts, oil, and wine from the oil palm.

Weapons.

The Congo tribes may be said to live in an iron age. In the far interior, iron forms the principal element of trade ; and iron is a necessity to the Upper Congo natives for the manufacture of their weapons. The tribes of the interior, in addition to adopting distinguishing cicatrization designs upon their faces and bodies, also adopt local designs and forms for the iron knives and spear heads, which constitute their weapons for purposes of attack and defence. In the manufacture of these weapons, the Upper Congo tribes display a remarkable artistic taste and mechanical ingenuity. Most of the fighting knives manufactured by the tribes far distant from the coast, possess an infinite grace of form ; and display a high sense of decorative art. The iron ore, from its raw state, is reduced and smelted in ant hills by means of charcoal fires and primitive bellows. It is then beaten into shape by the aid of a smooth stone, and is subsequently fashioned, and decorated. Every man in the Upper Congo tribes is more or less able to manufacture his own weapons

Language.

The Bantu languages spoken by the Congo tribes are as distinct from each other, in about the same degree as French is distinct from Italian; and were we permitted to study the mother tongue of the Bantu languages, we should in all probability find the present languages allied to the mother tongue in the same extent as French and Italian are allied to the original Latin. The Bantu languages are rich in vowels and liquids. The form of prefixes and the alliterative concords are the remarkable characteristics of all the languages of this family.

Native Eloquence.

It has been said that oratory constitutes the negro's one fine art. The same statement may be aptly applied to the Bantu tribes of the Congo, leaving aside for the moment the ingenuity and decorative faculty displayed by the latter race in iron work. The Congo natives of all tribes are naturally eloquent and ready speakers; employing many flowery expressions. They are also adepts in the use of metaphor. They reason clearly, and are ready debaters. The sonorous effect of their speech is greatly aided by the soft inflections and the harmonious euphony of their language. Among many of the Upper Congo tribes it is a common practice for the speaker to hold in his hand a number of small sticks, each representing a preconsidered point of his argument. Each point is subsequently enumerated and emphasized by selecting and placing one of these sticks upon the ground. It is customary for a Congo native in making an important speech, upon personal matters, to commence by referring to incidents which happened in his earliest recollection, and in this manner to refer to every favourable incident in his career, indifferent as to the applicability of his narratives, which in most cases are quite irrelevant to the subject under discussion. When speaking in his defence, upon being charged with committing a breach of the native laws, a Congo native will systematically refer to the good actions of his past life, and to the evil actions in the lives of his accusers; in this manner he will seek to prejudice the judicial authorities in his favour.

Cannibalism.

Cannibalism is practised throughout the Upper Congo, the western boundary being the Oubangi River, on the north bank; and the Lulungu River on the south bank. The motive for eating human flesh is mainly attributable to two sources: firstly, by eating prisoners of war, certain tribes consider they gain

courage ; and secondly, because human flesh is relished. Cannibalism, originating apparently from stress of adverse circumstances, has become an acquired taste, the indulgence of which has created a peculiar form of mental disorder ; with lack of feeling, love of fighting, cruelty and general human degeneracy as prominent attributes. All parts of the human body are eaten, with the sole exception of the generative organs, which are respected by superstition. An organised traffic in human flesh still exists in many parts of the Upper Congo ; men, women, and children, being continually purchased and sold expressly for cannibal purposes.

NOVEMBER 13TH, 1894.

Prof. A. MACALISTER, F.R.S., *President, in the Chair.*

The Minutes of the last Meeting were read and signed.

The elections of Col. C. K. BUSHE, Rev. J. G. JENKINSON, Messrs. VICTOR HORSLEY, J. S. KRAUSS, B.A., R. C. BROOK, J. GRAY, B.Sc., J. KENNEDY, A. P. MAUDSLAY, and Miss H. PENGELLY, were announced.

NOTES *on* COREA *and its* PEOPLE. By H. S. SAUNDERSON.

Race.

THERE is little doubt but that the Coreans are of Mongolian extraction, but the frequency with which features, almost European in refinement and Caucasian in cast, are met with seems to point conclusively to the fact that the natives are not all of the same family, a fact which greatly adds to the difficulty of tracing the race to its source. To increase the difficulty, the Coreans themselves have very vague ideas on the subject, and, though the antiquity of their race is the one point on which *par excellence* they pride themselves, their early records have been so scattered and destroyed in the course of their numerous wars with China and Japan that little if any information has been obtained from them. In the early Chinese records, however, we have a tolerably complete account of the events which led to the conquest of the country by one of the wandering tribes of Mongolia. I trust I shall be excused if I give the merest outline of this story.