

AN ADAPTIVE PEOPLE.¹

THE British Protectorate of Uganda has the distinction of possessing one of the most perfect types of a barbarous people to be found in the world.



FIG. 1.—Drums of office. From "The Baganda."

The Baganda are a Bantu race, exceptionally well built and healthy. Courteous and sociable, they are to a remarkable degree exempt from social vices and perversions. They have "gone straight," as it were, while other races of the same level have gone crooked. Their only weakness seems to have been one frequently resulting from religious fervour, namely, a predilection for human sacrifice. Their physical evolution similarly has been free from perversions; they have not, as so many barbarians have done, tampered with their bodies, and they practise no form of cutting, scarification, or mutilation. Intellectually they are remarkable for an extraordinary faculty of imitation, "especially in all kinds of mechanism. Give a man time to examine an object, and he will apprehend the mode of its construction, and will go and produce one so much like it that it is often well-nigh impossible to tell which is the original. Chairs, tables, shoes, &c., have each in their turn been closely copied. This power of reproduction extends to house-building in all its details; thus there are numbers of houses made of sun-dried bricks, with iron roofs, which the natives themselves have built and completed without any supervision from Europeans. This trait of imitation is noticeable even in small children, who may be seen making toy guns, after the pattern of those used by their fathers. These toy guns are often so well made that, when the triggers are pulled, they make a sharp report.

¹The Baganda: an Account of their Native Customs and Beliefs. By the Rev. John Kos-roe. Pp. xix+547+2 plans. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1911.) Price 15s. net.

Bicycles have been cleverly imitated by boys, with wheels and spokes made of reeds."

Their social rites are numerous and remarkable; they give the impression of being rather a living organic system than a structure of hide-bound superstition. If their social religion can be separated from their theological doctrine and hierological practice, the former appears to have played a more important part than the latter, though this was well developed in the way of temple establishments, divine beings, and priesthoods.

Their economic and industrial system deserves careful study. Every household has its garden, and the garden makes it absolutely self-supporting. Even the bark-cloth garments, as picturesque in certain fashions of wearing them as Roman togas, are grown in the garden, each possessing several bark-cloth trees. But behind the household is the clan. The clan not only regulates kinship and marriage, but acts as a friendly society, insurance company, and general cooperative body. Thanks to the clan system, poverty does not exist. The clans are totemic, each possessing a primary and a secondary totem. Descent and inheritance were in the male line; but in the royal family the system was maternal.

In view of the solidarity of the family, the clan, and the people as a whole, their idea of "impersonation" is significant. An heir "not only takes the office of his predecessor, but so impersonates him that it is common to hear a man telling another that he is the father or the chief of a person who is known

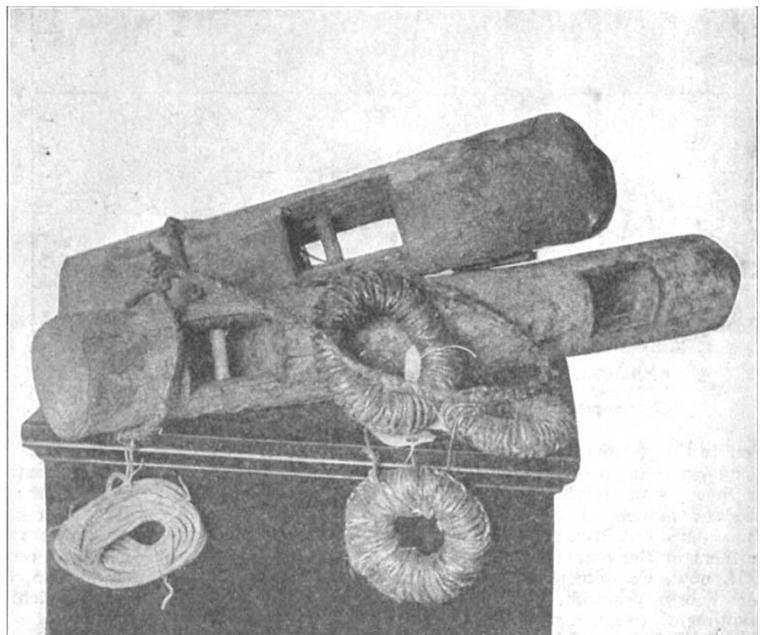


FIG. 2.—Stocks for arms and legs, with plantain-fibre pads worn to protect the arms and legs from the sharp edges of the wood, and coil of rope for binding prisoners. From "The Baganda."

to have died years before." A similar continuity is secured by another method in the case of the kingly office. The spirit of the dead king enters a medium, who is consulted at the Temple of the Jaw-Bone. This relic of the dead king, together with his

umbilical cord, serves as an attachment for the spirit, which is *en rapport* with them.

The polity and government of the Baganda was a very perfect form of that kind of feudal monarchy which is frequent in Africa. The description of this system, and particularly of the functions of the King, forms the dominant feature of Mr. Roscoe's book. It is a remarkable chapter in political evolution.

The royal family is distinguished by a straighter nose and less protruding lips. Its descent is traced back, along with the history of the people, for thirty-two generations, about a thousand years, to the first monarch, Kintu, who made the Baganda a nation. Oral history of this type is a very real thing, transcending time and space more efficiently than written records, and probably avoiding many errors inseparable from literature. The other great landmark of Uganda history is the reign of King Mutesa in the middle of last century. Mutesa was a broad-minded and far-seeing ruler. He initiated liberal reforms, and broke away from the previous policy of isolation. It was by him that Speke was welcomed in 1861, and Stanley in 1875. Through the latter's representations Christian missionaries were admitted. But Mutesa also welcomed the Arabs. After his death there was a struggle between the Christian and Muhammadan parties for the succession to the throne, which was ended by the British Protectorate.

The succession, it may be noted, is hereditary, but a committee of chiefs selects and appoints one of the princes. There is much that is equally logical among the rights and duties as between king and chiefs and clans. Take away from the states of mediæval Europe their Greco-Roman culture and inheritance, and you have a civilisation little, if at all, more advanced, both politically, socially, and industrially, than that reached independently by the Baganda. The king is invested at the coronation by "the King's Father." The "Father" says to him: "You are king. Rule over your people well, and always do what is right." The king answers: "I agree to do so." "Always give just judgment." "I will." Side by side with this is the curious custom of killing men so that their lives may invigorate the king. But such atrocities, though differing in intention, have actually been more common in Europe.

Mr. Roscoe has lived with the natives for twenty-five years. He not only knows their character and customs, but has studied them as an anthropologist. His book is full of new and important facts which only scientific insight could have unearthed. Both the ethnologist and the constructive sociologist will find it the most significant and valuable study of a native race that has appeared since "The Northern Tribes of Central Australia." Nor must the author's human quality go without mention. There is an indefinable atmosphere of sympathy permeating his pages, the result of which is that the people as he describes them are a living reality.

A. E. CRAWLEY.

THE EVOLUTION OF AN AËROPLANE.¹

READERS of the first two numbers of the twenty-seventh volume of "Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge," who have not forgotten the pleasure they derived from the study of Dr. S. P. Langley's work in aërodynamics, will welcome the publication of this third number, on mechanical flight. While experimental aërodynamics and the theoretical study of flight respectively may form the sole subject of an

¹ Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge, vol. xxvii., No. 3: "Langley Memoir on Mechanical Flight." Part I., 1887 to 1896. By S. P. Langley. Edited by C. M. Manly. Part II., 1897 to 1903. By C. M. Manly. Pp. xi + 320. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1911.)

investigation, the successful flight of models and of full-scale machines cannot be attained without both the guide of theory and the possession of accurate numerical data gathered by means of careful experiments. Appeal to nature is even necessary to obtain, through the observations of bird flight, some starting point in a line of research by trial and error that cannot be struck at random. For this reason the pursuit of success in actual flight is the most comprehensive branch of the science of aviation, and it

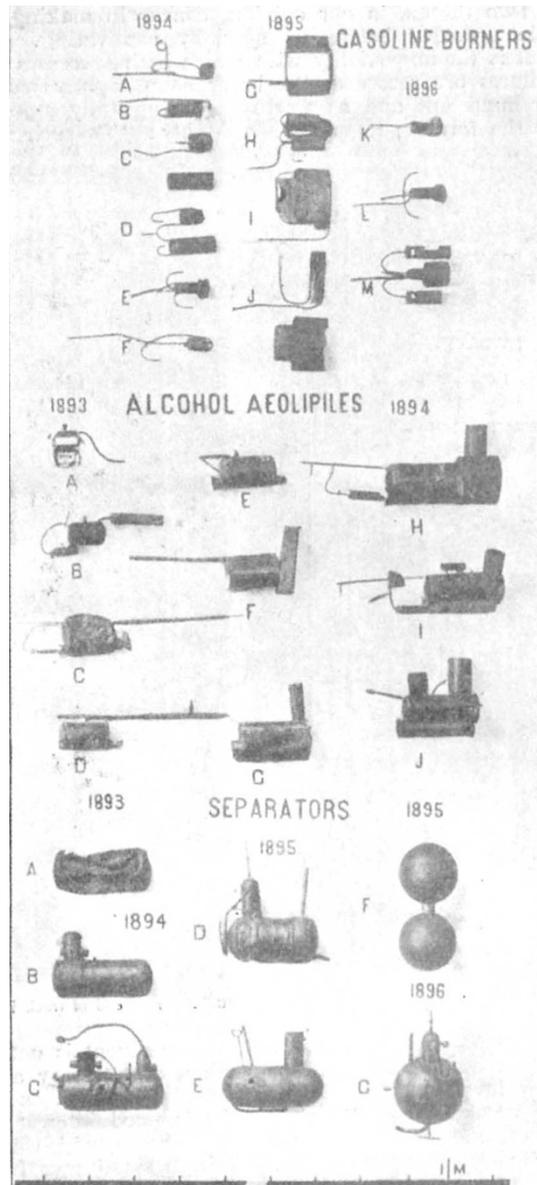


FIG. 1.—Burners, aeolipiles, and separators.

will be enough to say that the work before us deals with the history of Dr. Langley's efforts to realise artificial flight to convey the impression that the account put before us is pregnant with details of the utmost interest to men of science and to non-technical readers alike.

Those indeed who have appreciated Dr. Langley's indomitable perseverance in overcoming the ever-recurring obstacles that stand in the way of any experi-