

Monday, 6th July 1885.

SHERIFF FORBES IRVINE, Vice-President,
in the Chair.

The following Communications were read:—

- I. Notes on the For Tribe of Central Africa. By Dr Robert W. Felkin, F.R.S.E., F.R.G.S., Fellow of the Anthropological Societies of London and Berlin, &c. (Plate IX.)

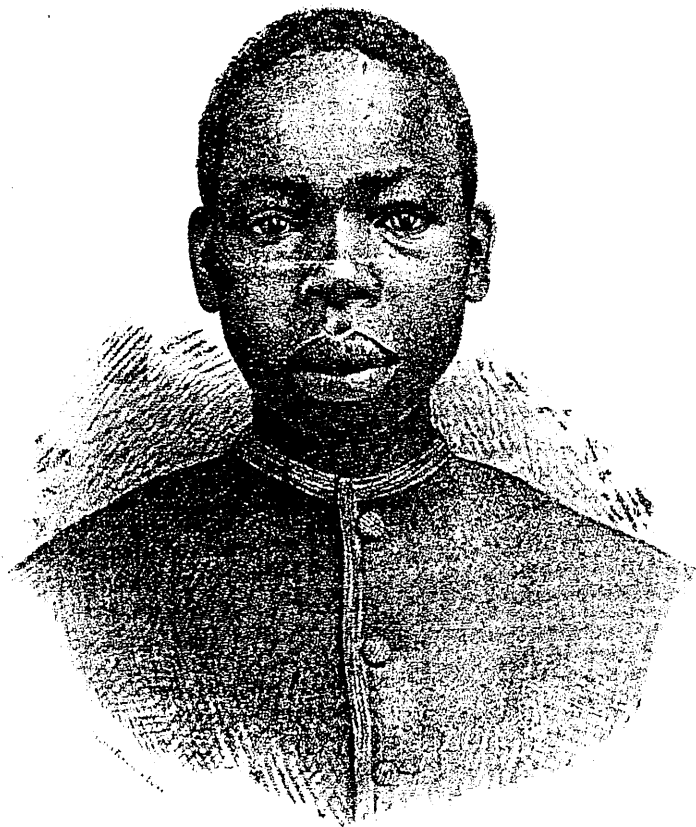
It may be within the recollection of the Fellows of the Society, that in December 1883 I had the honour of reading, in this room, a paper on the Madi Tribe of Central Africa.

I have now to lay before you a similar paper on the For Tribe, which, as in the former case, I have written from notes of my own observations when in the country, and from information supplied to me by people of the tribe. I am able on this occasion to introduce to your notice a For boy, who has been with me since 1880, when I was in Darfur. The boy was rescued from slavery by General Gordon in 1878, and he entered my service at Dara in 1879. I hope it will add to any interest you may take in my remarks to see the only representative of his tribe, who, as far as I know, has reached Europe.

The country of Darfur is bounded on the south by $9^{\circ} 30'$ lat.; on the north by the 16th degree N. lat.; on the east by $22^{\circ} 30'$ E. long.; and on the west by the 28th degree long.

Darfur, or Darfor, means the land of the Fors, who were once the sole and sole inhabitants of the whole province. They have, however, been driven back into the western part of the country, the remainder of which is now inhabited by various invaders, namely, the Hour Arabs in the north, the Bertis Turkruri in the east, in the south-east the Rezigat, while in the south the Baggara and the Turkruri are mingled. There has been no intermarriage between the Fors and the strangers, and the regular features and lighter colour of the latter at once proclaim their Arab origin.

The whole population of Darfur may be roughly estimated at



A FOR BOY.

from 3 to 5 millions, about half that number being Fors; but it is impossible to obtain exact information on this point.

It is not my intention to give any account of the political history of the country, as that may be found in a learned paper by the late Dr G. Nachtigal, entitled "Darfor, die neue Ägyptische Province," *Petermann's Mittheilungen*, 1875, p. 281. Some further information may be obtained in Dr Perron's *Voyage au Darfour*, which is the translation of an Arabic work by Mahommed Ibn Umar or Mohammed el Tounsi. His notes on the manners and customs of the people are wonderfully correct as far as they go.

Darfour was taken by the Egyptians in 1874, after the battle of Menowatzhi, when Zebehr Pasha conquered and killed king Brahim, but the province was not really subjugated until after my visit there, for Haroun held out in the Marah mountains till 1881, when he was killed by the Egyptian troops under Slatin Bey.

The Fors are pure negroes, and are the most northerly tribe in the eastern part of Central Africa. They form one of the three great negro Mohammedan kingdoms, the other two being Wadai and Bornu.

I was unable to spare the time for making detailed measurements of the For people. The average height of twenty-five men was 173·0; of fifteen women, 168·7. Pulse, 72; respirations, 19. Temperature in the axilla, 97°·2 Fahr.

The following measurements of my boy's head are given as better than nothing. The numbers correspond to Virchow's table:—

| | |
|---|-------|
| 1. Height, | 155·2 |
| 2. Greatest breadth from glabella backwards, | 20·0 |
| 3. Greatest breadth above ears, | 14·2 |
| 4. Length of face from root of nose to lower border of chin, | 12·1 |
| 5. Breadth of face from one foremost edge of cheek bone to the other, | 11·6 |
| 6. Breadth of face from one angle of lower jaw to the other, | 10·4 |
| 7. Greatest breadth between zygomata, | 13·0 |
| 8. Length of nose from root to junction of nose and upper lip, | 5·3 |
| 9. Height of head from chin to vertex, | 22·6 |
| 4. Height of head from meatus auditorius to vertex, | 13·0 |
| 15. Distance between two ears at top of meatus auditorius, | 12·4 |
| 16. Upper breadth of nose from one canthus to the other, | 3·4 |
| 17. Lower breadth of nose on cheeks, | 4·4 |
| 18. Length of nose from root to tip, | 4·6 |
| 19. Breadth of mouth, | 5·9 |
| 20. Distance from meatus auditorius to junction of nose and lip, middle line, | 11·8 |

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| 21. Distance from meatus auditorius to root of nose, | 11·2 |
| 22. Distance from meatus auditorius to middle of upper lip, | 13·7 |
| 23. Distance from meatus auditorius to chin, lower edge middle line, | 13·0 |
| 24. Greatest circumference of head at glabella, | 57·0 |
| 25. Arc from tragus to tragus over top of head, | 35·0 |
| 26. Arc from root of nose toinion, overhead, | 39·0 |

TABLE OF PRINCIPAL INDICES.

Cephalic Index.

$$\text{Measure } \frac{\text{No. 3} \times 100}{\text{No. 2}} = 71\cdot00$$

Nasal Index.

$$\text{Measure } \frac{\text{No. 17} \times 100}{\text{No. 8}} = 83\cdot01$$

Facial Index A.

$$\text{Measure } \frac{\text{No. 4} \times 100}{\text{No. 5}} = 104\cdot31$$

Facial Index B.

$$\text{Measure } \frac{\text{No. 4} \times 100}{\text{No. 6}} = 116\cdot34$$

Facial Index C.

$$\text{Measure } \frac{\text{No. 4} \times 100}{\text{No. 7}} = 93\cdot07$$

Colour of skin, Broca's Table No. 43-42.

Colour of eyes, Broca's Table No. 42 of the skin table, but darker.

Physical Powers.—I was not able to test the physical powers of the Fors, but both men and women are strong, and can march well. They carry loads from 70 to 80 lbs. weight with ease for fifteen miles a day, but they do not like the occupation, as oxen and asses are, as a rule, used as baggage animals.

Their sight, hearing, and smell are very good, but the sense of touch is not very acute, and their sensibility to pain is decidedly less than that of Europeans.

Reproduction.—Marriage takes place at about the age of 17. The women are prolific. I saw a good number of women with seven, eight, and nine children. Twins are common, and more especially welcome if females; a great feast is held after their birth, and the whole village rejoices. I never heard of a case of triplets.

Polygamy exists. Barrenness is common in the Gebel Marah district, where the men always make sure of a woman's fertility

of this meat. This custom is by no means universally carried out, for one reason, on account of the expense, but a man who thus honours his father is much respected. If it should be done by a husband in memory of his wife, it is considered to be a mark of extreme affection for her, and men will often do it for the sake of what people will say. No animals are offered as a sacrifice at funerals.

Superstitions.—The Fors are not particularly remarkable for their superstitious beliefs; other tribes I have visited are far more credulous. Some strange ideas, however, must be noticed.

The cry of the owl is believed to foretell a death. It is supposed to say:—"To-morrow a grave will open for some one." A gazelle crossing one's path is taken as a good omen. To knock one's left big toe against anything on going out in the morning is supposed to bring bad luck. It is also very unlucky to forget anything and to return for it, especially when going out hunting. It is a very lucky thing for any food to fall to the ground when eating. It must be picked up and swallowed with any earth that may adhere to it, for in the next world, should a man be accused of having starved his body, the earth will bear witness that he has fed it. There is a great objection to cutting anyone else's nails, for should the part cut off be lost and not given into its owner's hands, it will have to be made up to him somehow or other after death. If a person cuts his own nails he bears the consequences of his own acts. The nail parings are buried in the ground. If the sound of a drum is heard proceeding from Gebel Marah a national calamity is expected, or the defeat of an army, should the tribe happen to be at war at the time. It is supposed that an old woman who has always been faithful to her husband has power over fire, and that should a village take fire her presence will stop the flames. Such women are, however, few and far between. When several deaths occur about the same time in one family, it is thought to be due to falsehood or perjury on the part of one of its members. It is very unlucky for a bride to pass under a large tree or to cross a broad road unless she wears an amulet to protect her from the zittan.

Cups made of rhinoceros horn are supposed to detect poison in water, beer, or wine, the fluid changing colour; to give one of these cups to a friend is the highest honour that can be paid to him.

(I think this idea must have been derived from the Arabs.) Twins are supposed to be very lucky, especially girls; they are believed to bring good fortune to the whole village.

Crimes.—Wilful homicide is considered a great crime. The murderer is followed by the friends of the deceased, then tried by the chief, and the invariable sentence is death; neither he nor his friends can by any possible means evade the immediate execution of the sentence. There is no definite executioner, and, with the exception of the puggee (who may never shed blood), any bystander may be called upon to carry out the rigour of the law. Should the person whom the chief orders to undertake the office of executioner refuse to do so, even if a relation or friend of the criminal, he is compelled to pay a fine of two cows. The usual method of execution is as follows:—The murderer's hands are tied behind his back, he is made to kneel down, and is then struck on the back of the neck with a heavy knobbed stick. Another less common plan is to call on a party of men to pick him up and drop him head foremost on the ground, and to repeat this until his skull is completely smashed. This method is called "breaking the water melon," as that fruit is broken by being thrown upon the ground. If an aggravated murder has been committed, or the murderer has killed more than one man, or has tried to escape from or fight with his pursuers, he is slowly beaten to death. The criminal's friends are obliged to bury him at once, at a considerable distance from the village and cemetery; no prayers may be said at his grave, nor may the grave be marked in any way. If a man kills another accidentally he is tried by the chief, and has to give a full account of the circumstances which ended so disastrously. If he has no witnesses to confirm his story, he is required to take an oath on the *Koran*, or on one of the ancient religious books of the Fors; he is then kept for a week in prison, and if none of his relations die in the meantime, he is declared innocent and set at liberty. He is then expected to call together the friends and relations of the deceased man, and to express his sorrow for what has happened, after which he is treated in a friendly way by them, but on no account will they eat out of the same dish with him. Suicide is unknown in Darfur.

If a man wounds another in hunting or in the games no notice is taken of it; if on other occasions, a fine must be paid. If two men