

## Recent Progress in Central Africa.

"Recent" during the past twenty-five years. Practically no progress was made before 1870. "Central Africa."—Between a line drawn from 18° N. lat. on the W. coast to 4° N. on the E. coast, and another line drawn across the continent at 2° S. lat. Africa outside of these lines is so essentially different from Central Africa as to require, if discussed, a separate paper.

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The opening of the period under consideration (1870-1895) found a few mission stations scattered along the coast lines of the Dark Continent, planted there as "stepping-stones to the interior." These were manned by a small number of missionaries, the greater part of whose time was taken up trying to solve the problem of how to exist in Africa. These early missionaries accomplished very little that could be tabulated, but on their work the successes of to-day rest. Their work, their lives, their death have compelled the Boards, some of them at least, to recognize the fact that God does not hold His laws in abeyance because we are doing His work. They have clearly demonstrated that a missionary in that deadly climate, unless surrounded by suitable sanitary and hygienic conditions, and provided with skilled medical aid, will sicken and die as surely as any one else will. They have also proven that a thorough knowledge of the country and people, of any given region, is necessary before permanent stations can be founded. This led to the sending out of missionaries versed in medicine, geography, mechanics, languages, ethnology, etc. The proportion of such workers to theologians is rapidly increasing. It cost much in time, money, and lives to get these facts recognized; but it has been worth all it has cost—yes, worth many times more. Those missions which have recognized these facts are to-day preaching the Gospel to the millions of the far interior, while the others still painfully struggle for existence on the coast.

*Political.*—Next to the question of health, probably the greatest obstacle to be overcome was the political condition. (It must be borne in mind that the Central African, on the whole, did not object to the introduction of Christianity.) Almost the entire country was split up into petty clans and villages. There were a few tribes under one government, and two or three organized nations; but generally a chief's or headman's (often improperly called "king's") authority did not extend over more than five to ten square miles, often not more than half a square mile. There were no established laws—for the stranger, and petty wars were constant. Under such conditions travel and often residence were impossible for the missionary.

The different European governments exercised authority on the coast "within reach of the guns of the warships." For the most part this state of affairs has changed. Almost the whole area has been brought under European control. The net result has been very good, especially in the English territories. A missionary with tact, discretion, and a knowledge of the people, can, if unarmed, travel almost anywhere he chooses, preaching the Gospel as he goes. Such of the law machinery of civilized countries as is applicable to so new a country has been set in motion, and generally exercises its power to control and protect all. In a few years life, liberty, and property will be as safe in all, as now in many parts of Central Africa as in America. The degree of protection will vary in different localities, as it does in the United States.