

## A CASE OF AINHUM

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The specimen which I present to you was sent me by Dr. Harry Johnston, of BalACLava, Jamaica. It is the little toe of a Negro that was only attached by a thin pedicle which Dr. Johnston snipped off. The term Ainhum—derived from the Nagos word meaning to saw—is applied to a peculiar disease, which is found among certain dark-skinned races on the Pacific islands, in North and South America, and according to Manson, in India. Dr. Johnston tells me that it is quite common among the Negroes of Jamaica. The condition begins by the formation of a constriction at the base of the toes, especially the little toe—which continues to deepen until the digit is attached only by a narrow stalk. The toe then either falls off or is snipped off. The process is usually a very slow one, sometimes taking years to produce amputation. It does not affect the general health, and little discomfort is caused except when the freely moveable toe gets in the way or when ulceration occurs, which is rare. The disease is more frequent in males than in females, and usually occurs in adults, but has been present in infants a few weeks old. It tends to run in certain families, many members sometimes being affected.

As the constriction at the base of the toe deepens, the distal end of the toe becomes enlarged and bulbous. The various tissues atrophy. In the toe which I show you the bone is soft and cuts with little resistance. The constricting band appears to be thickened structures of the derma. According to Unna the disease is a kind of ring-formed scleroderma. This constricting band really causes strangulation of the structures distal to the band like the snaring of a tumor. Manson thinks the condition is due to the ulceration beginning at the digito-plantar fold from irritation, with contraction of the hyperplastic tissues. The lodgement of dirt, etc., in this region would keep up the process until final amputation occurs. Some have described the condition as a trophoneurosis, something of the nature of Raynaud's disease, but on no good reason, which may also be said of the idea that the disease is a form of leprosy.

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