

XVIII.—INHERITANCE.

Personal property is, over a great part of the Timne country, very limited in quantity; enquiries into the rule of succession by means of genealogies were fruitless, for the simple reason that informants had inherited little or nothing from their fathers. As a natural result they were frequently unable to formulate any clear statement for lack of personal experience.

It is clear that, generally speaking, a distinction is drawn between personal property and family, or inherited, property. The former descends to a son or an adopted son, the latter goes to a brother or (elder) brother's children, or father's brother's children; but it is a general rule that an absentee loses his rights, and that the eldest son by each wife is alone entitled to succeed.

As regards personal property, all the sons seem to receive a portion, but the eldest gets the largest share, and, provided he is not himself in tutelage to a father's brother or other guardian, is trustee of all the property; he will hand over a portion to his brothers when they marry, and also purchase their first wives for them.

The age at which a man is held to be capable of managing property varies within wide limits; a capable man may be regarded as sufficiently responsible at twenty, but thirty to thirty-five is considered a normal age. One white-bearded man of sixty, the second son of his father, informed me that he was working for his brother, who had charge of the land and kola trees; he hoped to receive a share when he was old enough. He was himself the father of three sons, the youngest of whom was married and had two children. At the present day the eldest son is accustomed to claim to control the property, and apply, not always with success, to the District Commissioner to support him. It is quite clear