

spring of Egyptian, the case of Etruscan, which has no offspring, or of the Basque, if that were to be lost, is no fit parallel.

The want of materials accessible to common critics, is that which creates an uneasy suspicion that all is not sound in these remarkable investigations. Add to this, that no new light is shed on history proportional to the pretensions. We do not forget (and we invite Sir Cornewall to reflect on it), that the Persian inscription at Behistun at once developed the fact that Darius, son of Hystaspes, had to re-conquer the Empire for the Persians. Mr. Grote, deviating from all previous historians, had already pronounced that this was the true interpretation of Herodotus; that the Medes had revolted against the Persian dynasty, and the whole Empire was in confusion. In profound ignorance that Mr. Grote maintained this, or that it could be made out from Herodotus, Rawlinson brought out from Darius's own avowal the same fact in a still stronger form. So much we say that we may not appear totally to disparage the historical value of these monuments. Yet, in fidelity to truth, we must add a few words, which we fear will be very exasperating to orientologists, who would read history from courtly records and royal pictures. Let us throw a part of our odium on a highly intelligent gentleman, who many years ago was British Ambassador at the Court of Teheran: for he it was that first made us incredulous. He stated that every year the Court historian solemnly read out to the king and to the assembled divan, a record of the events of the past year, which always consisted in a glorification of the sovereign and of his prosperity. If we can trust our memory of a distant conversation, he said that the events of the Perso-Russian war figured as Persian successes. But of one thing we are sure, and assert it positively: He attested to us that

the free gifts sent by the King of England to the King of Persia in the way of compliment, were all recorded by the historian as *tribute*; so that if a future inquirer had no other knowledge of the history than these documents might give, he would suppose the Empire of Persia in the nineteenth century to have included the distant island of Britain. What reason have we to suppose the sculptorial or pictorial Court historian in ancient Assyria or Egypt to have been a whit more truthful than those of modern Persia? Bunsen and Niebuhr, as profoundly as Sir G. C. Lewis, believe the early military history of Rome to be a tissue of falsehood. Was oriental royalty surrounded by an atmosphere more favourable to truth than Italian aristocracy?

We cannot read Sir H. Rawlinson's translation of the deeds of a certain Assyrian King (he will forgive our not remembering a name the pronunciation of which has been several times largely changed) without intense distrust; distrust, not of the interpreter, but of the record itself. Evidently it was the duty of the recorder, year by year, to say something to the king's glory. The monotony of his work betrays its origin, when every year he crosses the river and conquers a new people. As for pictures, we should as soon believe that a king was three times the height of common men, because he is so painted, as believe in his conquests over red-haired Scythians and vast negro nations, because a picture represents a troop of them brought to him in chains, or a string of animals ushering in the spoils of Africa. Caligula is not the sole Emperor who has celebrated imaginary triumphs. We need to see the disasters of an empire carved in stone by order of its king before we accept such monuments as a faithful source of knowledge concerning its foreign relations.

FRASER'S MAGAZINE.

FEBRUARY, 1863.

MY WANDERINGS IN WEST AFRICA.

A VISIT TO THE RENOWNED CITIES OF WARI AND BENIN.

BY AN F.R.G.S.

PART I.—THE RENOWNED CITY OF WARI.

ON the 1st August, 1862—a Friday, be it duly noticed—H.M.S.S. *Bloodhound*, Lieut.-Commander Stokes, found herself steering out of the harbour of Fernando Po, Gulf of Guinea, West Coast of Africa.

The then aspect of the 'Madeira of the Bights,' as some one inaptly calls it, was unusually wild and strange. The sun sank like a red-hot ball streaked with long bars of dark vapour, and as its orb disappeared behind the molten fire of the occidental wave, a red and lurid light overspread the sky, extending to the zenith, as though a universal conflagration were beginning in the west. Lines of black massive cloud variegated the surface of the nearer sea, whilst the foliated bluffs and bays lay black as Erebus; and on a floor of burnished metal the ships hung like black silhouettes, with reflections as dark, floating double, ship and shadow, both in mourning.

A tornado seemed rising in the N.E., the island's stormy direction. Presently, however, the moon appeared, and dispersed the fires, leaving, however, deep heavy mists settled upon the horizon; whilst the air felt intolerably sickly and sultry. In times of pestilence men's minds are ever awake to such weird meteorology. The first death by yellow fever had occurred at Fernando Po on the 5th May. At the end of July, sixty young and picked men had perished out of

a maximum of three hundred Spaniards—twenty per cent. already, and by no means ceasing. H.M.'s consul, who was a fellow-passenger, compared the spectacle with one which he had witnessed during the cholera year at Kur-rachee, in Scinde, when a single gallant corps lost some five hundred of its number in six weeks. Worse still, let me repeat, the day was a Friday;—as will be seen, it made its influence felt.

There happened nothing tellable during the cruise of two hundred and seventy miles separating the *Bloodhound* from the Benin river, her destination. It was a succession of squalls, that compelled us to put up the dead-lights—ghastly name!—whilst the rain called aloud for closed skylights, and the cross seas catching the old ship under the sponsons, raised her off her side as she rushed and staggered along. The only *passe-temps* of the voyage was a battle between a thresher and a black fish, or small whale: they certainly did act Messrs. Sayers and Heenan right well. The thresher looked like the single revolving spoke of a tremendous wheel, and the blows which he dealt were audible for a mile. The black fish, equally dexterous, 'laid into' him with a huge forked tail resembling a fan for machinery, and churned up the sea all around. It was truly a pretty bit of 'fancy.' We failed, however, in finding whether the thresher was aided, as whalers be-

lieve, by the sword-fish working from below.

On the 3rd of August we found ourselves at anchor some ten miles distant from the Benin river, or Great River Formoso.

The stream had a name in the old days of travelling. The Rio Formoso was discovered, like the Kongo, in 1484, and first visited in the middle of the sixteenth century: the earliest mission was during the latter third of the seventeenth. In 1786, it was inspected by Ambrose Maria Francis Joseph Paliset de Beauvais, who, after a residence of fifteen months, undeterred by fever and by the barbarism of the natives, collected materials for his celebrated *Flore d'Oware et de Benin*. Unfortunately the greater part was burnt by an English expedition. This enterprising traveller projected a march from the Bight to Abyssinia, but failed in persuading any one to accompany him. Early in the present century, Belzoni died near its banks; and some twenty years ago Mr. Beecroft, Governor and Consul, whose name will long be associated with discovery on this coast,* ascended it to assist, or rather to save, the saintly but unfortunate Niger expedition. Several European nations—English and French, Dutch, Spaniards, and Portuguese—had forts and factories on its banks, and their commerce extended from the river's mouth to the city of Great Benin. But the days of slavery passed away; it became Ichabod with the land; none know of it except a few palm-oilers from Liverpool; and it may now be treated as a *terra incognita*.

In that intensely tropical African part of the coast, where the ancient continuity of southern slope was broken into the segment of a circle

by Baron Humboldt's great Southern Atlantic Current, lies the happy bay of which the English mariner sings—

The Bight of Benin! the Bight of Benin!
One comes out where three goes in.

And the missionary more poetically warbles—the land, the land—

Where the skies for ever smile,
And the blacks for ever weep.

This fair region, which extends some three hundred miles from Cape St. Paul's to the west, has a single stream whose mouth lies in 5° 46' N. lat.—pleasant proximity to the Equator—and in 5° 4' E. lon.—touching vicinity to Greenwich. The natives call it Uwo ko Jakri (Outlet of Jakri)—the latter being what we call the kingdom of Wari or Warree—and they term their villanous selves 'Jakri men.'

With this much of 'universals,' return we to H.M.'s ship *Bloodhound* for particulars.

At 11 A.M. on the 4th of August, I proceeded on deck to admire the passage of the worst practicable bar on the coast, a bar for which insurance offices demand seven, or one per cent. more than for any other. The scene was intensely African—all 'much of a muchness,' as the Salem trader said—a dull glare day, livid-tinted above, and brown below, with a long low line which we knew to be mangrove, separating unlovely sea and dreary sky. It was broken by the river mouth, a wide gap bearing from the roads N.E. $\frac{1}{2}$ E. The southern side was the usual dull thin land streak. The northern bank was somewhat higher, a tongue with a bluff point and tall trees rising, as they usually do, from a sandbank regular as a Dutch dyke thrown up by wind and wave, and broken by swamp

and lagoon. In the roads, rode the barque *Earl of Derby*, conspicuous by mat awning and want of paint; and a dark green *Medea*, with her iron tender, the *Arvis*.

At 11¹⁵ A.M. about half an hour before high tide, and at least two hours too late, we proceeded to assault the bar, upon which, by the bye, the water has not yet been properly laid down. The current immediately began to set north. The arrows of the charts are ever flying southwards, but on this coast the only safe rule is, that wherever you want the stream to carry you, it will certainly set the 'clean contrary way.' So we put the *Bloodhound's* head E. and by E. $\frac{1}{2}$ E., and dash right for the gap. Presently two trees forming a nick show dimly off the north-west spit, and three whitewashed factories gradually disclose themselves. This, according to the learned, proves that under the influence of the tide we have fallen too far southward, and consequently that we shall carry less water than perhaps we may want. The deepest line, it is said, is obtained by opening out the highest factory—Messrs. Stewart and Douglas—clear of the north-west point, and then to run in north-east, allowing for tide and current. On this point, however, opinions differ: many are in favour of opening all three houses.

The gap now lay three or four miles from us, and heavy breakers clothed the dreaded north and south banks with sheets of foam. During the bad weather of the rains, the roads are a mass of boulders; the bar breaks right across; and the entrance, which has never more than thirteen feet of water at the springs, becomes impassable. We found it tolerably quiescent, though at times a long-lined tossing sea, combing, wall-like, under the quarter, with a send of ten to twelve feet, and breaking against the paddles, showed that the lion was not dead, but sleeping. The soundings fell off from eighteen to ten feet—the *Bloodhound* drew ten feet two inches—on the starboard side, and the lead, instead of bringing up in deep sticky bottom, struck

upon sand hard as stone—the true test of our being on the true bar. It is said by old travellers that here, as at Bonny, human sacrifices were offered as a propitiation to the impediment—Captain Adams specifies four annually—and really, after a little experience of Fetish ideas, it is not to be wondered at on a 'barry day.' After the usual three seas, which are often six or seven, we cross the outer line and find smoother water. By making for the centre of the gap, we safely weather the main breakers, which lead to the deeper channel of the river; we once more feel mud, and after twenty minutes of passage we know that all risk is over. The main disadvantage of this most 'saucy' bar, after its hardness, is its length: in twenty minutes we must have covered from three-quarters to the whole of a nautical mile.

As the *Bloodhound* passed through the estuary's entrance, which is not less than a mile and a half broad, the course of the Benin river began to show its distinguishing marks. At the sandy strip below the north-west point—the proper site, by the bye, for factories—lay Lower Fishtown, and, the corner turned, appeared Upper Fishtown, the property of the Chief Jallo, brother to a man who is 'wanted.' The Fishtowns are two Nigerian villages, miserable huts with pent-house roofs of rotten matting rising from a groundwork of swamp and manure. These people ever choose for sites of settlements the narrowest and most tortuous streams, with impenetrable morasses on each side. Fishtown, the first settlement, was, according to Captain Owen (vol. ii. pp. 358-9), 'burned to the ground in March, 1818, by solemn edict, in consequence of the king's Fetish men having persuaded him that this act was necessary in order to appease the deity, who had deprived them of their trade.' It lies at the mouth of Fishtown Creek, which leads, after seven days of lazy work, to Lagos. The creek is at least fifteen miles long to Begge, the village of the rufian Akabwa, and

* This excellent traveller died and was buried at Fernando Po, on the 10th of June, 1854, aged sixty-four. A monument of stone was sent out from England, and though until lately it has been wholly neglected, the Spanish authorities are preparing to raise it from the ground. Mr. Beecroft's hospitality to every description of visitor caused him to die a poor man; he left, however, a large tract of ground on the north-west part of the island, which had been made over to him by his employer, Mr. Jamieson, and of which, it is to be hoped, his widow will derive some benefit. A fitter place for cocoa, coffee, or sugar-cane can hardly be imagined; and an English company might work it to the greatest advantage.

the line is hardly open to boats. A few slaves were the only tenants of the visible tenements, their masters having thought better to take themselves off where no cruiser could catch them. Those seen were a wild-looking race, black, muscular, scantily clad, and with little lumps of wool protruding from their heads, sometimes like ragged balls of worsted, sometimes like bear's ears and thrum mops, sometimes like a saintly glory. They are lineal and worthy descendants of the 'robbers or pirates of Usa,' of whom Bosman writes, in 1702, 'They are very poor, and live only on robbery; they sail hence to all parts of this river, and seize all that lights in their way, whether men, beasts, or goods; all which they sell to the first that come hither for victuals, with which they are not at all provided.'

The factories then engaged our attention. Of course they are execrably situated for health and safety. Built in the old time when a cargo of oil was collected in a week, they now remain because no one will take the trouble to shift them. I had read in Dr. W. F. Daniell* that these 'edifices are commodiously built of wood, somewhat after the Spanish style, and that they contain a number of apartments in a middle story, elevated above the adjoining swamps.' I was not surprised to see wretched barracks, principally of mat and broken-down boardings, some of them inundated after heavy rains. Whilst people prefer these places to hulks, they must expect an occasional visitation from the natives, to say nothing of fever and dysentery.

On the right of the river, looking upwards, lay 'Horsfall House,' the site a sandy islet barely above high water, and recommended only by a fine curlew bank on the nearer shore. A three-masted schooner, without attempt at thatching, the *Pride of Canada*, was anchored off

this place. The factory had been threatened with attack on the 21st of June ult., by one Chanome, son of the Princess Dolo, a native chief, who swindled, in fact, by presenting undue cheques. On the mainland below the islet a thin blue vapour rose among the trees, telling the positions of Obobi, or Booby Town, *alias* Louboo, the property of the chief Chanome. Near this was Borodo, a French fort and factory, founded in 1788 by Captain Landolphe for the Compagnie d'Owhyère: it lasted till 1792, and died of the French Revolution. In 1851, Obobi was burned down by Mr. Beecroft. The people not expecting such vigour fired upon his flag in a boat that summoned them on board. 'Drat the fellows'—his only pet imprecation—said the old gentleman, twisting his long grizzly beard, after which he let fly, killed one hundred and fifty, and then landing drove the doughty negroes from their goods and chattels to the bush. Since that day they are careful to have 'small countries,' *i.e.* suburban villas, where their stores are placed; and the rapid growth of philanthropy has ordered whites no more to knock down negro towns.

On the proper right of the river we first see Messrs. Harrison's factory, with flag and guns; behind it is the second creek, called Wako and Jakwa (Wacow and Jacqua in old charts), which runs into the bush and leads to some extensive settlements. Beyond this, at nearly regular intervals of half a mile, and separated by a shore of sand, mud, and dwarf mangrove, lie the tall factories of Dr. Henry and Messrs. Stewart and Douglas, with schooners and other craft alongside. They are tall white buildings, dilapidated—if one may so speak of mat and board—with deep verandahs and low outhouses for casks and stores. Interspersed, the wretched villages of Jallo Town and Odesa Town nestled in the thick mangrove. The former belonged to a well-

known slave-trader long since deceased. He left a large property, which was speedily dissipated by his graceless sons.

There was, however, a redeeming point in the view. Amidst all this squalor and wretchedness, the majestic 'River Beautiful' poured its tribute to the ocean through long reaches, hazy headlands, and blue bluffs, which offered the noblest perspective. The breadth, nearly one mile and a half at the mouth, bulges out to two and more; whilst even at the farthest visible point, where it turns to the north-west, it is but little less than five hundred yards. The smooth expanse was varied when we first saw it by a number of floating islands, or rather grass fields, which formed line, and slowly but surely charged us. It is a curious and picturesque sight to see them drift up and down with the current;—they are not, however, unknown to us; we had studied them near Lagos. Most frequent during the rains, when the sudden freshets sweep away the reedy tracts that outlie the river's higher banks, at a distance they suggest the floating gardens of Anahuac. Some are of considerable magnitude; a moderate size would be 100 feet long by 20 broad and 2 fathoms deep, forming a total of 10,000 cubic feet, so thick and matted that even an anchor cannot sink through. They are thickly populated. The snake-, or jujubird, a large brown crane, paces about them in search of the serpents that may be seen cutting the waters *en route* to a safer locality. The small grass-green frog croaks through the day and night, whilst the culex sings his hideous song, and the sandflies float over the green expanse like motes in a sunbeam. These islands, as they bear down, require a careful lookout. Once athwart-hawse, they carry the tallest ship from her moorings, and they might take a fancy to escort her across the bar. Some sailors prefer to lay out a large kedge anchor, and to swing the craft; others allow 'lots' of cable, and give her a shear. At certain

times of the year, however, especially August, the chances are that a vessel at anchor in the Benin river will drift twice a week, giving uncalled-for trouble to all on board.

After two hours' steaming, the *Bloodhound* came to an anchor. The good old ship is well known in this river. During her first visit, in 1857, she was rash; her boats proceeded to attack one 'Smart,' a black fellow living up the Orogu Creek above Young Town. Mr. Smart justified his name; two *Bloodhounds* were killed, and seven were wounded.

On the present occasion her arrival was caused by a peculiar boldness of native villany. In the latter part of 1861, some Krumen belonging to Messrs. Harrison's factory were attacked by the Fishtown people; one was murdered and three were driven from their boat, which was plundered. The *Bloodhound* had been despatched from Lagos to investigate the subject, but 'murder and piracy' being mere peccadilloes in West Africa, no other steps were ever dreamed of. The natives naturally resolved again to taste the dear delights of slaughter and plunder. After some petty troubles, a Jakri man having been killed by Kruboy whilst attempting to steal a canoe—to the West African the canoe is like the mare to the Arab—the chief Akabwa collected his war vessels, filled two of them with above two hundred armed slaves, and about eight A.M. on the 24th May openly attacked Dr. Henry's factory. It is almost unnecessary to say that the owner was absent; he had crossed the bar to meet the mail steamer. The ruffians, entering the house, maltreated and wounded two of the servants, and threatening Mrs. Henry with disgrace and death forced her to fly through swamp and marsh to a neighbouring factory, where it is said her reception was the reverse of hospitable. They ended by plundering all they could lay hands upon. The unfortunate young Englishwoman fell ill with fever brought on by fright and excitement, lingered on without

* *Sketches of the Nautical Topography, &c., of the Gulf of Guinea.* By W. F. Daniell, M.D., F.R.G.S., F.E.S. I am not, however, aware that the said staff-surgeon spent any time in the Benin river.

rallying, and died of nervous depression on the 11th of June.

As might be expected, the husband was eager to punish the wife's murderers. He visited in person Fernando Po, the most 'comeatable' place boasting of an English official, and on application easily persuaded H.M.'s consul so far to fall foul of 'etiquette' as to undertake in a place beyond his jurisdiction the task of redress for, if not of actual punishment of, the outrage. The consul wrote an emergent requisition to Lieut.-Commander Stokes, whose feelings on the subject were equally excited. Hence the appearance of the *Bloodhound* in the Benin waters.

On the afternoon of our entrance a meeting of the agents and traders was called, and the Chief Idyáre—popularly known as Governor Jerry—was requested, after 'doing service,* to come on board with the head men of the river, a cane and a written promise of safe conduct to and from the ship being forwarded to him. He returned a submissive answer, promising to come himself, but protesting that he could not answer for others. The old man had received from Mr. Beecroft in 1851 a silver-headed stick, which constituted him king of the lower river, and in return he had signed on board H.M.'s ship *Jackal* a treaty promising protection to British life and property.† In 1858-59 he was removed by Mr. Consul Campbell in favour of one Abromoni; the change, however, appears not to have been for the better, so the governorship returned to its old channel. Governor Jerry is now a very old man, and—age is seldom powerful among barbarians—opinions as to his ability of defending strangers differ. This

leads me to consider the politics of the river, which are very purely African.

The lower course of the Benin river owes a manner of allegiance to the King of Great Benin City; that is to say, when he is strong, the people pay him the customs of the olden time; when he is weak, they laugh at his beard. Under present circumstances, they have established a kind of independence, and the population, headed by the different families, both of them originally Beninese, have made themselves, like the maritime tribes of Africa generally, a nation of carriers, brokers, and middlemen. Despite express treaties, they insist upon 'trust'—a system of credit bearing in Africa the same relationship to legitimate and ready money transactions as bill discounting does to banking in England. Unprincipled whites have encouraged a system which, with great risks, offers a prospect of immense profits. The natives, who look only to the present hour, are of course charmed with the method, and have repeatedly threatened to attack those who refuse such gambling, rendering 'trust' compulsory.

Elusa, son of Rejo or Reggio, king of Wari and of Lower Benin—which has been settled from Wari—died in June, 1848, leaving, as usual, a large family. The two elder sons, Iteyá and Ajoprú, followed their sire within the week. The numerous slaves of the former rose up in arms, left Wari town, and migrated to the Bateri (Battary) Creek, where they founded settlements and traded with Europeans. Ajoprú left also sons and slaves, amongst the former is the villain Akábwa, now the head of that part of the house. He is consequently a grandson to old Elusa,

* An old Anglo-African term for saluting. The extraordinary Captain Phil. Beaver, R.N., remarks, in his *African Memoranda*—probably the maddest book ever written—'Saluting is called in this part of Africa "doing service;" when Jaloren had given me his presents, he said he should now do me service; and seven very handsome brass blunderbusses were immediately discharged from close before his floor.' In Benin, however, where many antiquated forms of old trading language are preserved, saluting or doing service means presenting compliments.

† April 4, 1851. Hertslot's *Commercial Treaties*, vol. ix. pp. 14-16.

and his aunt is the Princess Dolo, of Obobi, whose son Chanome, in 1851, destroyed Messrs. Horsefall's factory. For this outrage the offenders were fined eighty-two trade puncheons of palm oil; they signed a promissory paper, and there, naturally, matters ended. The three principal surviving sons of old Elusa are in order of age, Chanwana, Eri, and Nyaure. Eri is an inveterate drunkard, and the two others lack the inceptive faculty, and are compelled by want of unanimity amongst the anarchy-loving white traders to leave their claims in abeyance, and to live in their own retreats near Wari.

'Jerry House,' now represented by Idyáre the governor, is connected with Elusa's; the grandfather was a slave to the king of Benin. The father was one Wako, whose name ('Waccow') appears in our old charts. Jerry lives at Jakwa, a town lying about two miles up the Jakwa creek, behind Messrs. Harrison's factory; it is an extensive settlement, containing some 5000 souls, of whom 600 or 700 are his own slaves. Dr. Daniell estimates the population at 'near two thousand,' and calls it the 'largest town in the kingdom of Warree,' which is an error. His eldest brother is a very old and unimportant chief, named Jibufu, who on momentous occasions uses the diplomatic excuse, and is always 'too sick.' The only one of the family that ventured near us, was Ifyá, a somewhat remarkable man, aged about fifty-five, and never quite sober. The tall old negro has a gruff and abrupt manner, which accords with his rough and independent sentiments. When he called upon us his rugged coal-black face and grizzled shock head was surrounded by a fillet of small red bags, leopards' teeth and claws, and his big burly frame was invested in a blue cloth coat, and lined, gold-laced, and many-caped, such as 'parochials' were once wont to wear. He ever applied to his snuff-box, whose contents were at least half natron, and when he breakfasted he disposed all his bones upon the table-cloth.

He puts his slaves to death without mercy, and is consequently highly respected; all appearing before him must kneel, and remain so till he has finished speaking to them. He was the first to dissuade Europeans from giving out trust, and in contempt of his kind he threatens to leave the country with his wives and family. He is of course a fratricide, and never appears upon the river without a vedette canoe and a number of armed men; his own barge may hold a dozen guns, each old three and four pounders. He was lately attacked by his brother Alaba, in his own village; he defeated the assailant, destroyed the settlement, and shot another younger brother, to settle things the more permanently.

The other native traders in the Benin river are mere brokers, who fetch produce from the upper country, and sell it to Europeans. In this maritime tract there is absolutely no cultivation, the people are wholly dependent upon imports. At all times their boys or slaves are wretchedly fed, exportation to Cuba would be hailed as a blessing by the poor devils, if they could throw off the idea that they are exported to become butcher's meat. They must work under the lash from four P.M. to three A.M., upon four ounces of boiled yam or plantain. Two such meals will probably be allowed them whilst pulling one hundred miles. They are mere anatomies. They will rifle the pails which the ship's pigs refuse, and, remember, this is in times of plenty. More than half starved, they are always the first to make a disturbance when their miserable pittance is curtailed. 'Stopping trade,' therefore, is clearly a hold upon the river. But as many of the wealthy traders are hoarders, the length of stoppage may vary from three to nine months.

To the reader it may appear strange that amidst this wealth of princes—they pullulate here as in the trans-Rhenine regions—the present state of anarchy should be permitted to endure.

But we are in Africa, where all reason is inverted. Each white

trader has his own black chief, whom, and whom only, he, and he only, wishes to make king of kinglets. Some men, again, think to profit by the absence of government, and fear that if united under one head, the native combination would present too firm a front. And, finally, in these petty places there is ever that active jealousy the concomitant of small minds and small communities, which makes men oppose one another for opposition's sake, even against their own interests. A man will to-day cry aloud for the aid of a cruiser to protect British, viz., his own life and property. To-morrow, when his neighbour deems it necessary to do the same, he will murmur at the appearance of a ship of war, and declare that the 'old tin-pot' is death to all trade.

In this state were parties when the *Bloodhound* cast anchor in the Benin river. On the day after arrival, the palaver 'came up.*' Governor Jarry declared that fear prevented his coming on board the *Bloodhound*; and that certainly not a single chief would show face out of the creek. This in good old times would have formed a *casus belli*; in these highly civilized days, however, the unpugnacious consul merely reproached him for his distrustfulness, and hinted at the possibility of further measures being taken, to which Jerry of course made no rejoinder. On the next day (August 6th), trade was stopped at the request of the merchants, a sort of gig was got ready, provisioned, manned, and commanded by Mr. Rugg, an intelligent West Indian, and a lengthened report was addressed to the governor-consul of Lagos, submitting to him that the presence of a man-of-war in the river was necessary until the outrage should be amply atoned for. After due deliberation it was determined to pass the time which must elapse before an answer could

arrive—the distance being thirty-two leagues, or nearly one hundred miles—in visiting Wari town, old Elusa's capital, now the residence of his surviving sons.

At two P.M. on the 8th August, the commander's gig left H.M.'s ship *Bloodhound*, and guided by Dr. Henry and Capt. Z., an agent in the river, proceeded for their eighty miles' excursion to Wari town. The trip was a fair specimen of Niger navigation, and as such I shall describe it.

The first stretch of two miles, generally set down as three, led to a bluff headland, where the mangroves muster thick—it is the left-hand support of a channel known in our charts as the Battery Creek, but here pronounced Bateri. The country people call it the Alagwa Pro, or Greater Alagwa, to distinguish it from a lesser neighbour. It has never been surveyed, but it is known to take a course S.E., bending to E.S.E., and after twenty-two miles, to fall into the Escravos, or eastern neighbour of the Benin river, about fifteen miles above the junction of the former with the Broder. On the south bank, near the mouth, is a narrow stream, leading to Bateri town, one of the strongholds of Jakri insolence. The main stream is a broad water of that nondescript kind between salt and sweet, in which the rhizophoræ delight. On a clear day, when a radiant sun and a lapis lazuli sky cast their reflected loveliness upon the lower world, the scenery would be admired, and in England an African river would be a favourite terminus for excursion trains. Here, however, the mind looks out through the eye, connecting a mangrove forest with half the ills to which tropical human nature is subject. Despite great Chatham, I do hold *Omne solum forti patria*. Still, the absence of all association, the sense of loneliness and estrangement, the absurd distance from

friend and family, seem to diffuse an ugliness over every African river, however fair. More especially the feeling is uppermost when, instead of soft and hazy mists glazing the landscape, a drizzling rain, broken only by a grey fog, deforms the water; and on land, instead of waving branches,

The very trees so thick and tall
Cast gloom, not shade around.

Then, the stream is dark as a suicide's river, and the mangroves wave like hearse-plumes, and, as the murks of evening close in upon the voyager, he experiences a sense of depression which nothing can remove.

As we advanced the broad Bateri narrowed from one thousand to one hundred and fifty yards; the reaches, however, were still long. After about seven miles, not including the two across the Benin river, we exchanged our line for the short cut known to the natives as Alagwa Týá, or Little Alagwa, a very narrow and winding creek. The object of this cut is to avoid the long round by N.E. and S.E. and west, which would be necessary if following the Bateri into the Escravos. And now, before it is dark, I would draw a short sketch of the red mangrove—the white is a tree growing high and dry—as it appears at full tide in the Delta of the Niger.

These forests of the sea at once resolve themselves into two different appearances. One is tall, dark, metalline, feathered to the feet, and rising from the soft mud, which is visible only when the water is out. The boughs have often a graceful bend, dipping towards the stream before they rise perpendicularly. The trunks are now upright, then bending forwards to the wave, when their white boles are conspicuous from afar: in large growths there are many felled and fallen trees, and in few parts of the Niger's Delta have I passed along a causeway without finding the mangrove suckers cut. Perpendicular to the course of the stream run transverse walls of this tall, dense vegetation, where they

are least to be expected; their growth is probably caused by depressions in the level of the bank, causing an increase of humidity. The other mangrove tract is low, bushy, and scrubby, and its light green contrasts with the spinach-colour of the taller forests. Oftentimes this is the work of man, when after the wood has been cleared away a new growth has been permitted to appear. In many places, however, I have satisfied myself that the phenomenon is natural, and attribute it to the comparative elevation of the base supporting the vegetation. When the bank rises a foot or two above the highest level of the flood, the eye delights to see other and more favoured growths—palms whose nuts no hand ever gathered; the majestic cotton-wood, with its towering white column gleaming through the depths of green; the graceful feathery tamarind veiling the sky with its emerald-coloured gauze; and the profusion of variety that distinguishes the tropical jungle from the temperate forest.

There is little to say of the animal creation in these bushes, and of the mangrove flies the less said the better; they are never wanting, and they are ready at all times to bite from you a large steak. A few brown cranes build in low trees huge nests, looking like wood drifted there during the last inundation, and often side by side with them are deformed black swellings from the trunks—the nests of a wicked black-brown ant. A fishhawk here and there sits sentinel upon some taller mangrove, but he never affords a shot. Even the white and black kingfisher—the beautiful painted variety was only once seen—skims the waves at an unapproachable distance. The parrots winnow the air, screaming between us and the clouds; the swift wood-pigeon swerves when he sees man; and the curlew with its wild cry of alarm rises as if flushed and fired at every day. Crocodiles abound; but as usual they are rarely secured, even after being killed. When young they prefer to bask

* — In Anglo-African, 'palaver began,' is opposed to 'palaver set'—i.e. ended. 'Come up' also means to rise from death. So said 'ole Parrot,' of Camaroon River, to a very plain Englishman who was chaffing him—'When so be I die, I com up all same white man. When so be you die, you come up all same monkey; which after all appeared probable.

upon some horizontal tree-trunk. When they give up childish habits they sprawl upon the mud. In either position, even after a mortal shot, they will by some peculiar action of the muscles reach the water, and, dying, sink to the bottom. Of course we heard of the exceptionally large and fine crocodile that had just eaten an old woman; such might have been the case, but that crocodile is found in every river on the coast. Fish is ever abundant where such fish-eaters are not too numerous; the mouth of every little creek shows a weir or a crate. In the Benin river there is a regular season for a small fry, probably of an African herring, which is here as well known as the whitebait of Greenwich. In the months of August and September, when the rains are heaviest, old wives may be seen fishing with bamboo baskets. The fry is sundried or smoked, packed in panniers, and sent up the country to fetch a profit of 200 per cent. This tropical whitebait is described as being too rich and oily for European taste.

The day was far from pleasant; now cold and rainy, then reeking and still. Residents divide the Niger year into three distinct seasons—the rainy, the smoky, and the dry. As usual near the tropics, there appears to be a great confusion, and the stranger will do well to remember that he is in the zone of perpetual rain. The wet season or winter in this part of the world begins in mid-May, and lasts with an occasional break, till the end of September, ending like the Elephanta of Western India, with violent storms. Tornadoes then follow, accompanied by light breezes. In early December are the heaviest smokes, which continue till March. This is the dry season, which is again succeeded by outbursts of electricity. The rainy quarter is ever the southwestern; but, as on other parts of the coast, the nimbal mass often works round to the opposite quarter. On the other hand, tornadoes come from the north-east.

Narrower and narrower grew the

creek as we advanced; it soon diminished from fifty to fifteen yards, or the size of an average English river. There were many offsets, widenings, and narrowings. In places the banks were invested with scrub mangrove, in others with tall trees, which are never removed when they fall, and in parts we passed through a tunnel of aerial rootwork and pendent branches. After nine miles of such work we substituted paddles for oars, and we hurried forward, for it was waxing dark. The sides opened out, mud banks appeared on each side, palm and pandanus contended for room with the mangrove, and ere it was too obscure for vision, we passed through the scrub-fringed mouth which connects the Alagwa Tiyá with the Escravos river.

Opposite us twinkled the lights of Ejotown, but it was not our destination. Having resumed our oars, we struck across the 'Slave's river.' A bold expanse of water stood before us, but nothing could be more puzzling than the network of rivers which seemed separated from one another by the merest strips of mangrove jungle. On return we had mastered the principal features, and we observed the course of the Escravos, corruptedly called Escardos, running down between N.N.E. and N.E. by E. It is the nearest south-eastern neighbour to the Benin, from whose mouth it is separated by about fifteen miles. Below Ejotown it makes a long bend to the west, and after anastomosing with the Broder falls into the sea. Local tradition declares it to have twenty-one feet of water over the bar. The pilots give 'twelve and perhaps less;' and the charts show in one place one and a quarter fathoms, besides frightening the mariner with a 'breaks heavily.'

As the water was flowing powerfully, we crossed from west to east the channel of the Escravos, which might here be a mile and a half broad. Our roosting-place lay to the proper left of the river at the bend where it joins the Broder, and as the shades multiplied a

twinkling light or two beckoned us that way. Again we had a drenching shower, more persistent than the diurnal. Dr. Henry went ahead to make arrangements for our landing; otherwise a volley of broken metal might have been Africa's reception to the stranger who 'drops in for a quiet evening.' Thoroughly tired with rain and cramps and heavy wet, we disembarked on men's shoulders—ignoble sight!—at eight P.M., and escorted by a crowd of Ejomen, we were led to the house of the local grandee. A fire was already burning, mats were soon spread upon settees of bamboo, the mid-rib of a palm, and after a late supper we found refuge from damp and cramp in heavy sleep.

We had spent of that day six hours in boats, and the tide being mostly with us, we can hardly allow less than five miles per hour, making a total of thirty miles to Uperájá, from the position of the *Bloodhound* opposite Lemnos, Dr. Henry's factory.

Jupiter Pluvialis, St. Swithin, St. Médard, or the Seven Sleepers being in the ascendant, and the tide not serving till noon, we had time before starting on the next day to inspect the place, and to call upon old Kratem (Cratum), King of all the Ejomen. The Upper Uperájá, where we lodged, appears in Captain Denham's sketch chart* as Opapa. It is built in a gap of a mangrove bush, where a strip of sand lends a landing-place. The site is a swampy ledge raised a few feet above water level, unsloping as the pools show, and backed by huge walls of rhizophoræ and forest trees springing from the richest possible soil. It lies on the western

bank of, and about fifteen miles from, the debouchure of the Escravos river. The huts are the normal habitations of these regions; walls of split bamboo, and roofs of ragged matting—mere sheds, often half ruinous. It is about the last place which a man would choose for a honeymoon.

Having decided against a bath on account of the number of triangular dorsal fins that appear above water, we proceeded to breakfast, and were joined by Olumájá, an aged chief, eldest son and heir of King Kratem. Habited in a tight-fitting dressing-gown of red and white bed-ticking, he brought an excuse from his father, who, age and infirmities not permitting him to call upon us, had sent as credentials a paper of recognition, signed by Mr. Beecroft in 1851. We also received an invitation to the Head Quarter village, and were told that a present of sheep awaited us there. Kratem is all-powerful among the Ejos or Ejomen, popularly called Joemen, a large and influential tribe. This people inhabit the banks of the Escravos, Broder, Forçados, Ramos, and Dodo rivers, extending to the Nun and Brass rivers. I have seen many of them in the Bonny. They are fewer in number than the Ibos, but they have the reputation of being good fighters. They are almost always at war with the Jakri men, because, like these, they trade for oil to the 'Sobo country,' the wide lands north and north-east of Wari.† Hence probably their ill name and their quarrels with Europeans, who have usually been under charge of their enemies. Mr. Hutchinson‡ calls them cannibals, and accuses them of eating

* Hydrographic Office, West Coast of Africa. Sheet xvii. Jaboo to River Forçados.

† In Mr. Beecroft's paper on the Delta of the Niger (*Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, vol. ii. p. 185), we are told that the Sooba country—in the accompanying map it is written Soobo Plains—is the name given to the district watered by the southernmost arm of the Benin River by the natives of Wari River, who represent it as forming part of the Kingdom of Benin. I rather believe that the word applies to the greatest part of the country between Abo on the Niger, the Wari River, and the southern branch of the Benin, which bounds it on the north, not on the south. At Wari we were within one day's row of the Sobo people.

‡ *Ten Years' Wanderings among the Ethiopians*, p. 61.

Kruboys, upon the authority of Dr. Henry, which Dr. Henry distinctly denies. On the charts we find that the natives are 'troublesome and turbulent, savage and treacherous.'

As the old king had ever been friendly to Europeans, it was resolved to visit him and to renew his 'book.' At 10:30 A.M. we embarked, and turned the boat's head down river. The first discovery was the reverse of pleasant. Our supplies had not been disembarked at night, consequently the Krumen had stolen half our liquor, and as all had shared in the plunder—such is their custom—the offenders could not be detected. After ten minutes' pulling we struck inland, where an earthen pot and a white cloth gave signs of Juju—these things might be mistaken by a novice for 'road-posts'—and we entered a creek, or rather a gut, leading to the King's Town. The course was exceedingly tortuous, often forming an angle of sixty degrees, whilst paddles were few and steering impossible. At last two men were ordered overboard to push the gig ahead. The water of the creek was of a dark vinous hue, the banks were slimy mud, in which the pole sank three feet, and a hurdle work of mangrove sprouts variegated a surface not unlike that of a dirt-pie. A scrubby jungle of rhizophoræ extended on both sides, and the horizon was shut in by a curtain of tall cotton-trees, which effectually excluded the air. The only inhabitants of the place were the peculiar 'mud fish,' half piscine, half lacertine, and dwarf crabs with claws of the brightest ultramarine. After half an hour's hard work, occasionally grounding and scraping over submerged trees, an opening appeared, and a cocoa-tree prepared us to sight the mat roofs of the settlement. Such are the sites which the old kidnapping days have caused the people of the Niger still to prefer. Arms and ammunition being plentiful there, they cannot be attacked without loss of life. A few trees thrown across the channel would stop boats and give

opportunities for easy shooting. The safest way is to assault on foot with mud-pattens, when they can be used. In some places, however, the creeks are neck-deep and the mire impassable.

We landed in the usual way, carried by the Krumen like babes, a style of debarkation which always affords work to the risible faculties of the natives. As at Upper Uperájá, a crowd of both sexes and all ages gathered about us, perfectly civil, but half stupefied by superexcited curiosity. Many of them, especially the juniors, now looked upon a white man for the first time. After escaping the sloughs of the entrance, we formed up, and attended by armed Krumen, were escorted by a dignitary in chimney-pot hat and brass-buttoned broadcloth long coat, to a palaver-house at the other end of the settlement. During the walk the cattle struck us with admiration; they are plump, round, and pretty,—the 'juicy Devons,' and the 'rent-paying Herefords' of these lands. One fine bull would have been admired among the Nandis of an Indian bazaar, and he wandered about with the same dignity. It is evident that the delta of the Niger does not produce the digitalis so fatal to cattle at Fernando Po. The place of our reception was by no means splendid; a small, dark room, with bamboo settees, and facing the entrance a deep alcove with matted earth-bench—the only furniture was the usual fan, a large circle of ox-hide, black and white preferred, with the skin on, attached to a wooden handle, which bisects it so as to form the flaps, and sometimes prettily ornamented with red silk and worsted. We afterwards saw these articles everywhere at Benin city, but the owners refused to sell them.

Taking our places in the alcove, the seat of dignity, we inspected the crowd whilst old Kratem dressed.

The Ejos are nearly all freemen, and therefore they greatly resemble one another. The tribe-mark in both sexes is a line extending from the scalp down the forehead to the tip

of the nose, made with a razor or a sharp knife, and blackened with charcoal and gunpowder. It is opened and reopened till a long thin frenum or bridle, as it were, draws up the skin at the bridge of the nose, and gives a peculiar expression to the countenance. The people of Benin have a similar mark, but it is not raised, and it often ceases at the eyebrows. Men and women have on each cheek three short parallel cuts, sometimes straight, sometimes crescent-shaped. Another favourite decoration are three broad stripes of scar, like the effects of burning, down the front of the body from the chest to the lower stomach. Lastly, the skin is adorned with 'beauty-berries,' buttons of raised flesh that much resemble exanthemata. The style of hair-dressing is very wild. Some wear thrum-mops, others long and crooked horns of matted plaited hair, others knobs of wool irregularly disposed over the surface. The skin is mostly black; some, however, are fair and reddish, a thing everywhere to be observed among Nigerian tribes. Though the aspect of the men is savage and staring, the women are not unfrequently pleasing, the eyes especially being large and well formed, clear as onyxes, and fringed with long up-curling lashes which this tribe does not remove. The dress of the men is the usual loin-cloth; their wives add to it an upper veil, which is thrown loosely round the shoulders. The favourite ornament in this part of the world is coral; not in beads, but in long pieces like bits of 'churchwarden'-stem. A string of this article is a regal present. The darker the colour and the larger the piece, the better, and a good bunch will fetch a puncheon or two of palm oil. Other ornaments are, big pewter bracelets, or brass, after the Benin fashion, huge rings of rudely cut ivory round the wrists and ankles, wire collars, and thin ropes of braided seed-bead, especially blue; various large porcelain beads, small-linked brass chains round the ankles, and strings of the Indian cowries. Chil-

dren's legs are girt with small brass bells, probably for fetish reasons. No one appeared armed; at the same time weapons, we were sure, stood ready at hand.

After a quarter of an hour's delay appeared the chief Kratem, preceded by the same stern master of ceremonies in black hat and brass buttons. The old man, whose head was white as snow, tottered painfully along, and could hardly step over the tall threshold, which here, as at Bonny town, bars the entrance of the house to the lower animals. Those who know him best, declare that his age cannot be under eighty, and even his sons are decrepid. He still showed signs of a powerful frame, deep and fleshy chest, no longer firm, large limbs with broad bones and ample extremities. His head was surmounted by a regular French casquette of blue broadcloth, profusely arabesqued with yellow braid, and his body garments were a silk loin-wrapper and an over-shirt of crimson cheecque of the same material. All who appeared before him knelt, and the snuff was put into his hand by a menial in the same humble position.

The interview was necessarily short: we had a long voyage before us. The consul was thus introduced: 'Dis he be we King Mouf, all same Beecrof?' which means that the person in question was an official entrusted with public affairs, &c. The commander was more easily made intelligible; 'manwár,' here, as in India, where the literati write منوار, being

known to everybody. After doing service, *i. e.* paying the usual compliments, congratulating the chief upon his name among white men, and renewing his 'book' by writing out a fresh certificate, the consul took leave, and promising on return to receive the little offering at Upper Uperájá, departed. The creek had by this time more water, and at 11:15 A.M.; the three gigs found themselves again off the place where the night had been passed.

The course lay to the east-

ward, where a point which we called Mangrove Bluff rises about five miles above Uperjá. Having now left the Escravos flowing westerly, and not having reached the Forçados or 'galley slaves,' the next débouchure, we found ourselves upon a kind of neutral water. According to the older books, El Broder or Brodero, generally pronounced Brodie, is the native name of the Escravos river. But the word is palpably not African, and it is here applied by the traders to that broad band of lagoon-like water which, as will be seen, connects the Escravos ultimately with the Ramos and the Wari rivers. It gathers, as it were, the waters from the several outlets that have received European names. The sea was nowhere sighted, the streams being everywhere land-locked, and the want of slope causes them to wind painfully to the voyager who knows that he may at once be within gunshot of, and two or three miles distant from, his destination.

After passing Mangrove Bluff, we saw on our right the line of the Forçados river flowing to the south. The mouth is known by the comparatively high ground on the east. At the distance of three miles from the entrance, according to bygone travellers, is the Palma island and town; here the Portuguese had a fort, a chapel, and several factories, which were abandoned on account of the insalubrity of the spot. It provokes our admiration to see how the voyagers of the olden time, in their wretched barks, despised bars, reefs, and shallows, which the moderns dare not affront. We now turned to the north-east, and passed a place where in Sheet xvii. 'Joe Creek' is placed. Formerly there was a town here, now it is reduced to three or four huts of people who dry fish. The site is favourable for a village: a high clay bank, with a fine spring of fresh water, and a grove of tall trees, not aquatic. Amongst them we found the shrub for which the river was first visited by our people. In 1553, Thomas Windham, under

command of Antonio Anes Pin-teado, of Porto, Portugal—by the bye, the latter was unmercifully bullied by the *insulaire bizarre*—opened trade for Malaguetta pepper with the Beninese. It appears still, in the shape of a cardamom, red and pyriform, and I have found several varieties of it on every part of the coast, from the Volta to Cape Lopez.

A waving reach of nine or ten miles led us past Acqua Creek to the mouth of the next river, the Ramos. It is a fine broad gap, opposite a tuft of tall mangroves, 'Thirteen Fathom Point,' such being the depth of water below it, whilst a little south-east of the river gap there is a long and dangerous shoal. Twelve more miles of very winding voyage led us, at 5:30 P.M., to the mouth of the Boat Creek. Here we temporarily left the Broder, which sweeps round by the north, and by following a south-east direction cut off the long bend. Where we quitted the Broder it appeared four hundred yards broad; it offers two clear fathoms to ships, but, as has been shown, there are sandbanks, and pilots are necessary.

The Boat Creek, which we named after our excellent guide, is at all times passable to gigs, and we carried the tide with us the whole way. The course is exceedingly winding, and it narrows so rapidly that paddles are soon required. In one place it is a mere ditch ten feet wide. The banks are muddy, with tall and scrub mangroves; near the south-eastern extremity, however, there appears at some distance from the margin, a semicircle of fine trees, showing hard dry ground. We emerged into the Broder from Henry Creek at 7 A.M., and guessed its length to be about seven miles.

The Government Krumen were now waxing tired. They have but little work on board, and are never in training, like their brothers of the oil-trade, who are in constant exercise. On the other hand, after a few days' work together, beef and rum, as might be expected, tell their tale. Under various pretexts we halted every half hour,

and many and loud were the complaints against the 'man for top'* and our hospitable guide. The latter had begun by informing us that from the Boat Creek's mouth to the factory it was two miles; presently it became six; and when we had finished the six there remained six more and even more. The object was of course to prevent our losing heart, and anchoring in the creek. Of this, however, we had no idea: the sandflies had raised by sunset time great burning lumps upon hand and face, and the mosquitoes were preparing to take their place. But the tide now running out like a sluice, gave us hard work. We rowed ten yards and we fell back four. The Krumen clamoured for supper, but as there was none for us it would not have been civil in them to satisfy their hunger.

The night waxed painfully dark: we could not distinguish the features of the upper river, which will therefore be touched upon when we return. At 11 P.M., we heard shots a-head; they proceeded from Dr. Henry, who began diligently to throw away gunpowder in salutes. A long half mile placed us abreast of a tall lone shed—Messrs. Harrison's factory, which rejoices in the name of 'Swamp Cage.' The agent, Mr. M'Math, was duly saluted with the loudest of tally-ho's. All, however, was dreary and ghostly till a single taper glimmered through a mist just deepening into rain. Another dreadfully tedious half-hour carried us across the stream to the mouth of a narrow creek; and presently, to our delight, we saw a blazing fire, and a tall house behind it. Landing upon a square platform of tree-trunks fitted like a log-cabin in the Far West—this contrivance, if filled with stones, would answer well as a river pier—we toiled up the ladder-like steps of the tenement. Our nighting-place was a large building of bamboos fitting into a framework of scantling and plankage, with mat windows, and a flying roof all in tatters. Mrs.

Brown, an Accra negress, and wife of the native agent, was house-keeper in charge. An Englishwoman would have bustled out, delighted to make the master as 'comfy' as possible: her African sister kept to her own dirty den; and during our two days' stay, we never once sighted charms which report declared to be more strictly concealed than was in any way needful.

Whilst the rest of the party sat down to supper, I turned in. These African drenchings seem to wet one to the bone, and they are followed by cold perspirations the reverse of enjoyable. Under the circumstances, the most advisable course is to get between a pair of blankets, not native, with all possible speed; and the stomach will next morning show its gratitude for having escaped loading at a time when its digestive powers are at their minimum.

That day's work was eleven hours; and at a modest computation the distance could not have been less than forty-six miles. Added to this thirty for the previous day, we obtain seventy-six miles as the indirect distance between the Benin River and the factories at Wari. Perhaps it may be eighty, but the usual computation—from a hundred to a hundred and ten miles—is certainly exaggerated.

The 10th of August was a Sunday, and the rain determined it to be a Day of Rest. Messages, however, were sent to the princes Chamwana and Nyaure, sons of Elúsá, requesting them to call, and they promised to do so on the morrow at 10 A.M., which necessarily they made 6 P.M. In the interim we had but little *passé temps* save to inspect the house and grounds. The factory lies E.S.E. of the Benin house, at a direct distance of about fifty miles. There is no town within sight; many settlements, however, are within hearing. The site is a clearing in the mangroves upon the right bank of a muddy creek; and nothing can equal the deadly dulness of

* 'Man for top' is good Anglo-African for the Lord of Heaven.

the view. The ground is virgin and highly fertile; a black mud, which shames the darkest soils of Guzerat, and the retiring waters expose beds of mire which, with a little working, might be made to produce anything. The African plum and the papaw seem to grow wild. The tobacco is excellent; the plant rises without topping three feet and a-half high, with large leaves, and a mild and mellow flavour. Dr. Henry has cultivated five acres of rice, a fine white grain, quite unlike the coarse red African. His example has not yet been followed by the natives. Of sugar-cane already twenty acres have been planted, and the growth would produce a hundred and twenty puncheons of rum (a hundred and twenty gallons each, and thirty-five over proof); such, at least, is the sanguine proprietor's estimate, from which we will not 'discount details.' The normal industry of the place is palm-oil, which comes chiefly from the Sobo country to the east and north. The natives rudely and wastefully stamp down the nut in canoes, and throwing in a little cold water, ladle out the oil. They have learned to prepare nut-oil, by breaking the stone, pounding the kernel, and draining off the produce, which is white as spermaceti. The 'black oil' of Yoruba, I should warn the reader, is in substance the same; but in this case the kernel is half burned, and the proceeds are allowed to drip into a hole below. The natives, who must break the hard nuts by hand labour, dislike the work; consequently, in some places the land appears paved with palm-nut stones, which feet polish till they look like knobs of metal. Europeans have, of course, invented mills; none of them appear, however, to be a great success. This branch of trade was first started about twenty-five years ago by Mr. Ralph Dawson, a West African merchant, who, naturally enough, was well laughed at: in more modern times, Mr. Robert Hedlle, of Sierra Leone, introduced to the public the possibility of so making money. At present 500—

600 tons, each worth £13—£15, are annually sent to Liverpool. Not including four in the shell, the kernel has fifty-three per cent. of fatty matter—in fact, proportionably more than the pericarp; and the residue, when chemists shall have taught us to cake it, will be worth £4 per ton. Nine tons of stones give two tons of kernels, and two tons of kernels give but one ton of oil: it is not, therefore, worth while to import them unhusked. Mat-bags are better than boxes for exporting the produce, as the air passes through them, preventing rancidity.

The Sabbath evening concluded with loud salvos of six-pounders. A war had been threatened between Chamwana and a younger brother Ogúra. These discharges announced that the palaver had 'set.' Such squabbles are about as interesting as the wars of certain Maxwells and Johnstones; but the sequels are more exciting and picturesque in Africa than in the Land of Cakes. The peace will probably be a death-blow to sundry poor devils of slaves. The ferocious custom of the country is, on occasions of ending war, to bury the victims up to the neck in earth, and after Canidian fashion, to let them starve when the modicum of food and water placed within reach is exhausted.

The Sabbath night was not rendered pleasant by the bass croaking of huge bull-frogs that formed antichorus to the rattling treble of the small green tenor, Rana Pipiens.

Monday was a somewhat more satisfactory day. A breakfast of palm-oil, chop, and occro (*H. esculentus*) soup was forwarded by the 'Wari lawyer' Nyaure, who, like his elder brother, had promised a visit at 10 A.M. Noon, however, and mid-afternoon had sped, and no prince came. They were said to be sleeping their siesta: a valid apology, as all these people, after meals, which may include a bottle of rum, fall into a kind of lethargy like that of Hernan Cortez in his latter days. We then resolved to visit the town of Wari, and we left

a message that if the tardy descendants of Elusá were disposed to see us they might follow us, but that at all events 8 A.M. on the next morning would witness our return towards the Benin River.

At 3:30 P.M. we descended the narrow creek, beautified with large white lilies that had escaped our notice during the night. There was the usual calico sheet at the mouth. Six hundred yards of winding line led us to the main river—the Wari—which here might be two hundred and fifty yards broad. We passed upon the right a ledge of clear ground and a skeleton house, which had often been built to very little purpose. It was the work of one European trader upon ground granted by the princes to another: consequently the roof had ever continued falling in some mysterious way till the place was abandoned. Another three hundred yards introduced us to a creek like that which we had left; it was an affluent of the main stream and came also from the east. The tide was out, and the mud-ledges now showed two feet in height. We were about to quit the main stream of the Wari river, which Mr. Beecroft discovered to be a highway into the Niger, and which is still an open entrance. It sets off, however, below the hostile villages, whose gauntlet the Nigerian traveller has consequently still to run. The point of bifurcation with the main branch is below the town of Aboh in 5° 27' N. Lat. The little steamer *Ethiopia* that saved the *Albert* in 1841 did not, however, enter the Wari by our line above described; she passed through the New Town Creek of the Benin, a place hereafter to be alluded to.

About half way up 'Wari Creek' we passed the village of Orubo; the usual mass of huts with clay walls brightly yellow, neat roofs and pools of black mire—quite Hibernian, of the more comfortable stamp. The background was a splendid wall of towering trees, some of them the most graceful I had seen in this portion of the Nigerian Delta. Several canoes were drawn and half drawn up

the mud-bank, and the villagers, dressed in their brightest cottons, huddled together staring at us. After forty minutes' paddling, we left the main creek which, anastomosing with another from above, makes a small island, and turning from south-east to a small branch running east, we sighted the town of Wari.

Wari—also called Warri, Owari, Owerree, Awerri, Owheyre, and many other names—is known to the people as 'Jakri.' The town, once the capital of a powerful kingdom, has ever claimed independence. Bosman relates, 'Upon one of these branches (of the Benin river) the Portuguese have a lodge and a church at the town of Awerri, which is governed by its particular and independent king, who doth not treat the king of Great Benin any otherwise than as his neighbour and ally.' So in the present day the King of Benin has repeatedly summoned the princes of Wari to his capital, but they have refused to visit it. The settlement lies S.S.E., and about eighty indirect and fifty direct miles from the Benin River; it is some 7-10 miles distant from the sea, whose roaring can be heard distinctly. The position is an island 4-5 miles in circumference, and it lies upon the southern side of a cross creek about fifty yards broad. The foundation is a clay bank raised a few feet from the water. Books inform us that in former times the island was well cultivated and had 'much of the appearance of an extensive park.' To Captain Adams it appeared as if it had dropped down from the clouds, for all the surrounding shores consist of an impenetrable forest rising out of a swamp. During the days of the late king the bush and grass were carefully cleared away; at present all is foul and neglected. Again, we read that the town consists of 'two parts divided from each other by about half a mile;' now there is no such separation; the frontage is long and straggling, and the depth shows only scattered tenements. Finally, the population is set down at 5000. I would reduce

it to one half. Some of the buildings are large, and compared with the Ejo towns, substantial; the walls are of stiff clay, and they are plastered with a reddish ochre, which looks well.

The people seemed at first not quite to like our coming; and though unarmed, they gathered rather suspiciously together. However, we landed, and were met upon the mud by 'Ebewa,' one of the principal traders in the place. He welcomed us with the usual Addo!—to which we replied Do! He then resumed Do, and we then rejoined Do—and so on for some time, in fact till both parties were satisfied. It is said to mean 'Are you well?' Some Europeans, however, believe it to be a corruption of 'How d'ye do?' This would be truly a triumph to the rude Kunic of which it was said of old,

Beneath the tropic is our language spoke.

But could it ever have aspired to be used in the delta of the Niger as neutral ground by the natives, who, not understanding each other's dialects, salute each other with an English 'How de doo?'

Ebewa, a short stout man, somewhat light in colour, led us to his house, seated us upon mats in the verandah, sent for some execrable English brandy—he is a thrifty fellow, who prefers poor drink and full coffers to champagne, a palace, and poverty—and introduced us to his 'son.' The son was a fine young person not without prettiness, and she carried on hip a prize baby, a most 'doody' thing, to quote the 'little language,' whose white skin gave a clue to its paternity.

After delivering some details touching the stoppage of trade, and lamenting its necessity, the Consul proposed a walk to see the remains of the Portuguese mission, which Ebewa after some demur consented to show.

According to Father Jerom Merolla da Sorrento, in his 'Voyage to Congo and several other countries, chiefly in Southern Africa,* two Capuchin missionaries—Fathers Bonaventura da Firenze and Angelo Maria d'Ajaccio—sailed from the Island of St. Thomas. They entered the Forçados River, and settling at Wari,† which they call 'the kingdom of Ouveri,' converted many of the natives. In a future page I shall recount more of their adventures. No local tradition touching this mission remains; it certainly disappeared before 1840, as there are traders in the Benin River dating from that time. The last slaves were exported in 1838. The town, however, shows signs of their presence in old iron carronades half embedded in the ground. According to Europeans the Capuchin mission was extensive. Some few years ago there were remnants of three several religious houses, and two large cemeteries. Captain Adams, who visited the town of Wari early in the present century, found several emblems of the Catholic religion and remains of religious edifices.

The path led south through scattered compounds into fields of grass, where deep sheets of black mire rendered walking a toil. Some bitter-orange trees and a few limes were the only signs of

* The good father was a capuchin and apostolic missionary in the year 1682. His work, which is minute and valuable, was first 'made English from the Italian' in Churchill's collection, vol. i. p. 521. I borrow from Pinkerton's general collection, &c., vol. 16.

† They were not, as the Directory says (p. 409), the 'first persons that attempted to introduce Christianity into equatorial Africa.' Father Merolla mentions (p. 302, ed. cit.), Father Francis da Montaleone, father-superior of St. Thomas; Father Francis da Romano, superior in the kingdom of Wari; and also that a new mission had been established at Benin. The dates are also wrong. The fathers are said to have visited Wari in 1683; whereas it is clear from Merolla (p. 304), who was on the coast in 1682, that they were there before he was. 'Until our coming into this part of Ethiopia,' says the latter author, 'these kingdoms had not seen the face of any other missionary; and every time any ship came to anchor in their harbours, the natives would ask the seamen if they had any capuchin on board.'

Europeans having been there. Like the Ejos, the people of Wari will not cultivate anything; they depend for the necessaries of life entirely upon their neighbours. The subsoil was a reddish greasy clay, well fitted for pottery. In more than one place we saw a kiln—an open space shown only by heaps of ashes and embers half consumed in the open air. Such work can hardly produce a good article; the earthen pots, even after burning, looked half raw, and I doubt not had little coherence. Yet the trade is extensive, and dates from many years; old travellers mention it as the special industry of Wari. After a few minutes we reached the ruins of a house belonging to one Okodoko, an influential trader, who, after making himself particularly obnoxious to Europeans, has settled in the Bateri Creek. From that point we visited several houses that had belonged to the late king Elusá and his sons; our leader was Dr. Henry, who remembered Wari in its palmy days; then turning westwards, were led by Ebewa to a place where once 'tick he 'tand,' and a pantomime showed that the stick in question was a cross. He was manifestly 'exercised' by our curiosity, and as usual his inquisitiveness took a bad turn. These natives of the Niger delta are at once the most suspicious, unconfiding, and treacherous race in West Africa; they cannot look upon a new thing without an insane fear of its consequences.

At length, when giving up the search in despair, I caught sight of a tall crucifix close to Ebewa's house. It still bore a crown of thorns, in bronze, nailed to the centre, where the arms meet the body, and a rude M of the same material was fastened to the lower upright. It had, however, no date. Singularly wild and strange this emblem arose from a thicket of grass surrounded by dense jungle, with a typical dead tree in front. Native huts were here and there peeping over the bush, and hard by stood the usual Juju house, a dwarf shed of tattered matting, garnished with an apron

of tarnished white calico:—suggestive signs of the difficulties with which the Cross has to contend in these lands where nature runs riot, and where all is rank as the spirit of man—difficulties against which it has fought a good fight, but hitherto with signal failure!

'A large wooden cross,' says Captain Adams, 'which had withstood the tooth of time, was remaining in a very perfect state, in one of the angles formed by two roads intersecting each other.' To this, Dr. Daniell adds, 'vestiges of the building and ancient reliques may still be seen; but the cross, when I visited the spot, had wholly disappeared.' The reader will observe that we saw just the contrary.

Hard by the crucifix was a mound of solid earth, whose tread told us that it was a place of sepulture. But of these reverend men, these Nigerian martyrs, it may be truly said, 'Time hath corroded their epitaphs and buried their very tombstones.' Not a sign of them appeared, save a bit of blanched and weathered skull. Yet they have had their reward. They laboured through life at a labour of love, expecting the pleasing toil to end in eternal repose. And the good which they did lives after them. At Wari we saw none of the abominations which afterwards met our eyes in the city of Benin.

I conclude this part of the subject with a pleasant story from Father Merolla.

The vice superior Father Angelo Maria d'Ajaccio, of the province of Corsica, together with Father Bonaventura da Firenze, having but just set footing in the kingdom of Ouveri, they were very courteously received by that king. This prince was better bred than ordinary, having been brought up amongst the Portuguese, whose language he was an absolute master of, and could, besides, write and read, a qualification unusual among these Ethiopian princes. Almost at the first sight of the king, the vice superior broke out into these words: 'If your Majesty does desire to have me to continue within your dominions, you must lay your injunctions on your subjects that they embrace the holy state of matrimony, according to our rites and cere-

monies; and, moreover, that whereas now the young men and women go naked till they are marriageable, I desire your Majesty to command that they may all go covered.' To which the king answered, 'that as to what related to his subjects, he would take care they should comply with his request; but as for himself, he could never consent to do it, unless he were married to a White, as some of his predecessors had been.* But what White would care to marry with a Black, even though he were a crowned head, especially among the Portuguese who naturally despise them? Nevertheless, the pious Father, trusting in God's providence to promote his own glory, gave no repulse to the obstinate monarch, but seemed to approve of all he said. To bring this good work to effect, he immediately departed, taking his way towards the island of St. Thomas, situate under the equinoctial line, and reckoned one of the nine countries conquered by the Portuguese in Africa. There he made it his business to inquire after a White woman that would marry a Black that was a crowned head. Whereupon he was informed that there was one in that island, though of mean condition, whose poverty and meanness were nevertheless ennobled by a virtuous education and a comely personage. Notwithstanding he was told that this woman was proper for the purpose, yet he had not the courage to speak to her uncle about her, under whose care and protection she was; but contriving how to bring about his design, with a lively faith in God, one day while he was saying mass, he turned himself about to the aforesaid personage, conjuring him, in the presence of all the people, in the name, and for the service of the most high God, not to deny him one request, which was, that he would let his niece marry the king of Oueroi, which would greatly contribute to, if not totally effect the conversion of that kingdom. At the hearing of this, that good man being wrought upon by the pious missionary's reasons, could not prevent weeping, and bowing down his head as a token of his consent.

The young lady not long afterwards,

* The same desire was expressed by H. M. of Dahomey, according to Mr. Bulfinch Lamb, who was a captive at Abomey in 1724. 'If there is any cast-off woman, either white or mulatto, that can be persuaded to come to this country, either to be his (viz., the king Trudo Audati) wife, or else practise her old trade, I should gain his majesty's heart entirely by it, and he would believe anything I say about my going and returning again with more white men from the company.' And again, 'When I came here first, the Portuguese had a mulatto . . . whom his majesty used with abundance of good manners, continually giving her presents. He gave her two women and a girl to wait on her.'—(Forbes' *Dahomy and the Dahomians*, vol. i. pp. 190, 191.)

having first taken leave of her relations, set out with some few Portuguese, and the missionary, for the aforesaid kingdom.

Being just entered the confines, she was joyfully and universally saluted by the people for their queen, having triumphal arches raised to her, and several other demonstrations of joy paid her by the inhabitants.

Being arrived at the king's palace, she was received by that monarch like another Rachel by Jacob, Esther by Ahasuerus, or Artemisia by Mausolus; and afterwards married by him after the Christian manner, thereby giving a good example to his subjects, who soon forsook their former licentious principles, and submitted to be restrained by the rules of the Gospel, that is, were all married according to the rites and ceremonies of the church.

After four years mission into these parts, the aforesaid two Fathers transported themselves into the island of St. Thomas, partly to proceed further in the duties of their office, and partly to oblige the king, who commanded it. This good intention of theirs, it seems, the devil envied, for he raised up a certain ecclesiastical person there against them, who extremely envied our two missionaries. This person had been accustomed before their arrival, to go every six months to the kingdom of Oueroi to baptize that people, which brought him in the profit of a slave a month, and another from the king, in consideration of his charge and trouble; but now finding himself deprived of this gain for four years, he, together with others not well affected to religion, raised the cruellest persecutions against these poor Fathers that could possibly have been thought on. He accused them to the Governor of the island for enemies to the crown of Portugal, and that they travelled about those countries with false passes; and, moreover, that to his knowledge, and his hearing, they had debauched the minds of the King and Queen of Oueroi, and, besides, held correspondence with the enemies of the Portuguese dominions. All this the Governor heard patiently, yet did not immediately resolve to have these innocent Fathers seized;

whereupon one of those that had accompanied the Queen to Oueroi, said to him, 'Take care, my lord, of what you do, lest, apprehending these apostolical missionaries, you create a difference between the crown of Portugal and the See of Rome. We are much obliged to these holy men for raising our countrywoman to a crown.' The Governor would not meddle with these holy men, but ordered them to be sent to Loanda, where there were likewise great complaints made against them by the aforesaid priest and his adherents.

Hence they were sent to the tribunal at Lisbon, where, being declared innocent, in that they had sufficient authority from the crown for what they had acted, their accusers were cited to appear to make good, if they could, their allegations; which not being able to do, the chief calumniator, the ecclesiastic, fled to Brazil, and the others to other places for protection.

Father Bonaventura da Firenze, on account of his great indispositions, returned to Italy; but Father Angelo Maria directed his course anew towards the island of St. Thomas, where, having performed the part of a good missionary and a good Christian, teaching by his exemplary life what his tongue omitted, he returned after some time to Lisbon, and died there.

Having finished our pilgrimage, we rejoined Ebewa, who anxiously inquired why we 'look dem 'tick.' We represented that white men like black men visit the graves of their ancestors, and he was compelled to rest contented with the explanation. After reaching the village and assuring the people once more that there was no palaver, *i.e.*, no quarrel, with Wari, we shook hands with sire and 'son,' bade good-bye, and mounted on man's-back.

Scarcely were the oars out before a large canoe, manned by a score of pullaboys, came charging up the creek. It proved to be the vehicle of Chamwana, who, having now finished his slumbers, bethought himself of his visit. Leaving word that he might follow us to the factory, we rowed down with the tide, and after fifty minutes reached our temporary home, the world turning dark and we hungry.

The younger brother, Nyaure, presently appeared in his equipage and the palaver came up. I will

not describe it; in fact it is indescribable. The immenso loquacity displayed by the expecting negro, who loves to ventilate his eloquence, and his vicious taciturnity when expected to speak, the surprising stupidity of some remarks and the excessive acuteness of others, the artful special pleading and the incautious admissions of the pleader, the ambitious comparison of himself with the white man, and the confession of an unlimited inferiority when he gains by it, the extra cunning which always overreaches itself, and the sound good sense, and, finally, the looks, the bye-talks, the remarks of attendants and the hard drinking—Nyaure never dropped his calabash tube of palm wine—these contrasts and conditions form a picture that must be seen to be understood. The palaver, however, ended at 9 P.M., the elder brother refusing to interfere in Benin affairs, and the younger, who throughout had proved his right to the title 'Wari lawyer,' being a trifle more pert and impudent than Mr. Bo**ll, Q.C., and undertook the attempt under protest of being a 'small boy.' Primogeniture is greatly respected in these lands as far as appearances go; but here, as elsewhere, the younger rarely loses an opportunity of stepping into an elder brother's shoes.

After a late dinner, thoroughly tired of 'talkee talkee,' we retired to rest, declining sundry extra polite offers made *en partant* by the princes. The people of Wari and Benin are touchy about and jealous of their wives even with foreigners, and amongst themselves fighting always follows a suspicion of dishonour. On the other hand they are no less free with the other members of the family, sisters and daughters, and they appear to take offence if these ornaments of the house are not duly admired. We were often signalled to by the men of the villages, who nodded significantly to dark apartments: it is unnecessary to say that the offers were politely declined.

The next day—Tuesday, the 12th August—was fixed upon for our

departure; the Consul had said 9 A.M., and he intended adhering to it. Exactly at ten minutes after that time we entered the gig, and presently issued out into the Wari River. We halted a few minutes with Dr. M'Math of Swamp Cage, and fortified ourselves with bitter ale against a day that threatened to be alternately fiery and watery. At 10'30 A.M. we took leave of our hospitable entertainer, who insisted upon sending us a viaticum of two dozen of beer, and we set out upon our return voyage.

We had missed the tide by about two hours, and suffered accordingly. At first it was slack, then it came up against us; during the whole time we had hardly any of it in our favour. The light of day, however, enabled us to observe objects which lay hid during the darkness of our ascent. Nearly opposite Swamp Cage is the creek leading to Nyauré's village, an unpretending adit which a stranger would never notice. Below that we passed some superior sites for houses and settlements, where the raised clay banks supported the palm and the bombax. About ten miles down the Wari River led us to a fork where the broadening stream parts to the north-west and the south-east. The former was our line. The latter, which is about half a mile wide, is named Ijiri. According to some, it joins the Ramos River; others declare that after three days it strikes the Nun or Niger above the Akassa Creek. Passing that mouth, we were once more in the stream called by traders the Broder, and found the water dead against us, on the same principle that it was for us in the Wari River. Before leaving the Broder for Henry Creek we halted to admire the fine clump of forest that leads to the entrance—a mound of vegetation capped with huge cones of green, like a dozen churchyard yews in one, tall graceful cottonwoods, begirt with lianas sized like goodly trees, and various palms, all upstruggling excelsior to catch a sight of the glorious sun.

It was nearly 1 P.M. before we

entered the Boat Creek, and here we halted for a time to collect some 'sauce-wood,' which was afterwards sent to England for analysis. Poison ordeals are customary in these regions; but the accused must visit the City of Great Benin, where and where only the Fetish is strong enough to administer such mysteries. Two kinds of bark are used, that of the young and that of the old tree, the latter not being so virulent. A *quant. suff.* is beaten up with water, which is strained off after standing half an hour; at the end of that time a quid of the fibre and a palmful of the juice are administered to the accused. If he return it he is innocent, if not he is condemned; guilt thus depends not upon the brains of a jury, but upon strength of stomach pure and simple. The idea here, as in other parts of Africa, is, that the drug acts as an intelligent agent, which searches out and finds man's mortal sin. It is remarked that, as a rule, rich men escape where poor men die; moreover, that when a man has vomited, the priest administers a restorative which removes all traces of the operation. Perhaps it is fair to suspect that their reverences have some imitation of the bark which deceives the vulgar.

We expected to see Uperájá at 4 P.M., and wasted time in bathing the Krumen; but we reckoned without our host. The tide, which ran against us like a mill race till the middle of the Boat Creek, then turned in our favour; but it did not last long. As we advanced, the day, which had disclosed glimpses of a burning sun, ended in gloom: lightning gleamed in the east, and black clouds rose rain-fraught from the south-west. A strong wind blew down heavy showers, but wetted us with the mimic waves which surged upon the broad Broder. Opposite the mouth of the Forçados the guiding boat halted to gather some *Amonum Granum Paradisi* growing upon the high right bank. We held our way, and after a good twelve hours of gig we made Uperájá at 10'45 P.M. It is fa-

tiguing work in these latitudes, with cramp in the lower limbs, an overpowering want of sleep, and a general 'fidgetiness' which cannot be relieved.

At Uperájá all was dark. The village slept. The chief Olumájá was on a visit of condolence to his papa Kratem, who had just lost one of his children, and the usual ceremonial was beginning—it would last a week. The Ejomen being all free, their funerals are long, mainly limited, in fact, by the wealth of the departed. The wake consists of drinking rum, drumming, dancing, and 'playing'—in the sense of Sardanapalus the son of Anacyndaraxis his inscription—for seven nights and three days; after that it is kept up every third or fourth day until the month expires. Six guns are fired at dawn and sunset; also at mid-day, if the obsequies be those of a very great man. There are, however, no human sacrifices or customs, properly so called, in this tribe; these barbarities are unknown except on occasions of settling important palavers.

We had resolved to rise early on the morrow and to make Benin before the night fell. Again a disappointment. Wednesday was a frightful specimen of Nigerian weather—a form of dysclimatism which even England cannot often show. Sultry, steaming, pouring a rain cold and thick as a Scotch mist, the elements fought spitefully against us. Headlands and distant heights stood out, making six miles seem two; now the palpable became obscure and the dim invisible. We resigned ourselves to our fates, fortified the boats with mats and rain awnings, ate an excellent breakfast of yam and fowl soup, 'liquored' up, and awaited a break. Old Kratem, who could not visit us, sent a bullock, a goat, and several baskets of the local potato. These *dashes* were brought by sundry swells in glazed black nautical hats, heavy cloth and big bone-buttoned coats smiting their ankles, and pink or rainbow-coloured umbrellas—that being the

whole toilette. It is a constant mortification in these lands, the hideousness of one's so-called fellow-creatures. They must also deform deformity by their barbarous hankering after the cast-off finery of Europe: Royal Marines' swallowtails, beadles' great-coats, and the sky-blue tiles of masquerade. What a contrast to the picturesque and beautiful costumes of Asia—the turban, the haik, and the burnus!

The day continued to be most tantalizing, with heavy showers and transient rainbows in the cloudy sky. We gradually put off our departure from nine A.M. till three P.M. At exactly a quarter of an hour after the latter time we found ourselves pushing through wind and watery air towards the bluff Mangrove Point bearing N.N.E. from Uperájá, and forming the western buttress of the Escravos, where it bends to the westward before falling into the sea. We reached the mouth of Alágwá Tiyá, the short cut, at 5 P.M., and easily found it by the low mangroves on its right bank. The tide, before against us, was now with us—the result of an outpouring of the upper waters, which were still uninfluenced by the flow; soon, however, the current turned against us to some effect. The direct distance—fifteen miles—was nearly doubled by the windings, and the way seemed interminable, because at almost every turn clear fringes of mangrove on the banks deluded us by a glimpse of sky into expecting an end. Then darkness fell upon us like a thunder-cloud, and the rain-awning, which we resolved to retain, gave us anxious thoughts. The angularity of the bed was excessive, 90° being a common case, and the shadows Cimmerian, without even the sickly gleam which usually appears upon the surface of still waters. It was 10 P.M. before we emerged from this tunnel-work of mangroves into the broad Bateri; and 11'30 P.M. had sped before we gratefully found ourselves on board H.M.S. ship *Bloodhound*.

follow on my departure. And so even hospitality has become a sham amongst us. The system is universally condemned, and yet every individual contributes his mite towards its maintenance, so easy it is to lay the blame anywhere but on the right shoulders, and so very difficult to get at people's real selves. Gentlemen affect the tastes and manners of grooms; delicate girls try hard to be as masculine as possible; shopwomen and valets are, in their own and in newspaper estimation, ladies and gentlemen; and the daughters of petty farmers leave their plainer mothers to carry the butter to market, while they remain at home to practise the piano. Brown, Esq., whose establishment boasts of a boy in buttons, feels something akin to contempt for his neighbour, Green, Esq., who only keeps a parlour-maid; but meanwhile he is nigh bursting with envy and uncharitableness on remarking a footman in plush unmentionables standing at the door of Robinson, Esq. Thenceforward he strives to keep up the same appearances on his few hundreds per annum that the other does upon as many thousands. He entertains, because 'everybody does it'; because all the requisite things can be hired when they are not actually owned, as only one style of dinners is tolerated in good society, no matter its cost. The feast itself is a mere sham, according to Dr. Wynter, who has helped to show us how the old-fashioned notion that 'an Englishman's word is his bond,' no longer holds good in these days of adulterations.

We feed upon poisons, and are nevertheless surprised at the increase of strange and dire diseases in the land! We are clad in sham goods, for pure silk and wool are almost numbered with the past; and cotton reigns paramount instead. Wherefore, as 'it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good,' it is to be hoped that if American squabbles produce a scarcity in the cotton market, those persons who are able and willing to pay high prices may have a chance of obtaining genuine articles for their money. We are thus made to purchase various shams *volentes volentes*, but where the *volens* prevails afterwards in the making up, and sham ornaments are superadded, I denounce the guilty parties without mercy. I even believe that to a certain extent our very manners are shams, particularly when we come in contact with our superiors in the social scale, and attempt to cut a dash in the eyes of our less favoured every-day companions. Also when we are most studiously polite in our behaviour and speech, I greatly fear that sham is too often lurking in the background; but who would have the moral courage to confess the sad fact? Yet if there were a little more simplicity and honesty, right feeling and thinking, in the world, how much more happily affairs in general would progress!

One thing, however, is certain, and it is, that I have written with an honest purpose, in the endeavour to expose shams, and induce others to avoid them as I do myself. Who, then, will say that this paper does not contain truth?

E. C. G.



FRASER'S MAGAZINE.

MARCH, 1863.

MY WANDERINGS IN WEST AFRICA.

A VISIT TO THE RENOWNED CITIES OF WARI AND BENIN.

BY AN F.R.G.S.

PART II.—THE RENOWNED CITY OF BENIN.

ON Friday, the 15th of August, I accompanied the consul and Dr. Henry on a return visit to the chief Ifyá, who alone had had the courage to call upon the white man. After an early breakfast we set out at 8 A.M., and with a flowing tide rowed merrily up the river some three or four miles. We then turned into a mangrove-ditch which opens on the right bank: it is nameless, the situation being marked only by scrub and girdled trees charred and half consumed by fire. There is nothing peculiar in the scenery. The usual panorama of bristling mangroves, muddy water, mire banks, and fierce flies. A few hundred yards of pushing and poking through this natural sewer led us to the wharf, which the travelled Mr. Joe, who acts 'mouf,' or interpreter, to the chief, facetiously compared with the miles of docks that form the pride of Liverpool. The landing-place is at the head of the creek, which dries up at low tides; the mud is knee deep; and the debarkation is defended by a few rusty old carronades, whose muzzles are protected with a tin plate acting apron.

The jolly old party came out to meet us, gourd in hand. He was striving with his morning drink of palm-wine. The life of 'native gentlemen' in these rivers consists of rising with the sun, drinking, snuffing, and smoking till the 10 o'clock breakfast, a heavy siesta,

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and an honest debauch for the rest of the day, interrupted only by supper about sunset. The whites imitate them to a certain extent. In the early morning a *trabucho por la mañana*, with bitters to keep out fever, is necessary; at breakfast, pale-ale or claret must support exhausted nature; twelve o'clock is 'made' somewhat earlier than usual—say 10 A.M.—on account of the cold with which thin drinks affect the stomach; and from that time the 'monkey' is 'sucked' till bed hour. But in one point the savage has the pull of the civilized; he has an abundance of wives, and thus he needs neither to labour nor to want.

Ifyá, who was, as usual, half tipsy, acknowledged the honour of a call by loud laughs of pleasure, and led his guests to his own house, a mass of huts in nowise superior to the other 'tatterdemalions' in the village. Dwarf settles were placed in the shade, and on the roughest of naked tables were marshalled jugs of water, bottles of trade brandy and gin, palm-wine in calabashes, and similar 'mats.' There was but little palaver. The cunning senior threw out a variety of suggestions, humbly submitting that the *Bloodhound* might leave the river, and just restore a little confidence to the people; that the consul would perhaps meet Governor Jerry at some factory on neutral ground, and much of the same kind, which.

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was of course rejected. He ended, however, by doing what was mainly wanted, detaching a special servant as guide and interpreter to Gwato. Mr. Joe, his pet linguist, was at the time suffering from a foot that called for lunar caustic; and these people, like those of the Gold Coast, when once laid up, are long sick.

After the visit, the consul proceeded, with Dr. Henry, on a melancholy expedition. The path led through a deep shady forest, based upon sand, thinly veiled with vegetable humus, and at a depth of three feet water appeared. This, combined with the burning sun, explains its exceptional fertility, which is attested by the luxuriance of the little plots acting plantations. No one looking at the dense mangrove forests lining the river-banks in these Nigerian regions, would suppose such ground to lie immediately behind them; and yet these are the habitation places of a numerous population. The soil would grow almost all vegetables; and if it could be substituted for the mud of the water-side, it would make, with a few avenues, an admirable promenade.

We walked a mile in a northerly direction, over a path so tortuous and intricate that we appeared to be travelling southwards. At length we came upon a second village, built near another, and a larger creek. The Tebbu, as it is called, connects the Lagos waters with those of the Benin, and falls into the latter at a headland which shows a little higher up than Ifyá's ditch. The principal industry of the settlement seemed to be salt collected from mangrove ashes, strained, boiled in iron cauldrons, and stored in large baskets of bamboo splints. Before use it is evaporated in earthen pots till crystals develop themselves. The taste is offensively bitter, like bad gunpowder; still the people put up with it. Here, as in Abyssinia, it is said of a rich man, 'he eats salt,' and yet the wretches live upon the shores of the Atlantic.

Embarking in a cranky canoe, whose sole merit was the spoon-

shaped prow, which greatly facilitates landing on mud, we ascended the Tebbu Creek. It was a sad specimen of Africa: everywhere broken walls and desolate heaps of blackened clay in a thick bush, showed that the hand of the destroyer had been there. But a few months ago it was a flourishing commercial village, which gave its name to the water, and the chief Alaba was own brother to our merry host, Ifyá. Alaba collected some sixteen hundred men, and attacked the fraternal village one fine evening, expecting to surprise it. The plan was defeated by a woman, who happened to be in the bush. Old Ifyá at first armed his boys with sticks and cutlasses only. But when the assailants fired a volley of twenty-five muskets, killing one man and wounding several, he handed out the guns, primed his fellows with rum—they are perfect cowards when sober, and incarnate fiends when drunk—and after fighting through the night, drove his enemies into the creek. Many were killed, and their village was burned and razed to the ground.

A few yards, rich in such memories, led us up the water, and presently we arrived at a clear spot, upon which appeared two huts. One was a mere shed intended for the men on guard. The other was a matted square of whitewashed boarding, in which the remains of an unfortunate Englishwoman were placed provisionally until removal to England. The tomb, like those of whites in general, must be protected night and day, or it would be rifled for very wantonness, if not for the sake of the grave-clothes.

After sketching the melancholy scene, the consul and Dr. Henry bade adieu to it, and returned home.

It had been resolved upon to attempt a diversion by visiting the King of Great Benin, whose 'Fetish' is so powerful that the whole river obeys him—we found that it did obey his father—in fear and trembling. There was some little delay caused by the apprehensions of Europeans. Benin city

has often been visited by white men since the days of Messrs. Moffat and Smith,* in 1838. The older travellers, Bosman and Adams, always speak lightly of the courtesy with which the deity-king, 'despite his fine attributes,' treated his visitors. Of late, however, they have not been received over civilly. According to accounts, the last traders who made the journey had been ordered to kneel before the king, and on refusal had been threatened with force: others declared that the whites had assumed the privilege of the De Courcys in the royal presence, and that they had been treated with contumely, as they deserved. Some affirmed that the kinsmen of the party had violated the sanctity of the king's harem, and that the masters, after some detention, had fled during the night, and had narrowly escaped a flight of poisoned arrows. It is hardly necessary to say, that all these romantic tales rested upon the smallest basement of fact. Messrs. C— and S— attempted to cut their visit too short to suit African conveniences, and when official dismissal was refused to them, they left the city during the hours of darkness.

A party was soon formed, the consul, the commander, and Messrs. Henry and Z. being the members. Provisions and liquor for ten days were made ready, and the necessary presents were prepared and packed in matting. At 9 A.M. on Saturday, the 16th August, three gigs left the factories, and proceeded to thread the river's course. There was little to observe except the various creeks which opened out

on both hands, but all of them similar to the Bateri on the left, and Tebbu on the right of the stream. Before noon they were opposite the Ardábrássá, called Lago on our charts, probably because it is the direct road to Lagos. Its entrance is denoted by the furthest bluff point on the right side of the river seen from the entrance; the breadth of the mouth is about six hundred yards, and there are two little holms, or cays, standing sentinel before it. On our right hand, after the Bateri, we passed three creeks leading into the Escravos river. At noon we turned from our easterly course—it varied from 60° to 80°—and stood northward into the Gwato Creek, which is also guarded by a little cay. The distance from Lemnos was about 14.50 miles, and allowing 5.50 miles from the mouth of the Benin river to the factory, the forking takes place at a distance of twenty miles. On the other side, about a mile and a half higher up, lies New Town, Young Town, or Egro, and its creek, which communicates with the waters of the Wari, and eventually with the Nun, or Niger. Through this New Town, or Wari, branch, Mr. Beecroft, in 1840, succeeded in reaching the Kwara, or Niger, at a point of bifurcation with its Nun branch, a short way below the town of Abo. Higher up again, but on the same side, is Rejo, more classically written Reggio, from the name of old Elúsá's father.

From the Gwato creek the main river turned a little south of due east (100° magnetic); its course,

* Messrs. Moffat and Smith were surgeons of Mr. Jamieson's schooner, the *Waree*, then lying in the Benin river. In May, 1838, they went to the city of Benin, wishing to open, or rather to re-open, trade at Gwato, and they seem to have failed. Mr. Smith, a 'very promising young man,' died of dysentery caught by being drenched with rain between Gwato and Benin. — See *Journal Royal Geographical Society*, vol. ii. (1841) p. 190.

† These distances are reckoned from a sketch survey made during the trip. Usually Dr. Henry's factory is placed six or seven miles from the mouth of the Benin river, and the Gwato entrance is placed eighteen or twenty miles from the factory.

The *Sailing Directory* (p. 405) places Gwato creek three leagues (nine miles) from the entrance of the river, whilst New Town, which is but 1.50 miles above it, is said to be six leagues. The rise of the tide in the river is not seven feet (p. 407), but under five.

however, will presently be from the north-east. Curious to say, not a man in the river knew anything concerning the upper waters, which renders a reference to the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* (vol. ii. p. 184) advisable.

In April, 1840, Mr. Beecroft, in command of Mr. Jamieson's schooner, the *Ethiophe*, ascended the Formoso—erroneously called in his paper the Fermo; the ship's company consisting of fifteen Europeans, including officers, medical men, an engineer, and seamen, with a full complement of Krumen and interpreters, among whom was Mina, who had accompanied Captain Clapperton and Lander.

For about forty miles from the sea,* including windings, he found the Formoso a fine bold river, with from six to three fathoms water.

At this point a division took place, both branches proving to be highly tortuous, and much narrower than the main trunk of the river, but having a depth of not less than three fathoms, so far as the steamer was able to ascend them. This Mr. Beecroft computed to be from forty to fifty miles on the one (*i. e.*, the northern branch), and from sixty to seventy miles on the other, including windings. His further progress was obstructed at these respective points, not from want of water, for that continued as deep as before, but from the impenetrable forests of large aquatic plants (and grass, according to the natives), which choked up the streams in both branches, so as to render a further passage impracticable, except by cutting *a way* through them, which could only have been accomplished by considerable labour, and with great loss of time. This he did not feel justified in risking, more especially

as the extreme limpidness of the water of both streams, when compared with that of the Niger, which Mr. Beecroft had navigated some years before, gave a sufficient proof that the Formoso is an entirely separate river, taking its rise probably in the high lands (the maps call them 'Kong mountains') north-west of the Niger.

We found the Gwato creek a river with a rapid outfall and a course varying from 10° to 110°, *i. e.*, from north to south of east (magnetic). We had again started at the wrong time; with the tide, seven or eight hours are sufficient, but against the ebb it is long and hard work. At 2 P.M. we climbed upon a network of mangrove, and made a hearty tiffin; the water was there perfectly sweet, and hence the white residents upon the Lower Benin procure their supplies when there is no rain. It was pitch dark before we made Slave Island, a little clump so called from the Spanish and Portuguese establishments in the olden time. At this place the creek forks, one branch coming from the south-east and the other from the north-east. The latter was our line, and we pursued it till it narrowed to a shallow ditch. At 3.30 A.M. we halted at its head, and sent up a messenger to the chief of Gwato for lights and guides. It was a fine night; impatience soon got the better of us; we sprang from the boats, and assisted by our men, waded through the line of mud and water that represented the road. After a few hundred yards through a 'tiger-infested' jungle, we climbed up a severe and slippery clay bank, and despite the intempestive hour, marched straight into the chief's house. It was broad daylight, 5 A.M., before we all turned in. Our trip had lasted us nineteen hours, during

which we had accomplished about forty-five miles.*

After a short rest, undisturbed by mosquitoes, which in the Benin river assail you by day, we arose and attacked the host to find hammocks and porters for our trip to the city. We were lodged in a place of consequence, as the thick walls and the relieves at the gate proved, and our entertainer was no less than brother to the last, and uncle to the present king of Benin. His name is Kusei, and he is known to Europeans as the Parson of Gwato, an old title, hereditary, and connected with the local religion. He has not the best of names. Many years ago a poisoning palaver drove him from his native country to Lagos. There also, after learning a number of slave dealers' dodges, he got into a scrape, and was obliged to return home about 1850. At present he lives under a cloud, and can hardly show at the capital. Before 11 A.M. he was so exceedingly drunk that not a soul would obey him; he was hurried off to the inner rooms, and was laid, Noah like, upon a mat to sleep off his liquor. Under this disappointment we strolled about the town, and sketched and visited its curiosities, taking care to despatch three messengers announcing our intentions to the king, and requesting him to dispense with the usual ceremonious delays.

Gwato—so pronounced by the natives—is called by the older travellers Agato or Agatton, by the more modern Gato or Gatto. The settlement, which is the great port of Benin city, is at the head of the creek of the same name. It lies about thirty miles in direct distance N.N.E. from the mouth of the Benin, and nineteen miles, not including windings, S.S.W. of the metropolis. The position is, ground elevated about one hundred and fifty feet above the level of the

creek; it is bounded on the north by a dry valley, where there are a few plantations of excellent koko (*C. esculenta*). On all sides a dense bush, capped with gigantic trees, invests the settlement; the soil is sandy, and in places red, but exceedingly fertile where covered with humus. It would grow excellent cotton if labour could be procured. The attempt was made by a merchant some years ago; he paid his head-man four pawns (= 1 shilling), keep included, three to his under-headman, and two (sixpence!) to his labourers, per week. Yet the avarice and arrogance of the people made the speculation worthless. When I last left England there was some talk of a Niger company, whose object would be the growth of cotton in the great Delta. Such a speculation would be a great success, provided that foreign labour is procured—with native workmen it must fail.

But though the admirable fertility of the country renders it a compeer of, or rival to Bengal, this field of enterprize will not equal India; it labours under the terrible disadvantage of proximity to England. Not the England of 1653—when Cromwell garred kings know that they had a crick in their necks—with her energy of character and scope for talent, but the England of 1860—foul blight upon his name that originated the policy!—non-interfering, anti-belligerent, duty-shirking, and therefore thoroughly dissatisfied, grumbling about the expenditure of a first-rate with the influence of a third-rate power, and irritated at having to maintain so long the ignoble position of defence. The Anglo-Saxon, however, is always in extremes. In the days of Queen Anne he fought for the Asiente treaty and the carrying trade. At the congress of Aix-la-Chapelle he was ready to fight for nigger eman-

* In *Bosman's Guinea*, a correspondent, David van Nyendaal, writing on board the yacht *Johanna Maria*, September 1st, 1702, places the 'common trading-place, Arebo' (in our charts Arrobo), above sixty miles from the river's mouth, and says that 'so far, and yet farther, ships may conveniently come.'

† The word is used advisedly. A merchant in the Benin river positively assured me that he had lately bought a striped skin fresh from the bush. This could not have been a leopard; but—il faut le voir pour le croire.

* Messrs Moffat and Smith make the distance from fifteen to twenty miles up the Benin river, and about the same up the Gwato creek. The *Directory* gives three leagues to the former and ten to the latter section—arriving at about the same total, but wrong in the distribution. I have calculated it at 14.50 and 25.50 miles, a total of forty-five. The traders in Benin give it from fifty to fifty-five.

ipation. In 1900 he will probably fight to restore a regulated slave trade, under the title of emigration.

Once a place of considerable importance, and studded with factories and business houses, Gwato now contains from twenty to thirty habitations, mostly ruinous, but sometimes showing traces of former splendour. Streets are, of course, unknown; the tenements are either built in clumps or separated by tracts of bush. The best buildings have walls of deep red clay, ribbed horizontally, so as to resemble brickwork, and a little smearing makes them look neat and new; the commoner sort are merely of courses successively dried, as universal in Yoruba. All are capped with tall penthouses of matting, with a steep slope to throw off the heavy rains, and, as tornados are violent, the timber-work of the interior is uncommonly strong and massive. The outside gate of the 'Parson's' house is decorated with a human skull, transixed with an iron, and a monkey's head, side by side, on an earthen bench at the doorway. The walls are adorned with figures of clay in mezzo-relievo, daubed black, yellow, and red, and representing giant warriors with uplifted battle-axes. There is a curious likeness between these efforts of infant art and the Nineveh bulls, which is probably a coincidence. But the following peculiarity can hardly be attributed to accident.

Architecture, according to Mr. Fergusson (*Handbook*, iii.), is 'as correct a test of race as language, and one far more easily applied and understood.' It is impossible not to think that Yoruba in ancient times derived its architecture through the Romans, whose conquests in Northern Africa were as extensive as in the North of Europe. We find in every house a perfect Tuscan atrium, with the

cavædium,* or gangway, running round the rectangular impluvium, the tank or piscina, which catches the rain and drippings falling through the compluvium or central opening in the roof. Sometimes the atrium is a tetrastyle, in which pillars at the four corners of the impluvium support the girders or main beams of the roof. As at Abeokuta, the latter is thickly thatched, and falls in at a steep angle.

I can understand the use of the atrium in beautiful Italy, where it tempers the warm rays of the sun by cool shade, and softens the summer glare into mellow light. But in these lands of violent rains, fierce tornados, harmattans, and smokes, it is impossible to understand the feelings and motives of the builders, unless, indeed, they derived the idea of their hypæthral apartments from the ancient conquerors of Morocco and the Atlas.

The larger houses have many of these curious courts, of which the third usually leads to that which serves as a reception room. On the outside there are raised earth benches for those who would enjoy the air. The rooms are dark and windowless, all of them have at least one alcove, and similar seats are disposed round the impluvium. The latter has always a hole in one of the corners, through which the superabundant humidity passes off. In the centre is some fetish, either a cone of clay, one foot high, with a central aperture set with cowries, or a pot of water half buried in the ground.

The Beninese are evidently a most religious race: there is not a single room in the house, even the courts and lowest offices, in which altars and implements of worship do not appear. The religion I at once recognised to be the intricate and mysterious mythology of Yoruba.† It has, however, some modifications; for instance, Shango,

the god of thunder and lightning, is, like Shiva, in olden India, here worshipped. The domestic altar is 'rigged up' in various ways; too various, in fact, for short description. Some are external, provided with all the heterogeneous mixture of fetish idols; waterpots, pipkins of spirits, cowries, chalk-sticks, ivories, some elaborately and beautifully carved as the Chinese, men's heads coarsely imitated in wood and metal, cocoa-nuts, and huge red clay pipes of Benin make, with stems six feet long. Internally these sacella are usually alcoves, not intended for man's use. Their contents are similar to the former, but more elaborate: there are wooden birds, life-sized, but curiously and wonderfully made, with tails probably intended to resemble elephant tusks, and large black sticks surmounted by a carved hand and out-pointing index; whilst a little below, a wooden clapper converts the open-worked hollow into a rude and noiseless bell.

After a delicious bath in a clear spring of fresh water, below and to the south-east of the town—in which, by the bye, the consul temporarily lost his seal ring—we repaired to the lion of the place, Belzoni's grave. The great discoverer, it will be remembered, left Europe in 1823, determined to explore Timbuktu, an exploit which the unfortunate Caillié, four years afterwards, succeeded in performing, but not in satisfying the 'home geographer.' Foiled at Tangier by the jealousy of the Jews and Arabs, he embarked at Mogador for Cape Coast Castle, and thence proceeded to the Bight of Benin, whence he thought—sagaciously enough—to find a caravan road to the Kwara. After picking up a homeward-bound sailor, a Kashna negro who had taken leave of H.M.S. *Owen Glendower*, he engaged him as his companion to

Hausa. Leaving his friend, Mr. Hodgson, on board the brig *Swinger*, in the Bight of Benin, he landed at Gwato, and marched to the metropolis, where he was kindly received by the old king, Odállá, father of the reigning monarch. Everything looked well, when the bad water of the city, taken from holes and foul wells, brought on a dysentery. Despairing of a cure at Benin, Belzoni left it and returned to Gwato, where he lodged in the governor's house a few yards from his grave. The chief's name was Ogea; he was a tall man, of yellow complexion and disagreeable look; he died about 1850. Belzoni departed life on the 26th November, some say the 3rd December, 1823; and the local legend is that he was poisoned by the governor, who afterwards tried the same trick on a European trader and failed.* Many of the oldsters in Benin city still remember the traveller, and talk of his huge black beard, his immense stature, six feet six inches, and his giant strength. What lends colour to the charge is the disappearance of Belzoni's books and papers. The latter, according to the Parson—who spoke, however, as one drunk—were handed over by the governor to the head Fiador, broker or confidential trader of the king of Benin; and since the death of the original possessor descended to his son, who is believed to retain them. Mr. Snape, late agent to Messrs. Horsfall—not to mention other traders—made a liberal offer for these documents, but to no purpose, and the consul resolved to try again. Stray leaves have, according to all Europeans in the town, been seen in the hands of the townspeople, leading to the conclusion that there are more behind; but after a lapse of forty years, the collection has in all probability been dispersed, and has perished. Nor, if found, could aught of interest touching Nigerian Africa be

* I am not ignorant that the meaning of this word is still under dispute; it is used above to denote the area between the tank and the walls of the room.

† This system can hardly be entered upon here: it would require a larger *Lemprière*. The reader will find a fair sketch of it in the Rev. Mr. Bowen's *Central Africa*.

* The same is told of the poor boy, Thomas Park, a midshipman on board H.M.S. *Sibylle*, who landed at Accra with three years' leave, to search for his father in the African interior. He is said to have been poisoned for ascending a Fetish tree; but he probably killed himself at the age of nineteen by over-zeal, dressing and living like a native, to harden his constitution.

expected in these days from Belzoni's early studies.

The grave was pointed out to us near the present Governor's house, to the south-east of the town, under a fine spreading tree, which bears a poison apple, and whose boughs droop almost to the ground. A little plantation of koko clothes the sides of the mound from which the tree springs, and a few cottages stand between it and the bush. It is a pretty and romantic spot, but there is no sign of a tomb; we gathered, however, some flowers from it, and sent them home. Messrs. Moffat and Smith found the spot marked by a wooden tablet fast going to decay—it was probably that originally placed there. Dr. Daniell described the grave as an elevated mound of earth overrun with weeds, with the fragments of a decayed wooden cross. The traveller's last home is now a *tabula rasa*, awaiting the piety of some European passing by.

A well-bearded mask, brought up by the funny Captain Z., caused great alarm amongst the people of Gwato, especially the women. I regret to say they are to a soul plain, and their head-dresses rather tend to enhance their ugliness. The great novelty is the habit of shaving a hand's-breadth from the forehead to the crown, leaving bear's ears on the sides of the cranium, or wool, collected in straggling and irregular lumps. A better style is to tie the hair, which often will reach the shoulders in a knot à la Diane, with beads, gold ornaments, and bits of coral interwoven; it would be tasteful but for the venerable-looking shaven scalp above. Some have false elf locks streaming down their faces, others artificial tresses extending to mid-leg, ribbon shaped, and so greasy that they appear to be leather;—both these coiffures belong to the Fetish women, or *béguines*. A few wear flat pieces of hair along the sides of the head: they look like black cakes, with excess of oil or fat, and I cannot imagine how they are ever undone; it beats *plica polonica*. The tattoo is a broad line of scars extending down the breast and

stomach, and the dress consists only of a pagne, or waist-cloth. The men are rather a fine race, tall and muscular; many are very powerful. They seem to suffer from some cutaneous diseases, horrible ulcers, and scrofulous eruptions, probably the effect of hot humid air, bad water, and scant provision. Among them was a disgusting albino, calling himself Roache, and claiming, I believe, a European origin. Always drunk and fighting, he ended by becoming so noisy and offensive that ejection from the compound became necessary. The old Parson let loose in our honour a wretched-looking boy, who crouched in a dark corner of the atrium, weighed down with handcuffs, irons, collar, and chains. He had attempted to kidnap a slave girl from his master, and had been taken 'red-handed.'

The day was mainly passed in flogging the Kruboyes. On these jaunts, when men are mixed, the thieving is disgraceful. I have never yet drank my last bottle of cognac. One fellow, Davis, known as 'the missionary,' because he had 'read book' at Sierra Leone, and had finished himself in villany under Dr. Livingstone, was the worst specimen of the converted African that I ever saw. He always, when 'palaver came up,' began by swearing in the Lord's name that he was innocent, and when tried for punishment he solemnly warned the Consul that those who flogged innocent men went to—Hades. Convicted of stealing cloth and soap from another 'boy,' he received four dozen with an extempore cat; but nothing would change him. He confessed to the theft, and presently pleaded intimidation, pathetically asking his commander what that person's feelings would be if the cloth and soap turned up untouched. No irons being found for the incorrigible rascal, he was ordered to carry a heavy load to Benin city. In the evening we found that sundry bottles of liquor, some quinine, and sardine-tins, had been abstracted from a broken box, and we suspected the Kruboyes.

Goods robbed by Beninese are to be readily recovered. The king not only rules, but governs; and governing, he removes heads with exemplary insouciance. The customs of Benin are not celebrated in history as those of Sántí (Ashantee) and Dahomé; at times, however, the streets of the capital run red with human blood.

Another walk led to dinner—the conclusion and the event of the African day. We called upon the actual governor, Media, whose name had been chalked upon his door-frame with a more Euripidean spelling, by some European traveller. He gave us the best palm wine that I ever tasted, except with the excellent Jesuits of Fernando Po, and we all confessed to our appreciation of its delicate and fugitive flavour. The Beninese, when drinking, always pour a few drops upon the ground, muttering the while 'Mobia, Malaku! Mobia—I beg, O Malaku—Fetish—guardian of lands and waters—I beg of thee to defend me against all evil, to defeat and destroy all my foes!' This said, a broken bittock of kola (*S. Acuminata*) is thrown upon the ground, and is watered with a few drops of palm wine.* The African's god is like the sage Solon's, *φθονερὸν τε καὶ παραχῶδες*, a jealous god and a disturber of man's peace; he requires perpetual propitiation.

After the little carouse we visited the Fetish house attached to our host's habitation. Once a fine building, the roof is now fallen in. Its most remarkable feature is a high altar, conspicuous for the statues of the reigning king and queen. His majesty of Benin is a peculiar figure, somewhat like Ganesa, all head, bust, and paunch; his legs are doubled up as if he were a 'Tasmeh-pa,' and his arms are supported 'country fash,' by two smaller figures intended, as in the Laocoon, for 'boys.' His

consort is in like position; she and her handmaids have 'glorious bosoms,' if volume be a beauty. The other objects are plates of thin iron perforated, and shaped like a large fish-slicer, with a shank and a terminating ring—mysterious articles used for 'making play' at festivals. Besides these were many walking-canes, wooden pots like old leather jacks, but adorned with metal, pipes apparently copied from the chibouque, three weather-worn ivories, sundry bells, square and round, wooden and metal, and similar offrandes. There were newly made gifts, white chalk and freshly gathered kola nuts. The latter grow wild in all this country; but natives are apt to confound the Anglo-African word with Ikolo, the large white edible maggot, which, like the pangolin, affects the bamboo palm.

We then wandered about the place, noting the sites of factories in happier days, and scolded the Gwato people for killing the bird that brought them golden eggs. All appeared very penitent until, as will be seen, the very first opportunity. At several of the cottages women were picking cotton; the seed was black, and the staple, though neglected, tolerable.† After a walk along the Gelegele track, we returned to the old Parson, and found him once more uselessly drunk. After dinner we attempted vainly to muster the porters and review the hammocks for the morrow. So we retired to rest not over-dazzled with our prospects as to an early start.

The night was truly beautiful: above, a pearly sky, with moon surrounded by opalescent halo; below, tall white-boled trees shrouded with a transparent blue mist, which lent to their majesty an air of dimness and mystery. The old Parson wandered about the house like one ghost-haunted

* This purely self-defensive rite, common throughout Western Africa, is often confounded with offerings of wine and food made to the ghosts of fathers,—Pitri, the Hindus call them. The latter, however, are always placed in the bush.

† 'Cotton is indigenous in Benin, and is spun there and woven into cloth by women.'—Messrs. Moffat and Smith.

till midnight, seeking liquor; towards the small hours, he probably had recourse to his own cellar.

The next morning—Monday, 18th August—justified our doubts. We were awake at dawn—in fact earlier; but when we wanted to set out, nothing was ready, not a single hammock. The Governor, Media, was present, and bustling, but in this half-republican race temporal rulers have little authority. The principal working-man was 'George,' a stout, light-coloured, and good-looking young fellow, son to the old Parson, and therefore of the blood royal; he followed us to Benin city, and we observed that in the palace he was treated by the king somewhat better than the interpreters. The other auxiliary was a yellow man named Sawaye, a noted scoundrel; his position in the empire was, to use the odd old jargon still prevalent, that of a 'father-boy,' *scil.*, an embryo messenger, linguist, and stranger's guide.

We began serious work at sunrise, expecting to be on the road at seven A.M. Eight, however, slowly passed, and it was within ten minutes of nine before we managed to leave Gwato. The start was effected with extreme difficulty by forcibly loading the idlers and driving them out of the compound. At each moment they stopped dead, swearing that we had not washed their mouths—viz., with rum—which, if done, would inevitably have ended work for that morning. Hammocks not forthcoming for love, money, or liquor, we fastened with 'tie-tie'—strips of liana, serving for cord—our own blankets and waterproofs to rude poles, whose only preparation was a nail that prevented the lashings from slipping. More artless still was the gait of the 'hammals,' who carefully kept step, shaking the vehicle as if preparing to toss the occupant in a blanket. I never mounted mine till within the walls of Benin, when self-respect demanded the sacrifice. These rustic hammals, however, did not fail to steal from my coat a dogey knife,

with which, for the donor's sake, I was most unwilling to part, and no amount of bastinado sufficed at the moment to recover it.

* * * * *

The party, including four whites, and Selim, the consul's steward, numbered fifty-one souls; of these eleven were Krumen and the other thirty-five indigenes. Sawaye the 'father-boy' brought, besides slave boys, a little daughter and two wives; these ladies began by decorating their foreheads and bosoms with chalk picked from the roadside Fetish-house, and made into a paste with water in the palm. It is a prophylactic against the works of the enemy, and I observed that they renewed it during the return march.

The route led first in a south-east direction, then it bent eastward, and lastly, north north-eastward, its permanent line. The country was a dense jungle. We had heard of fine avenues and a broad road fit for four-wheeled carriages. We found an occasional tunnel in the bush, and a route, or rather rut, which might accommodate a quartette of wheelbarrows in Indian file, but nothing more. The land was sandy and coarse, but highly productive, and doubtless there is good shooting, leopard and deer, in the thickets. A truly African sight presently greeted us—a corpse lying upon the path, with head partially peeled, sprawling prone in its own corruption. Hardly a soul, or rather a body—for it is hard to believe that these fellows have souls—stirred out of the path; most of them merely stepped over the remains. Benin has a very strong Fetish, and of that we were soon convinced. Almost every turn of the road showed some sign—a suspended calico cloth, a pot of water, or a heap of chalk sticks placed under what the Scotch call a 'fause-house,' or what the Australians call a 'breakwind,' *i.e.*, a pent roof, looking like the falling flap of a large bird-trap.

After about forty minutes' sharp walking, during which we passed sundry plantations and clearings,

an opening in the bush appeared to the right, and we were presently received at a *quadrivium* by a little crowd of villagers, who sang a kind of Io pæan or hymn in honour of our arrival, and greeted us with prolonged murmurs of 'Addo!—do!—o! o!' They belonged to the village of Kwáko, the nearest to Gwato, and the first of the five lying upon or near to the line of road between it and Benin. There are frequent offsets and cross-paths leading through the bush to the 'small countries,' as Africans call their plantation hamlets. The regular villages, however, are denoted by a gateway of rough unbarked poles, often three deep, fastened with 'tie-tie,' and hung across with cloth or fringes of palm-leaf. On the way there are sundry halting-places, clearings in the bush, and widenings of the path, where clay pots full of cold water and cocoa-nut cups are disposed for the convenience of the traveller. Thus Benin shows the rude beginnings of that system which, in India, culminated to the height of tank-building and 'bauri'-making.

At noon we halted for half an hour near a village called Gwáháme. There was a terrible fetor in the forest, the result of decomposed vegetation, leopards, and black ants, which on the line of march would fly at us like Lilliputian bull-dogs. The path was painfully encumbered with fallen trees, around which we were required to climb; and although the shade was generally thick in places, the sun shone fiercely upon our perspiring brows. At 1.10 P.M. we reached the half-way house—a bulge in the path surrounded by polework, and near to a settlement called Obunne. Here we were joined by one George Brown, a full-blooded negro, who calls himself 'king's messenger.' The title here is not exactly what it is in Europe; the messenger is a kind of trader, who is sometimes, like the bowstring-bearer in ancient Turkey, used for punishment purposes. We afterwards saw George Brown in the King's presence; but

he was clearly a cur of low degree. He had probably heard of our arrival, and had hurried forward in hope of rum. The ignoble old fellow, whose watery eyes and shaking hand announced his predilections, was maudlin drunk and pestilently polite; his importunities presently became so unendurable that he was civilly knocked down with his water-pot, which broke. The people on the road now began to wear the Beluko, a regular Highland kilt of broadcloth, serge, or native material. The poor have no other garment; those aspiring to swelldom twist around it all manner of cloths from fine muslin to thick calico, and produce a prodigious domework. In Benin the perfect figure of man is light built and nude to the waist, whilst all below the skirts fills out with more amplitude than crinoline; it is exactly the shape of a handbell.

Having dined at Gwáháme on ship's biscuit and raw ham, we proceeded with our journey, and presently passed on the left a large chalk-washed cottage, which the guides called a Fetish house. Various clearings, market-places, 'fause-houses,' and 'break-winds,' then led us to Igo—also called Egoro and Igolo—of which nothing showed but a similar big whitened domicile: at this place trader travellers, even white men, are delayed till they receive an order to enter the capita'. We were summoned to call upon the chief; but, promising to do so on our return, we hastened forwards, leaving Selim to bring up the hammock-rascals, who loitered behind to be out of our reach. He was presently visited by a small yellow boy under ten years of age, the Parson of the place. This dignitary walked silently and with reserve under an umbrella carried by a fellow who, acting interpreter, demanded a cloth in virtue of his position, and who when refused detained our rear for a good half hour.

The light of day was now fast waning; and though our guides assured us that the city was close at hand, our total of one hundred

and two legs, with the turns and windings of the road making a long line, found it impossible to advance. The tunnels in the forest looked pitch-dark, and the occasional fireflies, like far-off torches, served only to make the darkness visible: a 'transpicuous gloom,' as Richard Bentley hath it. At 6.10 P.M. we were compelled to halt under a torn mat-shed in a largish clearing, where we were told water was procurable. For a time we sat under the wall-less roof upon old tree trunks, riddled by white ants, and though thirsty, we were unable to make the fellows fetch firewood. These people are not a marching race; and as the journey to town is generally made in a day, they ignore all the arts of travel. At last the commander, quite *excédé*, arose and used his staff to such purpose that soon a fine fire crackled in the clearing, illuminating the blackness of the forest, and diffusing around that warm glow, like crimson paper, which the amateur of bivouacs loves. The water, however, was long in coming. According to our people, they had to travel some distance before finding it; the village was deserted, and the yellow hue of the thick liquid argued that it had been drawn from a clay-pit. At least half the bottles were exhausted before they reached us; each relay returned with more and more delay; and at last the stuff became execrable, viscid as treacle, and black with mud. This *contre-temps* sent us to roost supperless—an unfavourable condition after a nine hours' journey, during which we must have covered eighteen miles. Under these circumstances tempers were none of the sweetest, and the fearful clamours of the wrangling natives added not a little to the exasperation. Nothing would answer but the whip. 'Tis a good instrument, a short handle of blackened leather, with several broad thongs at one end, and at the other a kind of chain work, rings of iron and brass shaped like little handcuffs or saddler's D's, which I believe to be Fetish, but which I know can be used for castigation to some purpose. Happily for us,

the night was rainless, and the thick foliage warded off the dew. More happily still, the consul had objected to the proposal of the guides, namely, to proceed with fire-sticks. Palm oil torches were not procurable, bamboo splints blaze themselves out in a few minutes—briefly, we should have been in 'a fix.'

On the next morning—Tuesday, the 19th August—we arose long before the dawn; the fires had been allowed to die out, and the sensation of cold was unmistakable. Having at length procured water from Igo, we made a brew of tea, and drank it like Russians, till we perspired. Our men chewed boiled corn-cobs, which seemed to exercise the same influence upon them. The hammocks were then re-formed, our skulking porters having thrown away our pole, and a blanket having given way under Captain Z——'s weight. He was suffering from a sprained ankle; and Lieutenant Stokes complained of stiffness: natural enough after a march of eighteen miles, as toilsome as thirty in England. At six A.M. we left the camp with the usual noise and confusion, fisticuffing and flogging, shirking and refusing to work. The surface of the country was a second long wave of ground very similar to that which we had traversed on the former day. It was entirely alluvial, stones nowhere appeared, and the path was more muddy and less sandy than near Gwato. Instead, however, of open country, with settlements, farms, and villages, to say nothing of an improved road, we plunged into a far denser bush, and our route became a single deep cut most like a cart-wheel rut in a gully, that recalled to mind the hollow ways of Yoruba—it was enough to try the strongest joints. A tree once fallen is never removed in these lands; and in many places giant trunks blocking up the path rendered it necessary to scramble on all-fours up and down steep banks of red clay—a heavy work, which told upon the pace. By way of climax a drizzling rain came on, making the face of earth greasy and

slippery as a London pavement after a frost. At times, rays of light through the trees that hedged us in disclosed plantations, and the number of country people—women carrying grain baskets and wine gourds, and men bearing the implements of husbandry and massive square walking-sticks with knobbed tops—gave us delusive hopes that the end was at hand. In places the path rose upon the crest of an embankment, looking like an artificial approach to a city which had seen better days; then the bush would become denser and the road more rugged than before. Throughout the march the smell of mango was overpowering, and the fruit lay decaying upon the path. The kola-nut everywhere grew wild, and our people brought down the fat pods with sticks. At half-past eight A.M., after a five-mile walk, making along the road a total of twenty-three from Gwato,* we suddenly emerged upon comparatively open ground, where cocoas and tall white-belled cotton woods, dispersed over the surface, revived our spirits. The first habitation that appeared was a kind of guard-house, in which three men, armed with sticks, were sitting in state. Remnants of what seemed a city wall were standing in places, but the continuity was broken by masses of second growth.

The consul, who was one of the foremost, halted the party to form up and bring the hammocks to the fore. Etiquette commands a personal visit, before entering the city, to the Captain of War, a dignitary second only to the king, and he expects a P.P.C. before departure. The hammocks were ranged in Indian file, and after a few hundred yards we were brought up by a mass of dilapidated buildings surrounded by dense herbage, koko plantations, skeletons of walls and houses, and pools of water over-

grown with thick aquatic plants, which conceal the surface, and which are supposed to keep the element sweet. After halting at the door, we were pompously directed by a confidential slave, who spoke a little English, to 'do was' feet; and for that purpose we were conducted to a neighbouring shed provided with all the implements of Fetish, neatly carved ivories, and blocks of wood cut to resemble the human face, not at all divine. After a time came the boys bearing a huge demijohn of water, and a Neptune, or large shallow brass pan, that had done duty for many a day. The patriarchal custom may be pleasant enough—it is a great restorative—to those who wear sandals. But for footsore men, who must remove damp socks and wet leather boots with elastic sides, and what is worse, who must restore them to their places, it is the very reverse of agreeable. Such, however, is the universal reception in Yoruba: only, in the more civilized places the operation is more pleasantly performed by the women of the house.

We then proceeded to the ceremony of introduction. The abode of the Captain of War lies on the outskirts of the city north-west and by west of the Palace, and a little off the high road of ingress. It is in the Ijebu quarter, or 'beach,' as the people here say. The house had the usual clay walls ribbed like corrugated iron, and was a complete Castle Rackrent in appearance. We passed through an external and very shabby atrium into the reception-room, and were seated upon a mat spread in the deep alcove which in Yoruba always occupies the head of the apartments. On our left was a similar but shallower niche, containing an altar and its furniture, and opposite it a raised earthbunk, upon which various attendants

* A distance of 68 miles from Dr. Henry's factory, or 73.50 from the mouth of the Benin river. Messrs. Moffatt and Smith reckon the distance between Gwato and Benin to be 'about 20 miles in a north-easterly direction.' The *Directory* places the latter N.E. by N. of the former, but remarks erroneously that 'the road passes over a country perfectly level.' Bosman's authorities deceived him by stating that the city is 'situate about ten miles landwards in from the village of Agatton.'

were clustered. Our own people were also present, George the Parson's son, S aw aye the 'father-boy,' and George the King's messenger.

After a few minutes we were sent for into another atrium, where the Great Captain was ready to receive us. He was standing in the upper alcove with two attendants gingerly supporting his coral and iron braceleted arms, which hung down loose and away from his sides. The general effect of this attitude upon a new comer is that of a fainting man being caught in the act of falling: in this case it was exaggerated by the mawkish and maudlin look of the warrior, who was at least half seas over. In front of him was a crowd of attendants, who made way for us as we approached hat in hand. Perhaps the latter act of civility was an error; the consul, however, who intended to appear in an official capacity, was anxious for us to render due honour to all the high dignitaries. We drew near the Captain, who, contrary to custom, shook hands with us, and in his own tongue made a facetious observation, which drew forth shouts of laughter. After which we returned to our former seats in the other apartment.

Presently the Captain of War, supported, by his two arm-bearers, followed us, and took his seat by our side. We now remarked his dress and figure. His forehead was adorned with a broad stripe of chalk from the hair to the nose-tip, and upon this was drawn a thin line of glazy clotted blood from a goat freshly sacrificed; a similar thin streak ran along the big toe of his right foot. He had evidently just been 'blooded,' as stag-hunters say. His poll was shaven, whereas those around him wore their wool combed upwards and a little off the brow, not unlike the erected crest of a cockatoo. His back-hair was allowed to grow, and fastened at

the place where women usually wear a comb with leopards' claws and birds' quills of small size. His face was 'clean shaven' except under the chin, where there grew a few dwarf curls, like capers. His arms, which were soft and smooth, rejoiced in long lines of coral and polished iron-rings; and his dress was a large petticoat-like cloth, the head, bust, and feet being entirely nude. His figure was that of a tall, well-proportioned man, perhaps thirty-two years old, of olivine colour: his features were sub-negro, and he had the fine long-lashed eyes general in this part of Africa.

After the Captain sat down the ceremonies began. He keeps up an abundance of state; all knelt who approached him, and made low *cong ees* when addressed by him. A small rough stick in his left hand was repeatedly struck upon the ground, whilst he marshalled his dependants and expelled intruders. When S aw aye, who acted interpreter, had been seated close to our left upon a kind of settee with lock and padlock, a plate of kola nuts and squares of cocoa was brought to the consul, who, according to custom, peeled one of the former with his nails, and splitting it into its four pieces,* handed a bit to all present. This rite is equivalent to eating bread and salt in Arabia. A square of cocoa-nut was then placed in each man's hand, and we were obliged to sip a glass of tombo, or palm-wine: it was too tart for our taste, and, indeed, nowhere at Benin did we find it equal to that of Gwato. Whilst this was going on the Captain of War kept 'giving service,' which we punctually acknowledged, and, after often repeating Oyibo, 'white man,'† in his jollity he pulled the consul's beard, a compliment which was at once returned in kind. There was a general look about him which told of liquor far stronger than 'Pardon wine.' To

show his geography, he inquired about the war at Liverpool; to prove his superiority, he asked the consul what trade he came to make, a question of which the 'King Mouf' speedily and roughly disposed; and he informed us that he had washed our feet, a hint that he wanted us to wash his throat. We escaped as soon as possible, despite an urgent invitation to 'chop,' and took leave with little ceremony. The Captain of War was waxing rude. He seized a chain and seals which one of the gentlemen had imprudently exposed, and seemed inclined to break it. This little freak nearly led to a scene.

Quitting the house we retraced our steps, and found the impedimenta halted under a tree where some fine cattle, black and white, were enjoying the shade. Led by a guide, we pursued our way down what had apparently been an avenue or street. It was a broad line choked with dwarf bush and thick grass, bisected by a narrow pathway leading to the south-east, where the market and the king's village lie. An unpleasant object now met our eyes, a specimen of what we might expect at Benin. In the herbage, on the right of the path, appeared the figure of a man bare to the waist, with arms extended, and wrists fastened to a framework of peeled sticks planted behind him. For a moment we thought the wretch might be alive, a few steps convinced us of our mistake. He had been crucified after the African fashion, seated on a rough wooden stool, with a white calico cloth veiling the lower limbs, and between the ankles was uncouth image of yellow clay.

rope of 'tie-tie' fast bound round the neck to a stake behind, had been the immediate cause of death; the features still expressed strangulation, and the deed had been so recent that though the flies were there, the turkey buzzards had not yet found the eyes. The blackness of the skin and the general appearance proved that the sufferer was a slave. No emotion whatever,

except holding the nose, was shown by the crowds of men and women that passed by, nor was there any sign of astonishment when I returned to sketch the horrid scene.

Afterthoughts convinced the party that the poor wretch had been sacrificed on hearing of the white man's arrival at Gwato. It is some comfort to think that the murder was committed with as much humanity as possible; a slave bound for the other world is always plied with a bottle of rum before the fatal cord is made fast. In one point, indeed, the Beninese are superior to their neighbours. Twin births are esteemed good omens, and the mother is the recipient of royal bounty, like the progenitrix of triplets and quartets in England. In Bosman's day, when the king was informed of the auspicious event, he 'caused public joy to be expressed with all sorts of their music.' On the other hand, so different are African customs within a few miles, at Wari, and on the lower parts of the river, both children and the mother, unless she is bought off by her husband, are barbarously sacrificed. Beyond this, nothing can be said in favour of Benin; the place has a fume of blood, it stinks of death. Without any prepossessions for Exeter Hall policy, and far from owning that evangelization has succeeded, or ever will succeed, in this part of Africa, I could not but compare the difference between Abeokuta, where there are missionary establishments, and Benin, which for years has remained a fallow field. In the former, human sacrifices still flourish, but they are exceptional, they are done *sub rosa*, and they do not offend public decency by exposing the remnants of mortality. In the latter—but the sequel shall speak for itself.

The rest of the walk was hardly more pleasant. As we advanced the avenue shrank to a narrow lane, and in its deep shade we saw green and mildewed skulls lying about like pebbles. We thence

* The kola nut usually divides into four cloves; sometimes it is found with five or six; these, however, are mostly used for fetish purposes.

† The language of Benin is said to be intelligible at Abeokuta and the Egbas generally; it must, then, belong to the Aku or Yoruba family.

emerged upon a broad open space, which we afterwards called the Field of Death. It was, indeed, a Golgotha, an Aceldama. Amongst the foul turkey buzzards basking in the sun, and the cattle grazing upon the growth of a soil watered with human blood, many a ghastly white object met the sight, loathsome remains of neglected humanity, the victims of customs and similar solemnities. Our first idea was that we were led into the city by this road that an impression might be produced upon us. Afterwards it became apparent that all the highways conducting to the palace are similarly furnished. In Africa the divinity that doth hedge in a king, is a demon in a chamber of horrors.

After half a mile, old Okalla, the guide and entertainer allotted to us by the Captain of War, turned from the Field of Death down a lane leading to the south-west, and introduced us to our quarters in the Idemopwa district of the city. He is a freeman of the town, and a man of consequence, as is proved by his wearing anklets as well as necklace of coral; the latter may be compared with the insignia of the C.B., the former with those of the G.C.B. They are always the gift of the king, who keeps them in his possession, and punishes any counterfeiting with death. According to Bosman, a man losing his coral collar, loses his life. The house, however, was by no means in first-rate order. It was the usual Yoruba abode, a large walled compound, with a single great gate, and the interior was a labyrinth of alleys, passages, courts, apartments, hypæthral offices, and windowless store-closets, the latter always leading out of the sitting-

room. The atrium prepared for us had been freshly smeared. Like all others it had its household gods, three rude wooden images of turkeys with drooping wings, disposed in triangle, supported by two short truncheons, and placed in a black and white striped niche in the northern wall, with a raised step below it. I can say little in its favour as regards comfort. There were three doors, which rendered it a meeting-place of moving multitudes, till we barricaded two of them. There was no look-out except through those entrances, at brick walls two feet distant—uncommonly dull on a fine day! And when it rained, the cold torrents pouring through the compluvium, made it feel damper and look drearier still. After a single night there, my thoughts reverted almost with pleasure to an 'English fireside.'

Whilst we were breakfasting, at the hungry hour of 10 A.M., a messenger from the king volunteered the information that we should 'get mouf,' *i. e.*, have audience, to-day between three and four P.M. The condescension not a little consoled us; all trade travellers visiting the place—no official had yet seen it—are kept waiting for a day or more. The Captain of War at once sent us eight dishes of beef, fowls, boiled yams, and palm-oil chop. His attendant hinted intelligibly enough that he wanted rum, cloth, and books. The two former he obtained; of the latter he was disappointed; the inkstand had been left at Gwato, and where could such a thing be found amongst these *αγραμματοι κ αναλφαβητοι βαρβαροι*?

Patiently we waited till 4 P.M., when the head Fiador or broker,*

* Messrs. Moffat and Smith misspell the word 'Phædoes' (or traders). They enumerate five classes next to the king. 1st, the Captain of War; 2nd, the Grandes or Homograndes (Portuguese homems grandes, great men); 3rd, the 'Phædoes,' and two others of inferior rank. Bosman gives 1st, the three great lords (homograns); 2nd, the Are de Roes, or street kings, supervisors, viceroys, and governors of provinces; 3rd, the Fiadors (security men or brokers), who rank with the mercadors or merchants, the Fulladors or intercessors, and the Veilles or elders; 4th, the commonalty; and 5th, the slaves. I could hear only of the 'Homograns,' or ministers, the Fiadors, or brokers and traders—of whom there are four chiefs—the messengers, the father

whose name is Bâde, a thin old man of peculiar greediness, came in state, sat upon the alcove mat with us, and baring with great ceremony the top of a cane—it was apparently a cut decanter-stopper—'gave service,' and declared that the king was ready to see us. The royal presents were brought forth; the Consul's consisted of

Ten pieces silk (nine bandannas, and one embroidered) = £10;

Ten pieces Madras = £2 10s.;

Ten gallons (two jars) rum = £1 2s. 6d.;

amounting to £13 2s. 6d.; besides presents to the Captain of War, the Fiadors and messengers, £6 8s.; or a total of £22 os. 6d. Doctor Henry had also bought £13 worth of silk and Madras; and a further sum of £8 in cloth, rum, gin, tobacco, knives, locks, caps, and beads, as minor presents to the householder and others. Thus three days at Benin, and the honour

of a reception, are worth £33—a trifle dearer (pace Sir R—P—), than a dinner at Moscow in the coronation time.

At 4.30 P.M. the Consul and the commander, after a public levée in the literal sense of the word, issued forth in full toilette, the first uniforms ever aired at the city of Great Benin. The lieges crowded out of their houses, declaring that they and their fathers' eyes had not seen such a sight before, and that it must be a 'war-palaver;' an opinion in which perhaps they were joined by their betters, who had been 'pumping' Dr. Henry the whole morning. After a certain delay, during which the cunning old Fiador managed to lay hands upon the presents intended for the king, and five pieces of Madras for himself, the party was formed; and followed by two Government krumen, armed with cutlasses, we proceeded towards the palace.

boys, and the lower orders. The Beninese adhere strongly to their ancient customs, but the empire seems to have been long in decadence. The reader cannot but remark what an effect the Portuguese must have had upon this people; even to the present day the old men can speak a kind of Africo-Lusitanian.



joined to the mainland by a stone bridge. The country is now partially opened to foreign traders, evidently much against the wishes of the majority of the nation. That hatred of strangers and Christianity is still intense among the Japanese, is sufficiently proved by the letters of those who have had the best opportunities of studying their character and idiosyncrasies.* They have evinced on more than one occasion a suspicious readiness to make mince-meat of foreigners. Whether the trade with Japan and its collateral advantages will ever be sufficiently important to justify the expenses incurred for the support of European missions in that isolated region, is at present an unsolved problem. In all cases, so far as this country is concerned, let us hope that Exeter-hall will not rashly commit itself to any scheme for evangelizing the Japanese. We must not indiscreetly lay our sacred fingers on their idols, brutish and degrading as their idolatry may be. Let us gather experience from this instructive chapter of their history, and let the better part of our religion be, like the better part of our courage—discretion. We are undisguisedly

* A curious instance of the obstinate hatred of the Japanese towards Christianity occurred a short time ago at Nagasaki. The Dutch government had, at the request of the Japanese government, sent over a small steam machine, which had been made by the engineers, D. Christie and Son, who had, according to custom, cast the name of their firm on some conspicuous part of the machine. When the Japanese officials read this they sapiently concluded that the words had some reference to Christ the son of David, and that the machine was intended to make the Japanese Christians by steam-power! At first they positively refused to admit the obnoxious article; and even when the matter was explained, they did not seem at all at their ease respecting it. The same officials seized a copy of Longfellow's poems, on the plea that *Evangeline* had been written by one of the Evangelists, whose works it was not permitted to introduce into Japan! All Bibles and religious books on board of vessels arriving at a Japanese port must be put in a case, called the Bible-case, which is carefully sealed up and preserved under lock and key by the officials, until the vessel is ready to leave; it is then returned to the captain. This absurd regulation is now, however, little more than a formality, as the Bible-case generally contains merely a few stones packed in sawdust.



forcing ourselves upon them, and our presence is as unwelcome to them as is the intrusive presence of a handsome professional diner-out at the dinner-table of a wealthy paterfamilias blessed with beautiful daughters. Let us not force our opinions, our notions, and our diversity of religious creeds upon them too. If we want their vegetable wax or their silk, let us pay for it honestly, and in such a way as they require. They have done without our wares so long that they do not need them now, excellent as our machinery, hardware, and calicoes may be. If the Pope thinks proper to canonize their martyrs more than two centuries and a half after their ashes have been spread to the winds, let *him* indulge his freak. We of course know very well what *that* means—so does the King of Italy. Pious follies are excusable in senility, and rather commend themselves to our pity than to our scorn. But let us take care not to supply the Japanese with the materials for making new martyrs. Men-of-war and Armstrong cannon may be powerful to punish, but they cannot restore the life taken by the sword of a fanatic or by the treachery of an idolater.

FRASER'S MAGAZINE.

APRIL, 1863.

MY WANDERINGS IN WEST AFRICA.

A VISIT TO THE RENOWNED CITIES OF WARI AND BENIN.

BY AN F.R.G.S.

PART II. CONTINUED.—THE RENOWNED CITY OF BENIN.

THE King's Court, or quarter, is called Obwe; it is a large village, or rather town, separated from the neighbouring settlements by streets broader than Parisian squares, and appropriated to the royal family, great men, courtiers, and slaves. This part of the city is supposed to contain not less than fifteen thousand souls. It is in a most ruinous condition, and very little is to be recognised in old Bosman's description. An account of our several visits to it will perhaps give the reader a clearer idea of its features than a general sketch.

Leaving the Idembopwa quarter, where we lodged, our guide led us along the Field of Death to a small market-place which at this hour had begun, in Indian phrase, to 'cool.' A ten minutes' walk took us to the outermost gateway of the palace: it was guarded by a fetish altar on the left hand, and in front stood a suspicious clump of trees, which at once suggested to me an Oro grove.* Having passed through the tumble-down gateway, we saw before us a spacious square, surrounded by broken brickwork and adorned with noble trees. On one of these, which had apparently been lightning blasted, flights of turkey buzzards drew our attention to the form of a fine young woman,

seated, and lashed hand and foot to a scaffolding of rough branches, which raised her ten or twelve yards from the ground. The birds had been busy with her eyes, part of the bosom had been eaten away, and the skin was beginning to whiten—a ghastly sight. In the centre of the precincts was a brass neptune, planted upon a tall pole: it was intended as the reflector of a palm oil lamp, a trick which the natives probably learned from the Portuguese. At the further end of Palace-yard was a large shed, containing the usual number of fine large carved ivories, planted leaning against the wall.

We were halted at the entrance by the old Fiador, who, waddling in his huge muslin crinoline, started off, as he declared, to announce us. It is certain that he never went near the palace; equally certain that, after about fifteen minutes, he came back with a message that 'King make devil;' that is to say, customs for his father, and that the bloody rite would not end till after dark.

Concerning these customs† Father Merolla tells a characteristic story. Father Francis da Romano and Father Philip da Figuar, both being on a mission in 'Benin, a kingdom lying on the back coasts of Africa, and towards Guinea, being very near

* For Oro himself, the Oro Grove and the horrid purposes to which it is put, I must refer the reader to any work on the mythology of Yoruba.

† Father Merolla calls these funeral rites by the Kongoese word 'Támbí.'

the equinoctial line, they endeavoured to disturb a certain abominable sacrifice, accustomed to be performed every year to the devil,* for the benefit, as they alleged, of their dead ancestors:—

This sacrifice sometimes consisted of above three hundred men, but at present there were only five to die; yet those all of the better sort. These missionaries, under the conduct of a certain negro their friend, came to the third inclosure, capable of holding many hundreds of people; here perceiving a great multitude gathered together, dancing and singing to divers instruments of their music, they clapped themselves down in a private place, the better to observe what they were going to do. This place happened to be that where they kept the knives designed to perform so inhuman an action. Not being able to conceal themselves long they were quickly discovered by these wicked butchers, who, coming towards them leaping with great indignation, they soon drove the poor fathers out of the place they had so taken possession of. Father Francis hereupon was so little dismayed that, crowding boldly through the thickest of the negroes, he was not afraid to reproach their king of unheard-of cruelty. Some courtiers hearing this, immediately flew upon him, and heating and using him very unmercifully, tore him out of the crowd; when closing up their ranks again, they performed their inhuman sacrifice. Afterwards they gave these fathers to understand that it was the king's pleasure that they should forthwith depart his kingdom. Which command they not being very ready to comply with, the next morning they set upon them again, with intention to have killed them; which they nevertheless did not do, by reason they were informed by two of the courtiers there present, that the king would have them brought alive before him. Going therefore courageously to the palace, they were notwithstanding admitted to no other audience but stripes and reproaches in plenty; and afterwards told, in reviling terms, that it was the king's express order that they

* These good churchmen see the devil everywhere, even in places which he has apparently not explored, or where at least he has not made himself known. The customs are performed by Africans purely for the benefit of the departed, and without any suspicion of a third party.

† Bosman (21st Letter) justly remarks, 'the inhabitants of Great Benin are generally good-natured and very civil, from whom it is easy to obtain whatever we desire by soft means; if we make them liberal presents, they will endeavour to recompense them doubly, and if we want anything, and ask it of them, they very seldom deny us, though they have occasion for it themselves. But they are so far in the right, to expect that their courtesy should be repaid with civility, and not with arrogance and rudeness; for to think of forcing anything from them, is to dispute with the moon.' But the good fathers, like the Japanese martyrs, seemed determined to gain the 'crown of glory.'

should forthwith be gone out of his dominions. Notwithstanding which, great numbers of these insolent negroes flew upon them like so many hornets, and hurried them away to a noisome prison. Here they remained no less than three months, being buffeted, scoffed, and scorned at all the while. At last, not contented with this ill usage, they sold them for slaves to the Hollanders;† who, taking more pity upon them than these infidels had done, set them ashore not long afterwards, safe and sound, in the Prince's Island. Hence they writ to the Sacred College to inform them of what had happened to them; but were answered, that the Church had already martyrs enough, and but two missionaries in that kingdom, and therefore they should not for the future expose themselves so much in its service, but proceed warily among those new converts.

A message was returned saying that officials are not traders; that the party had visited Benin, not by the king's orders, but to 'look him face;' that our stay was to be short; and that if not properly received we should return at once. I am now confident that the king never even heard that we wished to see him. Another messenger started with great politeness, and we soon became the centre of attraction to a crowd of men, who removed the women and children as fast as they appeared. A demand for chairs brought only a pair of dwarf benches; and even a glass of water was not to be procured for the commander.

We waited with patience the arrival and departure of a dozen messengers, dummies all, and consoled ourselves with the reflection that the delay at St. James's is much greater, and the crush incomparably worse. Sawaye and George Mac Parson stood by us, whilst the older George had been knocked down—

pretending to bustle towards the Palace, so we determined him to be a thorough humbug. Presently the sun did 'go for bush,' and rain, which had fallen heavily during the day, again threatened. Finally came what might have been a *bonâ fide* message, that the king never saw strangers at night.

Very fierce, we all retired to old Okala's house, undressed, and inquired about 'chop.' None had been sent from the palace. Such conduct was quite opposed to custom and to our expectations. Presently, with profuse bows, entered the old Fiador, who politely pushed forward to occupy, as before, the seat of honour. The wrathful consul, '*l'irritable capitaine*,' as M. Antony Meray politely terms him,* made him squat at the bottom of the room, and with the loudest possible voice enumerated our many grievances and wrongs. The courtly senior, with raised eyebrows and shoulders, lavished obeisances and apologies, swearing that on the morrow all should be well. He waited long, and he begged hard, very hard, for rum, but the consul—*duris in rupibus illum, &c.*—as obdurately refused, and finally sent him forth into the rain liquorless.

Before resting, we may offer some details concerning the ancient kingdom of Benin, or, as the people call it, *Ibini*, or '*Bini*.'† It has of course no written history; local tradition, however, represents it as having once been the power paramount, and the civilizer of Yoruba. In the sixteenth century, it obtained in Europe the name of Great Benin, and an exaggerated opinion of its extent and wealth seems then to have prevailed. The Kings of Benin, in Bosman's time, considered themselves superior to all others in Guinea; yet Wari was, as it is now, virtually independent of them; and, owing to intestine feuds, the city appears to have been in as ruined a state in A.D. 1700 as in A.D. 1862. Captain Adams, who

visited the country before 1800, declares it to be of considerable extent, and places it principally to the north and north-west of the chief river. It has never obtained celebrity in England, although our geographers have given its name to the river and the bight. The *Penny Cyclopaedia* wholly ignores the existence of the city or the empire. Mr. Consul Hutchinson justly calls it the 'unknown kingdom.' In its palmy days I believe it to have been bounded on the east by the Kwara (Niger), westward by the land about Porto Novo, and southward by the sea—its limit to the north does not appear. Two of its colonies are Budagry and Lagos, and are called by the natives Aoni, or the offspring of Ini—Benin. At present, circumstances, which will afterwards be explained, have lowered its power to a minimum. All its traffic now passes through the Ijebu, popularly called Jaboo, country, to the British port of Lagos. It is a hopeless task to restore commerce to Benin. This people, who have long lost the trade, have declined in civilization. They make their own cottons, and are independent of Manchester: they brew their own Tombo, and have no need of Jamaica. I have heard of six shillings per pound being asked for ivory—grand inducement to risk health and life in the Delta of the Niger! Moreover, travellers will no longer find Benin a fair starting-place: here they would be plundered of half their stores—I cannot imagine this greedy people allowing a jar of rum to pass—whereas explorers might leave Abeokuta without the loss of a cowrie.

The night passed quietly enough. Okala had sent all but his old wives out of the house; and at Benin there is a law that only the king must supply matrimony. He generally provides the stranger with one of his daughters, whom he reckons by 'tallies,' and he charges a right royal price. We were several times

* In a very ridiculous review published in *Annales d'Afrique*. Juillet et Aôut, 1862, p. 63.

† This is the name of both empire and city; the latter in some of our old maps is called Oedo.

startled by the 'Voice of Oro,' buzzing about the town, and in the morning it became manifest that the 'spirit' had been perambulating the place to some purpose. This explained to me the saying of the lower river, that Benin has a strong Fetish. There the religion is merely embryotic: here the national faith and practice are according to the system of Yoruba—they claim to be its origin and head quarters—which rivals in complexity those of Greece and Rome.

On Wednesday, the 20th of August, we arose betimes, hoping for the best, fearing for the worst, and we sallied out to sketch. There is peculiar scenery in this city; and the aspect of some of the homesteads, especially in early morning, is pleasant and picturesque. After walking along the Field of Death, we met Dr. Henry, who pointed out, close to the King's Palace, the spot where another death had taken place. We walked there, and found a corpse lying stark naked upon its back: a few people were standing by looking with the utmost insouciance at a horrid spectacle. The miserable's legs had been broken at mid-shin with awful violence, a deep gash was under the ramus of the left jaw; and in the hot clear morning air the features had already become swollen and shapeless. This was a gratuitous barbarity. The African, less cruel because less intelligent than the European, the Asiatic, and the American, rarely sacrifices men without stupifying them with drink or drugs. 'Oro,' however, had manifestly slaughtered the poor devil in cold blood. Like the other sacrifice, this was a slave with black skin and negro features, as great a contrast to the upper orders as the wretched peasant of Western Ireland to the English patrician. The freemen are careful not to expose themselves; moreover, the king would not put them to death, except for some flagrant violation of the law.

Resuming our walk, we passed through the town in a northern direction. Like Abeokuta, it is divided by tracts of bush and wide avenues into a number of distinct

settlements, each bearing its own name. The quarters have regular streets and lanes, and in many places the ground before the walls was carefully swept and cleaned. Such was the law in the days of the old king; and it was kept like that of Mohammed Ali, which annihilated the plague, and converted Cairo into the cleanest city of the East. When a road passed between two houses, both householders were bound to keep it in order. Unhappily, the king had not ordered his subjects to fill up the foul pits from which building clay is taken: these still remain the founts of fever and dysentery. Few of the houses showed signs of fresh plastering; most of them were cracked and roughened by weather. The immense number of ruins were referred by our guides, George and Sawayé, to the absence of 10,000 soldiers at a war which has lasted since 1854.

Chemin faisant, we were much struck by the beauty of the women, who have the reputation of being the prettiest on this coast, surpassing even the Mpongwe or Gabons. The wives and daughters of freemen had light olive-coloured skins, tolerably regular features, with splendid eyes, and in some cases tall graceful figures and drooping shoulders, a formation never seen amongst the Guinea or Gullah nigger. The peculiarity of the shaven head gradually wore off: it seemed at last like a large forehead leading to the jetty black hair, which was collected into one or more bunches at the occiput. In all cases the bosom was bare. The dress was a pagne or loin-cloth. The favourite ornaments were some threescore iron rings, some of them wires, others of heavier make, round the left wrist: on the right was a twist of brass or a broad arabesqued Benin bracelet; whilst under the knee a garter of small Indian cowries set off the leg. The general mark was a tattoo of three parallel cuts about half an inch long, and placed close together upon both cheeks about half way between the eye and the corner of the mouth. Some added to these 'beauty spots' on

the middle of the forehead, vertical lines of similar marks above the eyebrows, and three stripes, or rather broad shallow scars, from above the breast to the stomach. These ladies appeared in nowise *béqueues*: white men may, I should say, command a *succès de salon* at Great Benin.

Presently we reached the market in the Igosi quarter, with which we were disappointed; it was little larger than the small gathering under a tree in front of the palace. The people talk of one very large bazaar in the Akalwa quarter, distant about two hours' march: probably the depressed state of the capital would prevent its maintaining such establishments as the chief cities of Yoruba can show. There was nothing peculiar in the scene—a knot of men and women sitting and standing in the hot sun bargaining and chaffering over the common country produce, beans and maize, kokos and plantains, dried fish and shrimps, salt, red pepper, and similar comestibles. Cowries, the country currency, lay in every basket.* Of these small places there are as many at Benin as at Abeokuta.

From the market the guides told us we could not reach the outskirts of the town before breakfast—say two hours or six miles; a similar distance to the southward would give a breadth of twelve miles, and from north to south it is about half that length. To the west and north there is open grassy ground, the rolling prairies of Yoruba. This accounts for the excellence of the cattle and the presence of horses, which cannot exist in a country where mangrove flies and Tsetse abound.† We did not, however, see a single horse; all were absent at the wars. They are described as a good but small breed, about fourteen

hands high, something between the pony of Lagos and the large war charger of Yoruba. What disappointed me still more was, that we did not meet any Moslems; yet they are said to be numerous here. It is impossible to estimate the population of the scattered settlements dignified by the name of Great Benin City. The old travellers never conjecture beyond the King's quarter.

On our return Sawayé kicked up a something which suspiciously resembled a man's eye. A deep splotch of blood a little further on explained matters; it was nothing so harmless as 'purring,' to use a Lancashire word. I had been reading a silly yellow-cover novel, in which a villager seeing some dead body upon his path, 'with an exclamation of terror, dropped his tools and fled back to rouse his neighbours with his tale of horror.' What would that villager have done with himself during a day's promenade at Benin? And more victims were hourly expected. The voice of Oro was explained to us as an effect of the king's piety; during the customs or mourning for his father he forbade, under pain of death, any one to leave the house after eight p.m. An equally filial subject is Glere son Gizo, the present King of Dahomy. Shortly after offering up many a victim to the manes of his sire, the earthquake which ravaged the Gold Coast on the 10th July, 1862, reached his capital. 'Ho!' said the monarch, 'do you hear the voice of my father crying for more death? He cannot rest in his grave, he must have blood; his grave must be watered with more blood!' And he dutifully put to death every captive chief upon whom he could lay his hands.

I am very sorry; but an account

* The following is the present tariff:—

250 cowries	= 1 pawn, i.e. 3d. to 6d.
1250 "	= 1 cloth, i.e. \$1.
18,000 "	= 1 bag.

In 1840; the pawn was worth from 2s. to 3s. The word is probably a corruption of the old French 'pagne,' a loin-cloth. Cowries are, it is evident, dearer here than in Yoruba, where 20,000 form the bag.

† I hope to prove that the Tsetse is a native of the whole of intertropical Africa, and not confined, as older travellers thought, to the south of the great triangle.

of this part of Africa does read much like the *Newgate Calendar*. 'In the midst of life we are in death' is a tolerably well-known saying; I may reverse it here: 'In the midst of death we are in life.' But how long—quien sabe?

Returning for breakfast, we found that no food awaited us—a great neglect. The consul had sent early in the morning a present to the captain of war by the hands of a black man, a white not being permitted to visit until after 'getting mouf' or having audience of the king. Also it appears that until the visitor's respectability is thus ascertained, he can have no pratique at the markets, or rather that any one selling anything to him would be slain. We were urged to go out and shoot one of the black cattle—forty-two were counted in one place—that browsed upon the luxuriant verdure of the field of death; they are said to be royal property, and all declared that the king would not be offended. However, we hesitated for fear of an inopportune palaver. I was rather surprised, indeed, that we met with no interruption during our morning stroll. In Santi and Dahomy we should have been *détenus* until after our first audience with the king.

Very impatient we waxed after early morning, when a summons was expected and was not received. The sleeping hours—eleven A.M. to one P.M.—had sped, and already we saw before us a wasted day, when a eunuch of the palace called upon us. He was a little beardless old man, clad in a tremendous petticoat; and he assumed considerable dignity, speaking of the head Fiador as of a very common person. The abominable institution is rare in Africa, and when found is borrowed from Asia. At Benin the habit of secluding the king's women has probably introduced these guardians of the harem. The consul now resolved to try a little bluster. With much noise and display the boxes were carried out and placed before the house, whilst the Kruboyes were warned to hold themselves in readiness. The old eunuch, who had, as the

Chinese say of opium-eaters, the figure of a paddy bird and the face of a pigeon, skipped about excitedly, rubbed his hands at us by way of salutation, and in a bird-like voice chirped 'Tútá! tútá!—remain, remain!' Having begun by complaining that the attendants were starved, the party was not surprised presently to see an old goat marched in with all solemnity, attended by twenty-one huge yams and a calabash of palm oil. And to give the Beninese their due, from that time provisions were liberally supplied. I can hardly say in sufficient quantities, for the hungriness of the men, especially those from Gwato, surpassed anything we had ever seen. Four of these lank-bellied fellows would squat down opposite a basketful of fufu-balls and a huge basin of palm-oil stew, and clear it in a minute, leaving no sign but a drop or two upon the floor, bolting their food like half-famished hounds, and licking the hands with which they wiped out the *vaiselle*. It was impossible to keep aught edible intact: under our very eyes yams, meat, and brandy were stolen, and so neatly stolen that we could hardly believe in their disappearance. As usual, the adults kept all to themselves. The small boy Rapid, a slave to Sáváye, who had attached himself to us, was hardly allowed a morsel, his master snatching it from his hands until we taught him better manners. These little wretches can never, however, be rewarded; whatever of dress or diet is given to them will at once be appropriated by the proprietor, or he failing, by any one senior and stronger.

When the eunuch pointed triumphantly to this liberal present, the consul declared that he would not taste the king's food until after audience. In dire distress the neuter declared that if we went away so unceremoniously he could never return to his master, and another messenger was sent with a peremptory message to the palace. Still the day wore on. At three P.M. the Consul again

started up, and after much deprecation proposed a final alternative, either that the party should set out at once or that the eunuch should accompany Dr. Henry to the presence. The presentation was to take place at once, and a 'book' would inform the consul that his Majesty was prepared to receive us.

This ruse succeeded. Dr. Henry, after waiting twenty-five minutes, was led into the presence-chamber and all the vulgar were expelled, ministers and interpreters alone remaining. The cause of our visit was stated; the king listened attentively, agreed to all things, promised to carry out our views, and lamented that there was no rule in Wari to prevent the occurrence of such outrages. A complaint was made about the delay of our being admitted to audience, and our treatment at the palace on the previous day. But in such cases the king gets scant information, and the interpreters slur over the matter. He appeared, however, to blame his people, and made it evident that he had never been informed of the consul and commander's desire to see him. Such delay being an ancient custom of the empire, it is probable that the messengers never take the trouble to do more than listen to those who would infringe it. After half an hour's conversation, the king rose and retired to change his dress for the second audience. Dr. Henry sent off a note, and sat down, as was expected, to the usual refreshments of kolas, cocoas, and palm wine.

At four P.M. we received the summons, and hastened to obey it. Our curiosity had been excited about this presentation. European visitors had talked of the presentee passing through an avenue of spearmen, of the courtiers prostrating themselves, and of white visitors being expected to kneel before the throne. The consul and commander equipped in full uniform—verily great is the power of the cocked hat!—and attended by Selim Agha and two Krumen in white pants, blue frocks, and

cutlasses, hastened to thread the narrow lanes leading to the palace. We passed by sundry waterholes and yards with tumble-down walls and great gaps that rendered gates unnecessary. One of the courts contained a grand fetish-house, with a number of ivories showing very curious and interesting work. At the bottom of the enceinte and facing the sacellum was a little grass-grown rise, the margin of a wide and deep well into which the custom's victims are thrown. The people called this the old king's fetish court, and it is kept in order by the piety of his son. The next square was subtended by a huge shed, open in front, and supported by eight Telamones—rude figures of war-men, one of them falling from under its load. We read in Bosman,

A third gallery [I would amend this to court] offers itself to view, differing from the former only in that the planks upon which it rests are human figures, but so wretchedly carved that it is hardly possible to distinguish whether they are most like men or beasts; notwithstanding which my guides were able to distinguish them into merchants, soldiers, wild beast hunters, &c.

From the court of the Telamones a small wooden door opened upon a lane, and across this was an atrium of peculiarly ruinous appearance. Thence we entered an adjoining room, which we took to be a vestibule, till Dr. Henry informed us that it was the presence-chamber. I had read of fine tapestries and rich canopies, and had not yet realized the ruin of the kingdom. The atrium was crowded with the ignoble, who ranged themselves, tightly packed, round three of the sides, leaving the lower end clear for us. Here was a rude earthen bench facing a similar one at the upper end, upon which was a small wooden settle serving for a throne. Rather a contrast to things a century and a half ago, when the King of Great Benin 'sat on an ivory couch under a canopy of Indian silk.' A mat was spread for us, and we rested whilst awaiting the monarch. Meanwhile a heavy shower of rain burst over

the palace, deluging the impluvium and threatening to delay proceedings. These African potentates will not move except in 'Queen's weather.'

At the end of a long half hour a door to the right at the top of the room opened, and in crowded some thirty fellows of stalwart proportions and huge forms, entirely exposed. It was a truly savage sight and novel, unknown to any of the courts of Yoruba. These men are called the King's cutlass boys, and they wear no dress till their master deigns to 'dash' them a cloth. Every male infant in the kingdom is still presented to the king, and belongs to him of right; hence all the youths in the land are called the king's boys, or slaves. The naked mob took its place on the right hand of the throne, crowding into the corner, and the man nearest the royal seat carried upright in both hands a huge handleless falchion of native make, fashioned like an exaggeration of the old Turkish scimitar. The rest were wholly unarmed, nor did we see a single weapon either in the court or in the city.

The cutlass boys were followed by half a dozen 'homograns,' whose numbers gradually increased to ten. They ranged themselves in line along the raised step, perpendicular to the left of the throne. All were old men with senile figures, offensively thin or hideously pot-bellied. They were naked to the waist, and wore immense white muslin or taffetas peshwaz, or petticoats, extending to the swell of the leg, and puffed out to a balloon shape by kilts acting crinoline. Each had his anklets and collar of coral,* a very quaint decoration, composed of pieces about one inch long, and so tightly strung that it forms a stiff circle about a foot in diameter. Lastly came the

king, supported by two men, who led him to the wooden bench upon which a mat had been placed, disposed his loin-cloth, and held both his arms.

Jámbirá, whose regal name is Atolo, and whose title is Obbá, or king, is a stout young man, about thirty-five years of age. His complexion is dark, but his aspect is uncommonly intelligent, and the expression of his countenance is mild and good-humoured. During this and the subsequent audience he smiled graciously upon his visitors, and our impression was that he is the best-looking negro we had ever seen. His dress was highly becoming—coral bracelets adorned his wrists, and his pagne, which, loosely gathered round the waist, covered his naked feet, was a red silk with broad stripes of yellow—the Devil's livery, we call it; but it is far more suited to the dark skin than are our dingy browns and blacks.

The Obbá of Benin is fetish, and the object of adoration to his subjects: hence his power. European writers assert that 'he occupies here a higher post than the Roman Pontiff in Catholic Europe, and is considered not only as the vicegerent of Deity, but as a deity himself, claiming the obedience and adoration of his subjects.' This is partly true, but they forget that the personal character of the deity in question mainly decides his position as a man.

Jámbirá is the second son of Oddi, or Odállá, the king of Benin in Belzoni's time, who was described by Messrs. Moffatt and Smith as 'a robust old man, who affected much dignity, and would not allow them to approach near his person.' His elder brother is Bawaku, whose birth not having been reported in due time by his mother, the cadet became, according to the law of the land, the senior.† When the old

king died there was, of course, a fight. The chiefs and ministers preferred the milder and more easily managed man. Jámbirá therefore changed his name to Atolo, seized his father's property, and became Obbá. Bawaku, whose temper is despotic, resisted for a time, but was presently expelled the country. He then fled towards the Niger and settled at Isán, a city said to be seven days' march from Benin and three from Igarra. Since 1854 the brothers have been constantly at war. Many of the Benin people, it is said, are now flying to the 'Pretender,' who, if the Ministers did not fear for their heads, would soon make himself Obbá.

We stood up and unhatted whilst a messenger bade us go forward and 'make service.' The consul objected to walking through the muddy and watery impluvium, and after some time obtained a partial clearing—the vulgar, which was excluded during Dr. Henry's audience, was now permitted to remain—of the step running along the left side of the room. As we approached the place where the naked cutlass boys crowded, there were some murmurs, signs to stand back, and even to kneel. The officers passed on to the step in front of the throne. Again voices were heard. The consul, however, placed himself in front of his Majesty, and after a low bow, introduced the commander and his other companions. The king acknowledged the compliment with a nod and a smile.

The attendants proceeded to spread a mat on the step below and to the right of the throne; the consul, however, objected to sit with patent leather boots in the dirty piscina, and the visitors were allowed to return to their original bench, which was now wet with the profuse leakings of the roof. Then the palaver commenced. It was carried on by two interpreters, Sáwáye of Gwato and Ogonná of Benin; George, the old Parson's son, remaining by our side. The two former, when they addressed the king, knelt—not prostrated themselves—upon the

step below the throne. The latter, as a kind of cousin, sat at squat. Each message began with 'King he send you service,' a formula duly returned.

The state of Liverpool—that is to say, England—was first inquired into and answered. The consul then complained of his treatment on the previous day. Of this the king palpably knew nothing, and the interpreters, as usual, slurred it over. Then came a lengthy inquiry on the part of the Obbá why white men did not trade to Gwato and Benin, and a request that the 'Governor' would direct them to do so. That personage replied that if his Majesty would send down messengers, and establish a firm rule, European traders would not be slow to appear. Lastly, as the hour was waxing late, the consul stated that if Belzoni's papers could be recovered it would give great pleasure to the 'king,' his sovereign; adding that he would return a bale of cloth, value twenty pounds, for the trouble. The Obbá kindly promised to send a messenger round with orders for the 'books' to be given up. Then followed the usual difficulty of an African court-dismissal. His Majesty, having heard of the party's intended departure on the morrow, urged a longer stay. He wanted to send as a return present some bullocks, large Benin pipes, and fine cotton-work, open and decorated with red worsted—a work confined to the ladies of the palace. The rejoinder was, that the arrival of the mail steamer rendered early departure an affair of necessity. Considering, however, that it would be quite informal to leave so soon after a first audience at an African court, the consul agreed to wait till 'sun go for top,' *i.e.*, noon. But, not wholly to yield the point, permission and a promise of hammock-men were obtained for Captain Z., who was fidgeting himself into a fever, to start early, and to convey our letters in case we lost the mail. At the Benin river letters cannot be written by night on account of the mosquitoes, or by day on account of the noisy natives. Traders

* Bosman describes it as a sort of pale red Castile earth or stone, very well glazed, and very like speckled red marble. Captain Adams describes the presents to the king as 'strings of coral.' In these days the favourite material is red coral brought from the Mediterranean.

† In England, an annuity office prefers considering the date of christening to the date of birth; in Africa the age dates from the day when the king acknowledges the child. Both are equally absurd.

generally go over the bar in schooners, and finish their correspondence on board the mail steamers. The king then dropped a hint about perambulating the town and visiting his 'homograns,' who would prepare a banquet for us. Traders have always found it necessary to spend a whole day in going the round among these great men; the consul, however, declined following their example, alleging that he came to see the Obbá, and that such proceeding would make the king a 'small boy.' At 6 P.M. the visitors were again told to 'give service,' which was a repetition of the introductory ceremony. After this his Majesty was suddenly huddled out of the room, ministers and cutlass boys promiscuously hustling after him.

Besides the civility and evident complacency of the king, there was one point most satisfactory in this conversation. In 1838, when Mr. Moffatt took leave of Odalla, the latter 'put several questions to him about the slave trade, and asked when the King of England was going to settle that "palaver" (i.e., to allow slave trading), and when told that "that palaver would never be settled," he burst into a rage, and said the King of England was a bad man to steal vessels on the sea (alluding to the capture of slavers), and that he would send a letter to him on the subject, as one of his people could write English.' In 1862, though Benin has been ruined, mostly by the suppression of slave export, the king accepts it as a *fait accompli*, and never even alludes to its revival.

The visitors were again directed to sit down; as, however, it was growing dark, they made excuses and walked out of the throne-room. In the court of the Telamones—its surface was that of a half-dried horsepond—they were overtaken by a 'king, son' or messenger, who begged them to return, but they walked home with deaf ears. They had hardly reached the house before it was mobbed by Fiadors and

* The Anglo-African term for palm wine, which of course has a different name in every tribe.

cutlass boys, bringing the usual kolas, cocoas, and tombo,* and loudly soliciting a return of stronger liquor. From premier to ultimate slave, these fellows think of nothing but drink and 'chop.' We had, however, now matured our plans. The large jars of rum were emptied into bottles, which were stowed away, and the nakedness of the land was ostentatiously exposed to them. By such Machiavellism we expected to effect an escape on the next day: as long as a tott remained in the locker the cunning rascals would have delayed us. There is a curse upon rum in these regions; no man who values his comfort will travel with a single jar of it.

Thursday, the 21st August, opened with a dull morning. Capt. Z. was stirring at 4 A.M., grumbling as only an old Scotchman or a hungry hyena can growl, and wanting to be off. Nothing appeared less likely. The Gwato men were dispersed through the villages, sleeping; they would have seen him die miserably before they would have shaken a leg. The Benin carriers had not appeared, and when they did come, they demanded an incalculable amount of 'chop' in addition to the rations which they had received from the king. This extortion being refused, they disappeared, but they afterwards followed the party, which by convulsive exertions found itself *en route* at 8 A.M.

We waited patiently at home during the morning, whilst Dr. Henry bore its heat and burden. He set out at 7 A.M. to go the rounds of the homograns, which took him three mortal hours, wandering through the great extent of the royal village. He describes the houses of the chiefs as far superior to the palace,—the atrium large, spacious, freshly glazed, and perfectly clean; the altars inlaid with cowries and porcelain platters, and filled with carved wood and ivories, and fine mats spread out in the alcoves. He breakfasted in a desultory way, in one house eating fowls, in another goat, in a third

wild pig. Kola nuts were brought to him in wooden boxes, eighteen inches long by six broad and three deep, prettily worked and studded, and inlaid with brass.

As may be imagined, our impatience was not soothed by this long delay; already 1 P.M. had sped, and we were resolved to make Gwato before noon on the morrow. Again the obliging Dr. Henry volunteered to visit the palace, and to send word when his Majesty could see us. It was already 2 P.M. when the message arrived. We sallied out in our ordinary dress, and after threading the ruins as before, we entered the tattered hall of audience. The Obbá did not keep us long waiting. He was clad to-day in a handsome pagne of silver-spangled brocade, and his aspect was even more smiling and pleasant than on the yester, especially when we told him that having called in uniform for 'king palaver,' we now came in plain clothes for 'friend palaver.' After bowing to him from the impluvium, which was now dry, we took up our position upon the matted earth-bench to the right of the throne. The interview was not long. The conversation consisted chiefly in requests on his Majesty's part, that we would delay departure and receive our return presents; on our side, in apologies for the shortness of the visit, and in expressing our hopes of a more protracted stay another time. When the audience was over, and the Obbá was supported out of the room, we were reseated, to go through the inevitable kolas, cocoas, and tombo. To these were added, on this occasion, a bottle of very tolerable Holland, which the commander, an 'old soldier,' did not fail to collar and carry off.

At 2.30 P.M. we effected our escape from the palace, and at 3.15, by almost superhuman efforts, we managed to issue from old Okalla's house. The idea that rum might be leaving the land seemed to make our black friends crazy; and as food

was arriving in plenty—we carried some with us, and ate it on the outskirts of the town—the confusion was fearful. We had already lost a knife, a ring, sundry bottles of liquor and quinine, and tins of sardines; now a large brass compass and a Scotch cap were not to be found. And when we reached Gwato, all the goats sent to us as presents by the chiefs were said to have bolted, but were really stowed away in the Parson's store-room. I determined the Beninese to be, with the sole exception of the Mpongwe or Gabons, the most pilfering race that I had visited on this west coast of Africa.

The loading caused the usual trouble: all who could, slank off burdenless, and the weakest were the only heavy carriers. A large quantity of palm wine had been going about the house, so the caravan was, as the Scottish Shakspeare says, if not 'fou,' at least 'gaylie still.' As we issued from the house the black sky discharged torrents of rain, which eased off our departure by clearing away the crowd. Here, as at Wari, August and September are the drowning months; during the whole time we have not had twenty-four hours of fine weather. Walking down the Field of Death, Selim collected half a dozen skulls, and passing a bit of 'tie-tie' through foramen magnum and orbit, made a chaplet fit for the goddess Bhawani. Imprudently enough, he carried them uncovered: the result was that after they were packed in a cloth no one would relieve him of his burden. These things are fetish; but the people made no objection to our removing them. When they asked me, as if startled, what 'dat man' wanted with human calvaria, I merely replied that the poor fellow, who could get no sustenance from yams, wished to grind these bones and make his bread. We would willingly have carried off a relic from the crucified party; but as this was his third day, he was quite unapproachable.*

* The crania were forwarded to Dr. J. B. Davis; who pronounced them on inspection to be the remains of young women between the ages of 15 and 40. This naturally leads to a suspicion that the softer sex is more liable to sacrifice in Benin—which I believe not to be the case.

When passing the quarters of the captain of war, he sent for us, but we continued our march, regretting want of time. Then we plunged into the jungle, and found the path truly infamous. The late heavy rains had filled the rut with water, the lowlands were all flooded, and long tracts of mud lined the hollows; our progress was mostly in the form of the Colossus of Rhodes, astraddle, with feet upon the two banks, and sometimes the position was like flying squirrels, all sprawling. Though the shower ceased, the jungle supplied us with a second edition whenever a breath of wind passed over it. Not a hammock was ready: had it been so, there was no one to carry it, all the porters being drunk and disorderly. Our progress was necessarily slow. It was 5.30 P.M. before we passed our former nighting place, now a little pond. In another half-hour the shades of Africa began to clothe the ground. We had provided ourselves with a country lamp and a calabash of oil; a wick was easily made out of a shirt-skirt, but fire was a difficulty. The first box of wax matches utterly failed—these gimcracks should be abolished by the traveller in favour of the old phosphor box with sulphured flints. We then attempted a short progress;—impossible! The eyes of a lynx could not have distinguished the path from the sides: the way was barred by tree-trunks, and their roots seemed placed there to break one's legs. We sent forward a native to fetch fire, knowing, however, that he would probably take refuge in some snug cottage, and leave us, at any rate for some hours, to 'bunk out.' Already I began to mature plans for an ugly night, when, as the danger of a wet bivouac appeared imminent, a box of dry matches was found, the lamp was lit, the line advanced—like Nature, however, not making 'saltus'—and at 7.30 P.M. we found ourselves at the village of Igo *quittes pour la peur*.

We were right hospitably received at the house of the local parson, the small boy Musei, who has been mentioned above. He came before us,

with a cutlass-bearer of his own age, completely nude, as the custom is, and bearing, with a stolid matter-of-course air, a falchion at least as long and nearly as broad as himself. The ecclesiastic's mother was the first to welcome us with many handshakings and cries of Addo!—do!—do! She was not young; her age, in fact, corresponded with the English thirty-six or forty, that fatal epoch when the candle of love burns up terribly bright but transiently, before settling down into lasting snuffiness. She had manifestly been a belle in her day, as those shark's teeth showed. Her hair, a little shaved off the pole, was collected behind into a huntress's knot, which was divided into four large bunches, with three smaller along each side of the head, from the occiput to the temples. These knots were defined by beads of brass and coral, and a long metal scalp-scratcher, like the bodkin of a Trasteverina, bisected the back-hair. This fascinating person led us into the reception-room, where a small fire was already burning in the alcove, and she occupied with us the matted earthbench, wholly undeterred by those changes of raiment which a long and damp march necessitate. As the evening advanced, and a little rum appeared on the *tapis*, the lady's civilities merged into the importunate. I can hardly repeat her last proposals—*pudefit hæc dicere nobis*.

At 6.30 A.M. on the 22nd August—another blessed Friday!—we left Igo. The march began with a general disappearance of the hammockmen by a back-door: a revolver was the only remedy for this proceeding. At 9 A.M. we reached the half-way house, or rather half-way hole, in the jungle: there we sat down to breakfast and rest, as it was evident that we must walk the whole way. There was, however, an improvement in the path. As we crossed the second wave of ground, it became dry and sandy; there were no ruts, and the rain of yesterday appeared nowhere except in the immediate neighbourhood of Gwato. On the route, Aládo, a rascally boy, who had already been suspected of over-familiarity with

our yams and brandy, was caught by Selim with one of the consul's Crimean shirts fastened in a bundle to his back. The fellow was frightened out of his wits, and took to the jungle, narrowly escaping a shot; yet, dastard as he was, he had had the audacity to walk for miles within reach of stick, whilst carrying the plunder almost openly. Before arriving at Gwato, the women's loads were opened, but the missing articles were not found in them. As we approached the end of our land journey, the jauntiness and insolence of our natives increased alarmingly. We saw that we should not leave Gwato without a 'row,' and we resolved to take the initiative.

Under these circumstances none were in the best of humour. Arrived at Gwato, we found the old Parson drunk as ever, and unable to lend us aid. The impedimenta were placed in his court-yard ready for transportation to the boats, and the rum and provisions that had been left behind were brought out of his store-room. Presently, one Ugwáne, nephew to the Parson, who, being asked *en route* to take up a hammock—it was his only duty—had jauntily walked away, swaggered up to the baggage with peculiar impudence, evidently spoiling for a fight. His reception was a broken head, upon which he ran away swearing revenge. He afterwards followed the consul and the commander as they went down to the spring for a bath, openly threatening to await them on their way to the boat. This last straw broke the back of endurance. With cocked revolvers we returned to the village, and insisted that the villains Aládo and Ugwáne should be given up to us. The old Parson pleaded inability to find them: he offered, however, to send his son George as a hostage for their eventual appearance. George followed us submissively enough to the boats; but when reaching the steep slippery descent, whose summit makes the old level of the river, he disappeared

in the thick bush and grass. Dr. Henry returned armed to recover the prisoner, and found the town deserted. Meanwhile, the consul and the commander had arrested the 'father-boy' Sáváye, and persuading him to accompany them by the consolatory phrase, 'this he no be your palaver,' seated him in the gig, and began to descend the river. A few days afterwards Sáváye was released with presents, under the assurance that the stolen goods would be returned.*

We found much to admire in the scenery of the creek through which we had before passed at night. It was luxuriantly wooded, the elevated bank of the old river produced a magnificent growth of trees above, below all was palm and pandanus; whilst on the watery marge tall grasses grew by acres in marshy fields that looked about to become floating islands. After twenty minutes we passed Gelegele, a village of Ejomen, on the left bank. We made ready, thinking that here perhaps a stand might be taken by the 'haughty negro' women and children, however, flocked to the edge of the dwarf cliff, showing that all was peace. Beyond that point there was little of interest. At dark again we passed Slave Island, and then, until the 'run in,' a multitude of large empty canoes that told of forbidden night traffic. At 1 A.M. on the following day—23rd of August, 1862—we entered once more the hospitable doors of Lemnos, Dr. Henry's factory, drenched with rain, cramped by the cold wind, and depressed by the pitchy darkness of the night. We had, however, the satisfaction of looking back upon a good day's work. Within that twenty-four hours we had got over sixty-one miles, of which sixteen were walking, and bad walking. And considering the difficulty of obtaining audience with African kings, and transacting business in these lands, it was a little feat to have seen the Obbá of Benin, to have covered a hundred and thirty-

* They were punctually returned shortly afterwards; which proves that the king of Benin has still some authority over his people.

six miles of ground, and to have returned within a week.

* * * * *
Bad news—all 'along of that Friday'—awaited us at the mouth of the Benin river. The cutter despatched to Lagos on the 6th of August, with reports and letters for the homeward mail, had capsized in a heavy gale. Mr. Rugg, an intelligent West Indian negro, had been left by the Krumen, who disliked his strict discipline, to drown. And the four or five fellows composing the crew had been seized by the 'Usa pirates,' the villainous Jakri men of the coast, about fifteen miles north of the river, and were held for ransom. The moderate sum demanded was sixty pieces of cloth = £12 per head.

The *Bloodhound* had now remained anchored in the Benin river twenty-four days—from the 4th to the 27th of August—and her presence had effected nothing. The natives seemed to care little for the suspension of trade: it became painfully evident that they could stand the ordeal better than we could. Indeed, all came to the conclusion that, unless some blow fatal to the prosperity of the river—such as temporarily removing the ships and factories—were struck, the outrages of those barbarians would remain unpunished, and might be expected to be renewed at the first opportunity.

No one, however, had authority to enforce so strong though necessary a measure. After awaiting the arrival of the mail, which brought with it no tidings, the consul and commander determined to visit Lagos, and to bring the circumstances of the case under the notice of his Excellency the Governor. We crossed the bar on the 27th August, and on the next day found ourselves rolling in the roads of the youngest of British colonies.

Before taking leave of the subject of Benin and its river, I would say a few words touching its climate and its coast.

With respect to the climate, which has a very bad name, second only to that of the Brass river, it appears to me in no degree worse

than its neighbours. But Europeans do not allow themselves fair play in these lands. What chance would a man have of keeping his health if he chose to dwell in a poor cottage in some small village of Devonshire, never taking exercise, and never changing scene, but sitting at home eating and drinking, smoking and sleeping, without other excitement than the arrival of a letter-bag once a month? This again supposes that he indulges in no excesses; and the probabilities of his remaining sane in body and mind would be vastly diminished if he went to bed mellow upon poor liquor every night, and arose every morning with 'hot coppers' from sundry 'cabbage-leaves.' But however sober he may be, an utter want of change, exercise, and excitement, must in a year or two do their work upon him. I presume that in the days of the Druids, England, covered with bush and swamp, was called by many a legionary the 'Roman's grave.' And I have little doubt that,

Far on in summers that we shall not see, intertropical Africa cleared of jungle, drained, and provided with broad roads, good houses, and a sufficiency of edibles, will lose its present title, the 'grave of Europeans.'

As regards trade:—It is obviously difficult to expect unanimity of action where, for instance, a Yorkshireman, an Irishman, and a Scotchman—perhaps two or three Sierra Leone fellows, or half castes—are all running a race for the almighty dollar. In these markets, too, it is useless for a dozen good men and true to pull together, if there is a single exception within reach—the natives will prefer the exception who gives them trust and takes them in. The only remedy in such a river as the Benin, where the natives, squatting in almost inaccessible haunts, can defy attack, is to be well prepared for defence. The building of factories is here the greatest of blunders: they offer every facility to the plunderer, none to the defender. They are at once costly, unhealthy, and uncomfortable. I would see all these places levelled

with the ground, transfer Europeans and their Krumen to hulks, moor them as far off the shore as convenient, and then bid the native and the fever 'come on.'

And now for the Elephant Mountain, Batanga, of the Xyliuces Æthiopia.*

NOTE.

The public having long since forgotten the late Lieutenant Forbes's *Duhomy and the Dahomians*, has been again startled by the following account of Dahomian atrocities:—

The Church Missionary Society have received from the governor of Lagos a report by Commander Perry, R.N., of Her Majesty's ship *Grifon*, at Little Popo, containing the substance of a statement made to him there on the 5th of August by Mr. Euschart, a Dutch merchant of property, who had just returned to Popo from a forced visit to Dahomy. The narrative is in the form of a diary, of which the following is an extract:—

'July 5.—He [Mr. Euschart] was brought to the market-place, where he was told many people had been killed the night before. He first saw the body of Mr. William Doherty (a Sierra Leone man), late a missionary and church catechist at Ishagga. The body was crucified against a large tree, one nail through the forehead, one through the heart, and one through each hand and foot; the left arm was bent, and a large cotton umbrella in the grasp. He was then taken to the market, where the king was seated on a raised platform, from which he was talking to the people much "war palaver," and promising them an attack upon Abbeokuta in November. Cowries, cloth, and rum were then distributed. In front of the market-place rows of human heads, fresh and gory, were ranged, and the whole place was saturated with blood, the heads evidently belonging to some Ishagga prisoners who had been killed during the night, after having been tortured in the most frightful manner.

'Until July 10, Mr. Euschart was ordered to remain quiet in his house, and not to move or look out after sundown.

'July 10.—The ground shook violently

—evidently, from the date, the effect of the earthquake felt at Accra. Mr. Euschart was at once brought to the market-place, where he found the king again seated on the raised platform, surrounded by Amazons. The king told him that the ground shaking was his father's spirit, complaining that "customs were not made proper." Three Ishagga chiefs were then brought before the king, and told they were to go and tell his father that "customs should be better than ever." Each chief was then given a bottle of rum and a head of cowries, and then decapitated. Twenty-four men were then brought out, bound in baskets, with their heads just showing out, and placed on the platform in front of the king; they were then thrown down to the people, who were dancing, singing, and yelling below. As each man was thrown down, he was seized and beheaded, the heads being piled in one heap and the bodies in another. Every man who caught a victim and cut off the head, received one head of cowries (about 2s.) After all were killed, Mr. Euschart was conducted home.

'July 11.—Taken to another part of the town, where exactly similar horrors were being perpetrated.

'July 12.—All the platforms were taken down, and the programme appeared to be firing guns, singing, and dancing all day. There were no more public sacrifices for ten days, but it is supposed many took place during the nights.

'July 22.—Taken to see the "grand customs" at the palace of the late king, at the gate of which two platforms had been erected; on each platform sixteen men and four horses were placed; inside the house was placed another platform, on which were placed sixteen women, four horses, and one alligator. The men and women were all Sierra Leone people captured at Ishagga, and were dressed in European clothes, each group of sixteen men seated or rather bound in chairs placed round a table, on which glasses of rum were placed for each. The king then ascended the platform, where he adored the Dahomian fetish, and seemed to make obeisance to the prisoners, whose right arms were then loosed to drink the king's health. After the king's health had been drunk, the effects of the late king were paraded and worshipped by the people as they passed; a grand review of the troops then commenced, and as each marched past the king harangued them, and promised the

* Should these pages ever be deemed worthy of republication, I purpose to affix to them Bosman's, or rather David Van Nyendael's *Description of Rio Formosa, or the River Benin; being the First Supplemental, or Twenty-first Letter*; and to illustrate the old author with notes. Many travellers of bygone days merit this attention; they have the especial advantage of being permitted to enter upon subjects quite tabooed by their 'highly respectable' successors.

sack of Abeokuta in November. Nearly the whole of the troops wore firearms; a few select corps had rifles; but the greater part were armed with flint-lock muskets. The artillery consisted of about 24 guns (12-pounders). The number of troops altogether could scarcely be less than 50,000, including 10,000 Amazons, all apparently well-disciplined troops. After the review was over the prisoners were beheaded; their heads being hacked off with blunt knives; at the same time the horses and alligator were despatched, particular care being taken that their blood should mingle with that of the human prisoners.

When all was finished, Mr. Euschart was permitted to leave Abomey, which, it is needless to say, he immediately did, having received the magnificent *viatica* of eight heads of cowries (16s.) one piece of country cloth, and two flasks of rum.

Mr. Euschart firmly believes that Abeokuta will, without doubt, be attacked by the whole Dahomian army towards the end of November.

The above contains a few inaccuracies. Mr. Euschart (not Euschart) was an agent of the respectable firm of Messrs. Rückeford and Co., Rotterdam. He is said to have applied to the 'Sháshá,' or second officer, of Hydah for permission to witness the atrocities at Abomey, which were doubtless exaggerated in his honour. He returned after three days in the capital. The missionary Doherty's throat was cut before he was crucified, and probably he had a bottle of rum previous to the operation. The number of troops may be reduced

to 15,000, of whom probably 10,000 could be marched into the field. Of the 10,000, about 2000 may be 'amazons,' who, like the urdubegani of India, are slaves of the palace. That the army is not formidable may be gathered from the affairs of Abeokuta and Ishággá. The 24 guns are probably old cast-iron carronades, lying on the ground. Abeokuta has been threatened every November for the last dozen years; but some day the blow will be struck.

The present king of Dahomy was called as a prince 'Badohong;' his regal name is Glere or Gleri, meaning the 'jawbone.' It is erroneously written Guelele. He is generally but unjustly abused as a tyrant, despot, and monster. He is neither better nor worse than his brethren of Ashanti and Benin. None of these monarchs can single-handed prevent, or even modify, the 'customs' of the country, which are supported by their caboceers or chiefs. As well might the king of a constitutional nation interfere with liturgy or creed.

The effect of a missionary (Mr. West) residing at Kumasi, the capital of Ashanti, has been to make the sacrifices secret. The same is the case at Abeokuta. Dahomy and Benin would doubtless in time adopt the plan, if similar influences were brought to bear upon them.



LATE LAURELS.

CHAPTER I.

FORESHADOWING.

Two children in two neighbouring villages
Playing mad pranks along the healthy leas.

UNDERWOOD Manor-house was regarded, not without reason, by the young people of the neighbourhood in the light of a realized paradise. Boys liked it because ponies abounded in the paddocks, pointers and terriers about the yards and lodges, and all sorts of good things upon the garden walls. Girls liked it for its rambling passages, the mysterious splendour of its rooms, its quaint pictures, its cabinets of picturesque curiosities, the peacocks, which strutted on the terrace, and the conservatory, where Mrs. Evelyn and an old Scotch gardener contrived between them to make summer seem eternal. Boys and girls alike instinctively appreciated the hearty welcome, and the effortless hospitality, which awaited them on the part of the squire and his lady. Many a little creature, secure of sympathy and consolation, intrusted her first trouble to Mrs. Evelyn's ear, or committed some too audacious request to her advocacy and protection. Many were the fortunate lads who imperilled their own existence by futile attempts upon that of the Underwood rabbits; who invaded the stables, disturbed the pheasants, decimated the peaches, and, in fact, did all those pleasant things which gild the fancy of imaginative youth, but are for the most part objected to by country gentlemen, and the subordinate army of country gentlemen's officials. The Underwood grooms and keepers, however, were infected by their master's benevolence, and regarded all juvenile delinquencies indulgently, as a venial and interesting characteristic of the time of life. Old Marston, the absolute despot of the woods, all whose ideas seemed concentrated in a malignant detestation of hawks and weasels, had yet a tender side for aspiring sportsmen, and had submitted more than once with laud-

able resignation to being 'peppered' by beginners, whose zeal got the better of their prudence; 'I be glad you're come, Jim,' he once observed to one of the beaters, who joined him at the corner of the plantation—'Master Charles have been pouring it into me most awful.' A special providence, however, preserved him and his leathern gaiters from annihilation, and Marston survived to reap a golden harvest, from a list of crack shots who had received their initiatory instructions at his hands. Thus, between master and servants, Underwood was a cheerful place; yet its cheerfulness resulted more from determined good nature, than from the absence of materials for melancholy. A sort of fatality had seemed of late years to hang over the manor-house; the generation of Evelyns, which would naturally have been just now at its prime, was already extinct, and a party of grandchildren supplied the place and enjoyed the privileges of the missing sons and daughters. Time after time had the Squire entered the little Underwood chancel, as chief mourner for children, whose vital energies had seemed to fail them, just when strength should have been greatest, and the prospect of danger looked the most remote.

One daughter, whose memory seemed now to her parents an almost unearthly dream of tender loveliness, had scarcely left the schoolroom, when she sank into a decline. Charles, the eldest son, frightened, while still in his honeymoon, by some unaccountable symptom of increasing feebleness, had carried off his bride to Italy, and endeavoured, under a sunny sky, to stave off the fate which he felt creeping pitilessly upon him. He soon knew it to be in vain, and turned homeward to die. For a while his widow lingered on at Un-