

Romance of Empire Series

EDITED BY JOHN LANG

THE  
LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

ROMANCE OF EMPIRE

---

THE LAND OF  
THE GOLDEN TRADE  
[WEST AFRICA]

BY

JOHN LANG

AUTHOR OF 'OUTPOSTS OF EMPIRE,' ETC.

WITH TWELVE REPRODUCTIONS FROM ORIGINAL DRAWINGS IN COLOUR BY

A. D. M'CORMICK, R.I.



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE THE GOLD COAST LIBRARY

LONDON

THE CAXTON PUBLISHING COMPANY  
CLUN HOUSE, SURREY ST. W.C.

1910

TO  
SIR LAUDER BRUNTON, BART.  
LL.D., F.R.S., ETC.

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I	
IN THE BEGINNING . . . . .	1
CHAPTER II	
THE CARTHAGINIANS IN WEST AFRICA . . . . .	13
CHAPTER III	
THE REDISCOVERY OF WEST AFRICA . . . . .	23
CHAPTER IV	
EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA: LOK . . . . .	43
CHAPTER V	
EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA: TOWRSON . . . . .	56
CHAPTER VI	
PRISONERS OF THE PORTUGUESE . . . . .	73
CHAPTER VII	
EARLY ENGLISH EXPLORERS ON THE GAMBIA . . . . .	90
CHAPTER VIII	
PORTUGUESE AND DUTCH ON THE GOLD COAST . . . . .	106

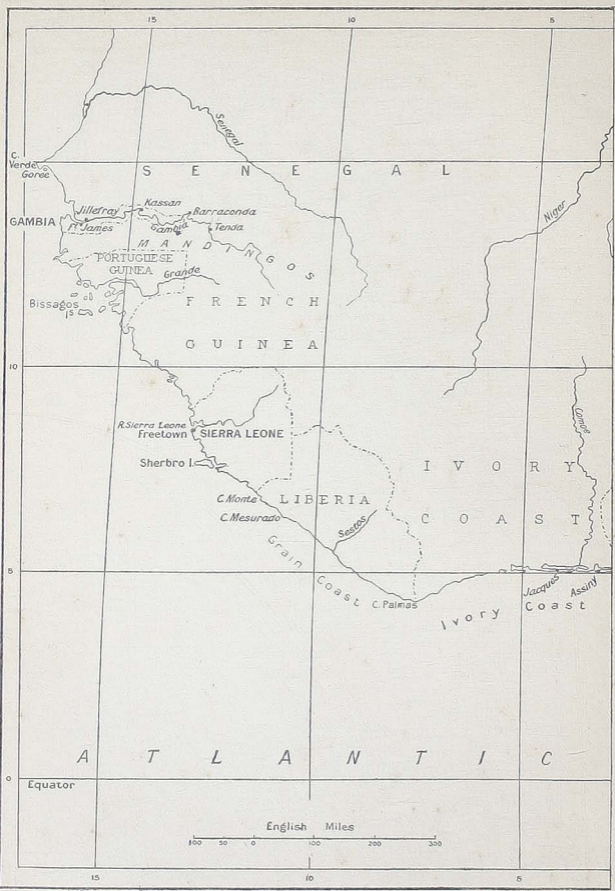
# THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

	PAGE
CHAPTER IX	
OUR DUTCH RIVALS . . . . .	116
CHAPTER X	
TROUBLES WITH THE FRENCH IN WEST AFRICA . . . . .	140
CHAPTER XI	
OLD MISSIONS . . . . .	150
CHAPTER XII	
THE SLAVE TRADE . . . . .	169
CHAPTER XIII	
THE SLAVE TRADE—ON SHORE . . . . .	185
CHAPTER XIV	
THE SLAVE TRADE—MIDDLE PASSAGE . . . . .	199
CHAPTER XV	
PIRATES OF THE GUINEA COAST: ENGLAND AND DAVIS . . . . .	231
CHAPTER XVI	
PIRATES OF THE GUINEA COAST: ROBERTS, MASSEY, AND COCKLYN . . . . .	263
CHAPTER XVII	
CONCLUSION . . . . .	300
INDEX . . . . .	311

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
Dias in the "Roaring Forties" . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
The Carthaginians attacking the Gorillas . . . . .	16
D'Azambuja receiving the Native Chiefs at Elmina . . . . .	36
"We made the upper worke of their shippe flie about their cares" . . . . .	66
"We surrender! We surrender!" . . . . .	76
Andrew Battell crossing the Bar at the mouth of the Mbengo . . . . .	86
"There remained one last convincing method" . . . . .	158
Tomba felled by the captain of the Slaver . . . . .	202
Capture of the Slaver <i>La Jeune Estelle</i> by a British Frigate . . . . .	218
Avery, the Pirate, taking the two armed Danish ships . . . . .	240
Death of Davis, the Pirate . . . . .	260
"One Stephenson . . . swore at him, and bade him stand up and fight like a man" . . . . .	278

### MAPS



15

10

5

S E N E G A L

GAMBIA

PORTUGUESE  
GUINEA

F R E N C H

G U I N E A

SIERRA LEONE

LIBERIA

I V O R Y

C O A S T

A T L A N T I C

Equator

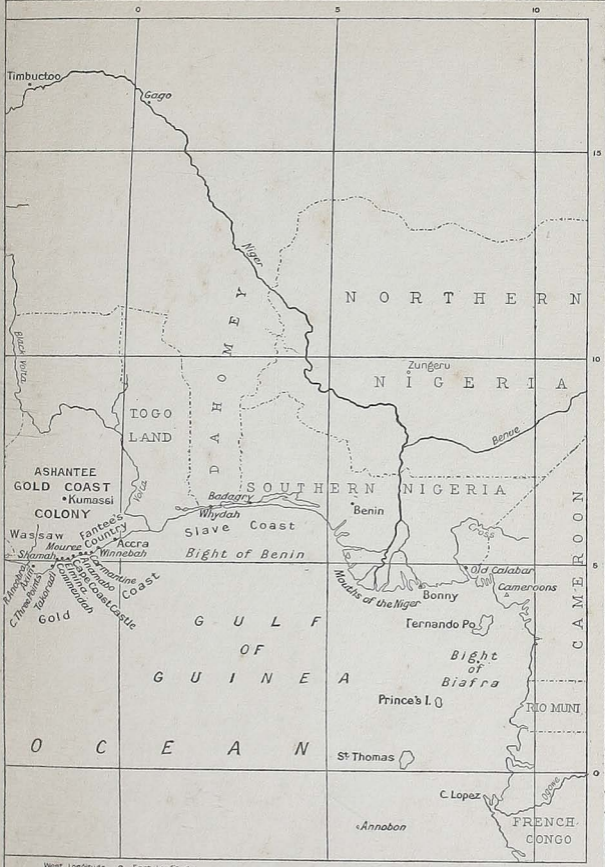
English Miles

100 50 0 100 200 300

15

10

5



Timbuctoo

Gago

Niger

D A H O M E Y

N O R T H E R N

N I G E R I A

TOGO  
LAND

Zungeru

Benue

ASHANTEE  
GOLD COAST  
COLONY

Kumassi

S O U T H E R N  
N I G E R I A

Badagry

Slave Coast

Benin

Whydah

Bight of Benin

Wassaw  
Mouree  
Shamah  
Fantee's  
Country  
Accra  
Winnabah  
Cape Coast  
Castles  
Carmarone  
Coast  
Gold

Mouths of the Niger

Cross

Old Calabar

Cameroons

Fernando Po

Bight of Biafra

Prince's I. C.

G U L F  
O F  
G U I N E A

RIO MUNI

O C E A N

St Thomas

C. Lopez

Annobon

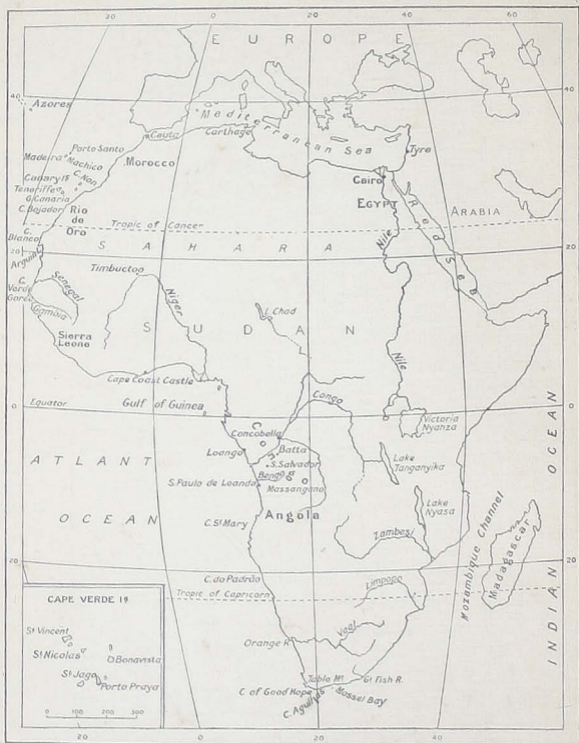
FRENCH  
CONGO

West Longitude 0 East Longitude

5

10

Barnholmen, Lond



English Miles

Bartholomew, Edin

0 500 1000 1500 2000 2500

# THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

## CHAPTER I

### IN THE BEGINNING

STEEPED in moisture, and sweltering in heat more enervating than is commonly to be found even under a tropic sun, swathed to the throat in vegetation that reeks of malaria, and hidden far from the beaten track of tourist, lie some of the oldest of our over-sea possessions. They are lands where yet shyly linger traces of the romance of olden days. Yet of those lands the average Briton has scant knowledge—save that mayhap he has heard one portion of them spoken of as the “White Man’s Grave.” Of their history he probably knows little—and cares less; yet with our own that history is inextricably blended, and on those shores were bred troubles from which sprang a great naval war that saw the enemies of our country come perilously close to the wharves and streets of London.

Of romance, those sun-smitten, moisture-laden latitudes are full; the very names that we find there smack of it—the Gold Coast, the Ivory Coast, the

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

Slave Coast. They are names that raise in our minds visions of bags from whose gaping lips trickle rivulets of gleaming yellow dust, the dust of gold, visions of great elephants' tusks piled in vast mounds, of pirate ships and slavers, of stout fights with "Portugals," and with our old enemies the Dutch in the days when De Ruyter upheld the claim of Holland to be a mighty Sea Power.

And, again, there is that other name which pertains to the entire coast, a name familiar to us all—"Guinea." It is common knowledge that the coin best known in the time of our grandfathers (and to which, though it no longer circulates, we still cling in the matter of subscriptions and in the payment of sundry too familiar fees,) received its name because it was originally made of gold brought from the "Guinea" Coast to England by that African Company whose charter, granted by Charles II., permitted them to coin gold and to display their stamp, an elephant, on the reverse of the coin. The same Company also turned out from the same source £5 gold pieces, like the guinea. "This day," says Mr. Samuel Pepys in his *Diary*, under date 21st September 1668, "also came out first the new five pieces in gold, coined by the Guinny Company, and I did get two pieces from Mr. Holder."

But whence originally came the word "Guinea" as applied to the coast of West Africa, and what did it mean? John Barbot, Agent-General of the Royal Company of Africa at Paris, writing in 1682, says in the introduction to his *Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea*: "To come

## IN THE BEGINNING

now to the subject in hand, viz. the etymology of the word Guinea, being a considerable part of the country of the Blacks lying along the sea-coast. It is unquestionably deriv'd from that of Genehoa, another province of Nigritia, or the country of the Blacks, lying betwixt that of Gualala which is on the north of it, and the river Senega on the south, along the north side of which river the province of Genehoa extends above eighty leagues up the country eastward. The natives of this country call it Geunii or Genii, ancient geographers Mandori, and the African merchants and Arabs Gheneva and Ghenehoa; from which the first Portuguese discoverers corruptly came to name it Guinea, or, as they pronounce it, Guiné, which appellation they gave to all the country they successively discovered from the river Senega to that of Camarones, which lies in the Gulph of Guinea."

As to the meaning of the word, there was of old no certainty. William Bosman, Chief Factor for the Dutch at Guinea, writing from St. George d'Elmina towards the close of the Seventeenth Century, says that "the very name of Guinea is not so much as known to the natives here."<sup>1</sup> Barbot writes that "Ptolemy in the Second Century says, concerning the name of Guinea, that it is a word of the country, and signifies hot and dry." A term less appropriate than "hot and dry," as generally descriptive of the west coast of Africa, cannot well be imagined, so that, whatever may be its meaning, we may safely assume that dryness has no part in it.

<sup>1</sup> *New Description of the Coast of Guinea.* English translation, 1721.

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

Lady Lugard, however, in her address to the General Meeting of the Royal Colonial Institute in May 1904, says on this question: "Ancient geographers called the part of the world to which it [West African Negroland] belongs sometimes Soudan, sometimes Ethiopia, sometimes Nigretia, sometimes Tekrou, sometimes and more often Genowah or Genewah, which, by the European custom of throwing the accent to the fore part of the word, has become Guinea. Always and in every form their name for it meant the Land of the Blacks. Genewah, pronounced with a hard 'g,' is a native word signifying 'black.'"

Of all Europeans, the Portuguese were the first, as a nation, to push their way to West Africa. But long prior to their day another seafaring people, the greatest of antiquity, the Phœnicians, had traded there, had indeed almost of a certainty sailed up the West African Coast from the south, after having rounded the Cape of Good Hope. Six hundred years before Christ, Pharaoh Necho, the then king of Egypt, sent a Phœnician expedition down the Red Sea, with orders to return to Egypt by way of the Pillars of Hercules. Herodotus records that "after he" (Pharaoh) "had ceased from digging a canal from the Nile to the Arabian Gulf he sent certain Phœnicians in ships, commanding them to enter the northern sea by the Pillars of Hercules, and so to sail back by that way to Egypt. The Phœnicians, therefore, sailing from the Red Sea navigated the southern sea. At the end of autumn they anchored, and, going ashore, sowed the land by whatever part of Libya they happened to be

## IN THE BEGINNING

sailing, and waited for the harvest. Having cut the corn, they put to sea again. When two years had thus elapsed, in the third they returned to Egypt, passing by the Pillars of Hercules; and they related a circumstance which to me does not seem credible, though it may gain belief from others, that sailing round Libya they had the sun on the right." Credible or incredible to Herodotus, the fact that the Phœnicians reported that in rounding from the east the southern part of Africa they saw the sun on their right hand (or to the north) is of course very satisfactory proof that the voyagers did actually round the Cape of Good Hope, or at least that they sailed far south of the Equator. They would have been little likely to invent a "traveller's tale" which was so utterly at variance with the knowledge of that time, and thus so likely to be treated with incredulity and ridicule. Doubtless they crept along the coast, hugging the shore as close as might be done with safety. But secure natural harbours of refuge in those latitudes are not numerous, and one may marvel how their frail craft weathered those angry seas that roar where the winds that prevail for great part of the year blow in the teeth of the strong running Agulhas current. It is an ocean that can but seldom be termed placid, and as they watched their chance ere putting forth to round some bold and rock-girt headland or treacherous far-reaching shoal, or essayed to cross a bar where surf raged white and hungry, many a time must the hearts of those bold mariners have turned to water within them.

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

In connection with this early voyage, much interest was a year or two since excited by the production of two scarabs said to have been discovered by the late M. Bourrian, the Egyptologist, at one time head of the French School in Egypt. After his death in 1902 these scarabs were sold by his widow to a museum in Brussels, but apparently they were not deciphered till a few years later. They purport to give an account of this voyage of the Phœnicians round Libya—an account entirely corroborative of that given by Herodotus—and at first the internal evidence seems to have given no ground for doubt as to their authenticity. “The fabrication is marvellously good; the hieroglyphics are beautifully cut, true to the style of the period named, and they show a better appreciation of the forms than is to be found in any usual copies by scholars.” “Yet,” continues Professor Flinders Petrie in the *Royal Geographical Journal* of November 1908, “it is now believed that they have the interest of one of the most skilful forgeries that has yet come to light. . . . The vast store of references collected for the new hieroglyphic dictionary at Berlin have enabled the construction of the documents to be tracked. They are found to consist of many passages identical with those in published inscriptions, connected by other unknown passages. The grammar and usage of words is in many cases unusual and faulty, judging from common usage. Now all this might occur in any inscription, or a modern letter; but the serious fact is that all the apparent faults occur in the connecting passages which are

## IN THE BEGINNING

without a published source. This marked difference of correctness between the parts which have a precedent and those which are without a precedent appears to make evident their nature as a modern forgery." The material, also, on which the hieroglyphics are cut is said to be lithographic, not Egyptian, limestone. And forgeries they now turn out to be. In the *Times* of 7th January of this year, 1909, appeared the following paragraph: "Paris, 6th January.—Mme. Bourrian, the lady who last year sold to the director of a Brussels museum two scarabs purporting to give an account of the circumnavigation of Africa under Pharaoh Necho, which have since been declared to be forgeries, was arrested by the police yesterday, together with her son. The lady, who is the widow of a former director of the French School at Cairo, received £500 for the scarabs, and was recently condemned by the Paris Courts to make restitution to the director of the museum, who had brought an action against her upon discovering the imposition of which he had been a victim. Mme. Bourrian, however, refused to pay the money, and the police issued a warrant for her arrest. Mother and son were duly interrogated by the examining magistrate, and the son ultimately confessed that the scarabs had been made and engraved to his order by a Paris sculptor. He pleaded that the inscription was genuine, and that he had discovered it on a parchment among his father's papers. Mother and son remain in custody, and will in due course be brought up for trial." What patient skill must have been expended, what

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

nicety of touch required, in the preparation of these forgeries; how delicate the manipulation that could even for a time deceive, as it did at first deceive, the trained eyes of expert Egyptologists. One could wish, with M. Bourrián, junior, that the inscriptions were really genuine, and that the slight blur which appears here and there on the surface of the scarabs, and the semblance of wear and tear at the edges, were really the effect of time and not of dishonesty.

One hundred years or so after this early Phœnician venture, a Persian noble named Sataspes, condemned to death by Xerxes, was by that monarch granted the choice between crucifixion and the circumnavigation of Libya, starting from Carthage and sailing by way of the Pillars of Hercules and the west coast of Africa round to the Red Sea. Sataspes preferred the frail chance offered to him by the forlorn hope—at the worst it meant a little longer of pleasant life—and he did for a time make progress down the west coast. But dread of the unknown “Sea of Darkness” and its mysteries, the terror of being plucked from peaceful sleep below by giant arm of some monster squid, their superstitious fears and crude beliefs, were more convincing to his Carthaginian crew than the hold over them possessed by Sataspes, more powerful than his fear of death, for presently the vessel returned, bearing to his doom the unfortunate Persian.

He had come, said he on his return, in the story told to the king of the mysteries and dangers of his voyage, to an obstacle which put an end to the possibility of further progress. Perhaps Sataspes

## IN THE BEGINNING

trusted that the sufferings through which he had already passed, and the dangers to which he had been exposed, might plead with the king and incline his heart to forgive and forget the crime of which his subject had been guilty. But if he so hoped, he hoped in vain; Xerxes was not the man to consider any excuse valid for failure to obey his orders. Sataspes had been commanded to circumnavigate Libya, and Sataspes had failed to carry out the king's will. He must die. Instant crucifixion was ordered. It is said, however, that Sataspes escaped to Samos. And for that escape, no doubt, the guards who failed to prevent it paid to the monarch heavy toll of death.

If Sataspes failed, however, there is at least evidence that some one else, more than a hundred years before Christ, must have succeeded in rounding the Cape. Eudoxus of Cyzicus, a Greek, when on his way back from India, (on a voyage undertaken by command of the reigning Egyptian king,) caught, it is not unlikely, in the break of the north-east monsoon, was driven far down the east coast of Africa. Here, amongst a quantity of wreckage, he found on the shore the prow of a ship which bore on it a carved horse's head. This figure-head was taken home by Eudoxus, and when exhibited in the market-place of Alexandria was recognised by seafaring people as undoubtedly belonging to a vessel hailing from that port called by the Romans "Gades," the ancient Phœnician settlement on the southern coast of Spain outside the Pillars of Hercules. It is in the last degree unlikely that this figure-head

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

belonged to a derelict craft which drifted round the Cape of Good Hope far to the south, presently finding her way up past the Seychelle Islands and eventually laying her bones on the east coast of Africa. There is small probability that in those seas she could have lived long enough to accomplish such a voyage, even supposing that the ocean currents could have deposited her where she was found; and she could not have crept up the coast against the full force of the Agulhas and Mozambique currents. She must have been commanded by some iron-nerved seaman, who, rising superior to his superstitious fears, undismayed by dangers and by portents or by crew timorous and ripe for mutiny, steadily plodded onward past ever-new cape and headland till the day dawned when it was too late to turn back. Perhaps the supply of food came to an end; maybe she sprang a leak and had to be beached while a heavy sea ran, too heavy to let her take the ground with safety; or the strength of a scurvy-smitten crew failed them, and they could no longer man the sweeps or handle the ship. And so she left her bones, and the bones of her crew, to bleach and perish "where Afric's sunny fountains roll down their golden sand."

But the sight of wreckage on East African shores of an undoubtedly Western vessel roused the ambition of Eudoxus, who determined that where man had gone man could go. At Gades he fitted out a squadron of three vessels and set forth to prove his theory. Fear of the unknown affected not Eudoxus, the dangers that in later centuries dismayed the early European mariner had no terrors for him. But the

## IN THE BEGINNING

hearts of his crews failed them when the ships began to plough their way through lonely unknown seas; they mutinied, and ran the vessels ashore. Yet Eudoxus had not lost all sway over them, for presently the mutineers consented to continue the voyage. It was found, however, that the largest of the three ships when run ashore had been too sorely damaged to be refloated, and out of her timbers a smaller craft had to be built. Then, again, when after wearisome delay the expedition had made considerable southing, the courage of the men oozed away. Unfamiliar sights met their eyes as timidly they crept down the coast; the waves grew wondrous hot to the touch; beasts awesome and great were seen in the rivers up which the vessels ventured a little way for the sake of renewing their supply of fresh water; weird bellowings and roarings, echoing from out the thick unwholesome mists that wreathed and swirled over the muddy water, smote their ears and thrilled their hearts of nights as they lay at anchor. Ill-health fell on the crews; their teeth chattered with cold, yet immediately thereafter their bodies burned with intolerable heat, pain and sickness unbearable racked their frames. Never again should they see the busy wharves of Gades! To their doom were they being led! Who was this man, their leader, that they should be sacrificed for him? So in terror, and in unreasoning wrath, they rose and compelled Eudoxus to put about and to steer for home.

But not thus was he to be daunted. Another expedition was quickly fitted out; fresh crews,

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

imbued by his spirit, were ready to face the dangers of the unknown seas, and to follow where Eudoxus would lead. Once again he sailed to the south. And long the women of Gades waited and watched for their husbands ; but never more returned Eudoxus or his men.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CARTHAGINIANS IN WEST AFRICA

WHETHER Phœnicians did or did not round the Cape, there is no doubt that more than a thousand years before the Christian era they had founded colonies beyond the Pillars of Hercules, to the south as well as to the north. With eastern seas they were familiar, for they traded down the Red Sea to Ophir,—which probably included not Asiatic countries alone but also part of East Africa, bringing thence spices, and “gold and silver, ivory and apes, and peacocks.” On the west, having once established themselves at Gades, a people so enterprising were certain to push farther afield, possibly to Madeira and the Canaries, as well as down the west coast of Africa, and north even to Britain. Of the exploits of the Phœnicians, however, the greater part is left to conjecture; there are extant few reliable accounts of their doings. Ever jealous of the interference of other nations, they kept secret all that could be kept secret of their voyagings and discoveries, and when their end came, and Tyre fell, the world’s knowledge of navigation suffered loss which a thousand years did not repair.

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

Of the Carthaginians, to some extent it is different; we possess, at least, more certain knowledge of their doings. Herodotus gives an account of their trading with black peoples down the African coast, and describes the method of barter, a method which says much for the good faith—or for the simplicity—of both parties. The Carthaginians, when they reached a spot where they desired to trade, took ashore with them a part of their cargo, which they made into heaps and left on the ground. Presently—the Carthaginians having retired—came the timid natives and placed alongside those heaps the goods which they wished to give in exchange. Then they in their turn retired, whereupon the Carthaginians, if satisfied with the commodities offered (possibly gold dust and ivory), took away with them the native “trade” and left their own. If, on the other hand, the offer of the natives was not considered to be of sufficient value, the northern merchants took back their own goods and departed elsewhere. It is a primitive system of barter; but probably the account given by Herodotus is substantially correct. A similar system is reported to have been still in existence up the Gambia River early in the Seventeenth Century.

About the year 450 B.C. there set out from Carthage a great expedition. Seven-and-seventy quinqueremes—great galleys, rigged each with huge square-sail for use when winds blew fair, but propelled chiefly by tiers of rowers, slaves, chained to the oars—threshed their way one day to the offing, out from the crowded shipping, and the wharves

## THE CARTHAGINIANS IN WEST AFRICA

where people clustered waving farewell to ashen-faced men and weeping women and children, who, clinging to the bulwarks, gazed dim-eyed towards the homes that should know them no more. Hanno, the Carthaginian, at command of the Senate was taking with him on this expedition, to found new colonies down the African coast beyond the Pillars of Hercules, the Liby-Phœnician population, the half-breeds of Carthage—offspring of marriages between Phœnicians and Africans—whose further residence in the city the Senate deemed undesirable.

Through the Straits and away to the south swept the fleet, delaying here a day and there a day to land men and stores, ever planting in suitable spots fresh settlements, in each dedicating temples to the gods, and presently again holding on its southward course. Then one morning, round a cape far stretched to seaward, the weary, whip-driven rowers toiled in the great heat, the ships plunging and labouring against a heavy head sea, till, sore spent, at last they cast anchor under the lee of an island which Hanno called Cerne, but which is the modern island of Arguin, to the southward and eastward of Cape Blanco. And in this isle are still to be seen the stone cisterns that those Carthaginians then built.

Dropping here more colonists, still sped the fleet many days to the south, making at last a great river whose mouth opened into a haven, many-isled and dense with vegetation. But the natives at this spot were hostile; instead of trading, they stoned the Carthaginians, and hurled at them missiles, driving them again to sea. Then, farther to the south,

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

another great river of turbid, oil-like water, alive with crocodiles and monstrous beasts, so that the crews feared greatly. And now to a great bay came the adventurers, a bay wherein lay an island, an emerald set in sapphire sea, a peaceful spot, of entrancing beauty to those toil-worn, weary seafarers. Here they landed, rejoicing to be at rest, revelling in cool shade hidden far from the pitiless glare of sun-kissed waters. All that day in the island silence reigned deep and breathless, but when darkness fell weird cries disturbed their sleep, harsh-sounding drums boomed on the mainland, cymbals clashed, "from the ground flames continually issued." Terror-stricken by these mysterious sights and sounds, overawed as well by the brooding silence of the day as by the appalling voices of the night, the Carthaginians fled on board their ships and pushed out to sea; but still as they coasted onward, the glow of flames pursued them through the night. And to this day along this coast, at that season of the year when the negroes clear the land for cultivation by the simple process of burning the scrub, may still be seen those fires that "issue from the ground," still may be heard the booming of deep-toned drums, the beating of tom-toms, and strange cries, as the natives hold nocturnal festival.

Many days' sail yet farther on, another great bay was discovered, and in this bay also was an island, wherein on landing they found a lake on whose bosom lay an islet rugged and broken, clad with many great trees. And as the explorers skirted along, forcing their way, now here, now there,



The Carthaginians attacking the Gorillas

## THE CARTHAGINIANS IN WEST AFRICA

through creeper-choked jungle and open glade, coming towards them from the trees they beheld sundry strange figures, short of leg, yet tall and very strong, broad of shoulder, vast of chest, with arms abnormally long and muscular. These natives were covered from head to foot with hair of a rusty brown—in strange lands must necessarily be found strange inhabitants—and as they advanced, continually the males beat upon their breasts, uttering the while terrible cries. But when Hanno and his men, fearing attack, rushed upon them, they fled, defending themselves with stones, and escaping amongst the rocks and in the dense forest, all but three females who were captured alive. Yet so strong were they, so fiercely did they struggle, bursting their bonds and sorely injuring their captors, leaving even on the blades of the Carthaginian swords the dent of their cruel teeth, that in the end it was found necessary to kill them. And their skins were stuffed and brought home to wondering Carthage. These natives Hanno called *Gorillæ*.

No farther than this bay went Hanno and his ships; provisions were running short, and prudence bade them turn home. All that we know of the expedition is taken from a Greek translation of Hanno's account of his celebrated voyage, and probably the translation is not accurate. In any case it is not easy to say how far Hanno did or did not go along the West African coast. Some writers are of opinion that he went no great way south of Morocco; others are confident that he sailed along the Gold Coast, through the Bight of Benin,

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

even past the mouths of the Niger and within sight of the Cameroons Mountains. Certainly the account seems to be at least very suggestive of the rivers Senegal and Gambia, and of the harbour of Sierra Leone.

However that may be, it is very certain that some ancient race once regularly traded down those coasts, and even went some way inland; or perhaps, which is less likely, came overland from Egypt or Carthage to the Gold Coast, a route which would suggest that they penetrated those forests whose dense growth in later years acted as a deterrent to the enterprise of Arab slave-dealers. Besides those remains on the island of Arguin, at here a spot and there a spot on or near the coast, is evidence—not conclusive, but satisfying—of the presence in the remote past of a highly civilised race of men. In the hinterland of the Gold Coast, far beyond the farthest spot to which either Portuguese or Dutch penetrated during their occupation of the country, yet far south of the dense forest zone, have of late years been discovered remains of ancient borings for gold. The natives, when they search for gold, invariably dig a more or less shallow pit. M. Campagnon, a Frenchman, writing in 1716 of gold-mining in the country back from the Gambia River, says they merely scrape away the earth and wash it in bowls, losing in the process all but the coarser grains. Though the ground gets gradually richer as they sink, yet they seldom go deeper than from six to eight feet, because they have neither the initiative nor the skill to construct props wherewith

## THE CARTHAGINIANS IN WEST AFRICA

to prevent the sides of the pit from falling in. For the same reasons they make no ladders whereby they may clamber out of the pits, in place of them merely cutting steps in the earth. Hence, the sides are continually falling in, the more readily because they work chiefly in the rainy season, on account of the greater quantity of water then available for washing the soil. The ground is very rich, but, says Campagnon, the negroes think "that Gold is a sort of roguish or malicious Being, which delights to play Tricks with its Followers; and for that end often shifts from one place to another." Thus when a negro prospector tries for gold without success at the first two or three attempts, he ceases work at that spot, saying, "It is gone." Here, in the Gold Coast hinterland, however, besides other workings, were found tunnels far driven into the hill-sides, and, lying in these long disused workings, ancient bronze lamps, cast away by miners who drove these tunnels centuries prior to the Roman invasion of Britain. Perhaps from here also came to King Solomon some of the gold, and the ivory and the apes; for who shall say where Ophir began or ended?

Then there are the famous Aggry Beads that are found in part of the Gold Coast. Whence do they come, and what are they? They are not made in the country, nor can they be successfully imitated even in Birmingham, that hotbed of spurious curios. "Aggry" is not a native word, nor can the natives themselves give any explanation of its meaning or origin. "They say they are directed to dig for them

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

by a spiral vapour issuing from the ground, and that they rarely lay near the surface. The finder is said to be sure of a series of good fortune."<sup>1</sup>

The beads are of two kinds, variegated and plain. "The plain beads," says Bowdich, "are blue, yellow, green, or a dull red; the variegated consist of every colour and shade. . . . The variegated strata of the aggy beads are so finely united and so imperceptibly blended, that the perfection seems superior to art. Some resemble mosaic work; the surfaces of others are covered with flowers and regular patterns, so very minute, and the shades so delicately softened one into the other and into the ground of the bead, that nothing but the finest touch of the pencil could equal them. The agatised parts disclose flowers and patterns, deep in the body of the bead, and thin shafts of opaque colours running from the centre to the surface." The beads are greatly valued by the natives, and for the blue and yellow aggy a certain tribe, it is said, will give double the weight of the bead in gold dust. "To this day," says Colonel Ellis in his *History of the Gold Coast*, "the value of an aggy bead is always reckoned at its weight in gold dust." "What is certain," continues Colonel Ellis, "is that the beads were introduced into the country from the sea, for, had they been brought overland, from Egypt for instance, some of them would certainly have been found in the interior, which is not known ever to have been the case. And as the natives had these beads in their possession when the Portuguese first explored the Gold Coast, they must

<sup>1</sup> Bowdich, *Mission to Coomassie*.

## THE CARTHAGINIANS IN WEST AFRICA

have been introduced there before the rediscovery of West Africa by the natives of modern Europe.”

Many superstitions regarding them are held by the natives. Powdered aggry beads, for instance, rubbed daily on an infant after washing, are valuable as a stimulant to growth—a belief not much more far-fetched than many that still linger in our own remoter villages. As a thief detector, too, the aggry is infallible. A bead is put in a cup of water, which is held by the accuser, who places his right foot against the right foot of the suspected person. The latter then takes the bead in his mouth, swallows a little of the water, and twice solemnly calls on the devil in the bead to slay him if he be guilty. Dread and superstition do the rest; as a general thing the thief confesses. Of this species of trial by ordeal there are various instances in other parts of West Africa. Andrew Battell<sup>1</sup> mentions the ordeal by poison, wherein the accused is held to be innocent if a certain potent drug do not kill him, or at least make him so giddy that he falls down, when the bystanders immediately beat him to death. This ordeal was generally held in cases of reputed witchcraft, and it seems in Battell's day to have been almost a weekly occurrence in Loango, where sometimes as many as five hundred persons would at one time undergo the trial;—witches then, as now, were a numerous band in West Africa, more numerous even than in lowland Scotland some centuries ago. Then there was (or is, perhaps) the ordeal of the red-hot knife or hatchet. This trial was called

<sup>1</sup> *Purchas, His Pilgrimage*, 1613.

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

“Motamba, for which purpose they lay a kind of hatchet, which they have, in the fire, and the Ganga-Mokisso, or Mokisso’s Priest, taketh the same red-hot, and draweth it near to the skin of the accused party: and if there be two, he causeth their legs to be set near together, and draweth this hot iron without touching between them; if it burns, that party is condemned as guilty, otherwise he is freed.”

Yet another strange belief with regard to the aggrы is, that these beads if buried in the sand will increase and multiply. And Winwood Reade, in his *Story of the Ashantee Campaign*, mentions that in Ashantee “it is a law that if an aggrы bead is broken in a scuffle, seven slaves must be paid to the owner.” Mr. Reade also says that “as these beads are usually found at some distance from the sea, it may be inferred that they were brought by the overland route.” That, however, does not seem very conclusive. If the Phœnician or Carthaginian mariners were in the habit of trading the beads for gold dust (as seems not improbable, in face of the fact that a bead is still reckoned as being equal to such and such a quantity of gold dust,—for we know how tenacious of life is custom in primitive communities), then it would be more likely that the beads should be found, not on the coast, but near the old gold workings. And this is certainly the case; they are mostly to be found in the Wassaw district of the Gold Coast, in which direction lie the old-time gold mines. It is interesting to note that similar beads are said to have been found in the ancient tombs of Thebes.

## CHAPTER III

### THE REDISCOVERY OF WEST AFRICA

CARTHAGE perished, and with her downfall came an end for the time to the spirit which lives in them "that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters"; no more went her galleys forth seeking new lands; her day was done.

Rome fell, and the world slipped back far towards barbarism. Like all else, knowledge of navigation suffered, and men but crept along the coasts that were familiar to them, nor of their own will lost sight of land. Forgotten now was much that Tyre had known; a sealed book were the discoveries that Carthage made in the days of her magnificence. Geographically, for centuries the world lay fallow.

Was maritime enterprise aroused from her death-like slumber by mere chance? Did the accident of some Biscayan trader, caught in heavy weather and carried, greatly fearing, far over the troubled waste of waters to sunny isles, reawaken the spirit of exploration? Did the world, by such freak of chance, light again on the Fortunate Isles of the ancients,—the Canaries, as we know them; or is it to late Thirteenth-Century Genoese enterprise that we owe

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

their discovery? In the *Conosçimiento* (1345) the Madeiras are mentioned, as well as eight of the Azores, two of the latter under their present names. In the *Laurentian Portolano* of 1351 they also appear. Was this knowledge of their existence due in the beginning to some storm-driven Biscayan? In any case, they were found.

By chance Madeira was discovered—or rediscovered. About the year 1344, in the reign of Edward III., it is said that a young Englishman, Robert Macham by name, eloping with a lady of high degree, or, as the old chronicler puts it, “with a Woman that he had stollen,” took ship at Bristol for Spain, but in a great tempest scudded far to the south and saw no land till they sighted a pleasant, but then uninhabited, isle, now called Madeira. Here “they cast anker in that haven or bay which now is called Machico after the name of Macham. And because his lover was sea-sick he went on land with some of his company, and the ship with a good winde did saile away.” Marooned on this desert and unknown isle, the poor lady, unable to bear up, faded away and died—“died for thought,” says the old record, by which presumably is meant that she brooded, and died, practically of home-sickness. “Macham, which loved her dearly, built a chapell or hermitage, to bury her in, calling it by the name of Jesus, and caused his name and hers to be written or graven upon the stone of her tomb, and the occasion of their arrival there. And afterward he ordeined a boat made of one tree (for there be trees of great compasse about) and went

## THE REDISCOVERY OF WEST AFRICA

to sea in it with those men that he had and were left behind with him." It is said that in due time, "without saile or oare," they reached the coast of Morocco, which "the Moores which saw it took it to be a marvellous thing." Accordingly they seized Macham and his men, and gave them to their king as a curiosity, who presently passed them on "for a miracle unto the King of Castile." The information which Macham was able to give, it is said, "moved many of France and Castile to go and find the island"; but once more for a time it vanished from the ken of man.

But now the nations of Europe had begun to awaken, if as yet they stirred but drowsily. Spain laid hands on the Canaries, though thereafter, for a time, with that she rested content. Then arose amongst the nations one destined to give back to the world all, and more than all, that it had lost. While Europe thus long lay asleep, Northern and Central Africa had been overrun by the Arabs, who traded and carried their religion, and with it the institution of slavery, even down to the banks of the Niger. Checked by the vast coastal forests, however, Mohammedan sway did not extend to the seaboard, lower down, at least, than about the latitude of Cape Verde. To Portugal, that David amongst the nations, it was left to rediscover those coasts which since the day of the Carthaginians had existed hardly even in tradition. France, it is true, lays claim to have been the first to rediscover the Guinea coast, but the claim is not supported by reliable evidence. In the year 1326 they say that

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

a French vessel, storm-driven, running far to the south, sighted the African land, and that shortly thereafter there sprang up a regular trade between the Guinea coast and Dieppe. In 1382, says Villaut de Bellefond, who himself visited the Gold Coast in 1666, Rouen and Dieppe merchants sent three ships to explore the coast-line, one of which vessels, the *Vierge*, went as far as a place which, from the quantity of gold there obtained by them, they called La Mine. This place, Villaut affirms, they occupied till 1484. But in 1481 the Portuguese built a fort at that place—Elmina, they called it—and there were then no traces of French occupation, no sign of the buildings which Villaut says the French erected. Villaut appears to base his claim partly on the fact that on the Gold Coast in 1666 he found villages bearing French names—Petit Dieppe, for example. But it is well known that Petit Dieppe and other places were founded by the French in 1616, and were presently abandoned. In any case, no contemporary historian makes mention of French West African trade or exploration in those early days; nor, when Portugal claimed the right to exclude foreigners from the Guinea trade on the ground of her own prior discovery, did the French then make any counter-claim. All the evidence of French discovery is evidence dating from Villaut's day and later. The claim was revived in Paris in 1728, when mention was made of a Deed of Association, said to bear the date 1365, signed by Dieppe and Rouen merchants, and entered into for the purpose of carrying on a trade with West Africa.

## THE REDISCOVERY OF WEST AFRICA

Unfortunately, this interesting document—if it ever existed—was said to have perished in the fire which destroyed the Dieppe Town Hall in 1694 during the English and Dutch bombardment, when the town was reduced to ashes. If, however, such an agreement was at that period made between merchants of Dieppe and of Rouen, it is strange that Rouen should have no evidence to show on the subject. In this same fire also perished, it was said, evidence that a Frenchman, a sailor of Dieppe, reached the mouth of the river Amazon four years prior to the discovery of America by Columbus. Evil was the fate that placed documents so precious within reach of the perfidious English fleet! There is no evidence on which to base the claim of France to prior discovery of the Guinea coast; to Portugal belongs the undoubted honour.

In search of a route to India, as early as the year 1291 two Genoese galleys had sailed far down the West African coast, how far, no man may say, for the expedition vanished into the unknown, leaving beyond a certain point no trace. Years later men in Genoa had not ceased to pray for its safety. In 1375, also, a vessel sailed from Majorca in search of the fabled African "River of Gold." It, too, dropped over the edge of the world, perished in the "Sea of Darkness," as men deemed. So, before the year 1412, Cape Non on the coast of Morocco was looked on by European nations as the boundary of the possible, as far as navigation was concerned. Beyond that they dared not sail, though it is true that the Norman Baron, Jehan de Bethencourt, driven by

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

adverse winds during a voyage to the Canaries, did once find himself off the African coast to the south of Cape Non, and somewhere in the neighbourhood of Cape Bojador.

Now at last, however, Portuguese sailors, becoming more venturesome, boldly rounded Cape Non and crept down as far as Cape Bojador. There they halted and returned, daunted by the fierce currents that sweep round that headland—currents, their fears told them, that were but the fringe of some bottomless whirlpool that presently would suck them into its insatiable maw. “Whoso rounds Cape Bojador,” they said, “will never return.”

And now appeared on the scene that man from whose brain and energy sprang results so great, not merely for his country, but for the world—Prince Henry of Portugal, “Prince Henry the Navigator.” In character he was “pure and disinterested to a wonderful degree, and his life is well summed up in the motto which he took for himself, *Talent de bien faire*. He combined intense love of science with practical ability in peace and war. He had religious enthusiasm to carry him forward, and a calm steadfastness which made him content to sow, leaving to future generations the fruits of his patient work. Beyond all others he was the man who taught the European world to brave the perils and win the secrets of the great dim ocean, the first and well-nigh the noblest figure in modern history. . . . Modern history dates from the Fifteenth Century. Its birthplace was Portugal; its father Prince Henry the Navigator.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lucas, *Historical Geography*, vol. iii.

## THE REDISCOVERY OF WEST AFRICA

Born in 1394, Prince Henry was the son of John I. of Portugal by his wife Princess Philippa of England, sister of King Henry IV. There was thus in his veins doubly a strain of the blood of rovers, for of the nations of Europe, those in the world's history that have left the greatest mark as explorers and colonisers have been Portugal and Britain. Is it too much to think that through his English mother he got that tenacity of purpose which enabled him to persevere in his course, no matter how disappointing the achievement, how discouraging the outlook?

It was at the taking of Ceuta by the Portuguese in 1415, (an event at which we read that King John of Portugal was "principally assisted by the English marchants"),<sup>1</sup> that Prince Henry learned from Moorish prisoners that a country green and fertile, teeming with gold and ivory, existed far south of the land of the Moors, a country beyond the ken of Europe, beyond that burning region in the heart of Africa under whose fierce heat men deemed that human life could not exist. Seized by overwhelming desire to discover this *terra incognita*, thus to bring great honour and glory to his native land, Prince Henry on his return to Portugal set himself to study how best to carry out his project, neglecting no means whereby he might further his plans.

Out on the rocky headland of Sagres, (near neighbour to that Cape, St. Vincent, where so often the guns of Britain's navy have thundered in bitter earnest since Prince Henry's day) he built for himself

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Walsingham, *his Latine Chronicle*

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

an observatory. Here, with help of the leading Portuguese scientific men of that time, he pondered over maps, studied the heavens, prepared his plans. For over twenty years he alone bore the cost of every expedition that went forth. Ships were sent out by him, with orders to double Cape Bojador and thence to sail south; but long years passed ere success was his. The first effort was made in 1418, but the result of this voyage added nothing to the world's knowledge of Africa, for instead of holding its southerly course, the ship drove west from the coast of Morocco and made an unknown isle, which they named Porto Santo. In the following year the neighbouring island of Madeira was rediscovered, and steps were taken to establish colonies there and at Porto Santo. It is worthy of note that the first governor of the latter was Perestrello, father-in-law of Columbus, and that the latter himself spent some time in that isle.

Men grew bolder as their knowledge increased, and as they realised more surely that the bounds of ocean towards the setting sun were wider than had yet been traversed by the most adventurous of mariners. Influenced now by the unwearied promptings of Prince Henry, they began with greater courage to push westward. Hence, one of the islands of the Azores was rediscovered in 1431, an island close on a thousand miles west of Cape Rocca in Portugal. We have already seen that these islands, the Azores, appear with considerable accuracy in a map bearing the date 1351, and even thus far also do the Carthaginians of old seem to have voyaged

## THE REDISCOVERY OF WEST AFRICA

in their day. In one of the group, Corvo, Punic coins are said to have been found.

But still Cape Bojador remained unconquered. Time and again Portuguese ships approached that dreaded headland; time and again they returned, baffled by their own fears, and discouraged. Then in 1434 one Gilianez, more bold than his fellows, ventured round, and returned to report a sea not more terrible than that to the north of the cape, a heat as little to be feared. But in the hearts of those who succeeded Gilianez, as they pushed south, dread reawakened. They found men with black skins. "See," said they, "how the terrible sun has scorched these unhappy wretches!" And to the same cause they attributed the woolly hair of the natives. The surf that fringed the shore, even in calm weather, raged as at home it had never been known to rage, the foam was whiter. "Look," they said, "the very ocean boils from the great heat!" And they hastened back to Prince Henry to report that, as their fathers had believed, so it was,—the land was unfit for habitation. But not thus was Prince Henry to be discouraged. In face of every obstacle, in spite of difficulties greater than in our day it is possible to realise, undismayed he clung to his project, firm in the belief that perseverance must be rewarded, not alone by the discovery of new lands, but even by the finding of a new route to the Indies.

And now Fortune's smile became less sour. In 1441 Antonio Gonzales and Nuño Tristan set forth to continue the work of exploration. Tristan suc-

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

ceeded in reaching the neighbourhood of Cape Blanco (lat.  $20^{\circ} 37' N.$ ), round which the Carthaginian galleys of Hanno had tossed ere they reached the island of Arguin. There Tristan kidnapped, and took home with him, several Moors. Now these men were, as it chanced, men of note in their own country, and the ransoms they offered in exchange for liberty were on a scale which tempted the Portuguese to restore them to their homes. In the following year, therefore, a ship was sent to land the captives on that part of the coast whence they had been taken; and to that arm of the sea where this transaction took place Gonzales gave the name Rio d'Oro, from the quantity of gold dust which was paid over by the friends of the ransomed ones. Negro slaves also formed part of the ransom, a novelty that roused endless excitement and wonder in Lisbon. Gaping crowds flocked around wherever the blacks appeared. And on those who were permitted to gaze at or to handle the gold dust, to run the yellow grains of gleaming metal through their fingers, the effect was as is ever the effect of gold on the average human being. Could they but get to this wonderful new land, what so easy as to bear away with them vast store of this shining dust? No more need they work; wealth beyond the dreams of avarice should be theirs.

Soon many vessels were on their way to this country of the golden sands, and the work, instead, as heretofore, of being the effort of one unaided man, rapidly became the national passion.

In 1443, Tristan, working for Prince Henry,

## THE REDISCOVERY OF WEST AFRICA

discovered Arguin. In 1444 a private venture of six ships sent out from the port of Lagos attained as far south as the river Senegal, whence they brought a number of negro slaves; but running short of provisions, the expedition was forced to return without venturing farther afield. Then in 1445 Dinis Diaz passed the mouth of the Senegal, discovered Cape Verde, and returned bringing with him four negroes. Unlike those who had hitherto been brought to Europe,—slaves obtained from the Moors,—these four men were captured in their own country, a capture which bred, as such acts do breed, great trouble in the aftertime. For when, but little more than a year later, Nuño Tristan led an expedition up the river Gambia, his boats were surrounded, and he and all his men killed or wounded,—not one escaped unhurt. Nuño himself regained his ship, but died of his wounds, and there was left but a crew of four to navigate the vessel home, these four, men lacking knowledge, who knew not so much as in what direction to steer. To and fro they fared over the heaving face of the waters, fear gnawing at their heart-strings, despair pursuing them, as month merged into month and never the coast of Portugal loomed on the horizon. Haggard and wan, lean with anxiety, were they when home once more was gained.

Now at last, after all the years of endeavour, Portuguese mariners had found the country of gold and ivory of which Prince Henry dreamed so long. The Papal Bull of 1441, granting to Portugal possession of all lands discovered by her subjects between

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

Cape Bojador and the Indies, for a time at least secured their ownership, and they pushed onwards diligently, ever making fresh discoveries. Alvan Fernandez skirted along the coast a hundred miles beyond the spot reached by Tristan—not, however, without the shedding of blood; and in 1445 and 1446, Cadamosto, a Venetian in the pay of Prince Henry, twice ascended the Gambia, trading for elephants' teeth and gold, fighting, and generally exploring the river more thoroughly than Tristan had been enabled to do. During the second voyage Cadamosto also discovered the Cape Verde islands.

But now came an end to the life of that man from whose energy and dogged determination had sprung results so great. "The grand impulse to discovery was not given by chance, but was the deeply meditated effort of one master mind."<sup>1</sup> That master mind was now at rest, its energy for ever stilled. In November 1460, in his sixty-seventh year, Prince Henry died. "He was not destined to see the full results of his long unselfish devotion to the cause of science and discovery. But, ere he died, he had taught his countrymen their lesson; he had trained them to press on to the south, to reach year after year some new cape, some new river, some further landmark on the African coast. He had made the way comparatively easy for after-comers; for, by the time of his death, men's hearts were hardened and their imaginations fired to seek and to find new lands of promise."<sup>2</sup>

With mainspring broken, the nation's work for

<sup>1</sup> Washington Irving.

<sup>2</sup> Lucas, *Hist. Geog.*

## THE REDISCOVERY OF WEST AFRICA

a time fell out of gear; the hand which so long had guided the infant footsteps of navigation withdrawn, what wonder that those footsteps paused for a space and became less certain?

But the thirst for gold is a thirst not to be readily quenched; once a gold-seeker, always a gold-seeker. The work of exploration, if no longer a national undertaking, was soon again vigorously taken up by private enterprise, tempted by the yellow gleam of gold, and by the great profits to be made on those ventures. Farther and farther along the coast pushed the Portuguese. Almost as Prince Henry lay a-dying,—at least, at no great interval after his death,—and by an expedition of his planning, Sierra Leone with its splendid harbour was discovered. Then in 1469 the King, Alfonso, nephew of Prince Henry, leased the African trade for a period of five years to Fernando Gomez, on certain conditions, one being that at least one hundred leagues of coast to the south, beginning from Sierra Leone, should be explored each year.

Along the shores of the Gulf of Guinea sailed Gomez and his men, past the mouths of the Niger, past the Cameroons Mountains, and on down to the islands of Fernando Po, St. Thomas, and Annobon. It was during one of those voyages that the Portuguese first landed on the Gold Coast, at the place which they called Elmina, where gold was so plentiful that shortly it seemed to them a wise precaution to build there a fort for the better protection of their trade in that commodity. This is the spot which the French claim to have occupied

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

till 1484; but when in 1482 the Portuguese laid the foundations of their stronghold, San Jorge da Mina, the place was innocent of all trace of the French, the only thing European found there, indeed, being a Portuguese sailor named Juan Bernardo, a gold prospector, who had lived some time in the country and could talk with fluency the language of the natives. To the expedition which sailed from Lisbon for the purpose of building this fort of San Jorge and a church at Elmina, Bernardo must have been little short of a god-send as interpreter.

The force despatched by King John II. to build and to garrison this fort included two hundred mechanics and labourers and five hundred soldiers, the whole commanded by Diego d'Azambuja. On landing, the commander despatched Bernardo to arrange a meeting with the paramount chief of the district. Meantime, the Portuguese, armed, but with weapons hidden under their clothing, marched in solemn state to the shade of a huge tree, near to the spot deemed most favourable for the position of their fort. There, the Royal Standard having been run up to a lofty branch, mass celebrated, prayers offered up for the success of the undertaking, d'Azambuja, clad in gorgeous uniform and wearing round his neck a heavy collar of gold, seated himself on a raised chair, or throne, between double lines of his troops, and awaited the coming of the African chief. Preceded by a band—whose music, we may assume, to European ears was more powerful than pleasant—the chief arrived. Bedecked from head to foot with plates of gold, a chain of the same metal about his throat, an infinity



D'Azambuja receiving the Native Chief at Elmina

## THE REDISCOVERY OF WEST AFRICA

of little golden bells attached to his beard and to his woolly hair, the great man marched slowly onward, surrounded by inferior chiefs decorated only a little less richly than their sovereign. The king's body-guard, like their chiefs, were naked, save for scanty covering of monkey skins or palm leaves round the loins; for headgear, a helmet of skin closely covered with sharks' teeth lent stature and ferocity to men already, from their numbers, sufficiently formidable; for arms, they bore shield and spear, bow and arrow.

Presents having been exchanged—on the part of the Portuguese, no doubt, rich gifts of beads and pieces of iron or of glass; on the part of the negroes, trifles of gold dust or ivory—d'Azambuja, through the interpreter, harangued the African king. He had come, he said, from a mighty monarch, whose power was boundless and beyond reach of his poor words to describe. It behoved the chief, therefore, to seek the friendship of this Potentate, to which purpose it were well that he should consent to the erection in his country of a fort where the speaker and his men might dwell in amity with the Africans. But before all this, and even more important, was his King's overruling desire to instruct the chief and his people in the True Faith,—("though I do not pretend," quaintly says de Faria, the Portuguese historian of the scene, "to persuade the world our only design was to preach").

The chief in his reply was diplomatic, rather than eager to welcome the strangers. He was sensible of the honour offered to him, and always, said he, it had been his wish to keep on the most friendly terms with

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

the white men, and to help them to fill their ships; he was glad to see the white strangers, but hitherto those who had come to him had been men of little account, whose last desire was to make a lengthy stay with him once their ships were laden. Now the strangers were men who in their own land were great chiefs; they were led by one who claimed "descent from the Deity who created the day and the night," and they asked permission to build houses and to remain in his country. It was a poor place; they would get none of the things to which in their own rich country they were accustomed; there would be disputes and difficulties between the white men and the black. On the whole, it would be well that things should remain as they had been; when their ships were filled they should again depart.

He was a wise chief, this, and his words were words of wisdom. But naturally they did not please d'Azambuja; it became necessary to show the iron hand in the glove of velvet. Arguments, promises, bribes were tried, and not without effect; but the final argument, the argument that compelled the chief's consent, was the hint that that consent might chance to be done without.

Work on the fort, and on the chapel within the fort, was begun without delay; but at once arose trouble which all the commander's diplomacy and tact were at first powerless to assuage, and which ere the angry natives were mollified cost heavily in presents to the chiefs. There stood near the great tree under whose welcome shade the Portuguese had sheltered on first landing, a huge rock or boulder, of

## THE REDISCOVERY OF WEST AFRICA

all things the source most welcome as a quarry for stone with which to build their walls. Accordingly, without thought or knowledge of possible consequences of their action, without consideration of possible native prejudice, the Portuguese workmen began the task of breaking up the rock. But it chanced that this giant boulder was in native eyes most sacred, the home, no less, of a powerful local god or fetish. The white strangers were committing sacrilege! "Kill! kill!" rose the cry; and narrowly was bloodshed averted. Not once, but scores of times, has ignorance of native custom, or contempt for native prejudice, led to similar scenes, and seldom have the offenders emerged so cheaply from the fray as now did the Portuguese. Many a time, even in our own day, have such incidents ended in hideous massacre. Over often do tourists, and—with sorrow one must say it—more especially do certain *British* tourists, give unforgivable offence by their worse than inconsiderate behaviour in mosques and other buildings which are sacred in the eyes of the natives of that land on which the tourist may at the time be bestowing the honour of his passing attention. The smoking of cigarettes in sacred buildings, the loud and blatant talk there of empty minds, the inconsiderate trampling amongst persons devoutly worshipping, (wrongfully perhaps, yet according to their lights), are outrages which frequently lead, and rightly lead, to trouble. But there be men among us who care for none of these things. Not readily do some of us tolerate the religion or the prejudices of others.

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

In no great space of time Fort San Jorge da Mina was made tenable; then, the chapel having been consecrated, d'Azambuja sent the fleet back to Portugal, whilst, with a garrison of sixty men, he himself for three years remained on the coast as Governor. This was the first permanent European settlement in West Africa; and this same Elmina is now one of the chief stations in the British Gold Coast possessions.

In 1484, Diogo Cão, sailing along the coast in quest of the long-sought-for route to the Indies, discovered in about lat.  $6^{\circ}$  S. the mouth of the mighty Congo. On its southern bank he erected a pillar of stone, from which circumstance he called the river the Rio do Padrão; and, sailing on, he reached lat.  $13^{\circ} 26'$  S., where on the Cabo do Lobo (now Cape St. Mary) he erected a second inscribed pillar. This stone has been recovered intact, and its inscription records that in the year 1482 the King "ordered this land to be discovered by Diogo Cão." No further went this expedition, but in the following year Cão, in command of three vessels, made his way up the Congo some ninety miles, and there, on the rocks, is still to be seen the inscription carved by his orders: "Thus far came the vessels of the illustrious King João of Portugal: D<sup>o</sup> Cão, P<sup>o</sup> Annes, P<sup>o</sup> da Costa"; then a further list of names (one of them that of a man, Pero Escolar, who was afterwards pilot of one of Vasco da Gama's vessels), and some crosses. The date of the carving, 1485, can be fixed from the use of a certain Royal Coat of Arms which accompanies the inscription. On this occasion Cão

## THE REDISCOVERY OF WEST AFRICA

proceeded as far south as  $21^{\circ} 50'$ , where he again set up a pillar, calling the place the Cabo do Padrão. This pillar, or cross, was found in 1893 and is now in a Berlin museum, but a facsimile of it has since, by order of the German Emperor, been erected on the spot from which the original was taken.

Diogo Cão probably died here, for at this point he disappears from history; but ere the return of his vessels there came to Portugal an envoy from the powerful Chief of Benin, who by some information which he gave, aroused the dormant interest of the Portuguese King in the mythical "Prester John." The mysterious personage of whom the envoy spoke could be, the King believed, none other than the long-sought "Prester John," and he determined to verify his belief. To that end, searchers were despatched in divers directions, by land *viâ* Egypt and the Nile, by way of the Red Sea, by the coast of West Africa. In connection with the last, Bartholomew Dias was ordered to take charge of the expedition which the King designed should sail round the continent.

With two small vessels of fifty tons each, accompanied by a tender even smaller, Dias sailed in the year 1486, towards the end of which year he reached lat.  $26^{\circ} 38' S$ . (where he set up his first cross, part of which is now in the Cape Town museum). Thence, out of sight of land, he sailed—or perhaps was driven—right down into "the roaring forties." And, after heading eastward many days in hope of picking up the land,—beating, like an early Vanderdecken, to and fro, sore buffeted by breaking seas and tempestuous weather, gazing weary-eyed on giant albatrosses

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

eternally soaring, as it might be the souls of those dead in sin condemned till Judgment Day to wheel 'twixt storm-wracked sky and angry sea,— he set his course to the north, and in due time sighted a high coast-line, presently anchoring in what is now called Mossel Bay. Thence he worked his way along the coast to the Rio de Infante (now called the Great Fish River), where his crew mutinied and forced him to turn back. On the homeward voyage Dias first of modern navigators sighted Table Mountain, and the story goes that the southern point of Africa received from him the name of Cabo Tormentoso (the Stormy Cape), in token of the boisterous weather there experienced, but that King John, sanguine of the realisation of his dream of reaching the Indies by this route, re-christened it Cabo da Boa Esperança. Touching at San Jorge da Mina on the homeward voyage, Dias picked up another baffled seeker after the mythical Prester John—Duarte Pacheco, with whom African fever had dealt hardly as he essayed to reach that monarch's kingdom by way of one of the great rivers of West Africa. Unfortunate Dias! But for the timidity of his ships' crews there is little doubt that he would have anticipated his more famous countryman, Vasco da Gama, who, a few years later, was the first explorer to reach the Indies by way of the Cape of Good Hope. A little more courage on the part of his men, or, mayhap, on his part a little more of the masterful, unrelenting temperament that made da Gama feared, and the latter had never been hailed as the discoverer of the sea-route to the Indies.

## CHAPTER IV

### EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA : LOK

UP to the year 1481, the Papal Bull granted to Prince Henry had been sufficient to prevent even the suggestion of foreign intrusion on the West African monopoly of the Portuguese. England had not yet broken with Rome ; not yet for a while were Englishmen, caring nothing for Papal edicts, to set sacrilegious foot on African soil. But in this year 1481 came the first stirrings of desire to share in the West African plunder. John Tintam and William Fabian, merchant adventurers, fitted out vessels and were preparing to sail on a voyage to the Guinea Coast, when King John of Portugal, hearing of their intention, sent an ambassador to Edward IV. calling on him to prohibit his subjects from encroaching on Portuguese rights. The voyage was accordingly abandoned, and half a century passed ere record is found of an Englishman having visited the coast of Guinea,—though we read in the pages of Hakluyt that near the beginning of the sixteenth century England traded far to the west. It is “gathered out of an olde ligier booke of M. Nicolas Thorne the elder, a worshipfull marchant of the City

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

of Bristol," that long prior to the year 1526 "the English had an ordinary trade to the Canaries."

In 1531-2, however, came the first Englishman to the Guinea Coast. "Olde M. William Hawkins of Plimmouth," father of Sir John Hawkins, "a man for his wisdome, valure, experience and skill in sea causes much esteemed, and beloved of King Henry the 8 . . . armed out a tall and goodly shippe of his owne of the burthen of two hundred and fifty tunnes, called the *Paule* of Plimmouth," and whilst engaged in voyaging to Brazil "he touched at the river of Sestos upon the coast of Guinea, where he traffiqued with the negros, and took of them elephants' teeth and other commodities that place yeeldeth." "Olde Mr. William Hawkins," however, seems to have kept his hands clean from taint of the Slave Trade. It was left for his son to be the first Englishman who is known to have trafficked in human beings.

Within five-and-twenty years of the date of William Hawkins' voyage began a series of English trading ventures to West Africa; the efficacy of Papal Bulls was no longer a thing to be reckoned on. In 1553 the ships *Primrose* and *Lion*, with a pinnace called the *Moone* as tender, were fitted out in London for a voyage to Guinea, "all well furnished as well with men of the lustiest sort to the number of seven score . . . having also two captaines, the one a stranger called Anthonie Anes Pinteado, a Portugall . . . a wise, discreet, and sober man, who for his cunning in sailing, being as well an expert Pilot as a politike captaine, was sometime in great

## EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA

favour with the King of Portugall, and to whom the coasts of Brasil and Guinea were committed to be kept from the French, to whom he was a terrour of the Sea."

Unfortunately the relations between the two captains were far from friendly. Captain Windham, the leader of the expedition, was a man of violent and overbearing temper, one with boundless scorn of foreigners and of all things foreign, a man, indeed—as the old chronicle puts it—"whom vertues few or none adorned." Almost from the start he seems to have laid himself out to thwart and to browbeat Pinteado, whose offence of being a foreigner apparently justified Windham amply in his own eyes for bullying of the vilest character.

At Madeira the ships fell in with a Portuguese galleon, heavily armed and full of men, sent out specially to intercept them. She made, however, no attempt to interfere with the English ships; discretion was the better part of valour, especially as the English craft individually were probably quite equal to tackling the "Portugal."

After Madeira began Pinteado's "sorrow." Windham's behaviour became more and more brutal, and finally he seems to have dis-rated the Portuguese captain. At the river Sestos they "might for their marchandise have laden their shippe with the graines of that country, which is a very hote fruit, and much like unto a fig as it groweth on the tree." But Captain Windham would have none of this pepper; he had a soul above mere ordinary trade—only gold dust would satisfy him.

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

With which end in view he took the ships farther along the coast near to Elmina, and then, still dissatisfied, wished to push on yet farther. It is ever the distant prospect that looks the more enticing. Pinteado, to whom the coast was familiar, knowing that at this time of year it was particularly unhealthy, strongly advised Windham to go no farther; but the latter, flying in a rage, called Pinteado "a dirty Jew," with "other opprobrious words," threatened to cut off his ears and nail them to the mast, and finally compelled him to pilot the ships to Benin.

Here the ships' boats were sent up the river fifty or sixty leagues, "where certaine of the marchants with Pinteado were conducted to the King's Court," and arrangements were made under which the King undertook to provide, within thirty days, lading sufficient for both vessels. Meantime the crews "having no rule of themselves, but eating without measure of the fruits of the country and drinking the wine of the Palme tree that droppeth in the night from the cut of the branches of the same, and in such extreme heat running continually into the water . . . were thereby brought into swellings and agues, in so much that the later time of the yeare coming on caused them to die, sometimes three and sometimes four or five in a day." This state of affairs did not tend to mollify a temper ever simmering, ever ready to boil over, and, the thirty days having expired without sign of the promised cargoes, Windham sent to Pinteado and the others directions to leave the King's Court and to come on board ship without delay. They "returned answer that already great

## EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA

store of pepper was gathered," and that they "looked daily for more." Thereupon Windham, in uncontrollable temper, peremptorily ordered them to come down at once. The merchants, unwilling to lose their cargo when delay of a few days would complete it, sent down Pinteado to reason with Windham. Worse choice of an ambassador could hardly have been made, even had he arrived in time to remonstrate.

But "in the mean season, Windham, all raging, brake up Pinteado's cabin, brake open his chestes, spoiled such provision of cold stilled waters and suckets as he had provided for his health, and left him nothing, neither of his instruments to saile by, nor of his apparell, and in the meantime falling sicke, himself died also. Whose death Pinteado coming aboard lamented as much as if he had bene the dearest friend he had in the world. But certaine of the mariners and other officers did spit in his face, some calling him Jewe, saying that he had brought them there to kill them; and some drawing their swordes at him, making a shew to slay him.

"Then he perceived that they would needs away, desired them to tarry that he might fetch the rest of the marchants that were left at the Court, but they would not grant his request. Then desired he them to give him the ship's boate, with as much of an old saile as might serve for the same, promising them therewith to bring the rest to England. But all way in vaine. Then wrote he a letter to the marchants promising them if God would lend him life to return for them with all haste to fetch them.

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

And thus was Pinteado kept ashipboard against his will, thrust among the boyes of the ship, not used like a man, nor yet like an honest boy, but glad to find favour at the cooke's hand.

“Then departed they, leaving one of their ships behind them, which they sunke for lacke of men to cary her. After this, within six or seven dayes sailing dyed also Pinteado, for very pensiveness and thought that strooke him to the heart. A man worthy to serve any prince, and most vilely used.”

Thus disastrously ended the first of the English voyages to the Guinea Coast, a voyage redeemed only by the fact that one hundred and fifty pounds weight of gold dust was brought back. “Of seven score men that sailed scarce forty reached Plim-mouth,” and even of that forty, many died after landing. What befell the unfortunates who were abandoned to their fate in Benin City, we do not read. Probably they, too, perished in no long time. It is an ill climate for Europeans.

Undeterred, however, by the evil fate of Windham's expedition, Captain John Lok, with three “goodly shippes,” the *Trinitie*, of one hundred and forty tons, the *Bartholomew*, of ninety, and the *John Evangelist*, of one hundred and forty, dropped down the Thames one October day in 1554, bound for the same regions that had proved so cruel to the first voyagers. Though the venture began with a stroke of ill luck,—one of their two “pinnesses” was lost, with all her crew, ere the English coast faded out of sight astern,—yet there ended adverse fortune,

## EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA

and the record of trade done along the Gold Coast was highly satisfactory, in spite of trouble with the Portuguese, who near Elmina fired upon the English boats. "Foure hundred pound weight and odde of gold of two and twentie carats and one graine in finenesse; also six and thirty butts of graines, and about two hundred and fifty Elephants' teeth," constitute a cargo of no mean value. Some of the tusks were "as bigge as a man's thigh above the knee, and weighed about four score and ten pounds weight apiece," but "they saye that some one hath been seene of an hundred and five and twenty pounds." It is quaintly recorded that "these great teeth or tusks grow in the upper jaw downward, and not in the nether jaw upward, wherein the Painters and Arras workers are deceived."

To those voyagers of old, an Elephant ("which some call an Oliphant") was an exceeding strange beast, regarding which many wondrous beliefs are related, such as that "they are made tame by drinking the juise of barley." It is a thing also not generally known to students of natural history of the present day, that the elephants "have continual warre against Dragons, which desire their blood, because it is very colde; and therefore the Dragon lying awaite as the Elephant passeth by windeth his taile (being of exceeding length) about the hinder legs of the Elephant, and so staying him, thrusteth his head into his tronke and exhausteth his breath, or else biteth him in the eare, whereunto he cannot reach with his tronke, and when the Elephant waxeth faint he falleth down on the serpent, being now full of

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

blood, and with the poise of his body breaketh him: so that his owne blood with the blood of the Elephant runneth out of him mingled together, which being colde, is congealed into that substance which the Apothecaries call *Sanguis Draconis*, (that is) Dragon's Blood, otherwise called Cinnabaris, although there be another kind of Cinnabaris commonly called Cinoper or Vermilion, which the painters use in certaine colours." Doubtless the "Dragons" were Pythons, but pythons certainly gifted with even more than the proverbial wisdom of the serpent. The belief in a cunning which would prompt a snake to slay an animal so huge and powerful as the elephant by mooring him fore and aft, so to speak, and slowly sucking the breath and the life-blood out of him through his trunk, is indeed remarkable.

Captain Lok during his voyage was not at all favourably impressed by the negroes. "They are," says he, "a people of beastly living, without a God, religion, or common wealth, and so scorched and vexed by the heat of the sunne that in many places they curse it when it riseth." Yet this very heat, of which complaint is thus made, appears to be turned to account by the natives, for we are told that they are thereby saved some trouble in the baking of their bread. "They grinde," says the writer of the account of Lok's voyage, "betweene two stones with their hands as much corne as they think may suffice their family, and when they have thus brought it to floure, they put thereto a certaine quantitie of water and make thereof a very thin dough, which they sticke upon some part of their

## EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA

houses where it is baked by the heate of the sunne, so that when the master of the house or any of his family will eate thereof, they take it downe and eate it." The birds of the air must have mourned the day when that form of baking was abandoned.

The "wheate" from which those negroes made bread appears to have been somewhat brobdingnagian, for we read that "they have very faire wheate, the eare whereof is two handfuls in length, and as big as a great Bulrush, and almost foure inches about where it is biggest. The stem or straw seemes to be almost as bigge as the little finger of a man's hande, or little lesse. The graines of this wheate are as bigge as our peason, round also and very white, and somewhat shining like pearles that have lost their colour." This "wheate" no doubt was a kind of maize.

Lok thought that the Senegal and the Niger were one and the same river, and he says of the former that "It is furthermore marveilous and very strange that said of this river; and this is that on the one side thereof the inhabitants are of high stature and black, and on the other side of brown or tawnie colour, and low stature, which thing also our men confirm for true." It is the fact that the Senegal does sharply mark the boundary between "dry, bare waste of northern desert, the home of wandering tribes of brown skinned men, and the fixed dwelling places, the towns and cornfields of the negroes who dwell upon its southern bank."<sup>1</sup>

Of the many strange things touched upon in the account of Captain Lok's voyage, it is interesting to

<sup>1</sup> Lucas, *Hist. Geog.* vol. iii.

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

note that he, like Sir Walter Raleigh in Guiana near half a century later, mentions a race of men in the interior of the country without heads, with eyes and mouth in their breasts. These people were called "Blemines," and they answer very well to the description given by Raleigh of the Ewaipanoma, of whom he says that "though it may be thought a meere fable, yet for mine own part I am resolved it is true."

In talking of the country in the interior, to the East of Benin, mention is made of an island called Meroe, "imbraced round about with the streames of the river Nilus," in which island in days of old, women reigned. "Josephus writeth that it was sometime called Sabea, and that the Queen of Saba came from thence to Jerusalem to hear the wisdom of Solomon." East of this again lies the empire of Prester John, "whom some call Papa Johannes."

Of the derivation of the word "Africa," we read also that it was so named by the Greeks "because it is without colde. For the Greek letter Alpha or A signifieth privation, voyd, or without: and Phrice signifieth colde: for indeed although in the stead of winter they have a cloudy and tempestuous season, yet it is not colde, but rather something hote, with hote showers of raine also, and somewhere such scorching windes that what by one meanes and other, they seeme at certaine times to live as it were in furnaces, and in manner already halfway in Purgatorie or Hell."

Strange lore of the sea, too, we find in the account of this voyage. Mention is made of certain parts of

## EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA

the ocean in which Lok's vessels found themselves, where they saw "streames of water which they call spouts, falling out of the aire into the sea," some of them "as bigge as the great pillars of churches, insomuch that sometimes they fall into shippes and put them in great danger of drowning. Some faine that these should be the cataracts of heaven, which were all opened at Noe's floud. . . . But I think them rather to be such fluxions or eruptions as Aristotle in his booke de Mundo saith to chance in the sea. . . . Richard Chancellor told me that he heard Sebastian Cabot report, that (as farre as I remember) either about the coasts of Brasile or Rio de Plata, his shippe or pinnesse was suddenly lifted from the sea and cast upon lande, I wot not how farre."

Although in this second English voyage to the Guinea Coast the mortality amongst the ships' crews was on no such formidable scale as had been the case during Windham's voyage, yet even Lok lost "twentie and foure," many of whom died on reaching the colder weather experienced between the Azores and London. The voyage was very long drawn out, which might have given the men a fair chance of becoming gradually acclimatised, but probably they were saturated with African fever, and the chill northern air killed them as frost in autumn kills flies. We know, too, how appalling were the arrangements for the sick on shipboard in days even later than those. It had taken the ships seven weeks to reach the Coast from London on the outward voyage; homeward bound from the Coast to the Thames they were at sea for twenty weeks,—“the cause

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

whereof they say to be this: That about the coast of Cabo Verde the winde is ever at the East, by reason whereof they were enforced to saile farre out of their course into the maine Ocean to find the winde at the West to bring them home." Were a sailing vessel in our day to make the unusually tardy passage of one hundred and forty days even over the long twelve thousand mile waste of waters that stretches between Port Phillip Heads and England, many a face would lengthen as day followed day and still she continued unreported. One hundred and forty days between Cape Coast Castle and the Thames is phenomenal, and must have entailed an enormous amount of suffering in those scurvy-smitten days, when every ship was a hotbed of that fell disease. It was no unusual thing then, and even up to the end of the Eighteenth Century, for whole crews to be stricken down by this one loathsome disease, and its ravages generally amongst seamen were incredibly great. In the Eighteenth Century, in all the naval battles during the Seven Years' War, it was found that of a total of nearly 136,000 casualties, little over 1500 were due to the actual fighting, but that close on 134,000 men died of disease, or were "missing." And the disease chiefly responsible for this vast total was Scurvy.

One of Lok's vessels on this trip brought away with her four negroes, who were said to have been taken for the purpose of having them taught English, so that in the future they might act as interpreters. It does not appear, however, that their consent was asked. Towrson reported a year later that on a

## EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA

certain part of the coast the natives were hostile because "that the last yeare M. Gaynsh did take away the Captaine's [Chief's] sonne and three others from the place with their golde and all they had about them; which was the cause that they became friends with the Portugals, whom before they hated." The men were, however, restored to their homes in 1557, though the fate of "their golde" is not recorded. They are said to have been "tall and strong men, and could wel agree with our meates and drinkes. The colde and moist air doth somewhat offend them. Yet doubtless men that are borne in hot Regions may better abide colde, than men that are borne in colde Regions may abide heate."

## CHAPTER V

### EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA : TOWRSON

THE success of Lok's voyage gave great impetus to the Guinea trade, and, not unnaturally, thereupon befell much trouble with the Portuguese, who could ill brook that foreigners should poach in their preserves.

Yet in spite of all that Portugal could do—and she did not confine her efforts to honest fighting—both English and French ships as the years passed visited the Guinea Coast in ever-increasing numbers. The Portuguese were not strong enough to sweep the entire seaboard; but even if their strength had been much greater than it actually was, the task of keeping off the English wolves would have been a heavy one. Already England had tasted of the riches of West Africa, already her sons had begun to despise the Portuguese, that people who—it was scornfully said—“for the conquering of forty or fifty miles here and there, and erecting of certain fortresses, think to be lords of half the world.” When it came to going into action, it was not always with victory, or with credit, that the Portuguese now came out. So they resorted to other means to stop what they deemed an illicit trade.

## EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA

Natives known to have had dealings with either of their rivals were severely punished, their homes burned, their villages destroyed. Crews of captured English or French ships were either put to death or were sent to the galleys as slaves—slaves with but faint hope of release. Finally, the Portuguese offered a reward of one hundred crowns for the head of any Englishman or Frenchman, and many a poor wretch, no doubt, when ashore was decoyed into the bush, and there treacherously murdered for sake of the reward;—in all ages and in all lands “Jack ashore” has been easy prey to even the least skilled hunter.

But even measures so extreme on the part of the Portuguese were of little effect in deterring the interlopers, and long before they were resorted to many a rich ending to Guinea voyage had been made by English vessels. Not the least successful of the adventurers was Mr. William Towrson, a merchant of London, who in the years 1555, 1556, and 1557 made three voyages to the coast. With the ships *Hart* and *Hinde*, Towrson began his first voyage on 30th September 1555. After an uneventful run, anchor was dropped one evening off what they believed to be the Sestos River, where, after dark, seeing a light inshore which they concluded must come from a Portuguese or a French vessel, they cleared for action and lay all night expecting to be attacked. Morning light, however, showing no sign of an enemy, the two English ships under easy sail stood along the coast, doing trade here and there “at a reasonable good reckoning.” Grains of Paradise—which are not so romantic as they sound, being

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

merely a species of pepper—elephants' teeth, and gold dust were exchanged by the natives for cloth and for small basins; but "they desired most to have basons," out of which, indeed, the Englishmen seem to have made more than "a reasonable good reckoning," for we read that five small basins were the equivalent of half an ounce of gold dust, that is to say that five basins sold for the value of nearly £2 sterling. And "for an Elephant's tooth of 30 lbs. we gave them six basons,"—a very tidy profit in this instance also, one may imagine, seeing that the value of ivory can scarcely have been less, and probably was much more, than £50 per cwt.

Friendly enough were the natives here; "divers of their women to shewe us pleasure danced and sung after their manner, full ill to our eares." Full ill, indeed, to our ears, are most native chantings, and not alone on the West Coast of Africa.

Some way to the east of the Sestos, Towrson's vessels ran into a haven which doubtless in later days must have become a favoured haunt of Pirates; few strongholds could be imagined that would have better suited the ruffians who flew the Skull and Cross-bones. "This river lieth by estimation eight leagues beyond the River de Sestos and is called on the carde Rio S. Vincente, but it is so harde to finde that a boat being within halfe a mile of it shall not be able to discerne that it is a River: by reason that directly before the mouth of it there lyeth a ledge of rockes which is much broader than the River, so that a boat must runne in along the shoare a good way betwixt the rockes and the shoare before

## EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA

it come to the mouth of the River, and being within it, it is a great River and divers other Rivers fall into it. The going into it is somewhat ill, because that at the entry the seas do goe somewhat high, but once within it, it is as calme as the Thames." To the writer of this volume is known, on another line of coast, just such a haven, in entering which, till within two cables' length of the land, the uninitiated might suppose that he was about to pile the bones of his craft on the forbidding shore. Then, as the giant seas, relentless and terrible in their deliberate haste, swing past and fling themselves thundering in white fury over a treacherous far-jutting rock, almost as the vessel seems lifting her bows to hurl them in destruction on the breakers, a quick turn to starboard leads to sudden peace, and to stillness as of abbey cloisters. And now, where of old the debaucheries and ribald shoutings of ruffian pirate crews desecrated the silence of Nature, it may be that the chatter and inane laughter of some cockney tourist alone at rare intervals break the Sabbath peace that for generations has lain undisturbed.

Farther along the coast, Towrson found the negroes to be very timid, having already been mis-handled by the Portuguese, and little trade could be done. Hitherto no actual collision had occurred between the rivals, but near Cape Corso, whilst the *Hinde's* men were ashore attempting to trade, warning was received that they were about to be attacked by the Portuguese. Sailor-like, little attention was paid to the warning, and near were they to pay heavily for neglect of precautions. The son of a

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

chief had "conspired with the Portugals," and the English sailors were all but cut off. With extreme difficulty their boat was reached, and as the crew bent to the oars, the Portuguese "shot their culivers at them but hurt no man." Then the ship joined in with her guns, without, however, doing more than to drive the Portuguese and their negro allies to cover. When later the armed boats attempted a landing, the Portuguese "from the rockes and from the hills shotte at us with their half hakes, and the Negros more from feare than for love stooed by them to helpe them, and when we saw that the Negros were in such subjection unto them that they durst not sell us anything for feare of them, we went aboard," and stood further along the coast. Benefiting nothing from this experience, the crew were again all but ambushed a few days later when trading on shore. A crowd of negroes stood "at the ende of a hollow way, and behinde them the Portugals had planted a base, who suddenly shotte at us but overshot us, and yet we were in a manner hard by them, and they shotte at us againe before we could ship our oares to get away, but did no hurt." All along the coast a Portuguese brigantine followed the English ships from place to place, warning the people of what they might expect in the way of recompense if they should dare to trade with the strangers.

In spite of every difficulty, however, Towrson did well enough to encourage him to return towards the end of the year. On 30th December 1556 his squadron, consisting of the *Hart*, of sixty tons, the *Tyger*, of one hundred and twenty, and a pinnace of

## EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA

sixteen tons, sighted the Guinea Coast, and at the same time, to windward of them, three ships and the same number of pinnaces. They were not English, that was very clear, so Towrson cleared for action and held on his course. As the opposing squadrons neared each other, "with their streamers, and pendants, and ensignes, and noyze of trumpets very bravely,"—a gallant show,—Towrson signalled to the enemy "to come under his lee and fight"; the invitation, however, was not accepted, and after long parley the strangers, who were French, agreed to ally themselves with the English against the Portuguese, and so, being thus strong enough to crush any probable opposition, to cruise along the coast in company, each undertaking not to undersell the other. In theory the arrangement was excellent, but in practice it did not work; when the pinch came the Frenchmen proved to be but indifferent allies.

Everywhere the negroes were disinclined to trade, fearing the vengeance of the Portuguese. Towrson, however, promised to protect them, and to raise the courage of the natives gave a display of the combined fleets' strength; the boats were made to "shoote off their bases and harquebusses, and caused our men to come on shoare with their long bowes, and they shot before the Captaine, which he and all the rest of the people wondered much at, specially to see them shoot so farre as they did, and assaied to draw their bowes but could not." A few days later the negroes gave warning that the Portuguese were coming both by land and by sea, to which reply

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

was made that "wee were very glad of their coming and would be ready at all times to meet them." But though shots were heard in the bush, "which we knew to be Portugals which durst come no nearer to us, but shot off in the woods to see if they could feare us and so make us to leave our traffique," nothing was seen of the enemy till near the end of February, when five sail hove in sight.

Towrson at once weighed and put to sea, trying to get the weather gage of the Portuguese, but darkness came on ere a gun had been fired on either side. The English commander all through was doing everything in his power to bring on an engagement, but when fighting did begin a couple of days later, he was most indifferently backed up. The French Admiral was pretty severely handled by the Portuguese near the beginning of the action, suffering considerably both in spars and in rigging, and losing some men. But she had no great stomach for the fight, and after receiving a broadside from each of the Portuguese vessels, drew off for repairs, an example speedily followed by her countrymen. One of the enemy's ships was "a small barke which sailed so well that she cared not for any of us"; but the Portuguese vessels as a whole were faster and better handled than those of the allies. "Those of the Portugals," says Hakluyt, "went so fast that it was not possible for a ship to boord them, and carried such ordinance that if they had had the weather of us they would have troubled three of the best ships that we had: and as for their Admiral and Vice-Admiral they were both notable opponents."

## EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA

Had it not been that the *Tyger* lay to windward and showed every wish to close—Towrson never shunned hard knocks—it is likely that the French Admiral would have been boarded and taken. As it was, the *Tyger* had the major part of the fighting, though she did not suffer very severely. Neither did she do much damage to the enemy, “because our shippe was so weake in the side that she laid all her ordinance in the sea”;—an uncomfortable ship to fight, and an uncomfortable ship to sail in anything like heavy weather, must have been the *Tyger* at the beginning of such a voyage, when she was light, and high in the water. She did better ere the venture ended. Eventually, in this first fight, the Portuguese drew off, having had enough, and the *Tyger* chased throughout the night, with the *Hart* far astern. It is not very clear why the Portuguese did not fall on the former and capture her whilst she was without support; they had the heels of the English ship, and they were in overwhelming strength. Certainly what credit was to be got in the fight was gleaned by the *Tyger*; but the little English pinnace also behaved throughout with courage. After the action, she was found to be so badly knocked about that it was barely possible to keep her afloat, and to prevent the possibility of her falling into the hands of the enemy she was set on fire and burnt.

“After this the French durst not anker for feare of the Portugals,” and their trading partnership with Towrson came to an end; each went his own way. There was no more actual fighting on the coast

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

during this voyage, though the *Tyger* and the *Hart* were once forced to show their heels when a superior force of three vessels, (one of five hundred and one of two hundred tons), hove in sight; "whereupon we wayed and made shifte to double out of the land." An awkward position indeed, with a powerful foe to windward, blocking the way, and the land closing in ahead and astern; rats in a trap might have had as little chance of escape, but eventually, after being chased the entire day, Towrson slipped through. He was not the man to run, where fighting would serve his turn, but he knew when courage degenerated into foolhardiness.

It was during this voyage that the earliest recorded English elephant-shooting expedition took place. Surely, as regards weapons, never before or since has crew so motley gone a-sporting! A party of thirty men landed, and, accompanied doubtless by an army of native beaters, made for the thick bush. They were "well armed," says the chronicler, "with harquebusses, pikes, long-bowes, crosse-bowes, partizans, long-swordes, and swordes and bucklers: wee found two Elephants which we stroke divers times with harquebusses and long-bowes, but they went away from us and hurt one of our men." The picture of men armed with sword and buckler being charged by a wounded elephant is one which will commend itself to big-game hunters of the present day!

Having filled his ship, Towrson headed for home. But he did not see the Thames again without having to fight for his gold and his ivory. Off the Portu-

## EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA

guese coast, as they slipped through the dancing, sun-lit waters one day, when already, almost, a whiff of the Channel was in their nostrils, and visions of the Lizard heaving in sight ere many days in their minds, a strange sail that had been suspiciously hovering about all morning, began rapidly to close in on them, and long before nightfall they could see from the English ship that the stranger was heavily armed and crowded with men. Towrson beat to quarters, and without much delay the strange sail—a Frenchman as it turned out—ranged alongside, “judging us to be weake, as indeed we were,” and “there stepped up some of his men in armour, and commanded us to strike saile: whereupon we sent them some of our stuffe, crosse-barres and chaine shot and arrowes so thicke, that it made the upper worke of their shippe flie about their eares, and we spoiled him with all his men, and toare his shippe miserably with our great ordinance, and then he began to fall asterne of us and to packe on his sailes and get away; and we seeing that gave him foure or five good pieces more for his farewell: And thus we were rid of this Frenchman, who did us no harme at all.” A man of action was Captain Towrson, one with fine insular scorn of the French! Yet on his own ship during this engagement lay sick unto death a very gallant man of that nation, the ship’s trumpeter, who, “being sicke and lying in his bed, took his trumpet notwithstanding, and sounded till he could sound no more, and so died.” One loves to picture to oneself this poor youth, when drums beat to quarters unable to be in his wonted place,

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

left to himself when the very dews of death itself were gathering on his brow, yet with unbroken courage struggling to raise his feeble body, and with last supreme effort, as his spirit passed, sending forth the old familiar call that should hearten his comrades.

From the start of Towrson's third voyage there was lack neither of adventure nor of excitement. To begin with, shortly after clearing the Channel his squadron captured two Dutch vessels which on being overhauled were found to be carrying cargo for a French trader. On this pretext the goods were confiscated, Towrson's ships, the *Minion*, the *Christopher*, the *Tyger*, and the *Unicorn* pinnace, helping themselves to what each fancied ere the Dutchmen, in sorry plight, were permitted to go. To have carried home the cargoes for sale then would have too greatly delayed the voyage; therefore each man helped himself, and helped himself so largely that in the end Towrson was obliged to interfere and to order the goods to be restored. Still, much changed hands, especially of wine and brandy. Thereafter, putting in at Grand Canary for fresh water, Towrson found at anchor in that port the Spanish West India fleet of nineteen sail. In friendly mood were the Spaniards, for England at that date, through the marriage of Queen Mary with Philip II., was the ally of Spain,—within a few months, indeed, Englishmen under Lord Pembroke were fighting at St. Quentin side by side with the Spaniards against France. Towrson dined on board the Spanish Flagship, and all went merrily till dinner was ended and



"We made the upper worke of their shippe fie about their eares"

## EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA

the Englishman entering his boat to return to his own vessel. Then the Admiral gravely intimated that he observed the English ensign flying aboard the *Minion*; he must request Captain Towrson to have the goodness to "furl his flagge."

Now, Towrson was not a man to be coerced. Not at dictation of any foreigner was he going to lower his flag, nor would he permit a Spaniard to issue orders to him. Defiant still flew the Cross of St. George. The Admiral sent fresh messages; Towrson returned more obstinate refusal. Excitement grew as the tension increased; trouble seemed quickly drawing to a head. Then—for the Devil, at a pinch, ever finds some fool ready to aid him in mischief-making—a hot-headed soldier on one of the Spanish ships, snatching up his arquebus, fired on the English ensign; in an instant his comrades, carried away by such an example, began to shoot at the arrogant bunting, hoping by good chance to cut away the signal halyards and thus bring the English colours down by the run. Towrson in a fury, and with his men at quarters, sent a boat with the intimation that if firing did not instantly stop he would loose off his big guns at them. This brought matters to a climax; but instead of threatening to blow the English ships out of the water, (a threat that, with his overwhelming force, he could very readily have carried into execution), the Spanish Admiral had the wisdom to order his men to cease fire, and himself to send an ample apology for the insult offered to the flag of England, thereby no doubt saving a very awkward international compli-

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

cation. It must have been with ill grace, and from unwilling lips, that the haughty Don forced an apology. What might have happened had temper and stubborn pride overcome discretion? How might History have been altered had Towrson carried out his threat, and had the Spanish fleet, in retaliation, sunk the English squadron? Would the courage of Mary, and her affection for Philip, have proved equal to the task of overcoming another popular outbreak in England? Would a Spanish Armada, before its time, have attempted invasion of our shores? Would Towrson and his ship have taken in later ages their places as national idols alongside Sir Richard Grenville and the *Revenge*, or would History have condemned the former as a hot-headed fool? In any case, it is by such acts of magnificent audacity that a nation, or an individual, is carried far to the front. The evening of her days will be closing in on Britain, methinks, when the deeds of men like Towrson cease to touch in her sons an answering chord.

After this incident at Grand Canary, Towrson's squadron ran down the Guinea Coast, trading; but not undisturbed. Whilst the bulk of the English crews were on shore one morning, five sail of Portuguese hove in sight. Hurrying on board, sail was made on the English ships, and the *Minion* with her consorts drew slowly off shore. With freshening breeze a running fight began which lasted most part of the day. The *Minion* hulled the Portuguese Admiral many times, and herself suffered to some extent in spars and rigging, but the end of the fray saw little

## EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA

real harm done to either side, and, the wind falling light, the ships drifted far apart and finally separated, seeing each other no more after nightfall. Greater damage than had been suffered in the fight was done to the English ships in the stark calm that followed, for the *Tyger* and the *Minion*, drifting into dangerous proximity, finally fell foul of each other, the watch on deck of the former being asleep at the time. The rend of canvas and the snapping of spars, the groan of timbers and the smash of upper works as the helpless vessels ground their heaving sides together in the darkness, hoarse orders and the rush of hurrying feet over the decks, made a pandemonium worse than any caused by roar of cannon or crash of shot.

Farther along the coast Towrson surprised three French vessels at anchor ; two, slipping their cables, with luck scraped clear and got away ; the third was taken, with fifty pounds weight of gold on board, a welcome prize to the Englishmen.

But now sickness stretched out a heavy hand and gripped the crews ; man after man, attacked by the fell African fever, laid him down and died ; towards the end of the voyage there were not thirty sound men in all the ships. Things in other ways, too, began to go less well ; the natives, hitherto so friendly, now refused to trade or even to supply food. The English helped themselves ; the natives stoned the foragers. Then the sound portion of the ships' crews landed, burned a town, killed and wounded a number of negroes, and destroyed all the canoes. Returning to Shamah, where they had hoped to re-victual, a similar state of things was found ; so Shamah too was burned,

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

“because,” says the chronicle, “the Captaine thereof was become subject to the Portugals.”

Proceedings so masterful did not benefit the English, for when in 1562 the *Minion* was again on the Coast, we read that she and her consort, the *Primrose*, were unable to trade at all.

It was in that same year 1562, however, that in other fashion John Hawkins traded to Guinea. Hawkins being, as we read, “amongst other particulars assured that Negros might easily be had upon the Coast of Guinea, resolved with himself to make trial thereof. . . . For which purpose there were three good ships immediately provided.” The *Jonas*, a barque of forty tons, the *Swallow*, a ship of one hundred, and the *Solomon*, of one hundred and twenty tons, “wherein M. Hawkins himself went as Generall,” set forth on this the first recorded English Slave-hunting expedition. Calling at Teneriffe, from that island Hawkins “passed to Sierra Leona . . . which place by the people of the country is called Tagarin, where he stayed some good time and got into his possession, partly by the sworde and partly by other meanes, to the number of three hundred Negros at the least. . . . With this praye he sailed over the Ocean sea unto the Island of Hispaniola. . . . For the Negros he received . . . by way of exchange such quantity of marchandise that he did not only lade his owne three shippes with hides, ginger, sugars, and some quantity of pearles, but he fraighted also two other hulkes with hides and other like commodities.” And thus, so far as England was concerned, the seed germinated of that

## EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA

poison-plant the Slave Trade. Nor was this the last visit of Hawkins to the Guinea Coast in search of the same evil cargo. It is reported that on hearing of his first voyage Queen Elizabeth said that, "if any Africans should be carried away without their free consent, it would be detestable and call down the Vengeance of Heaven upon the undertaking." Admirable sentiments! But did she continue to hold them, one wonders. In the voyage of 1564, Hawkins' chief ship, the *Jesus of Lubek*, was a Royal ship. Did the Queen take a share in the venture? Did she wilfully close her eyes to his proceedings? In this latter voyage Hawkins lost several men whilst engaged in the capture of slaves; seven were killed and seven wounded in the course of one encounter. "We stayed certaine daies," says the chronicle, "going every day on shore to take the Inhabitants, with burning and spoiling their townes." Here surely was room for the "Vengeance of Heaven," to say nothing of the vengeance of England's Queen. Yet Hawkins incurred at least no permanent disgrace in the eyes of his Royal Mistress.

With regard to this voyage a curious note is made concerning the Azores. "About these islands," it is written, "are certaine flitting islands which have sometimes been seen, and when men approached neare them, they vanished . . . therefore it should seeme that hee is not yet borne to whom God hath appoynted the finding of them." Strangely credulous and of exceeding simplicity in some ways were our ancestors. In days when surveying ships were un-

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

dreamed of, charts but in the making, when men's minds were agape to swallow every fresh marvel, a mirage more or less perfect no doubt readily gave rise to the belief in "fitting islands." Yet, after all, if we have shaken ourselves free from some of the superstitions of our ancestors, in the eyes of our descendants three hundred years hence our own ignorance may seem as quaint as to us now seems the simplicity of the Sixteenth Century.

## CHAPTER VI

### PRISONERS OF THE PORTUGUESE

IN the year prior to Hawkins' second voyage, there had befallen on this Guinea Coast to an English boat's crew an adventure, long drawn out, which might have supplied the late Mr. R. M. Ballantyne with many a thrilling incident. The *John Baptist*, the *Rondel*, and the *Merlin* had arrived on the Coast from England, and had begun to trade. A boat containing nine men had left one of the ships for the shore, and the men, too intent on doing good trade to trouble about aught else, were engaged in bargaining with the negroes—not forgetting, in all probability, where possible to wet their bargains with draughts of native palm wine. A couple of miles out to sea the ships, under easy sail, were standing off and on, prepared, if trade were good, to send in more boats laden with merchandise. Of a sudden those on shore were startled by the sound of a gun from one of the ships, followed almost immediately by another gun.

“What's up aboard? The old man's in a plaguey taking,” says one of the boat's crew.

“By the Mass! he has reason. Look there!” answers another.

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

Away out to sea there is a black, threatening, ominous-like cloud, low down, but spreading rapidly, and shooting out in front of it towards the zenith ragged wisps and streamers; already the horizon is strangely blurred. Another gun from the ship, and as the boat shoves off, before almost the grating of keel on sand has ceased as she slides into the water, the three vessels have gone about and are heading for the open sea, crews swarming up the rigging and hurriedly shortening sail. Hopeless now the attempt to regain the ship; the boat puts back and is run by her crew high and dry up the sloping sandy shore out of harm's way. Through the thickening gloom they watch with straining eyes a white smother of flying foam race out of the murk to windward and drive down on the ships. Over they go, and over, till lee-rails are buried in the sea. Then the black cloud swallows them. And when, hours later, the weather clearing, a rain-drenched boat's crew looks wistfully seaward, never a rag of canvas breaks the line of empty horizon; white seas chase each other, and roar still angrily, but the offing shows no sign of man or of his works, it is solitary as when the Spirit of God first moved upon the face of the waters;—there is only "the burden of the desert of the sea."

Well, they were heading to the south and by east when last seen, and if all went well with them, somewhere along the coast to eastward the ships will be found. It will be safe for the boat to head in that direction; she will be picked up the sooner by the returning vessels. So reasoned the bedraggled and misguided boat's crew as they once more ran her into

## PRISONERS OF THE PORTUGUESE

the water and stood along shore in confident hope of picking up their ship. And so it chanced that next evening when the ship, running in, hove to and fired a gun, expectant of finding her missing hands where they had been left, neither of boat nor of men could sign be gained. Just before the squall struck her the previous night, some one on the ship had observed the boat leave the shore, but no one saw her put back. The inference was obvious: she had been caught in the squall and swamped; no boat could live through such a turmoil. Thus it befell that the ship put out again to sea, bound west, and for home, leaving her nine men to fare as best they might at the hands of semi-hostile natives, or exposed to the still less tender mercies of the Portuguese.

Day after day, scorching in open boat under the pitiless rays of a West African sun, drenched of nights by rain or soddened by heavy dew, the unhappy men toiled on, ever hoping against hope, ever hoping in vain, that on rounding the next distant headland their eyes might be gladdened by sight of the welcome topsails of their ship. Three weeks such as this passed, three weeks of hardship and of hope miserably deferred; sometimes food was got by exchanging for it part of the merchandise they had brought away from the ship, sometimes for days they went without food when the shores showed nothing but "thick woods and deserts full of wild beasts." Scurvy seized them; their cramped knees swelled till it was scarce possible to stand up in the boat, their feeble hands were fast growing powerless to use the oars. One way or other the end must come!

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

They would give themselves up to the Portugals ; better existence as a galley-slave than this living death ; at least on the galleys they would be fed. So with what remnant of strength remained to them, dejectedly they laboured toward the squat white buildings of a Portuguese settlement that far ahead on a palm-fringed sandy spit lay quivering and blinking in the roasting heat. And abreast of a little fort, where men, waving a white flag, came running down to the water's edge, they turned and with sinking hearts—yet glad that now the long agony was ended—rowed silently towards the land.

But even here the Gods forsook them ; the white flag was but a ruse of the Portuguese to lure the hated Englishmen within range of the fort. The mouth of every gun belched flame, cannon-balls lashed the sea into foam around the boat, the blade of an oar flew into splinters as the rower was hurled groaning, a doubled-up heap, into the bottom of the boat.

“We surrender, we surrender !” shrieked the unhappy men, with all their strength still making for the shore.

“We surrender,” yelled their steersman, wildly waving over his head a dirty white rag. But still the iron hail scourged on. Then came breathing-space ; they had run inside the zone of fire, and the guns no longer thundered, for they could not now be sufficiently depressed to bear on the landing-party. So the men, still intent on giving themselves up, tumbled hastily ashore under the walls of the fort, thankful for the moment at least to have escaped death. But it is well to look before you leap.



'We surrender! We surrender!'

## PRISONERS OF THE PORTUGUESE

Scarcely had their feet touched the land when from the battlements overhead came hurtling an avalanche of boulders and stones that speedily drove surrender out of their minds and put again in its place the vengeful passion to slay. Once more they pushed off, and, lying just so far out that the guns of the fort could not be trained on them, they themselves from their harquebusses and long bows opened fire, with good effect, on the Portugals, and on the natives who had now come crowding down to join in the fray. Then, having killed and wounded many, and thus to some extent slaked their thirst for vengeance, the boat was headed again for the open sea, once more without serious mishap running the gauntlet of the fort's guns. Quivering with indignation, still drawing breath in hard, sobbing gasps, the luckless castaways toiled wearily onward. Better anything than dealings with those treacherous Portuguese devils; better the worst that the blacks might do to them,—better death. And death indeed ere long took heavy toll of that sore-harassed crew.

At the first native settlement that hove in sight they landed, and for a time—so long as their store of merchandise lasted—at least they could get food. But the last dregs of cargo too soon filtered from their hands into those of the negroes, and food supplies ended. What cared the natives how the white strangers fared! It was naught to them if the white men lived or if they died; there was nothing more to be got out of them.

The wounds of those who had been hit by native arrows during the fight at the fort had long been

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

suppurating; now gangrene set in. Fever gripped others. They sank and died miserably. Soon but five were left; then four,—then three. But at last, when the life of those three also was all but at an end, when, indeed, they sat listless and unstrung, longing for death to release them, there came trading to that village a French vessel. Never paused the gallant Frenchmen to consider whether the sufferers were friend or foe; they gave of their best. So the Fates forbore to sport longer with the lives of brave men, and to their homes again at length came the wanderers! Yet not without fretting their hearts out for a time in French prison. One of these men, Robert Baker, is said to have occupied much of his time whilst a prisoner in writing a poetical account of their voyage and subsequent sufferings. A very minor poet is Mr. Baker, but it served to pass the time, no doubt, and some of the doggerel is interesting enough. Says he, in describing their first meeting with the negroes, prior to the casting away of the ship's boat:

“ We see

A number of black soules,  
Whose likeliness seemed men to be,  
But all as blacke as coles.

“ Their captaine comes to me  
As naked as my naile,  
Not having witte or honesty  
To cover once his taile.”

It was, however, the subsequent behaviour of these gentlemen of colour that had caused the boat's crew to hesitate in their choice of surrender to the Portuguese or to the negroes. The latter were

## PRISONERS OF THE PORTUGUESE

cannibals, for anything that the castaways knew to the contrary :

“ If cannibals they be  
In kind, we do not knowe ;  
But if they be, then welcome we,  
To pot straightway we goe.”

A British sense of decency also seems to have naturally inclined the balance in favour of surrender to a nation who, whatever their failings, at least wore clothes. As for the blacks,

“ They naked goe likewise,  
For shame we cannot so ;  
We cannot live after their guise,  
Thus naked for to goe.”

As the Portuguese dealt with those unhappy castaways, so they endeavoured to deal with all Englishmen and Frenchmen on the Gold Coast. The crews of vessels captured were inhumanly treated, some—as in the case of the French ship *La Espérance*, in 1582—being wantonly put to death, others retained as galley-slaves, a fate by some natures more dreaded than death.

Of the Englishmen captured and sent to the galleys by the Portuguese about this time, that one with whose adventures we are best acquainted is Andrew Battell, of Leigh in Essex, one of the crew of an English privateer, who was taken by Indians on the coast of Brazil about the year 1590, handed over to the Portuguese, and by them sent to serve his time in their West African Colonies, Kongo and Angola. Battell has left behind him an interesting account of his sufferings and of his travels there.

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

“His narrative bears the stamp of truth, and has stood the test of time. It is unique, moreover, as being the earliest record of travels in the *interior* of this part of Africa; for, apart from a few letters of Jesuit missionaries, the references to Kongo and Angola printed up to Battell's time, were either confined to the coast or they were purely historical or descriptive.”<sup>1</sup>

There is not space here available to do more than touch the fringe of Battell's adventures during the eighteen long years of his captivity. Twice he attempted to escape, and twice was recaptured. On the first occasion, he succeeded in getting on board a Dutch vessel, and probably would have got clear away had not some Portuguese on board betrayed him. The result of this attempt was two months' imprisonment in heavy irons at Loando, followed by banishment to Massangano “to serve in the conquest of those parts. Here I lived a most miserable life for the space of six years without any hope to see the sea again.”

From Massangano, with several fellow-prisoners, a second time Battell escaped, in a canoe down the river this time, foodless but for a little maize, and driven “to dig and scrape up roots of trees, and suck them to maintain life.” The mere act of escaping to the bush was no doubt easy enough where prisoners were not kept in irons; but it was generally a case of jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire, and probably their Portuguese jailers relied more on the dangers of the bush and the certainty of starvation

<sup>1</sup> *Andrew Battell in Guinea.* Ravenstein.

## PRISONERS OF THE PORTUGUESE

there, than on any strict supervision of prisoners as a means of preventing attempts at escape. Leaving the river after voyaging a considerable distance, Battell and his companions struck overland, stumbling onward in that extreme heat without water, till darkness made travelling hazardous or impossible. Several times they came across bands of negroes, who gave them "fair words" only that their betrayal to the Portuguese might be the more easy. Ever onward the fugitives pushed, goaded by the fear of re-capture; then over the river Mbengo, which they crossed "with great danger. For there are such abundance of crocodiles in this river that no man dare come near the riverside when it is deep." Then more difficulties with negroes, who followed the little party some miles, continually threatening them, and once making a fierce attack in which they wounded two of the men. In spite of difficulties, however, the runaways made progress, and hope grew, for "at night we heard the surge of the sea." Alas! that sound, sweet to the ears of Battell, this time was but the precursor of fresh trouble. In the morning they saw "the captaine of the city come after us with horsemen and great store of negroes," and soon the little company of fugitives was scattered, some here, some there, some running to hide in the thickets, some—Battell and three others—making a more bold dash for liberty. Not this time, however, was freedom found; the horsemen headed them off, driving them into, and surrounding them in, "a little wood." The Portuguese troops, afraid to come to close quarters with men armed and desperate, who would

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

be likely to sell their lives dear, contented themselves with firing volleys into the wood from all sides, whereupon the fugitives for their greater safety again separated. "Thus, being all alone," says Battell, "I bethought myself that if the Negros did take me in the woods they would kill me: wherefore, thinking to make a better end among the Portugals and Mulatoes, I came presently out of the wood with my musket ready charged, making none account of my life."

The commander of the troops calling on him to yield, Battell, "having my musket ready, answered the captaine that 'I was an Englishman, and had served six years at Massangano, in great misery; and . . . here am left all alone: and rather than I will be hanged, I will die amongst you.' Then the captaine came neare unto me and said 'Deliver thy musket to one of the soldiers; and I protest, as I am a gentleman and a soldier, to save thy life for thy resolute mind.' Whereupon I yielded my musket and myself." Poor Battell! In the city of San Paulo after this he lay for three months, chained by the neck with a great iron collar, and with heavy irons on his legs,—a fate in any country, and especially for a white man, dreadful to contemplate, but doubly so in a climate such as that of West Africa. Thereafter, he was "banished for ever to the wars" in the interior. Here after some years of more or less continuous fighting and raiding, in company of the scum of Portuguese prisons—"banish't men,"—he was badly wounded in the leg and was sent down to the coast to be cured. A welcome change, for it led to

## PRISONERS OF THE PORTUGUESE

his being once again employed at sea. True, it was as a soldier, not as a sailor, that he once more got afloat; but at least he had again that for which his soul yearned, the free breath of ocean, and if yet he was a bondsman, still the very heave and send of the ship under his feet, the old familiar smells, the creak and complaining of timbers, the patter of reef-points when wind fell light, brought with them consolation and the renewed hope of freedom. As when from dreams of home the exile wakes with undefined feeling of happiness to come, so to Andrew Battell the sea gave back something of the spring of life, raised in him anew after the long years of hopeless misery a resolution to win his way once more to his native land.

And his chance came at last, though not as he might have expected it to come, nor in a way that he would have chosen. How seldom indeed does any long-desired end come as we would choose it to come, had we any say in the matter! As out of great tribulation at times comes joy, so it was in Battell's case; out of much hardship and apparent misfortune came freedom, though stony was the path and long.

With fifty of his comrades Battell was ordered on a two-day march inland, to the country of a great chief. White men, and guns, being both hitherto unknown here, this chief, having secured their services, in the end refused to let them go, visions of conquest and spoliation of his rivals by their aid running in his mind. Finally, by dint of much importunity the great man's consent to their departure

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

was gained, providing always that they undertook to return within two months, and meantime that they left as hostage a white man with his musket. Readily enough the Portugals agreed to the chief's terms. And, provided that they themselves got away, what hostage so fitting to leave behind as this heaven-sent Englishman! What matter to them the fate of such an one,—a luckless foreigner, a convict, devoid of friends, moreover, a heretic! No need to cast lots here: the Englishman must stay. So Battell was left behind, and the Portuguese marched away, promising to return within two months with a force of at least one hundred men to help the chief in his wars. "But all," as Battell says, "was to shift themselves away, for they feared that he would have taken us all captives. Here I remained with this lord till the two months were expired, and was hardly used, because the Portugals came not according to promise. The chief men of this town would have put me to death, and stripped me naked, and were ready to cut off mine head. But the lord of the town commanded them to stay longer, thinking that the Portugals would come."

In dire peril, never knowing what hour might not be his last, Battell at length escaped to another tribe, and from them passed on to a cannibal people among whom he abode many months, seeing much "drinking, dancing, and banquetting, with man's flesh, which was a heavy spectacle to behold." Two years or more he remained amongst those savage peoples ere chance enabled him to rejoin the Portuguese at Massangano,—even their society was preferable to

## PRISONERS OF THE PORTUGUESE

that of cannibals,—and with the Portuguese he saw more fighting, this time as sergeant of a company. Unfortunately the Governor to whom he owed this promotion and better treatment died, and the “new upstart Governor,” who was “very cruel to his soldiers,” adopted the old method with Battell.

“At this time there came news by the Jesuits that the Queen of England was dead, and that King James had made peace with Spain.<sup>1</sup> Then I made petition to the Governor, who granted me licence to go into my country: and so I departed with the Governor and his train to the city of St. Paul. . . . Then I purposed to have shipped myself for Spain, and thence homeward. But the Governor denied his word, and commanded me to provide myself within two days to go up to the Conquest again.” Now, as the term of office of this Governor who respected not his promises was all but at an end, and as the arrival of a new Governor might reasonably be expected to take place within a few weeks, Battell determined that for these weeks, or for whatever time might be necessary, it were wise that he and the old Governor should not meet. So, with two negro boys to carry his musket, six pounds of powder, one hundred bullets, and some small stock of provisions, he took to the bush, there to wait till the new Governor should land, trusting confidently to the custom that “every Governor that cometh maketh proclamation for all men that be absent, to come with free pardon.”

But the months rolled on, and still came no word

---

<sup>1</sup> Portugal at this period of her history was, of course, but a part of the Spanish Monarchy.

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

of a new Governor; still the old official blocked the way. Food was plentiful—"the greatest store of wild beasts that is in any place of Angola"—yet Battell's condition was pitiable, his misery acute. Six months of dried flesh and fish, and his powder nearing an end! Death from starvation, or return to the Portuguese settlement, there to be hanged as a deserter by his enemy the Governor,—these seemed his alternatives. Yet hope did not altogether perish. On the islands of the lake on whose shores he had been lurking, grew trees "light as cork and as soft." Of these, with the aid of a native knife that he possessed, Battell constructed a canoe "in the fashion of a box nailed with wooden pegs, and railed round about, because the sea should not wash me out; and with a blanket that I had I made a sail, and prepared three oars to row withall." A craft more frail, one less well adapted to go to sea in (except as regards buoyancy; and her very buoyancy might chance to be a snare), it would be hard to imagine. Yet Battell's purpose was not only to sail in her down the Mbengo, but to cross the dangerous bar at that river's mouth, and to take his chance of making some port whence he might reach England. And this "box" was to hold not himself alone, but also his two negro boys (who had faithfully stuck to him), and sufficient food to keep the three in life. Surely Robinson Crusoe himself was never more put to it. At least Friday had the means, as well as the skill, to make a seaworthy canoe. However, Battell and his two boys pushed boldly out, rowed some miles across the lake, entered the river, and with the



Andrew Battell crossing the Bar at the Mouth of the Mbengo

## PRISONERS OF THE PORTUGUESE

current floated down to its mouth. To go farther in that crank craft must have meant taking his courage in both hands, for, crossing the bar "I was in great danger, because the sea was great: and being over the bar I rode into the sea, and then sailed afore the wind along the coast, which I knew well, minding to go to the kingdom of Longo, which is towards the north."

With his blanket set and the breeze astern, Battell headed up the coast through the long hours of darkness, steering by the stars, or possibly by the sound of the surf on the shore. He must have been a man not greatly vexed by any vivid imagination, otherwise, as that wretched "box" wallowed through the heaving water, leaking no doubt like a sieve, visions of huge twenty-foot sharks might have turned his hair gray. But he was a sailor by profession, and to a sailor much is possible that is beyond the ken of landsmen. His faith was justified by results. In the morning came bowling along a white-sailed pinnace, which hailed him. Fortune no longer frowned, for it chanced that her master and Battell were old shipmates, "and for pity's sake he took me in, and set me on shore in the port of Longo." Here he passed three more years, a free man, yet unable to find a ship homeward bound, but "well beloved of the king, because I killed him deer and fowls with my musket."

How Battell eventually reached England one does not know, but about the year 1610, accompanied by a negro boy he turned up in his native place, Leigh, then a town of some importance. This

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

boy claimed to have been held captive by gorillas, amongst which animals he said that he had passed a month. Battell told the story to his friend the Reverend Samuel Purchas. "He told me in conference with him," says Mr. Purchas, "that one of these Pongos (gorillas) took a negro boy of his, which lived a month with them, for they hurt not those which they surprise at unawares, except they look on them, which he (the boy) avoided." Purchas gives no hint as to whether or not he believed the story, but he says—possibly with sarcasm, possibly with simplicity—"I saw the negro boy."

Battell gives much quaint information as to the natural history of the Gorilla; of their manner of walking with hands clasped behind the neck, he speaks; of the houses or shelters built by them in trees; of the attacks made by them on elephants, which they "beat with their clubbed fists and pieces of wood that they will run roaring away from them." Du Chaillu, the celebrated traveller and gorilla hunter, in his book, *Adventures in Equatorial Africa*, scoffs at these "traveller's tales," and throws doubt on Battell's good faith. But Battell did not himself profess to have seen gorillas; he merely repeated, with the credulity of his day, what the natives believed regarding them. It was a credulous age; but credulity is not a peculiarity of Andrew Battell's day. Not many years have passed since statements as marvellous as anything he related were eagerly swallowed by a wonder-loving public. In one respect, though he throws doubt on the idea that in Hanno's expedition to West Africa gorillas were

## PRISONERS OF THE PORTUGUESE

ever met with, du Chaillu bears out the Carthaginian estimate of the enormous strength of these animals, for he mentions that a gorilla which he encountered flattened with his teeth the barrel of the musket of one of his men.

Like Jobson at a later date, Battell related some marvellous tales of crocodiles. "Andrew Battell told me," says Purchas, "of a huge crocodile which was reported to have eaten a whole *Alibamba*, that is, a company of eight or nine slaves chained together, and at last paid for his greediness: the chain holding him slave, as before it had the negroes, and by his indigestible nature devouring the devourer, remaining in the belly of him after he was found, in testimony of this victory." Truly a marvellous mouthful! Barbot also, writing in 1682, mentions crocodiles of thirty feet in length, and says that "whole bullocks have been found in their bellies." A considerable gulp!

## CHAPTER VII

### EARLY ENGLISH EXPLORERS ON THE GAMBIA

By treatment such as was meted out to Andrew Battell and to others, the Portuguese thought to intimidate their rivals, and for a time indeed English and French trade on the Gold Coast did languish. For a period, the French confined themselves chiefly to the river Senegal, the English to the Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Benin, places where gold being little in evidence the Portuguese were less jealous of what they regarded as the intrusion of foreigners. The issuing of patents by Queen Elizabeth in the year of the Great Armada, 1588, and in 1592, to certain merchants of Exeter and Taunton, whereby in the one case they were for a period of ten years granted a monopoly of trade "in and from the river of Senega to and in the river of Gambia"; and in the other, "from the Northermost part of the river of Nonnia to the Southermost parts of the rivers of Madrabumba and Sierra Leona," also served to turn the attention of English merchants towards those regions and away from the more attractive Gold Coast.

In 1591 Richard Rainolds and Thomas Dassel

## ENGLISH EXPLORERS ON THE GAMBIA

found the French firmly established on the Senegal : “The Frenchmen of Diepe and Newhaven have traded there about thirty years; and commonly with foure or five ships a yere, whereof two small barks go into the river of Senega. . . . The Frenchmen never use to go into the river of Gambia: which is a river of secret trade and riches concealed by the Portugals.” The “Gambia” already, even at that early date, appears to have become a great slave depôt; Rainolds found that “in the townes of Canton and Cassan in the river of Gambia are many Spaniards and Portugals resident by permission of the Negros: who have rich trade there along the coast, especially to San Domingo and Rio Grande not far distant from Gambia river; whether they transport the yron which they buy of Frenchmen and us, and exchange it for Negros; which be caried continually to the West Indies in such ships as came from Spaine.” A hotbed of scoundrels seem then to have been those places; “the most part of the Spaniards and Portugals that be resident . . . be banished men or fugitives for committing most hainous and incestuous acts; . . . they are of the basest behaviour that we have ever seene of these nations in any other countrey.” Full measure of their baseness, indeed, were Messrs. Rainolds and Dassel like to have tasted; with difficulty did they win free from the wiles and plots of the Portugals.

Though trade with Guinea from this time went on continuously, as yet there was no permanent British settlement in West Africa. We skirted

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

haphazard along the coast, touching here, putting in there, but without attempt so far to establish a permanent footing on shore. In 1618, however, King James I. granted a charter to a body of merchants calling themselves "The Company of Adventurers of London Trading into Africa," whose field of operations was meant to include the Gold Coast as well as the Gambia and Sierra Leone, and by this Company forts were built on the Gambia and at Cormantine on the Gold Coast. It is certain, however, that the garrisons of these forts were of a very temporary nature, if indeed they can be spoken of in any sense as "garrisons." Certainly in the story of Jobson's expedition up the Gambia to the rescue of Captain Thompson in 1621 there is no mention either of fort or of garrison. The account of this expedition, as it appears in *The Golden Trade—a Discovery of the river Gambia and the Golden Trade of the Ethiopians, 1620-21* [published in London in 1623], is of much interest, both in itself and as affording evidence that at least up to this date the English had no desire to engage in the Slave Trade.

In September 1618 a certain Captain George Thompson had sailed from London in his ship the *Catherine* for the Gambia, with instructions to enter that river, there to leave his ship in some secure anchorage, and with part of his crew to explore the river by boat. Thompson ascended "farre up into the river," and during his absence "through the overmuch trust of our English hearts . . . the shippe was betrayde and every man left in her his throat

## ENGLISH EXPLORERS ON THE GAMBIA

cut, by a few dejected Portingals and Molatos, whom they gave free recourse aboard, being only banisht people and for the most runnagados from their country." Thompson, hearing of this disaster, by some means contrived to send home the news, and a small vessel of fifty tons, the *St. John*, was despatched to the rescue. By the time the *St. John* had made her way up the river, however, Thompson had found the prospects of trade so encouraging that he sent her back to England, and in place of her the Company in 1620 sent out the *Syon*, a ship of two hundred tons, with the *St. John* as tender, both vessels under the leadership of Captain Richard Jobson. Meantime, Thompson with his crew of eight men had ascended still farther up the river, finding the prospect of trade ever improving. So sanguine, indeed, did Thompson become, so elated by the ease with which it appeared that wealth might be acquired, that it led to his undoing, for we read that "such an extasie of joy possest him as it is and hath been aleadged against him, that growing more peremptory than he was wont, and seeming to govern with more contempt, by a general falling out amongst them, one of his Company slew him."

Thus when Captain Jobson made the Gambia, after a quick run of twenty days from Dartmouth, there was little for him to learn beyond the fact that Thompson was dead, for the latter had kept no journal nor left any written record of his doings; his knowledge perished with him, and the information to be gained from the survivors of his crew was

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

of no great value. Jobson accordingly set out to explore the river on his own account, and with eight of his ship's crew, two of Thompson's survivors, and four blacks, went through many adventures on their long three hundred and twenty league journey up stream. Strange were the sights they saw, astonishing the information they gleaned, as the little expedition made its toilful upward way through the stagnant heat. They could not travel after dark, because of the danger of staving in the boat against some rock or half-hidden treacherous snag. For some hours before and after noon they could not travel, because in the extreme mid-day heat severe exertion was impossible or dangerous. Their progress, therefore, was confined to a few hours after daylight and a few hours before sunset. Shoals and mud-banks became more frequent the farther up stream they gained, and half their day would be spent in the water with incredible toil "heaving and shoving" the boat over some obstruction. As for the native portion of Jobson's crew, it was with the utmost difficulty that they could be induced to put foot even in shallow water, so "very fearful of the crocodiles" were they. Thus, even when they were compelled to enter the stream to help shove the boat off some shoal, fear caused half their strength to be wasted, so apprehensive were they, so continually on the watch for signs of the dreaded monsters. The chief toil fell on the white men, and even of nights they got little rest; a myriad mosquitoes murdered sleep; lions and other "ravening beasts" roared, monkeys and baboons chattered,— "often, in the night, you shall hear many voices

## ENGLISH EXPLORERS ON THE GAMBIA

together, when instantly one great voice exalts itself, and that noyse is all husht"; and lastly, "specially towards breake of day [the crocodiles] would call one to another, much resembling the sound of a deep well, and might be easily heard a league." Food, too, ran short, and though Jobson tried to shoot an elephant, one of "sixteen great elephants hard by him," he succeeded only in frightening them, for his piece missed fire.

In the upper reaches the river was found to be so infested with crocodiles that the crew could not drink the water, nor even use it to cook with, in consequence of the overpowering taste and smell of musk imparted to it from the glands of these reptiles; and for the same reason fish caught in that part of the stream were uneatable owing to their nauseating musky flavour. Crocodiles the world over have for very long been on the decrease in numbers (possibly also in size), but no doubt in Jobson's day they may have been as numerous as he says they were. As to size, Jobson mentions that he saw some of thirty-three feet in length, stupendous monsters surely. A crocodile of seventeen feet in length is now considered large, though they are *said* occasionally to grow to far greater lengths. These brobdingnagian monsters of the Gambia kept the natives in a continual state of terror, and nothing would induce the negroes to enter deep water; even to wade knee-deep was considered dangerous. Jobson tried vainly to laugh them out of their fears, but at length, when he himself dived in and swam across the stream, some of the blacks plucked up courage and followed

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

him. Said they, "White man shine more in the water. Bambo" (their name for the crocodile)—"Bambo take *him*." And one would imagine that Captain Jobson ran a great and very unnecessary risk, for the white man does actually "shine" when seen by a swimmer under water; from a considerable distance he looks almost like a bar of silver. One would imagine that to a hungry thirty-foot crocodile he would prove a quite irresistible bait. Maybe the very strangeness of the lure made them for the moment shy of rising; or perhaps Captain Jobson possessed the secret of that "grease of the water adder," which by naturalists of Shakespeare's day was known to be sure protection against the crocodile. "The grease of the water adder," we read in Friar Bartholomew's book, "helpeth against the biting of the crocodile; and if a man have with him the gall of this adder, the crocodile shall not grieve him nor noy him: and that most jeopardous and fearful beast dare not, nor may do against him in no manner of wise damage nor grief, which beareth the gall of the said Adder."<sup>1</sup> Also says the same writer, "A crocodile is nigh twenty cubits long, and his skin is hard that reckoneth not though it be strongly beaten on the back with stones. . . . If the crocodile findeth a man by the brim of the river, or by the cliff, he slayeth him if he may, and then he weepeth upon him, and swalloweth him at the last."

Strange indeed was the lore with regard to the crocodile which was collected in the Sixteenth and early Seventeenth Centuries. Thus, it was known

<sup>1</sup> Bartholomew (Berthelet), London, 1535.

## ENGLISH EXPLORERS ON THE GAMBIA

that if women, even "old women and rivelled" [wrinkled], were to anoint their faces with ointment made from certain parts of the reptile, they would again for a time "seem young wenches," the bloom of youth would return. A fortune awaits the lucky rediscoverer of this priceless unguent. It is recorded also of the Crocodile in the account of John Hawkins' second voyage to Guinea, that: "His nature is ever when he would have his prey, to cry and sob like a Christian body, to provoke them to come to him, and then he snatcheth at them." And in Topsell's *History of Four Footed Beasts and Serpents* (1608) we learn that, "The Crocodile is a fearful serpent, abhorring all manner of noyse, especially from the strained voice of a man. The Crocodile runneth away from a man if he winke with his left eye and look steadfastly upon him with his right eye." And again, "Because he knoweth that he is not able to overtake a man in his course or chase, he taketh a greate deale of water in his mouth, and casteth it in the path wayes, so that when they endeavour to runne from the Crocodile, they fall downe in the slippery pathe." Truly is the crocodile a reptile possessing vast store of low cunning! We read, too, in the *Hortus Sanitatis*, Book iii. (about A.D. 1500), that that strange bird, which "loveth wilderness," the Pelican, lives largely "on the milk of the Crocodile."

No wonder, then, that crocodiles were a terror to the negroes of the Gambia. But if they feared them on their own account, and exercised the extreme of caution when anywhere in the immediate neighbour-

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

hood of the river-bank, they were equally timorous on account of their cattle. And the manner of getting their beasts over the river was, Jobson tells us, as follows: "When they passe a beefe over, he is led into the water, with a rope to his hornes, whereby one holds him close to the boate, and another taking up his tayle, holds in the like manner: the Priest or Mary-bucke stands over the middle of the beast, praying and spitting on him, according to their ceremonies charming the Crocodile, and another againe by him, with his bowe and arrowes ready drawne to expect when the Crocodile will ceaze, and in this manner if there be twentie at a time, they passe them one after another, never thinking them safe untill they be on the toppe of the River banke."

Hippopotamuses too were a danger at times to Jobson's expedition. There was "a world of sea-horses, whose paths as they came on shore to feed, were beaten with tracks as large as London highway." "Behemoth" is not always placid and good-natured; on one occasion one drove his tusks right through the boat's bottom, "which I was enforced, with a great deale of diligence to stoppe, or it had daungered our sinking." There was not sufficient powder on board to justify the crew in scaring away the huge ungainly beasts by firing at them, and Jobson was sore put to it now and again to disperse the inquisitive crowds that surrounded the boat. After dark sometimes he adopted a plan which proved effective, that of sending floating lights (candles, he calls them) down stream, from which the hippos "would flie, and make way with a great deale of horreur." But as

## ENGLISH EXPLORERS ON THE GAMBIA

far as the human inhabitants of those regions were concerned, no trouble was experienced; Jobson, indeed, speaks very favourably of a tribe of "Fulbies," as compared, in the matter of freedom from dirt, with certain Irish "kernes," of whom truly he seems to have held no loving memory. "With cleanliness your Irish woman hath no acquaintance," says he. But our ancestors generally, in the Seventeenth Century, had but a nodding acquaintance with soap and water; and even to this day one fears that it is but a section of those of European nationalities who—at least in winter time—worship the morning tub. The "Fulbies" had not the terrors of cold weather and icy water to contend against; they probably bathed, not to keep themselves clean, but to keep themselves cool. And indeed it is humiliating to the white man by whom the daily tub is deemed as indispensable as is his morning meal, when perforce he travels, say on horseback, through a land dry and parched, where is no water or water but sufficient to keep life in horse and man, to find, after a day or two of extreme discomfort, with what startling rapidity he becomes accustomed to conditions which, till he *had* to do without water, would have filled him with horror. We are creatures of habit. Though we may not desire his company, which of us in very truth can afford to cast a stone at his neighbour?

Unwittingly, in his description of the Fulbies, Jobson is amusing. "Neither are the men ever seene to use any manner of familiar dalliance with" the women, says he, "insomuch as I thinke there

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

is hardly any Englishman can say he ever saw the blacke man kiss a woman." One does not know why it should be so, but the idea of a black or tawny Apollo "dallying" familiarly with a dusky, blubber-lipped Amaryllis is irresistibly comic. The women of this tribe appear to have been exceedingly well-behaved and good-natured, or exceedingly well ruled by their husbands. Speaking of the numerous wives of some of the chief men, Jobson says: "Againe, which is to be noted . . . it is never heard that they doe brawle or scolde, or fall out among themselves . . . contrary to our English proverb, 'Two women in one house,' etc." Possibly the husband's ideas on the subject of "dallying" were not entirely unconnected with the use of the club. One has known such instances among savage peoples;—and, indeed, the institution of the boot is not entirely foreign to the habits of those of our own lower orders who are resident in large cities.

As to trade, "small beades and poor knives . . . with other trifling things" were the commodities most desired by the Fulbies; "but after they once saw and tasted of salt, which in their language they call 'Ram-Dam,' there was no other thing could so well please them." In exchange they offered hides and elephants' teeth; and slaves might have been had for the asking, had this first African Company (forerunner of those which in later years dipped their hands deep in the foul mire of that trade) desired any such merchandise. At Tenda, for instance, a chief, Buckor Sano by name, brought "certaine young blacke women" and offered them for sale to Jobson,

## ENGLISH EXPLORERS ON THE GAMBIA

who made answer that “wee were a people who did not deale in any such commodities, neither did wee buy or sell one another, or any that had our owne shape; he seemed to marvel much at it, and told us it was the only marchandise they carried downe into the countrey where they fetcht all their salt, and that they were sold there to white men. . . . Wee answered, they were another kind of people, different from us, but for our part if they had no other commodities we would returne againe.” Brave words! Pity that circumstances arose which almost necessarily altered the point of view for England in this respect. But there were in Jobson’s day no English Colonies in the West Indies; when it came to the pinch, when, thirty or forty years later, her tropical colonies had need of imported labour, England was little, if any, better than her neighbours. In the beginning, slaves were brought to the English Colonies for the most part in Dutch vessels; after 1660 or thereabout we ourselves took a leading part in that horrid traffic; and when the Slave Trade became, as in after years it did become, the one great, all-absorbing industry—if “industry” it may be called—of West Africa, it was in British ships that the bulk of the miserable negroes crossed the ocean. Later, we shall see how the Slave Trade waxed and waned, and how Great Britain, from being the chief of sinners became the principal factor in healing that leprous spot.

The chief object of Jobson’s wanderings, however, had not yet been attained; he had not, up to the time of meeting Buckor Sano, come across any gold.

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

The natives had offered so far in exchange for Jobson's goods, only hides and elephants' teeth, and those female slaves already mentioned, but of gold they brought none. Now this, "the principall we came for," Jobson was determined to get, and he set about the task with much commercial cunning. "We never talked unto them of golde," he says, "but waited opportunitie, and notwithstanding we saw it worne in their women's eares, warning was given none of our people should take any great notice of it as a thing we should generally desire, until occasion was given by Buckor Sano himself, who taking note of our guilt swordes and some other things wee had, although but poorly set out, with some show of golde trimming, did aske if that were golde: he was answered, Yes: it should seeme, sayth he, you have much of this in your countrey: Wee affirmed the same, and that it was a thing our men did all use to weare, and therefore if they had any wee would buy it of them, because wee had more use than they for it. You shall have, sayd he, what is amongst our women here, but if I did know you would esteeme of that, I would be provided to bring you such quantitie as should buy all things you brought."

Then Buckor Sano began to draw from the stores of a florid imagination. With his own eyes, said he, he had seen "a great Towne the houses whereof are covered only with golde"; that town was four moons' journey from the place in which they now were. Probably he was alluding to the fabled wealth of the cities of Timbuctoo and Gago. "Tombuctoo" was believed by Europeans to be

## ENGLISH EXPLORERS ON THE GAMBIA

the centre of a district passing rich in gold ; it was, indeed, the objective of the Company for which Thompson and Jobson both worked, and it was by way of the rivers Senegal or Gambia that white men believed the city might be reached. In August 1594 a merchant in Morocco reports to a friend in London that "not ten days past here came a Cahaia of the Andaluzes home from Gago, and another principal Moore, whom the king sent thither at first with Alcaide Hamode, and they brought with them thirty mules laden with golde." Writing on a later date the same merchant continues : "There went with Alcaide Hamode for these parts seventeen hundred men ; who passing over the sands, for want of water perished one third part of them ; and at their coming to the city of Tombuctoo, the negroes made some resistance ; but to small purpose, for that they had no defence but with their asegaies and javelings poisoned. So they tooke it and proceeded to the city of Gago, where the negroes were in number infinite, and meant to stand to the uttermost for their country ; but the Moores slew them so faste that they were faine to yield, and to pay tribute by the yere. The rent of Tombuctoo is sixty quintals of golde by the yere ; the goodnesse whereof you know. The report is, that Mahomet bringeth with him such an infinite treasure as I never heard of ; it doth appeare that they have more golde than any other part of the world beside. The King of Marocco is like to be the greatest Prince in the world for money, if he keepe this country."

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

But Jobson never attained to this African "City of Manoa," any more than did Sir Walter Raleigh and his men to that shining city on the Orenoque where Martinez affirmed that he had sojourned. On the contrary, for reasons not clearly stated, Jobson returned to his ship. Perhaps he had got as much gold as could safely be stowed away; or perhaps Buckor Sano's story did not hang together very well; the natives at all times seem to have made more or less of a mystery of the source of their gold supply. (Writing at a later date, Bosman, the Dutch Historian of the Gold Coast, says of the gold-mines of that country—"nor do I believe that any of our people have ever seen one of them . . . the negroes esteem them sacred, and consequently take all possible care to keep us from them.") Jobson does not take us very fully into his confidence as to his reasons for returning. Maybe the Fulbies on prolonged acquaintance showed themselves to be not so wholly admirable as at first they had appeared in his eyes; he complains that of nights they made "a hethenish noyse, most commonly untill the daye beginnes to breake." One does not need to be a fever-stricken wreck to realise the misery of such nights; even to the healthy man the irritation quickly becomes intolerable. All Afric's golden sands might not recompense him for nights made hideous by the drum-beating, the singing, the chatter and bawling of innumerable negroes. In any case, Jobson's stay had been over long for the good of that portion of his ships' crews which he had left on board in the lower reaches of the river. Great part of

## ENGLISH EXPLORERS ON THE GAMBIA

them had died, and Jobson on his arrival at Kassan found but four men fit for duty, barely enough with his own men to enable him to work his way out to sea, away from those fever-haunted river-banks.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PORTUGUESE AND DUTCH ON THE GOLD COAST

PORTUGAL, as we have seen, had been successful practically in expelling the English and French from the choicest of her West African preserves, or at least she had succeeded in establishing there a state of affairs which to these nations made the risk incurred by poaching outweigh the profits thereby to be gained. Few English or French vessels now attempted to trade along the Gold Coast. But as the Sixteenth Century drew to a close, another rival started up to harass the Portuguese in those parts, a rival whose trading instincts were keener by far than those of either English or French, one not to be daunted by severities however great, one who flew at the throat of the enemy and there clung tenaciously, till, in the end, life was shaken out of him.

The shrewd business eye of the Dutch Nation had been attracted by the profits to be made in the Guinea Trade. A certain Ericksen, a Dutchman, captured at sea, had been carried by the Portuguese to the Bight of Biafra and there long detained prisoner on the island of San Thomé. Whilst

## PORTUGUESE AND DUTCH

in captivity Ericksen gleaned sufficient information regarding Portuguese trading matters to convince him that they were of an extremely profitable nature, and having by good fortune escaped and reached his native land, he had little difficulty in persuading merchants there to fit out a vessel for a venture to the Gold Coast, and to give him the command. In 1595 Ericksen brought his voyage to a successful end, and from that date, in spite of all that Portugal could do, Dutch trade with the Guinea Coast prospered and increased.

A nation of Traders, the business sagacity and acute commercial instincts of the Dutch would have made them rivals to be dreaded even had they been less formidable as fighters; the combination of business ability with naval and military skill—though doubtless other causes were also at work—caused them eventually to be to the Portuguese irresistible.

Portugal since 1580 had become but a province of Spain, and Spain was more intent on her own West Indian possessions than concerned in the welfare of settlements which to her were of no interest except as they might affect the labour supply of the Spanish West Indian islands. Hence, the Portuguese establishments on the Gold Coast had been greatly reduced, and of this fact in due time the Dutch took full advantage. Before the close of the first quarter of the Seventeenth Century, the Hollanders, underselling their rivals everywhere, had practically swept Portuguese trade out of existence. Instead of making any attempt to recover that trade,

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

Philip IV., finding that income hardly met expenditure, curtailed the latter by further reducing the already weakened garrison of San Jorge da Mina and by shortening their supplies. The natural result followed; more and more, as time passed, the Dutch ousted the Portuguese, and very soon, except Elmina and Axim, nothing remained to the latter of the old-time monopoly which Papal Bulls had delivered into their hands. In the beginning, indeed, Portugal had employed against the Dutch the same tactics which against the English and the French had been found so efficacious. She offered rewards for the heads of Dutchmen; and wherever a Hollander was captured his death-sentence and execution speedily followed, or he was consigned to the galleys. To such an end—death or the galleys—came many a gallant Dutchman in the closing years of the Sixteenth Century. But the result was not to drive the Dutch from the field, as English and French had been driven.

In 1599 five Dutchmen, lying becalmed in a boat off Elmina, were taken by the Portuguese, in cold blood beheaded, and their heads stuck on spikes on the ramparts of San Jorge. In revenge, the Dutch stirred up the neighbouring tribes to rebel, and by supplying arms and ammunition helped the rebels not only to inflict severe losses on the Portuguese, but enabled them also finally to cast off the Portuguese yoke. As a farther consequence of this revolt, the Hollanders were enabled to make yet another forward movement and to establish a fresh trading post on the Coast at Commenda. Cautiously,

## PORTUGUESE AND DUTCH

and with characteristic business ability, did Holland make her initial steps. To walk before she ran,—“first to creep and then to go,” as at a later date the Council of Seventeen of the great Dutch East India Company instructed their representatives at the Cape of Good Hope,—was ever her motto. In this instance, the island of Goree, to the north of the Gambia, had been bought, and thus a base secured from which to work. Thence, from place to place she crept, ever widening her sphere of influence, steadily plodding onward.

Then in 1621 the Netherlands West India Company was incorporated, and to this Company was granted by the States General sole right of trade on the West Coast of Africa, as well as a similar right in the West Indies. The Dutch did not fritter away their strength in isolated efforts, they combined; they concentrated their energies on a definite object, and that object, so far as concerned West Africa, was the overthrow of Portuguese power and influence in those regions and the establishment of their own supremacy. Portugal and her colonies were now but dependencies of Spain, and by Spain had Holland been long and cruelly ground down. Now at last the yoke was thrown off. Holland was already supreme at sea, and after her long and bitter struggle against a relentless and bloodthirsty foe, she was carrying the war into that foe's dominions.

In 1623 a Dutch squadron sailed for the west with the object of seizing the Portuguese colonies in Brazil, and the conflict in those parts necessarily lent added bitterness to the struggle in West Africa,

## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

whence came the labour supply for the Brazilian sugar-mills and plantations.

In 1624 the Dutch built, or at least completed, at Mouree, near Cape Coast Castle, a fort which they named Fort Nassau, and being now in their own estimation sufficiently strong to strike a decisive blow, in the following year they attacked San Jorge da Mina, being under the impression that sickness had greatly enfeebled the garrison of that stronghold. With twelve hundred of their own men and a force of native auxiliaries, a landing was made a little to the west of San Jorge. But Dutch calculations had this time been premature; the policy of "creeping" before "going" had been too soon abandoned. The expedition proved a disastrous failure. Before the force had time to deploy and take up position, while, indeed, they were yet in the confusion consequent on landing, they were sharply attacked by the Portuguese and driven back into their boats with heavy slaughter. And we may be certain that not much quarter was given to the wounded during that rout.

Deterred by this repulse, checked but not discouraged, the stubborn Dutch bided their time, embittered, and rendered but the more determined by the recollection of their losses. San Jorge was a formidable stronghold, as strongholds went in those days; Barbot describes it as having "no equal on all the coasts of Guinea. It is built square, with very high walls of a dark brown rock stone so very firm that it may be said to be cannon proof."

There must be no mistake in the Dutch second

## PORTUGUESE AND DUTCH

venture. Accordingly, years passed, years which perhaps lulled the Portuguese into fancied security, causing them still further to slacken in their precautions. To "let things slide" is an easy doctrine enough, but it is one for which payment, heavy payment, must be made in the end—as Great Britain herself has found more than once even in our own day. And so Portugal now found it. To van Ypren, the Dutch Director General in Africa, it seemed at last that the time to strike had come. Nor did he delay. The Company at home was informed by him that now was their chance to succeed, and he suggested that a sufficient force should be sent to the Coast without loss of time. It chanced that Count Maurice of Nassau, with a fleet of thirty-two sail and a considerable body of troops, was at that very time on the Brazilian coast harassing the Portuguese there. To him instructions were sent, and Count Maurice at once detached nine sail, with eight hundred soldiers under Colonel Hans Coine, for service on the Gold Coast.

On June 25, 1637, the expedition arrived off the Ivory Coast, and having sent word to van Ypren, proceeded to Cape Coast Castle, where, on being joined by a large native contingent under the Director General himself, the whole force—eight hundred soldiers and five hundred seamen, exclusive of natives—landed and marched towards da Mina. The action did not begin very favourably for the Dutch, for a strong detachment sent to seize a hill which commanded the fort of San Jorge was cut to pieces by the Portuguese native auxiliaries, slaughtered almost to a