WEST AFRICAN STORIES

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BY

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STORIES FROM WEST AFRICA.

I.—BOHSUM PRAH.

Lord Wolseley's successful expedition to the Gold Coast in 1873-4 has made every one familiar with the river Prah. It was that river, you may remember, that the Ashanti army crossed at Prahsu when it first invaded the British Protectorate; and it was at its mouth that Commodore Commerell, and several officers and men, were shot in the back by a party of natives from Chama, ambushed on the river bank. Prah, "the sweeper," is what we should term a sacred river, and is called by the natives Bohsŭm Prah, *bohsŭm* having the meanings of "god, sacred, occult, mysterious." The spiritualized Prah, the god that is worshipped by the natives, is one of the chief deities of the southern districts of the Gold Coast. It is described as being a female, of human shape and monstrous size, with a brown skin. Her

disposition is cruel and revengeful, and the crocodiles of the river are her children. Sacrifices of sheep and cattle are made annually at the present day, to this goddess, on her holy day. In former times, human beings were always offered; but, since the commencement of the present century, the sacrifice of human victims has been prohibited by the Colonial authorities, and if such be offered now it is in secret.

In the year of grace 1495 the Gold Coast was very much the same as it is now, for, while all the rest of the world has been progressing, the West Coast of Africa, defended by its pestilential climate, and its impenetrable forests, has retained its pristine barbarism, and remained at a standstill. It was then fourteen years since the Portuguese under Diego d'Azambuja had built Fort St. George, and established themselves at El Mina, which was their head-quarters in that part of the world. There they maintained a considerable garrison for those times, and from it, as a centre, searched the neighbouring coast for gold. Traces of this metal had been found at Chama, on the Rio de St. Juan, as the Portuguese termed the Prah; and Fernando Gomez, who had farmed the Guinea trade for an annual rent of five hundred ducats, had opened a gold mine at Approbi, near little Commenda.

The natives of the Gold Coast do not seem to have fallen into the error made by the inhabitants of the

New World, upon seeing white men for the first time—they do not seem to have regarded them as gods; at all events there is no record of it. Very early, too, they seem to have lost any feeling of awe they might have had for white men; for the Portuguese masons, employed in the construction of Fort St. George, were vigorously attacked by the natives, under their chief Kwamina Ansa, for daring to quarry the rock which was the abode of their god Behnya. It is true that since 1469 several expeditions to the Gold Coast had been undertaken by private adventurers from Portugal, who probably had not always behaved with moderation and discretion; and the current belief concerning the whites was that they were a people who had no country of their own, and who were therefore forced to travel about in ships till they could seize the land of some other people, and dispossess them. The natives then, though sufficiently friendly with the Portuguese as long as the latter did not endeavour to interfere with them, or outrage their superstitions, did not regard their advent with joy, and were not at all disposed to regard them as benefactors. An intercourse of a very few years had been sufficient to show them that all the Portuguese sought was gold, the value of which was well known to the natives.

It was in the year of grace 1495 that a Spaniard named Diego Alvarado, and a Portuguese named Juan de Solis, two ne'er-do-weels belonging to the

garrison of Fort St. George, conceived that an excursion into the interior would be a pleasant change to the monotonous routine of duty in the fort. It was the age when the priesthood was dominant, when no expedition was considered complete which did not include an outfit of priests. There were therefore nearly half a dozen of these bald-pated gentry in St. George; mass was said morning and evening, the garrison had to confess at least once a week, fasts were scrupulously observed, penances were constantly being inflicted, and Diego and Juan did not find their life at all gay. No nocturnal conversations with the well-shaped damsels of Commani and Fetu were permitted by these ascetic priests, who seemed to have got the commandant quite under their thumbs. Poor Juan had been sentenced to a week on biscuit and water for merely chucking under the chin a comely, black-eyed damsel of some sixteen summers, whose spiritual conversion the reverend father Gallego San Benito had undertaken; while the haughty Diego had even suffered the indignity of being flogged, for having slipped over the wall of the fort at night in order to enjoy the refining society of the softer sex in the native town of Oddena. Both felt that these things were not to be borne. Was it not enough to have to mount guard and sentinel in helm and breastplate under the fiery tropical sun, to have to spend hours walking to and fro on the parapets of the fort, dragging a

heavy halberd, and to be obliged to submit without complaint to the *provedor's* unscrupulous dilution of the sweet Lisbon wine, without having these pestilent priests interfering, spying, and constantly at one's heels?

"Mother of God!" they swore. "Was it for this dog's life that we left our native land and the black-eyed damsels of the Douro? Caramba! Carajo! Ten thousand devils! Certainly not."

"Let us desert, go inland, marry the daughters of a king, and establish a kingdom," said Diego, whose fine Spanish blood still smarted from his chastisement.

"Agreed, *amigo mio!*" replied the less ambitious Juan. "We will lie in the shade all day, dance with the girls at night, and drink palm-wine. It is not bad stuff. At all events it is as good as the bottle rinsings that the *provedor*, whom may the devil destroy, serves out to us."

Their plans were soon arranged. One dark night about ten o'clock, when they were both on duty on the walls of the fort, they quietly deposited their armour on the ground; and, taking with them only their cross-bows and daggers, slipped down a rope, with which they had provided themselves, on to the rocks at the base of the seaward face of the rock. They listened a moment, all was still; the draw-bridge on the land side had long been raised, and it was not likely that their escape would be discovered

for some time. It would not be safe to pass along the west side of the fort towards the wooded hill of St. Jago, as they might be observed from the walls. Neither would it do to traverse the town of Oddena, because the natives would be able to point out the route they had taken; so they passed hurriedly along the sandy beach, as if going to Amquana.

They were about half-a-mile from the fort, when in the darkness they nearly ran upon two dark figures seated on the ground, who had not heard the approach of our two heroes, deadened as their footsteps were by the roar of the surf and the soft sand of the beach. The two figures sprang hastily to their feet. One was the pious Gallego San Benito, and the other the comely Fetu damsel, whose conversion the holy father had so much at heart.

It was impossible to say which party was the more surprised at this sudden encounter, but the priest was the first to recover his self-possession.

"What do ye here, misguided men?" he cried angrily.

"*Por Dios*, rather what dost *thou* here, misguided monk?" said Diego, mockingly. "Ha! ha! a fitting time and place to confess your pretty penitent."

The damsel laughed, her white teeth glistening in the darkness; but the excellent Gallego exploded with rage at having his pious motives thus misconstrued.

"Peace, scoffer," he cried furiously, "nor dare to

calumniate an humble instrument of the Holy Church with thy foul aspersions. And answer me, what do ye two here? Whither go ye?" and he seized Diego by the arm.

"Ten thousand devils! Loose me, or 'twill be the worse for thee."

"Loose thee? No, rather will ye both return to the fort with me, where I warrant your backs will smart sorely for this adventure."

Diego struggled with the priest for a few seconds; but the latter was a sturdy fellow, and could not be shaken off. Then once, twice, a keen blade gleamed in the darkness, and the pious Gallego fell heavily to the ground.

"Oh, Holy Virgin!" groaned Juan, in great terror. "Thou hast surely not slain him, Diego."

"And why not?" said the latter. "Why did he interfere with us? Was it that we could return with him to St. George, to be flogged, starved, kept in irons, who knows what?"

"Oh no," murmured Juan.

"Then pluck up heart. What is one monk more or less? It is done now. *Los muertos no hablan* (Dead men tell no tales), so this to make sure he cannot put the Commandant upon our traces." And he plunged his dagger again and again into the prostrate body.

All this time the girl had been looking on, without displaying any emotion, except that her eyes sparkled

and her teeth gleamed when the monk fell bleeding on the sand. She seemed to regard the whole episode in much the same light as does a leopardess the conflict between two leopards for her possession, and stood still with her arms folded over her shapely bosom.

"What shall we do with her?" asked Juan, anxiously. "Must we also ——?"

The young lady herself settled the question.

"I will go with thee," she said in her broken Portuguese, laying her hand upon Diego's arm. "Thou art a warrior, a brave man. I will go with thee."

Diego laughed. "So be it, pretty one," he replied. "But let us hasten; we should put more distance between ourselves and the fort."

They hurried on, along the beach. Half a mile further, the girl, who now acted as guide, struck into a narrow path, leading into the forest. The tall trees loomed up on every side, and their dense foliage, stretching far overhead, obscured the star-lit heavens. Gnarled and twisted roots of trees, and festoons of creepers, stretched across the path, and they could only proceed slowly. After about three miles, they passed through a hamlet of four or five houses, buried in sleep, and again plunged into the forest. Occasionally loud, weird cries echoed through the sleeping forest, wailing on the still night air. On first hearing them Diego and Juan stopped and grasped their cross-bows; but the girl re-assured

them. It was nothing, she said, only a small beast that howled from the tree-tops, and which could do no injury.

At day-break, thoroughly done up, our two heroes and their companion turned off the path, and, forcing a way into the forest for some distance, threw themselves on the ground at the foot of an enormous silk-cotton tree. Here they were safe from observation, and could rest. The two men, exhausted by their unusual exertions, soon fell asleep; while the girl, whose name, by the bye, was Effua, sat down with her back against a tree on watch. They awoke about noon, and found the girl engaged in roasting some plantains, which, it appeared, she had snatched from a tree in the village through which they had passed in the night. They fell to, and ate. They did not find the food very palatable perhaps, but they were too hungry to be particular.

"*Caramba!* At least we are our own masters here," said Diego, as he fondled the comely Effua.

In the afternoon they continued their flight, travelling by unfrequented paths. They did not meet a soul, and at nightfall they again halted, for it was impossible to get along in the dark. This time they had nothing to eat, for they had not been near any villages; but Effua built a little shelter with the branches of the dwarf palm, between two of the buttresses of a silk-cotton tree, in which she and Diego were no doubt tolerably comfortable. But Juan was

not so well satisfied. He felt hungry, the occasional smothered laughter of his companions in their leafy nest seemed to annoy him, and it is possible that he almost began to regret the step he had taken.

For three days they thus continued their flight, Effua pilfering plantains, bananas, or yams from the village plantations whenever she had an opportunity, but always taking care not to be observed. On the morning of the fourth day they had not proceeded far, when they arrived at a broad river, the name of which Effua announced to be Bohsum Prah. The banks were steep, and the stream looked deep and strong.

"How, in the devil's name, are we to get across?" asked Juan.

"*Caramba!* I am tired of running through the forest," said Diego; "let us go to the nearest town and stay there. We shall at least get something to eat."

They turned up a path which branched from the one they had been following, and soon reached a plantain-grove, over which they could see the crests of cocoa-nut palms, the invariable sign of habitations. Presently, as they turned an angle in the path, they met a child with a water-pot on her head, going probably to the river. Upon catching sight of the white men she dropped the pot with a crash in the path and fled in the direction from which she had come, uttering loud cries. A few paces further on,

they were able to see a village of considerable size in front, the houses of which were grouped around a number of enormous silk-cotton trees. Some of these had been killed by lightning, and their scarred, white limbs stretched out in the air, a hundred feet above the houses, like gigantic and distorted fingers.

The villagers, alarmed by the cries of the child, were coming out of their houses. Some had arms, and those who had not ran back to get them when they saw the white faces. As the two white men continued to approach some of the men fitted arrows to their bows and half drew the string; but Effua called out something in the Commani dialect; a tall man, wearing a heavy gold collar, thereupon gave some order to the men, and the latter lowered their weapons.

As the two white men entered the village they were surrounded by quite a throng of armed men, some of whom bore bows and arrows, some broad-bladed swords of soft iron, others short spears for throwing, and others again long spears for stabbing and thrusting. They carried curious shields, four or five feet long and three broad, made of osiers and covered with leopard's skin. Some of these had plates of gold at the middle and the two ends to ward off arrows. Effua led the way up to the tall man with the golden collar, the village chief, and the two Europeans shook hands with him.

"Tell him," said Diego to the girl, "that we are

white chiefs from over the sea. We have come to stay with him a little time, and make friends."

The chief heard this without enthusiam, but hospitality is a quality rarely lacking in savages. He therefore said he was glad to see them, ordered a house to be swept out for their reception, and conducted them to it. It was a courtyard surrounded by alcoves, the floors of which were raised some two feet above the level of the court. They were thatched with grass, and open on the side looking into the court, but this aperture could be closed with mats. The walls were of swish, carefully kneaded mud, and the lower parts were coloured red with some ochreous earth, so as to form a kind of dado.

"At last," said Juan, as he stretched his weary limbs on the smooth floor of one of these *adampan*, "At last we can eat and drink, lie in the shade, and make love. By the ten chief devils, this is much better than the guard-house of St. George, eh, Diego?"

The advent of the deserters created a great sensation among the villagers, who had never before seen white men, though they had heard of such beings from their fellow-countrymen who lived on the sea-board. Every one sought some pretext for coming into their court-yard. One brought a present of yams, another palm-oil, a third fowls, a fourth palm wine; and before long our heroes found themselves supplied with provisions for at least a week. The name of the

village was, they learned, Bohsumassi, and they made up their minds to remain there for some time.

Every day the chief came to visit his guests, and asked all kinds of questions to discover their motives in coming there. He was generally accompanied by two men, who had unkempt heads of shaggy hair, and white circles painted round their eyes. They were priests, said Effua, and these two good Catholics regarded them with loathing and abhorrence, and crossed themselves devoutly whenever they came. "Priests of the devil," they muttered.

After a few days, Juan expressed his desire for a native wife.

"My friend here," said he, "is married, and I also wish a wife."

The chief promised that he would send him one, but it was one thing to promise and another to fulfil it. The village girls, unaccustomed to white faces, considered our heroes hideous.

"What!" said they. "Marry one of those men with staring white skins like a devil, and long noses like the bills of birds? Oh, no!" and they went away to tell their lovers what had been proposed to them.

They were also afraid of the white men, their appearance and manners were so strange. They perhaps devoured their wives. Who could tell? They might be devils, or sorcerers. With Effua, of course, the case was different. Ever since she could

remember she had been accustomed to see white men at Elmina; and she had long got over that natural repugnance felt by dark-skinned people on first coming into contact with whites. Moreover, the pious Gallego San Benito had taught her that there was nothing terrible about white men.

The chief at last ordered a slave-girl to be taken to his guest. She was dragged by force to the court-yard and presented to Juan. But she yelled at the sight of him, and finally broke from the men who were holding her, and rushed howling into the bush. At last, after several days, an old woman, who had long been languishing in single wretchedness, plucked up courage, and said she would marry the white man. But when Juan saw her, he declined with many oaths to have anything to do with her. She was sixty years old at least, and nothing but skin and bone. Juan was much annoyed and disappointed. He proposed that Diego should share Effua with him; but this nearly caused a serious quarrel with his comrade; and Effua flew into a violent passion, brandished a knife, ran to and fro in the court, and behaved like one possessed; so that the subject had to be dropped.

By the end of a fortnight the villagers had satisfied their curiosity by gazing at the white men, and ceased to bring provisions; but people still came from neighbouring villages, so that they were well supplied with food. But, though they had plenty to eat and drink, the time hung rather heavily on their

hands. They couldn't eat, drink, and sleep all day long. They missed the companionship of their comrades in the garrison; there was no one to talk to, or gamble with. After all, they thought, there were worse places than Fort St. George. Then they were haunted by a perpetual dread that the commandant might gain tidings of them, and send after them; and there was that ugly business with Gallego San Benito to be accounted for. Altogether they were not happy, especially Juan, who had no Effua to comfort him; but the more bored and anxious he felt the more he had recourse to the jars of palm-wine, with which the chief kept them supplied; and he spent the greater part of his time in getting drunk and sleeping off the effects.

One day Juan, full of palm-wine, went out into the village, and seized a young woman who was passing through the village *ehsúdu*, or meeting-place. Her screams brought a number of people to her assistance, who soon took her from her assailant; but Juan, half-drunk and full of rage, drew his dagger, and struck at some of the people, wounding two. Diego, who heard the noise of this scuffle, ran out and tried to pacify the people, and dragged Juan back into the yard.

Next day no food was brought, nor did the chief pay his customary visit. They had plenty of provisions in stock, so did not much mind the cessation of supplies; but Effua looked serious, and said it was a bad palaver. The woman that Juan had seized

was the favourite wife of one of the priests. When three days passed without the chief having been to see them, our heroes began to get seriously alarmed. They tried to go to see him; but they were always told he was not at home, and all the villagers seemed to shun them. Effua counselled immediate flight; there was some mischief brewing, she said. But they did not know where to go to. They could not return to Elmina, and they could not go, unobserved, to another village.

On the fourth day the chief came, accompanied by the two priests and some other men. He excused his absence on the previous days by saying that he had been pacifying his people, who were frightened at the white men, since one had wounded two of them. But now he had persuaded them that the whites were their good friends, and that it was only the palm-wine that had made one of them act so violently. Therefore, to celebrate the reconciliation, he had ordered his people to make a dance that afternoon; and he hoped the two white men would come to it, to show they were not angry.

Diego and Juan were delighted. They said most certainly they would come, and they thanked the chief for arranging the matter in such a friendly way. After he had left their court-yard they congratulated themselves that their troubles were over; and Juan swore by all the saints in the calendar never to get drunk on palm-wine again. But Effua did not seem

altogether satisfied; there was still some mischief brewing, she thought.

At about four o'clock they heard the sound of drums in the village, and soon after a messenger came from the chief to say that all was ready. Our heroes at once started, followed by Effua. As they were turning the corner of a house, Diego thought he heard a smothered exclamation and a slight noise behind. He turned, but could see nothing. He went back to the corner of the house and looked round. Effua was nowhere to be seen.

"*Caramba!* where is the girl?" said he, rather surprised. "I thought she was following at our heels."

The native with them made signs to show that she had returned to their court-yard.

"She has gone back for something," said Juan. "Come along; 'twill not do to keep the chief waiting."

They found the *ehsúdu* full of people. All the inhabitants of the surrounding villages seemed to have come to do honour to the occasion. A space about twenty yards square was left clear in the midst of the crowd, and at one side of this sat the chief, surrounded by his sword-bearers and attendants. Near him were two vacant country-stools, and to these, after greeting the white men, he motioned them.

Diego and Juan sat down and looked around them, while the crowd closed in behind. Opposite to them, at the other side of the open space, were ten or twelve

men and youths, each of whom held a drum between his knees as he sat on the ground. The drums were made of the hollowed trunks of trees, with skins stretched over one end. They were of various sizes, from one to four feet high. But their attention was soon concentrated upon two figures which sat a little to the left of the drummers. They were two men whose bodies, with the exception of the eyes and the crown of the head, were painted a dead staring white. Their appearance was horrible, and their dark eyes, vividly contrasted by the surrounding white, looked absolutely demoniac. Each wore a short skirt of plaited grass, reaching from the waist nearly to the knee, and carried in the hand a short brush of reeds. Juan could not repress a shudder as he gazed upon these men.

"Mother of God protect us!" he murmured; "are these men or devils?"

"*Por Dios,* they look hellish enough," replied Diego, "but 'tis probably only some savage buffoonery. In any case, 'twill not do to have the appearance of being afraid," and he twirled his mustachios and looked calmly round at the spectators.

Presently, at a sign from the chief, the drummers struck up, and the chorus of men behind them commenced to sing a kind of chant. It was a quaint, weird melody, in a minor key, not altogether unpleasing; and the drums, each of which sounded a different note, blended harmoniously.

"Holy Virgin!" suddenly cried Juan. "Look at that painted devil."

One of the men painted white was certainly behaving in a very extraordinary manner. He was shuddering violently, as if in an ague-fit, and every muscle of his body seemed to quiver. The whites of his eyes only were visible, and his tongue hung protruding from his mouth. He was, while still seated, slowly making his way into the centre of the arena by a succession of short jerks. Saliva flowed copiously from his mouth, and every now and then he made violent efforts to vomit, as if his body were struggling to expel something which had entered it.

"He is possessed," cried Juan. "A devil has entered him;" and he crossed himself rapidly, and began to mutter such few odds-and-ends of prayers as he could remember.

"Faith, it seems like it," replied Diego. "But, man or devil, we must put a good face on it."

The second painted man was now seized with the same convulsive shuddering; while the first sprang to his feet, and with unsteady gait, rolling eyes, and foaming mouth, staggered to and fro in the arena. Then he approached the drums, which were played louder and louder; while the chorus of voices raised a volume of sound that echoed far away in the aisles of the forest. He bent forward, and, placing his hands upon the largest drum, hung his head down between his arms, and shook it violently to and fro. Then

he leaped in the air, waved the reed-brush over his head, and the drums suddenly stopped. At the same moment a strange voice uttered some words. The lips of the painted man were seen to move, but the voice did not seem to come from him. It sounded in the air, above and around, and was harsh, discordant, and altogether inhuman. As these sounds fell upon the ears of the spectators they raised a loud cry, and the drummers struck up a more rapid rhythm.

Diego and Juan were now really alarmed. They believed that they were assisting at some frightful incantation, and that the evil one would impound their souls. Yet they were obliged to stay. The first painted man was now joined by the second, and both commenced dancing in the arena. They went through all the contortions, bounds, leaps, and gestures that it is possible to conceive, dancing like maniacs, with eyes wildly rolling, and foaming lips; while every now and then the strange unnatural voice would again be heard overhead, uttering a few words to which the crowd would respond with a great shout.

The exercise was so violent that the two men soon streamed with perspiration, which washed off the white clay with which they were covered; and, as their faces were gradually freed from this disguise, Diego and Juan recognised them as the priests who had generally accompanied the chief in his visits.

Still dancing, the two priests now approached that side of the square on which were the two Europeans.

They appeared to be in a state of frenzy, leaping, gesticulating, twisting, and twining as if possessed. Suddenly, when just in front of the two white men, one of the priests stopped short and waved his reed-brush over them, while at the same moment the unnatural voice was heard in the air over their heads. A loud cry burst from the people.

Diego sprang to his feet. "Keep off, thou damned son of the fiend," cried he, threatening the priest with his dagger.

But in an instant he and Juan were seized from behind by a dozen men, and thrown upon their faces. They were seized so suddenly that they could offer no resistance, which, in any case, would have been useless; for what could two men do against more than three hundred? In a twinkling of an eye their hands were tied behind their backs, and their legs fastened together. Then they were jerked up on to their feet. Juan was quite crushed by this sudden misfortune, but Diego was bursting with impotent rage.

"May the pest stifle ye, ye brutes, dogs, pigs, unbaptized heathens," and he ran through the somewhat copious vocabulary of expletives then in use.

The point of these imprecations was of course entirely lost upon the natives, still they could see that they were not intended to be complimentary; so the chief danced a few steps in front of his prisoners in sign of triumph, and then spat in Diego's face in token of contempt. The fine hidalgo blood boiled in

his veins at this gross outrage. Beside himself with fury, he threw himself at the chief; but the latter jumped to one side, and Diego, bound and helpless, fell like a log to the ground. At this moment a young woman burst through the crowd and threw herself upon him. It was Effua.

"They seized me," she cried, "as I followed thee. Or I could have warned thee, had I seen," and, snatching a knife from her girdle, she strove to cut the lianas with which Diego was bound. But the knife was wrested from her in an instant, and she was torn away. She made a second effort to reach Diego; a man struck her on the head with a billet of wood, and she fell to the ground, her face streaming with blood.

Diego and Juan were removed to the outskirts of the village and thrown on the ground under a thatched shed, open on all sides, which stood by the path. A man, armed with a sheaf of spears, a bow, and a quiver full of arrows, stayed to watch them, and the remainder of the people went away. For seven days they remained in this shed. Not once were their bonds loosened, and they could only change position by rolling over and over. They suffered tortures from the flies that swarmed on them, and the ants which occasionally promenaded on their bodies; both of which, their hands being bound, they were unable to drive off. They were, moreover, half starved. Every morning and every evening a man

came with some snail soup in an earthen pot, and of this he poured as much as he could hold in the hollow of his hand into each prisoner's mouth. Beyond this they had nothing, but fortunately the snail soup was very sustaining. Unwashed, grimy, and surrounded with filth, their condition can be better imagined than described.

Their guard was changed morning and evening. The men had their meals brought to them by their wives, and they delighted in tantalising the prisoners by displaying the food before them, and by pretending to offer them portions of it, which they then withdrew to place in their own mouths. Of Effua the prisoners had seen and heard nothing, and they knew not what had become of her. Juan passed most of his time in lamenting his fate and in upbraiding his comrade in misfortune with having brought them to such a pass. He upbraided him with having induced him to leave the fort and with having slain the priest, which deed had rendered their return to St. George impossible. Diego disdained to reply to these lamentations and complaints, and preserved a sullen silence. They had no idea what their captors intended doing with them, nor had they any means of ascertaining, since they neither of them knew a word of Tshi, and their guards, on the other hand, did not know a word of Portuguese. They thought that probably the chief had sent to Elmina to report that he had two white

men in his village. Every day they expected to see a party from the garrison arrive to take them away; and, although they had nothing but the halter to expect as the result of such a removal, they looked for it eagerly; any change, they thought, must be an improvement upon their present condition.

The morning of the eighth day of their confinement passed away as had the preceding ones. About eleven o'clock one of the wives of the man on guard had brought him a mess, compounded with palm-oil, in a black earthen dish; had waited while her lord and master devoured it, and had then returned home with the crockery. As noon approached the loiterers left the streets; the boys and girls went no more to the river for water, and all the villagers sought the shade of their court-yards and *adampan*. Suddenly the man on guard fell forward on his face, foaming at the mouth. A strange, faint gurgling or choking sound came from him; he beat his hands wildly on the earth, and then lay perfectly still.

Before Diego and Juan had recovered from their surprise a lithe figure glided from amongst the tall grass which grew close up to the back of the shed. It was Effua. She stepped over the prostrate guard, whose corpse was already beginning to swell fearfully, and spurned it with her foot.

"The poison worked well, my friend," she said ironically; "and now we shall eat with thee no more."

She peered cautiously up and down the path. Not a soul was in sight, and, drawing her knife, she commenced to sever Diego's bonds.

"Not me first, pretty one," whispered Diego, "but him," and he motioned with his head towards Juan, who was looking on with eager eyes.

"No, no," she said; "thee first, my warrior, my brave one. Suppose there were not time to release ye both!"

"*Por Dios!* then I should stay with him."

"Stay with him! Thou would'st stay with him? Dost not thou know thy doom? To-day is the festival of Prah, and this very afternoon will ye both be offered to the god if ye fly not."

The two men shuddered.

"*Diablo!*" said Diego, "I relish not the idea of being offered up to a false god, or, rather, devil."

He was now free, but his limbs were so numbed by the long confinement that he found he could not stand. Effua knelt beside him and chafed his legs with her hands.

"No, no, leave me," he said; "loose Juan, quick!"

She turned to his comrade, and Diego, after a few attempts, struggled to his feet, and stamped about to restore the circulation. At this moment, for some reason or another, perhaps hearing the sound of voices, a young man left a house which stood at the distance of a few yards only from the shed, and came towards

them. On seeing one of the prisoners loose he stood for a moment dumbfounded. Diego snatched up one of the guard's spears and made a furious thrust. But he had not fully recovered the use of his arms, and the spear, instead of piercing the heart, struck high and penetrated the shoulder. Diego snatched up another, but before he could use it the man turned and fled up the street, shouting the alarm. In a few seconds a dozen men came running towards the shed. Juan's bonds were but half severed. Effua threw herself upon Diego, and strove to drag him away.

"Come, come," she cried wildly; "think only of thyself."

He stood hesitating. A number of men burst into the shed and secured Juan; two more seized Effua, but two spear-thrusts lay them bleeding on the earth. The others paused; in their hurry they had come without arms, and Diego, turning round, dashed into the tall grass. Effua was following, when a man coming from behind the shed seized her. She bit, fought, and struggled, but it was in vain; she could not escape, and, with a short, convulsive sob, she sank upon the ground.

Diego plunged on through the tall grass, which met some two feet above his head. A half-grown youth, who found himself in his path, crouched down, terrified at the aspect of this white man rushing on with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, and brandishing a bloody spear. But Diego's blood was up; he drove his spear through the cowering form, and

ran on with a laugh. Soon he heard the sound of falling water, and in a few minutes found himself on the river bank. Close below him were some falls, and the water was churned into foam as it poured over the black rocks. The river, dammed back by the ledge of rocks which formed the cascade, spread out above it in a broad pool, the edges of which were fringed with a dense growth of sedge and reeds. Diego let himself drop into this, and waded into the midst of the reeds. The water reached nearly to his neck, and the tropical water-plants completely hid him from view.

Presently he heard the shouts of his pursuers on the bank, and he feared almost to breathe, lest he should be discovered. He could hear them beating up and down the banks, which were covered with dense bush; and he could tell by the voices that a number of them had crossed the river by the rocks. Once or twice some of the men must have passed within a few yards of him, but gradually the voices became more distant. Either the pursuit had passed on, or the natives, confident that he could not escape from the neighbourhood without being detected, were abandoning the search for a time.

Diego had been in the water about an hour; he shuddered with cold and his teeth chattered, while, now that the danger of imminent discovery no longer entirely absorbed his thoughts, he was beginning to think about the crocodiles, when he heard a loud

drumming and shouting, which appeared to be gradually approaching. The din came nearer and nearer. There was a continued rhythm of drums, loud blasts of horns, and a chorus of many voices, singing a weird chant. It reached the river-bank and then ceased to advance, while, from the hum of voices, Diego knew that there must be a large assemblage.

Notwithstanding his dangerous situation, his curiosity got the better of his prudence; and he determined to see, if possible, what was going on. Covering his head and face with sedge, and the broad flat leaves of the white river-lily, and stooping till the ripples of the water met his lips, he cautiously parted the stems of the rushes, moving forward inch by inch, so as to cause no disturbance amongst them. At last he reached a point from which, by parting the stems in front, he could peer through a thin growth of sedge. The pool here was about eighty yards broad, and on the further side, under an immense rock on the bank, was a great crowd of people. All of them were covered with blotches and marks of white, while two, probably the priests, painted white from head to foot, were gyrating and dancing on the river brink. A dozen men were playing on drums and horns; but there was one figure from which he could not turn his eyes. It was that of a white man, stripped stark naked. His hands were tied behind his back. A knife was thrust through his cheeks, the handle protruding from one side and the blade from the other,

and his breast was dabbled red with the blood that trickled from these wounds. He was led by a cord which was passed through a hole that had been made in his nostrils. It was the wretched Juan.

Diego ground his teeth in impotent rage at this fearful sight. "Oh for a score of our trusty comrades from St. George, to fall upon these hell-born savages!" he thought.

Two men now appeared upon the river bank, bearing some object on their heads. They placed it on the ground, and Diego saw that it was a country-stool, but of unusual size. It was stained black, and clotted with the blood of hundreds of victims, and on the top of it was what appeared to be a caul of fat. The two priests dragged their wretched victim towards this stool, and signed to him to dance. But Juan doggedly refused to comply. They thrust two knives under his shoulder-blades, and jerked at the cord through his nostrils; but still Juan would not move. Either he had made up his mind with dogged obstinacy not to do honour to the god by dancing before his stool, or his senses were stunned by the horror of approaching death. Diego, not by any means of a squeamish nature, felt sick and faint at the horrible sight; yet some strange fascination held his gaze fixed upon the spot.

The priests sent a couple of men back to the village for firebrands, intending to apply them to their victim's naked body, and so compel him to dance;

but the men had scarcely left the bank when Juan tottered and fell forward. The loss of blood, the scant food of the past week, and the horror of the moment had overcome him; he was fainting. Fearful that their victim was dying, the priests hastened to hold him up over the stool, and a man with a shaggy head of hair, and armed with a broad-bladed sword somewhat resembling a bill-hook, ran out from the crowd. The blade whirled over his head. Once, twice, thrice it fell upon the neck of the sacrifice; then the head fell, rolling down to the water, and the blood spurted in torrents from the severed arteries over the stool.

Diego closed his eyes and groaned. "Alas! alas! poor Juan," he murmured. When he again looked, the people were smearing the stool all over with blood, while two or three men were busily engaged in cutting up the still palpitating body. "Mother of Heaven!" he thought. "They are cannibals. They are going to eat him." But he soon saw he was mistaken. Two men dragged a canoe up over the falls, the pieces of Juan's body were placed in it, and the men paddled the canoe along the river-bank and amongst the rocks, placing here and there a piece of flesh. It was an offering to the crocodiles, the "children of Prah."

The bloody stool was now carried away, preceded by the drum and horn players, and accompanied by the priests; then the crowd gradually dispersed.

After about half an hour, the men in the canoe, who had been up the stream some little distance, returned. They dragged the canoe up on the bank, took their paddles out and went away, and the river was once more solitary and silent.

As soon as night fell Diego swam across the pool to the canoe. With infinite labour, in his weak condition, he succeeded in getting it afloat, and dragging it over the falls. Then he threw himself into the bottom of it, and, keeping in the dark shadow of the trees on the bank, let it drift down the stream, guiding it as best he could with his spear. By daybreak he was many miles below Bohsumassi, and not a soul had he seen. Towards morning he had heard at one spot the crowing of cocks, and had inferred therefrom that there was a village near; but not a single habitation had he seen. At daybreak he pushed the canoe under a dense screen of overhanging bushes, and lay down in it to wait until darkness would again enable him to proceed with safety. He was faint with hunger. Except a handful of snail soup on the morning of the previous day, he had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours, and he was wearied and worn out. He pulled up a few rushes and tried to eat the succulent stalk near the root, but his gorge rose against it. He felt that he could not eat, and, stretching himself out in the bottom of the canoe, he soon fell into a troubled slumber.

When he awoke, the afternoon sun was low in the heavens. He felt ill and exhausted. His head and hands were burning hot, and the noise of his pulse throbbing in his head sounded in his ears like the din of hammers on an anvil. An unpleasant taste and smell, as of damp, decaying vegetation, filled his mouth and nostrils, and his back and legs ached. As daylight waned he pushed out of his hiding-place, and once more drifted down stream. The trunks of the trees on the river-banks glided past like grey spectres, the sloth raised its unearthly wail from the tree-tops, and here and there in the deeper pools sounded the snort of the hippopotamus. But Diego paid but little attention to anything. Although his head seemed on fire, he shuddered with cold; his strength seemed entirely gone, and at last, utterly prostrated, he fell down in a condition of half sleep and half stupor.

He awoke finding the sun brightly shining in his face, and with the sound of surf in his ears. He raised himself on his elbow and looked over the side of the canoe. Before him, at a little distance, was a line of white breakers, leaping and tossing; beyond these rose a large isolated rock, round which sea-birds were wheeling; beyond this lay the open sea, and, oh joy! there was a caravel lying at anchor. In a few minutes the canoe was among the breakers. They lifted it up like a cork, and threw it from one to another as if playing at shuttlecock with it. Now

it stood up nearly on end, then it spun round and round, but at last, half full of water, it slipped from the last roller and glided on to the smooth bosom of the open sea. But the tide was now carrying him away from the caravel. Diego made a superhuman effort. He struggled to his knees and uttered a despairing cry. A moment passed, and an answering cry came back from the caravel. Soon he saw a boat being lowered, and then, overcome by his feelings, he fainted.

When he recovered consciousness he found himself in irons on the deck of the caravel, which was under full sail, bearing up for Elmina. The commander had been sent to Chama to make some inquiries concerning gold there, but he considered it his duty to return to St. George at once, now that he had captured one of the deserters. Diego was offered food, but he could not eat; they brought wine, and he drank copiously. Then the commander ordered him to state what had happened, and where Juan de Solis was. Stimulated by the wine, he was able to talk, and he narrated all that had occurred, carefully omitting, however, to mention the encounter with the pious Gallego San Benito. The crew of the caravel gathered round to listen, and cries of horror and indignation, with curses and threats of vengeance, arose when they heard how Juan had perished. They pitied Diego, too, for his sufferings, and were beginning to murmur at his being placed

in irons after what he had gone through, when the commander said sternly to Diego—

"A strange tale, but thy manner smacks of truth, and I doubt if thou could'st invent such things. Yet is there more behind. How came Don Gallego by his death?"

Diego started. "Don Gallego? — dead?" he stammered.

"Yes, dead, and murdered. The very morn that ye two were missing was his body found amongst the rocks under the fort, where the waves had carried it. He had been stabbed to death, and it is said that the wounds were not such as could have been inflicted by the clumsy weapons of the savages; that they were too clean cut. Know'st thou aught of it?"

"No, señor commander; I swear it."

"Well, well, the commandant, doubtless, will interrogate thee when thou art put ashore."

By noon Diego was in high fever and delirious. In this condition he was landed and placed in the guard-room of St. George. For days he remained delirious; but his constitution was sound, and no doubt would have successfully battled with the fever had not the barber-surgeon of the garrison materially assisted the disease by drawing about half a pint of blood from the patient daily. He was so weak and wasted that they took off his irons. It was evident that he could not last much longer.

One day Diego opened his eyes from a quiet sleep

and spoke sanely in a weak voice. His great bodily weakness had naturally correspondingly enfeebled the mind; his great desire now was to be absolved, and he asked for a priest. There was soon one in attendance.

"Father," said he, in a faint voice, "I feel I have not long to live. Receive then the confession of my sins, and grant me absolution."

The catalogue of his offences was somewhat lengthy but it was at last finished. He had, however, altogether omitted to mention the name of the pious Gallego San Benito.

"Thou hast not told me all, wretched man," said the priest. "Thou must know something of the manner in which our brother met his death, and to lay hands upon a priest is an unpardonable offence."

"Father, it is true. Forgive me, father. He wished to stop us. We struggled. But it was not my hand that struck the blow. No, father, I swear it by all my hopes of heaven. 'Twas Juan de Solis. I strove to stay his hand, but 'twas too late," and Diego fell back panting on his bed.

"Dost swear it was not thy hand?" asked the priest, looking at him doubtingly.

"Aye, father. I swear it. Canst thou doubt the oath of a dying man?"

The priest was satisfied. He gave Diego absolution, extreme unction, and everything else that he considered would equip him comfortably for his

journey to the next world. When he had finished, a sweet smile flickered on the lips of the dying man, and he closed his eyes. The priest bent over him; he was dead.

Thus far I have closely followed the veracious manuscript from which I have taken the foregoing; but on the back of the vellum there is an indorsement in another hand. It states that some two months after the death of Diego, Effua once more appeared in the town of Oddena, thin, worn, and weak. She had, she said, been sold as a slave into Denkera, and had escaped therefrom. She was much affected on hearing of the death of her lover, but she did not prove absolutely inconsolable. She painted herself red, in mourning for Diego, for some days; but a week or two later she accepted the addresses of a nephew of the second chief of Oddena. A rubicund priest from Alentejo had offered to continue that task of spiritual conversion which the much-to-be-regretted Gallego San Benito had so ably commenced; but her European friendships had all terminated so unfortunately that she shunned all intercourse with the Portuguese, and, it is much to be feared, relapsed into heathenism. She made no secret of the fact that it was Diego, and not Juan de Solis, who had slain Gallego, and the priests were much annoyed at having been tricked by the former. They had furnished him with a passport for the realms of bliss, whereas, had they known the truth, they would have

consigned him to quite another destination; and what made the matter worse was that the mistake could not now be rectified. They were very angry, and anathematized Diego's memory freely; in fact, the greater part of the indorsement consists of abuse of him.

I am in doubt as to whether I ought to place full credence in the authenticity of this story; but it is probably true. There is a town named Bohsumassi on the Prah, about twenty-four miles up the river; and just above it are some falls, which have, from time immemorial, been a place at which sacrifice is offered to the god Prah. Indeed, the name Bohsumassi itself shows that the place is closely connected with the worship of a local god.

The scene described as having taken place in the village *ehsúdee*, is exactly similar to what may be seen at the present day, when the natives consult their gods, or "make fetish," as the English say, though very incoroectly. Although it is not expressly so stated in the MS., there can be no doubt that one of the priests was simulating possessian by the god Prah. The strange, unuatural voice, produced probably by ventriloquism, was intended to represent the voice of the god; and the words uttered immediately before the seizure of the two men, were beyond question a denunciation and a demand for their sacrifice.

Juan is described as having perished in a manner

and with surroundings absolutely identical with the ceremonies which accompany human sacrifice at the present day beyond the colonial frontier. But perhaps the most curious confirmation of the truth of this story may be found in the fact that, amongst the skulls which adorn the large sacred drum of Prah at Bohsumassi, is one which is unmistakeably Caucasian; and which, say the natives, is that of a white man, who was sacrificed "long ago, before the time of the Dutch." Can it be that of the unfortunate Juan de Solis?

II.—A NIGHT AT MAFARI.

The probability is that you have never been to Mafari, in which case you may be congratulated, for there is nothing of special interest to be seen there, and, even if you escape from the climate of the "White Man's Grave" with life, you do so with an impaired constitution, so that Mafari really has no attractions. It is a Timni village, situated on that branch of the Rokelle, or Sierra Leone river, which is termed the Porto Lokko river, but which is really a creek; for at low tide it consists of nothing but mud-banks, between which flows a mere thread of water a few inches deep, and which is the joint contribution of the two little brooks which tumble into the creek, in a series of pretty cascades, at the town of Porto Lokko. At high tide there is from six to eight feet of water in the channel.

There are no shores, properly speaking, to this creek, for it is fringed with a dense growth of man-

groves, which at high-tide stand knee-deep in water; and the tangle of suckers which each tree throws down, and which strike root in the mud, forms an impervious thicket. At intervals of three or four miles, a little bank of solid earth, with a frontage to the creek of fifty or one hundred yards, is seen. On these islets of earth, raised above the surrounding mud, stand some twenty-five or thirty native beehive-shaped huts. A narrow strip of rice grows along the brink of the creek, and a canoe or two lies above high-water mark. This is a village, and just such a one is Mafari. It is some thirty miles distant, as the crow flies, from Freetown, the world-renowned metropolis of Sierra Leone; but persons going there hardly ever travel by crow, and the distance by boat is nearly forty miles.

Our stay at Mafari was quite unintended. We had left Freetown early in the morning, intending to go on to Porto Lokko, and sleep there. But the steam-launch which we had hired for the trip was, like everything else at Sierra Leone, in a sadly deteriorated condition; and it took us three hours to round Tasso Island, and reach the former slaver stronghold of Bunce Island. Here the launch gave up work altogether, and it was not till after midday that we were able to proceed.

The day was swelteringly hot. It is true there was an awning, but a flimsy roof of drill or brown-holland does not afford much protection from a

tropical sun. The gunwale of the launch was so heated that the hand could not be suffered to rest upon it; and the boiler-furnace, only some six feet from our bodies, did not tend to make us feel more comfortable. We positively gasped for breath. Every now and then great green-eyed mangrove flies would pay us visits from the swampy shores, and all hands would be engaged in attacking them, for the bite of the mangrove fly is no joke. We passed Robomp, and entered the Porto Lokko creek. A dense green wall of mangroves shut us in on each side, and intercepted every breath of air; and the sun beat pitilessly down on the muddy stream, which slipped past us in oily curves, carrying on its dirty bosom leaves and the branches of trees, for the tide had turned. The engines wheezed and gasped like an asthmatic patient, and did their best; but we saw we should not be able to reach Porto Lokko that night, and determined to go as far as the tide would permit, and sleep in the nearest village.

We crept along near the right bank. Every now and again a sullen plash told us that a crocodile, disturbed in his afternoon siesta by our approach, had slipped from the mangrove roots into the water; but we saw nothing, the foliage was too thick. We crawled past Yenkin and Maboné, two wretched villages in the midst of the swamp, and pushed on for Mafari. The tide was falling fast, and running strong against us. Just beyond Mafari the creek

widens for a short distance, and the channel follows the left bank; but we did not get as far as that; we had to stop and anchor about a quarter of a mile below Mafari, and proceed to that village in the dingy which we had been towing astern.

As we stepped ashore at Mafari the whole population of the village gathered on the bank to gaze upon us. Men in burnouses, or in those half-sleeved caftans, locally termed *tobes;* women old and young, with nothing but a strip of cotton-cloth round the waist, and children, clothed from head to foot in suits of glossy black, which would wear and wash well but could never be changed, crowded round us. Very likely they thought we were intending to stop a month, for our baggage must have seemed quite ample. Everything has to be carried with you when you travel in West Africa, and we had old wine-cases containing plates, knives, forks, glasses, dishes, tinned provisions, loaves of bread, cooking utensils, beer, soda-water, &c. These, with our grass-hammocks, rugs, and sleeping-clothes, formed quite a procession, as a score of naked boys ascended the steep bank to the village with them on their heads.

We explained to the men on the beach, who were regarding us in dignified silence, that we wanted a house to stay in for the night, and that next morning we were going to Porto Lokko. They replied that we must see the king first. Every village, even if it only consists of ten huts, possesses a king; and I

have no doubt that even if there should be only one hut in a village there would still be a king. The result of being so constantly thrown into the society of royalty is that the proverbial result of familiarity is engendered, and one ends by becoming thoroughly imbued with radical sentiments.

We proceeded to the king's house, which was of the ordinary circular kind with a conical roof, the latter being carried out some eight or ten feet from the mud wall, and supported by posts imbedded in a low wall, so as to form a kind of piazza. In this were raised benches of smooth mud, covered with mats, on which one could lounge. Here we sat down to wait for the king; for a king always keeps you waiting, it adds so much to his dignity. Presently he appeared, shook hands, and seated himself upon a mat. He had taken advantage of the delay to don a turban, and throw a few strings of amulets round his neck, in case any of us might have evil designs upon him. We at once stated the object of our visit.

"We had intended going to Porto Lokko, but the state of the tide prevented our reaching there to-day."

"Heh! heh!" grunted the king, nasally.

"This we now regretted the less, as it had enabled us to see Mafari, whose fame had reached us even at the ends of the earth."

"Hur! hur!" grunted his majesty.

"We proposed staying at Mafari that night, and

would be glad if the king would select a house for us. The owners would be paid."

"Heh! heh! hur! hur!" grunted the king and his assembled followers in chorus.

The king replied that he was a very great king. Except the king of Porto Lokko, there was none greater than he. He was pleased to see the white men, who, he hoped, had brought him something good. His trusty henchman, Ali Sennamansa, should at once conduct us to a house.

He said a great deal more than that, but that was all we cared about, and by the time we and our belongings had reached our temporary residence night was falling. With the exception of a light breakfast before starting, we had had nothing to eat that day; so we set to work to open tinned provisions and get out our crockery. We spread our repast in the piazza, slung a couple of hurricane lamps from the rafters of the thatched roof, and fell to. Some two hundred souls, the whole population of Mafari, crowded round outside and watched the performance. They made remarks about our manner of eating, our appearance, our clothes, our strange food which we cut out of iron boxes, and the pronged weapons with which we put it into our mouths. But the pop and fizz of the soda water astonished them more than anything. One small boy in the crowd cried out, "Mother, mother! They are drinking boiling water. They are sorcerers," and fled howling.

We sent to the king the "something good" for which he had expressed a wish, and which took the shape of a roll of tobacco; and we offered some trade gin, "square face," which we had brought with us on purpose, to those amongst our audience who appeared to be the principal men. But they one and all refused, shaking their heads, and making gestures of disapproval. "Allah forbid. Was it not against the law?" they murmured. We were surprised, for negro Mohammedans do not usually strictly observe the law of abstention from intoxicating fluids; but we did not, of course, press the matter, and a smart thunder shower which now came on soon relieved us of the presence of the crowd.

We had finished our dinner, and were smoking our pipes, when we heard a gentle tap at the back door of the house. It was opened, and one of the men to whom we had offered drink entered cautiously. He looked carefully all round, bolted the door by which he had entered, made signs, and pointed at a bottle of "square face" that was upon a box. It was handed to him with a tumbler. He half filled the latter with raw spirit, tossed it off without moving a muscle, bowed his acknowledgments, and crept cautiously out of the front door, looking round to see that he was not observed. A few minutes after he had gone there was another tap at the door; another man appeared, went through the same pantomime, with the same results; and then bowed himself out. By

and bye there came another; and before we turned into our hammocks, which we had slung under the piazza, nearly all of those who had expressed such abhorrence of strong drink had come secretly to ask for it. They did not mind disobeying the Prophet's injunctions, they were only afraid of being found out by their fellows. We could not help remarking how very like Christians they were after all.

The mosquitoes mustered in strength at Mafari that night, and the news that there was white man's blood to be had for the sucking, was no doubt rapidly spread throughout the neighbourhood. They were very healthy mosquitoes, possessed of wonderful appetites, and, mosquito-proof as most of us were, they annoyed us considerably. You would be just dozing off, when the shrill pipe of a mosquito would sound close to your ear. Soon he would alight upon you and commence his supper, and you would begin to doze off again, when another would come singing round your head. To most of us the bark of the mosquito was far more destructive of slumber than his bite. At last we one after another fell asleep; the villagers had apparently long since retired to rest, and the stillness of the night was only broken by the croak of the bullfrogs in the sedge by the creek, which sounded like an altercation of aggrieved rooks.

I had been asleep for some hours when I became conscious that some one was crying out at a little distance. Still, I was too lazy to move, and should

probably have gone to sleep again had not somebody remarked, "I wonder what those frightful screams mean." Then I roused myself. Every few seconds a terrible cry, as of a person in great agony, burst forth upon the night; and after listening a moment or two we could distinguish the hum of many voices.

"I wonder what's up," said one.

"A Timni gentleman probably beating one of his wives," replied another.

This was likely enough, but the screams were so appalling that we roused up a Sierra Leone boy we had brought with us, and sent him out to see what was the matter. In about ten minutes he returned his eyes sparkling with delight, and announced:

"The Timnis catch a witch."

"Catch a witch?"

"Yes, a old witch woman, who has killed some one, and now they goin' to burn her."

"Going to burn her? What! in this village?"

"Yes, sar. Just little way up the street."

"Oh! this will never do," said somebody. "We can't sit quietly here and let these brutes burn her. We must go and put a stop to it."

"But how are you going to prevent them doing what they like? We are not in British territory. The people are independent, and we have no right to interfere with their customs."

"Bah! you talk like a Colonial Office despatch."

"Well, do you want us to go out and get up a

fight with the Timnis? I daresay we should be able to clear the village, but we should have to shoot one or two first. Do you think it would be a good thing to kill two or three men so as to save one woman?"

"Anyhow, I'm not going to stop here tamely without trying to prevent such an atrocity. What infernal brutes these savages are!"

"My dear fellow, it's only about a hundred years ago that we used to burn witches ourselves in England. In parts of Ireland the people would burn them now, if they were allowed to. I think you're rather hard on the Timnis."

While this little conversation had been going on, we had been pulling on our boots, and we all went out into the street together. We had not decided upon any plan of action, but we were going to try if argument and persuasion could not effect something.

Our boy had exaggerated a little, for we saw no signs of a fire, or of any preparation for one; but all the inhabitants of the village were gathered round two tall posts that supported a horizontal beam, from which was suspended an old woman, stripped naked. Several palm-oil lamps were held in the crowd, and we could see that her wrists were fastened to the beam; and that to each foot, which hung about two feet above the ground, was tied a heavy log of green wood. The muscles of her back and shoulders were

strongly defined under this tension, her arms seemed as if about to be torn from the sockets, and she shrieked most fearfully. The wretched being who was thus being tortured was very old, her wool being quite grey; she appeared almost toothless, and nothing but skin and bone. Why is it that miserable old beldames are all over the world supposed to be witches, in preference to middle-aged or young women?

We approached the king, who was apparently superintending the proceedings, and asked him what it all meant.

"It is a witch," said he. "Last week she turned herself into a crocodile, and killed and ate the son of the chief of Mintoma."

"And how do you know it was not a real crocodile that did it?" we asked.

The king stared. "We know very well that it was not," he answered, after a pause.

"So now you are punishing her for that?"

"Oh! no. We shall burn her for killing the chief's son. We are now trying to make her tell us the names of her accomplices."

At this moment the old woman stopped her cries and uttered a few words. The bystanders at once removed the logs from her feet, unfastened her arms from the beam, and seated her on the ground, while the king approached to hear what she had said. We followed close at his heels. The old woman said

something, the bystanders repeated it, and an old man who was looking on was seized and dragged away.

"What did she say?" asked we.

"She has just told us the names of two of her accomplices, and we have caught one of them already. The other is at Mintoma."

"And what will be done to the accomplices?"

"We shall burn them, and sell their wives and children."

"Are you going to burn the old woman now that she has told you their names?"

"Oh, no! we will put her away till to-morrow; then we will hang her up here again, till she gives us the names of some more accomplices. We shall only burn her when she tells us no more names."

"Idiot!" said we, "don't you see that there's nothing to prevent this wretched woman naming all the people of the place? Don't you see that whenever the pain becomes unbearable she will give you the names of people in order to escape from it, and to prolong her miserable life? And those people, who will be quite innocent, you are going to burn just because she accuses them in order to escape torture. Let the old woman go free at once. There is no such thing as witchcraft, and you and your people are only making fools of yourselves."

This speech was considerably modified in the process of translation, but the king was much annoyed.

"You Potus-of-the-Sea,"* said he, "know all things. But we do as did our fathers before us, and we find it suits us very well. These things are our affairs and do not concern you. You had much better not meddle with them."

He turned and spoke excitedly to the men near him. Some of them closed up round us, and we began to think there would be a row. But their intention only was to prevent us interfering with the old woman, who, before we could understand what was being done, was seized by some men and hurried away in the darkness. This was perhaps just as well, as, if any of us had endeavoured to enforce her release, we should only have brought on a collision which might have had very serious results.

The spectacle being at an end the crowd dispersed, and we returned to our temporary abode. It was impossible to do anything for the old woman, and we pitied her less now that we had seen her willingness to involve others in the same doom. It was a little past four o'clock; we were wide-awake, and not at all inclined to go to sleep again; so we packed up our things, and, embarking in the dingy, bade adieu to Mafari.

Some weeks later we heard that the persons who

* In Timni "Potu" means a white man, but as of late years this designation has been extended to the negroes of Sierra Leone who wear European clothing, it is now usual to say "Potu-of-the-Sea," when a white man is specially meant.

had been denounced by the old woman had been burned and their families sold. The old woman herself had also been burned, after having denounced eight persons, men and women; and, as the property of those who have been denounced by a witch is by native custom divided between the chiefs and principal men of the village, there is no probability of this barbarous custom soon dying out.

III.—THE FIRST VOYAGE OF ALOISIO DE CADA MOSTO.

In the year 1415 John I., King of Portugal, being then at war with the Sultan of Morocco, captured the town of Ceuta, on the African coast opposite to Gibraltar, and, with the town, a large number of prisoners. John, who had married Philippa of Lancaster, sister of Henry IV. of England, had a son Henry, a person of inquiring mind; who subsequently, from the aid and encouragement he gave to maritime explorers, earned the title of Henry the Navigator. This prince frequently conversed with the prisoners who had been captured at Ceuta, and from them he learned, to his great astonishment, that far to the south, across the Sahara or great desert, there was a fertile and well-watered land, inhabited by a people of a black colour, and so named by the Moors the "Land of the Blacks." I say "to his astonishment" he learned this, for the opinion then held by the *literati* of the age was that the earth was divided into five zones,

and that in the torrid zone, which extended to the north and south of the equator, the heat was so intense as to entirely destroy all life. It was held to be a fiery belt, girdling the earth, and effectually cutting off the inhabitants of the northern hemisphere from those of the southern. This theory had the entire support of the Church, and it was almost rank heresy to doubt it; while it was even maintained that there could be no people living in the southern hemisphere, because, it was argued, their feet would be above their heads, which would be hanging downwards. Prince Henry, then, was extremely surprised to learn that both in and beyond this supposed belt of fire people actually lived and thrived, notwithstanding the heat, and the dangers they ran of a determination of blood to the head from their enforced position; but the details given by the Moors were so circumstantial that he was compelled to put faith in their narrations.

At this time the Portuguese had never ventured beyond Cape Non on the West African coast, which was considered an impassable boundary, and the limit of the navigable globe; but, stimulated by the hope of discovering rich lands which might be brought into subjection to the crown of Portugal, Prince Henry, between the years 1433 and 1441, sent out various expeditions, which gradually explored the African Coast as far as Cape Verde. The fame of these discoveries was soon noised over western and

southern Europe, and it shows how much the science of navigation had declined since the downfall of the Roman empire, that these discoveries, so limited in extent, and which had been made by servilely creeping along the shores and never venturing out of sight of land, were considered prodigious. The rumour of these explorations soon drew to Portugal the more enterprising seamen of other countries, and amongst them came a Genoese, named Aloisio de Cada Mosto, of whose ability Prince Henry thought so highly that in 1455 he put him in command of a caravel, with instructions to double Cape Verde, if possible, and explore the African coast further to the south.

The caravel sailed from Cape St. Vincent on the 22nd of March, 1455, and after touching at Porto Santo, Madeira, and the Canaries, arrived at Cape Blanco on the African coast. At that time a Moorish tribe resided in this neighbourhood, whom the Portugese termed Azanaghi. Prior to Cada Mosto's voyage the Portuguese had been in the habit of kidnapping these people, landing by night, surprising villages of fishermen, and carrying off persons of both sexes, whom they sold as slaves in Portugal; but this had now been forbidden by the Infante, for John I. was dead, and the Azanaghi, apparently forgetting and forgiving these past injuries, received Cada Mosto in a friendly manner. Cada Mosto was not favourably impressed by these gentry, who no doubt were on their side just as unfavourably im-

pressed by the Portuguese. He says they were "treacherous, lean, and of a common stature," and is apparently displeased with them for wearing their hair "frizzed over their shoulders, like the Germans," and for oiling it daily with fish-oil, which, he observes, "makes them smell very strong, yet they repute it very modish."

When the Azanaghi first saw ships at sea they took them to be immense birds, with white wings, come from the ends of the earth; but when they saw them with their sails furled they thought that they were fish. Others believed they were spirits that wandered by night, and were much afraid of them. They came to this conclusion because one evening they might be seen at one place, and next morning at another, a hundred miles off; and they could not conceive how, if they were living creatures, they could travel in one night as far as a camel could in three days.

The Azanaghi spoke of a kingdom called Melli, a long way inland, that abounded in rock-salt, which the inhabitants of Melli carried a great distance to a river, and there disposed of to a curious people, who would not allow themselves to be seen. The manner of arranging the barter under these circumstances was as follows. The salt merchants placed their salt in heaps on the river-bank, each merchant putting his mark on his own heap, and then all retired half-a-day's journey. Upon this the people

who would not allow themselves to be seen crossed the river in canoes, laid upon each heap as much gold as they were willing to offer for it, and withdrew in their turn. The salt-merchants then returned, and, if they were satisfied, they took the gold and went away; but if they wanted more they again withdrew, leaving the gold on the heaps, and the invisible people either added a little more gold or declined to trade. This, said the Azanaghi, had been the mode of trading with these people since very ancient times; and there was, perhaps, some truth in it, for Herodotus relates that the Carthaginians carried on a trade in exactly this manner with an African people, living beyond the Pillars of Hercules, without ever seeing them. Captain Richard Jobson, who made a voyage to the river Gambia in 1620, also has a similar tale of a people who lived near the sources of that river, and who thus traded with the "Arabeks of Barbary" for salt.

The king of Melli, being of a curious disposition, was anxious to know why these people were so averse to being seen. He therefore instructed his subjects, the next time the salt caravan proceeded to the river, to conceal themselves in pits near the river-bank, and seize two or three of the people who came to deposit gold on the salt. This project was accordingly executed, and four prisoners were taken. Three of these were released by the merchants, who did not want to spoil their trade, and who thought

that one specimen would be sufficient to satisfy the king's curiosity; but the one they kept would neither speak nor eat, so that in four days he died. The king was very angry with the salt-merchants on their return for not having complied with his orders and brought him a man, and demanded a description of this curious people. The salt-merchants replied that they were exceedingly black, well made, and tall, but that their under-lip was thicker than a man's fist, very red, and hung down on their breasts, while something like blood dropped from it. The upper lip was as small as that of other people, but they had great gums, from which blood also dropped, great teeth in the corners of their mouth, and large black eyes; in short, they gave a description of a very pretty ogre.

Naturally the seizure of four of their number was not calculated to lead this strange people to place confidence in the salt-merchants, and, though the latter repaired to the riverside as usual, all trade with them ceased. The king of Melli, lamenting the loss of his share of the gold, repented of his conduct, and told the merchants they were on no account to offend the prejudices of the ogres, but it was not until three years had elapsed that the trade recommenced. It was believed that the ogres were compelled to reopen the traffic because their long hanging lips began to putrefy from the excessive

heat, so that several of them died, and salt was the only remedy.

Cada Mosto appears to have implicitly believed this story, for he says the heat of the country so putrefied the blood that without salt every one would die. We can perhaps understand Cada Mosto believing in the existence of these ogres, considering the superstition of the age in which he lived; but what can be said of Captain Richard Jobson, who, two hundred years later, tells us that the reason these people will not allow themselves to be seen is "their having lips of an unnatural size, hanging halfway over their breast; which, being raw, would putrefy with the heat of the sun did they not keep continually salting them; and their country yielding no salt they are obliged to traffic for it with the Moors of Barbary." Judging from local tradition still existing in Senegambia, it seems in past times the Moorish tribes to the south-west of the Sahara were in the habit of kidnapping and carrying off the blacks, to sell as slaves in the markets of Morocco; and hence the negroes grew so suspicious of all Moors and Arabs, that they would only trade with them under conditions, such as described, which would guarantee their safety. The immense under-lip hanging to the breast was doubtless an exaggeration of the really protruding and thick under-lip of the negro.

Doubling Cape Blanco, Cada Mosto came to a river

called the Senega (Senegal), which divided the land of the tawny people from that of the blacks. This river, according to the opinion of the learned of that age, was a branch of the river Ghion, which flowed from the terrestrial Paradise, and had been known to the ancients as the Niger. The Nile was believed to be another branch of this mythical river Ghion. Passing the Senegal, where was the kingdom of the Jalofs, a people who professed Mohammedanism, and wore preposterous drawers, Cada Mosto arrived at a country, which he named Budomel, after its lord. He places this country eight hundred miles beyond the Senegal, but as it was north of Cape Verde, which is only some eighty miles from that river, he was either considerably out in his calculations, or his translator has thoughtfully added a cypher to his figures, to give his discoveries a greater extent and importance.

The chief Budomel came down to receive Cada Mosto with fifteen horse and one hundred and fifty foot, and conducted him to his village, four miles inland. This consisted of some forty or fifty thatched huts, built close together, and surrounded with ditches and large trees, with here and there a passage left for entrance. In his description of this part of the country, which is very correct in the main, Cada Mosto tells us that it abounds in serpents, more than two paces long, "but have neither legs nor wings, as serpents are said to have; but so very thick that

some have swallowed a goat at one morsel." These serpents, the natives told him, retired in troops to certain parts of the country, where white ants swarmed; which ants, by instinct, built houses for the serpents with the earth they carried in their mouths for that purpose.

The inhabitants of Budomel were great enchanters and snake-charmers. A "Genoese of credit" told Cada Mosto that when he was in that country the year before he was sleeping one night in the house of Bisboror, the nephew of Budomel, when he was awakened by a great whistling noise. His host, who was also aroused by this noise, at once went out. When he returned, the Genoese asked him what was the matter, whereupon Bisboror explained that the noise they had heard was the hissing of serpents, and that he had gone out to drive them away by enchantments, otherwise they would have killed many of his cattle. The Genoese, being surprised at this, Bisboror told him that that was nothing, and that Budomel could do much more; that when he wanted to poison his arrows he made a large circle, into which, by enchantment, he made all the snakes in the neighbourhood come. From among these he then selected the most poisonous, and, killing it, mixed its blood with a certain seed. The poison derived from this mixture was said to be so deadly as to cause death in a quarter of an hour. Cada Mosto says that this story of the serpents is

very probable, for that he had heard of Christians in Italy who could do the same.

Some of the natives going on board a caravel, Cada Mosto caused one of her guns to be fired, which threw them into a dreadful panic, that was not diminished when he told that one cannon shot would kill a hundred men. But what astonished them most was the bag-pipe, which Cada Mosto made one of the sailors play. Until its mechanism was explained to them, they thought it was a living animal, that sung in different voices. Its music pleased them much, which is not surprising, for the music of the bag-pipe is of the kind that appeals to barbarous taste. As for the caravel itself, they thought it was alive, and that the port-holes in the stern were eyes, with which it saw its way over the sea. They said the white men were great sorcerers, and not inferior to the devil himself; since, although it was difficult enough to find one's way on land, where there were roads, trees, hills, and all kinds of marks to guide one, they found their way over the sea, where there was nothing at all to show the way.

On leaving Budomel Cada Mosto fell in with two other caravels, one belonging to a Genoese named Antoniotto Uso di Mare, and the other to some explorers in the employ of Prince Henry. Joining company with these, all three caravels doubled Cape Verde, and, passing Magdalen and Goree Islands, came to a small river about sixty miles beyond the

cape, which they called the Barbasini, and which appears to have been the Saloum River. There were three interpreters with the expedition, natives of the Senegal, who had been kidnapped by former Portuguese explorers, and taken to Portugal, where they had learned the Portuguese language; and it was decided to send one on shore to communicate with the people of the place. An armed boat was accordingly sent off, which landed the interpreter, and then lay off the shore to await the result. Several blacks were seen to come and meet him, and, after a few words, they fell upon him furiously with their short swords and killed him, before those in the boat could render any assistance. This experience of the temper of the natives was quite enough for the explorers, and, concluding that if they would thus treat one of their own colour they would use them still worse, they at once weighed anchor and proceeded on their voyage to the south, sailing in sight of land. The hostility of these natives was entirely due to the acts of the Portuguese themselves; for invariably on their first coming to a place they were received in the most friendly manner. This confidence they had everywhere abused by seizing and carrying off by force some of the inhabitants; so that their reputation as man-stealers was now widely established along those parts of the coast that they had visited. As those whom they thus carried off were never seen again, the natives not unnaturally concluded that they had been

murdered; and it could not be expected that they would regard the arrival of other Portuguese with delight.

As the explorers continued their voyage they found the shores low and covered with trees; and before long they came to the mouth of a very large river, three or four miles wide in the narrowest part. They thought that this must be the kingdom of Gambra (Gambia), of which they had heard at the Senegal, and where they hoped soon to make their fortunes by finding gold in heaps; and as it was late in the day they anchored, to wait till next morning before attempting to enter the river.

Next day at daybreak, the wind being very light, they well manned the smallest of the three caravels, which drew but little water, and sent her up the river, accompanied by an armed boat. The leader of this party was instructed to return to the ships at once if any natives came to attack them, without having any dispute, "because the end of their coming thither was to cultivate peace and commerce within that country which was to be managed by policy, not by force." The caravel and its attendant boat proceeded some two miles up the river, and, as they were returning, three canoes, each made out of a single piece of wood, shot out of a creek. The Portuguese called these *almadias*, a Spanish word meaning "rafts," because, as America had not yet been discovered, the word "canoa," or

"canoe," had not yet been introduced to Europe. The explorers were in such terror of poisoned arrows, that directly they perceived these canoes they took to their oars, and pulled in all haste to the ships. The canoes, which contained some twenty-five or thirty natives, closely followed the retreating party, and finally stopped within bow-shot of the caravels. There they remained a short time gazing with astonishment, and then, taking no notice of the signs made to them, hastily returned up the river.

Early next morning all three vessels entered the river, the small caravel leading, and they had proceeded some four miles up it when they suddenly perceived a number of canoes following them, which had come they knew not whence. They hastily heightened the bulwarks with sails and such materials as they had at hand, to protect themselves from the poisoned arrows, and then, tacking about, bore down upon the canoes. Cada Mosto's caravel out-sailed the others, and the canoes, fifteen in number, carrying altogether about one hundred and fifty men, ranged up under her bows. Thus they remained for a few minutes gazing at the white men, who in their turn had ample time to examine the natives. The latter were attired in long white robes, and white caps with a wing on each side and a long feather in front. They were armed with bows and darts, and in the bow of each canoe stood a man with a round target, which appeared to be of leather, on his arm.

Each party was thus examining the other, when the natives suddenly saw the two remaining caravels bearing down upon them; they dropped their paddles, raised a loud cry, and sent a flight of arrows whistling about the ears of the Portuguese. The latter replied to this with four guns, the reports of which, together with the smoke and flame, so astounded the natives that they dropped their bows, and gazed full of wonder at the spot where the stones discharged from the cannon had fallen; but they soon recovered themselves, and, approaching still nearer, let fly another flight of arrows. The Portuguese now took to their cross-bows, and the very first shot pierced a man through and dropped him dead. His comrades in the canoe took up the bolt and examined it curiously, but the remainder of the natives pressed on, and a perfect rain of arrows fell about the caravels. The Portuguese, however, were so well covered, that not one man was struck, while on their part they killed several of the natives; and the latter, seeing that they were at a disadvantage, drew off a little. The leaders consulted together for a few moments, and then the whole flotilla of canoes bore down suddenly upon the stem of the small caravel, which was both ill-armed and ill-manned. They attacked her with such fury that they would soon have carried her, had not the other two vessels come to her assistance, and, getting her between them,

they at last drove off the natives by repeated discharges of their cannon.

The three ships now dropped a little down the stream, and, all three being fastened together in case of a second attack, an anchor was dropped which held them all. The natives still kept hovering about in their canoes, and were frequently hailed by the interpreters without any notice being taken; but at last one canoe came nearer, and the interpreters asked the men in her why they attacked strangers who came to trade with them in a friendly manner, as they had done in Senegal. They invited them to come on board and take some of the curious things the white men had brought for them; but the natives replied that they would have nothing to do with white men; that they had heard of them before as men who stole the blacks to eat them, and that they would kill them all if they could: the evil reputation of the Portuguese had preceded them to this country, which the natives said was called Gambra. While this conversation was going on the wind began to rise, and the Portuguese at once made sail, and rather treacherously tried to run down the canoe, but the men paddled away vigorously and escaped to the shore.

Cada Mosto was much discouraged by the unexpected animosity shown by the natives here, and after consulting the other commanders he decided to go some distance up the river, in the hope of finding

a more friendly people; but no sooner did the sailors hear of this than they began to murmur, declaring that they had done enough for one voyage. "Whereupon, knowing that seamen are a headstrong, obstinate people," the commanders gave way; and next day the three vessels sailed for Cape Verde on their way back to Portugal.

IV.—THE AHBOASSI MINE.

In 1433, Prince Henry of Portugal, in order to secure the quiet possession of his African discoveries, had obtained from the Pope, Eugene IV, a papal bull granting to the crown of Portugal all lands which might be discovered between Cape Non and the East Indies; and in 1481 John II had obtained from the then pope, Sixtus IV, a second bull, prohibiting all Christian powers from intruding within those limits. The grant of Eugene IV included, roughly speaking, the whole of Africa south of the Sahara; and one is positively obliged to gasp at the sublime self-complacency of this ecclesiastic, who thus, with a sweep of the pen, calmly handed over to the Portuguese a vast continent to which neither he nor they had the least right or title, and which was already inhabited by millions of people who might be supposed to have some voice in the matter. But what appears the more astounding to us in this age of liberty, when

the claws of the priesthood have been well cut, is that the other nations of Europe should have recognised this monstrous claim, and have obeyed this prohibition. In 1483, when some English adventurers were preparing to fit out an expedition to Guinea, John II sent an ambassador to Edward IV of England, calling upon him to respect the terms of the papal bull, and to prohibit his subjects trading with West Africa; and Edward IV complied, thus preventing the English from profiting by the geographical discoveries of the age.

The Portuguese, protected by these bulls, remained for nearly a century in undisturbed possession of the Gold Coast. Little is known of what they did there beyond that they built forts, or rather castles, at Axim, Elmina, and Christiansborg, and ransacked the seaboard up and down for gold, without appearing, however, to have endeavoured to open up the interior. Then the Reformation came to spoil their monopoly, for the English and the Dutch, emancipated from papal servitude, refused to acknowledge the validity of the Portuguese title to the whole of West Africa; and, in spite of the remonstrances and threats of the Portuguese, the English trade with Guinea commenced with the despatch of two vessels, well armed and manned, under Captain Windham in 1553.

The Portuguese were, it seems, in no very great strength upon the Gold Coast, their energies being

rather concentrated in the East Indies; and when Portugal became a province of Spain under Philip II. the settlements on the West Coast of Africa were still further neglected in favour of those in the New World. The English, French, and Dutch, therefore, met with but little serious resistance; their vessels roamed up and down the coast, fighting the Portuguese when they met them, and sometimes, for want of other employment, fighting each other. It was a semi-piratical trade in which each crew of adventurers fought for their own venture. Avoiding the strong places of the Portuguese, they landed wherever that people had no establishments, attacked the native villages, and carried off their prisoners—men, women and children—as slaves. At native towns which were too strong to be forced they bartered their goods for gold-dust and ivory; and, as they gave more merchandize in return for these commodities than did the Portuguese, the natives were willing enough to trade with them.

Occasionally a Portuguese squadron, *en route* for India, would fall upon the adventurers, capture their ships, and hang the crews; but more frequently they escaped, and the Portuguese found their trade on the Gold Coast sadly crippled. As, with the small force they had, they found it impossible to prevent the English and Dutch landing and trading at places at a distance from their forts, they wisely determined to make the most of those posts they held. The few

gold-mines they had opened on the sea-board had soon become exhausted, with the exception of that at Approbi, near Little Commenda; and in 1622 the hill of the latter, pierced in all directions by tunnels insufficiently shored up, caved in, burying alive a considerable number of the natives of the place, who were in the employ of the Portuguese. The native priests, consulted by Djeseh, the chief of Little Commenda, as to the cause of the accident, declared that it was the handiwork of the god Sasabonsum, who was angered at having the hill disturbed. Had it not been known for ages, they said, that Sasabonsum lived there? Could not any one see that the earth was red? In consequence of this, when the Portuguese endeavoured to clear away the *débris* of their ruined galleries, and reopen the mine, not a native would engage himself. One and all positively refused to run any risk of offending the implacable Sasabonsum, and as the Portuguese could not work it themselves the mine had to be abandoned, and it has remained untouched up to the present day. The Dutch, indeed, who in 1688 built Fort Vrendenburgh at Little Commenda, made an effort to reopen this mine in 1694; but the natives resisted, and a war ensued which lasted more than a year.

The forced abandonment of the Approbi mine caused the Portuguese to concentrate their attention more directly upon the Rio Cobre, now termed the Ancobra river, from whence they had long procured

gold; and where, on that account, they had, not long after the completion of the castle of St. George at Elmina, built the fort of St. Anthony. The natives of this part of the Gold Coast, belonging to the Awooin tribe, were much more independent and warlike than those of the tribes more to the eastward; they were also the only tribe on the Gold Coast that made use of poisoned arrows. It was probably due to this that the Portuguese had been unable to penetrate far up the Ancobra. They had not, it was true, attempted to force a way; but the Awooins had shown themselves persistently hostile to any advance of the white men into the interior, and the dread of the poisoned arrows caused the latter to respect the prejudices of the natives. They had accordingly limited their operations to the opening of one or two mines in the vicinity of Fort St. Anthony, and in those districts abutting on the sea coast, inhabited by the Ahanta tribe.

But the intrusion of the English and the Dutch, and the failure of the mines on the seaboard, led them, early in the seventeenth century, to adopt measures for pushing further inland; in the hope that they would be able to lay hands upon the rich gold-pits which the natives were known to possess in and around Essaman in Wassaw. For the protection of their exploring parties and mining engineers and overseers it was determined to build a fort at some little distance up the Ancobra river; materials

and workmen were obtained from Elmina, and, the garrison of St. Anthony having been reinforced by a detachment from St. George, a little expeditionary force started up the river early in 1623. The engineers had selected as a site for the projected fort a spot on the left bank of the Ancobra, some fifteen miles from its mouth, and just above the Bytoborri Rocks. Here two streams, one of which was called the Duma, flowed into the Ancobra from the east, while a third stream joined from the west, and the whole of the surrounding valleys promised to be rich in gold. The ruins of this fort may still be seen by the traveller who is curious enough to cut a way through the dense bush which now covers and surrounds the masses of masonry, about half a mile from the junction of the Ancobra and Duma, and on the right bank of the latter.

The Awooins, whose territory at that time extended as far south as this point, were taken by surprise by this sudden inroad of the Portuguese, and one or two days passed before they decided upon any concerted action. They then summoned the Portuguese to withdraw, and as this summons was disregarded they attacked them. The Portuguese had, however, well matured their plans. The flotilla of boats in which they had ascended the river had contained a large number of mantelets, some seven feet high, constructed of stout planks, and quite impervious to any arrow. The few days of delay had enabled

them to clear the forest on the site they had chosen for the fort, which was a rounded knoll, and this they had enclosed with their mantelets. The Awooins, led by their chiefs, commenced the attack on the north-east side by clouds of poisoned arrows, which they let fly from the surrounding forest; but finding that these produced no effect they soon rushed upon the barricades of the Portuguese. Although they were met with a deadly fire from calivers and cross-bows through the loopholes of the mantelets, it is probable that the position would have been forced by the very weight of numbers, had not a pinnace, which was lying in the Duma, rendered timely assistance. This boat, the gunwale of which had been heightened with boards to protect the crew from the missiles of the natives, had a small saker mounted in the bows, and enfiladed the front of the line of mantelets with repeated discharges. The Awooins, then little experienced concerning fire-arms, had never before heard the sound of artillery or witnessed its effects. The roar of the discharge, and the havoc caused by the solid shot, which tore through their struggling masses, filled them with dread; they hesitated, rallied at the cries of their leaders, then again hesitated, and finally fled precipitately. The Portuguese breathed more freely when the last of their foes had disappeared in the forest, for the situation had been most critical. Their loss, however, was exceedingly small. Some half-a-dozen men had

been wounded with javelins in repelling the rush of the Awooins, and two or three Ahanta labourers and one Portuguese by arrows. The latter was very slightly wounded in the armpit by an arrow which had glanced from his armour; but so deadly was the poison with which the Awooins tipped their arrows that he and the labourers all died, as the ancient chroniclers tell us, in a very strange manner, with their mouths shut, so that their comrades were forced to place sticks and other things in them to keep them open. The wounded men who thus died lingered for two or three days, and it seems probable that the poison produced a kind of tetanus.

The Awooins left nearly two hundred dead and wounded on the ground, a loss unprecedented amongst these small tribes, and they gladly listened to the proposals of peace made by the Portuguese through the medium of the Ahantas. The Awooins promised not to molest the invaders for the future, and acknowledged their right to open mines in the neighbourhood of their new fort; while the Portuguese, on their part, covenanted not to interfere with any of the gold-pits which were in native hands. Before long, the fort, a small square construction, designed to accommodate a garrison of some twenty men, was completed, and the Portuguese commenced prospecting the neighbouring hills. Several galleries were opened, with varying success, but after a few years they were obliged to acknowledge that although the

valley of the Duma, the Talinkan, and other small streams, were rich in alluvial gold, the quartz vein—the mother-lode as it were—from which the tropical rains had for ages been scattering the gold-dust found in the valleys, was not, as they had fondly imagined, in any one of the hills near at hand. They satisfied themselves at first with digging on the river-banks, and later on diverted the streams from their beds and dug them up; but before many years the valleys, ransacked in all directions, were exhausted, and it became necessary to go further afield. Prospecting parties were sent out, and after a few months it was reported that a rich vein of gold-bearing quartz had been discovered. It was situated in a hill, some five miles up the valley of the Duma, which was crowned by an out-crop of granite, worn away here and there into immense boulders, and which on this account had been named by the natives *Ahbo-assi*, "Under the rock." From this vein, said the engineers, had no doubt been washed all the gold-dust which had been found dispersed down the valley.

Now the soil on the Ahboassi Hill was of that peculiar deep red colour which is seen here and there upon the Gold Coast, and the natives, in consequence, regarded it as the habitation of a Sasabonsum. The religion of the inhabitants of the Gold Coast, like that of most uncivilized peoples, consists of a crude polytheism, in which all the phenomena of nature whose power they experience, are deified, and

personified into superhuman beings. Thus rivers are to them, besides being mere volumes of flowing water, superhuman and malignant beings, who manifest their malignancy by dragging down and drowning those who come within their reach, and by flooding and destroying low-lying villages. Thunder, lightning, and storm are likewise the evidences of the anger of a malignant being; and, as has almost invariably been the case with all peoples, these phenomena are ascribed to the chief god of their system. Earthquakes, occasionally felt upon the Gold Coast, are believed to be due to a god, or rather a class of gods, termed Sasabonsum, who are regarded as the most cruel and implacable of all the superhuman beings. A Sasabonsum is believed to be a monstrous being, of human shape and red colour, with long hair. According to the priests, every hill where the earth is of that peculiar deep-red colour already referred to is or has been the dwelling-place of a Sasabonsum; and this colour is believed to be caused by the blood of the countless victims who have there fallen to his anger.

These primitive beliefs are amongst the very earliest formed by man, and take us very close to the genesis of all religious belief. They have probably been held by the natives of the Gold Coast for hundreds of years, perhaps for thousands, for there has not been the slightest change in them in the last four centuries. Indeed these people, like most savages,

have been almost stationary; and, with the exception that muskets have now universally replaced their more primitive bows, arrows, and spears, they are now in almost identically the same condition, morally and socially, as they were when the Portuguese first explored the western shores of Africa. If no appreciable progress has been made in four centuries, even under the stimulus of intercourse with Europeans, how long must they have remained stationary in the past, when they were shut off from all contact with a higher race?

When the priests learned that the Portuguese proposed disturbing the Ahboassi Hill they vehemently protested. Such conduct, they urged, could only result in the most frightful calamities, and all the inhabitants of the district would certainly be destroyed by Sasabonsum, who was never known to forgive an injury or insult. The Portuguese endeavoured to pacify them by pointing out that since they, the whites, were going to outrage the god, and not the natives, the effects of his anger would only be felt by them, and they were perfectly willing to take the risks. But the priests replied that this was quite a mistaken view. Sasabonsum's wrath would be vented on the Awooins. He was their god; he would do nothing to the white men. This reasoning, which seems absurd to Europeans, who are accustomed to the notion that a god, to be a god, must be supreme, and for the whole of mankind, was to the natives

perfectly sound. Their gods are necessarily local, since they are rivers, lagoons, mountains, &c., and so they come to be regarded, first as the gods of certain localities, and then of the peoples dwelling in those localities. To their ideas, the gods of the district in which they dwelt did not interfere with the people belonging to other districts, who had their own gods to reckon with. It seems that they hold the notion that a god cannot molest an individual unless he comes within the area of his sway. The Portuguese had their own gods, little figures, *ehsuhman,* which they carried about with them, and Sasabonsum had nothing to do with them.

However, by promises, bribes, and threats, the Awooin chiefs were won over, and the priests, finding themselves unsupported, had to give way, prophesying the most frightful calamities as the result of the neglect of their advice. There was at first some little difficulty in procuring labourers for the Ahboassi Mine, the natives of the district being afraid to engage in the work; but a considerable number of slaves were obtained from Elmina, and the Portuguese then pushed ahead merrily. At the lowest point of the Ahboassi Hill, where it was skirted by the Duma, a tunnel was driven in, and after a few months the predictions of the engineers were entirely fulfilled. A quartz reef, unusually rich in gold, was struck, and it is estimated that during the next six years the Portuguese annually transmitted to Lisbon, from

this mine alone, some two thousand pounds weight of gold ; while, as it was worked almost entirely by slave labour, the expenses were comparatively trifling. The vein, whose limits had not yet been defined, was worked by four parallel galleries, which, sloping slightly downwards, debouched from the tunnel which now pierced the centre of the hill.

In December, 1636, the Ahboassi Mine was under the management of Juan Rodrigues, who was assisted by Fernan Diaz and Pedro Gomez, two subordinate engineers. These three men occupied a wooden house which had been built on the northern slope of the hill, near the Duma, and had under their orders a party of twenty soldiers, whose business it was to watch the slaves and guard the two exits from the mine. The slaves were confined at night in a long building, built of stout timbers and roofed with the same materials. It was secured by a narrow and exceedingly strong door, adjoining which was a guard-house for the soldiers on night-duty. Every morning the slaves, escorted by the guard, were marched naked to the mine, the entrances of which were then guarded ; while native or mulatto overseers, armed with heavy whips, walked to and fro in the galleries to arouse the lazy. About eleven o'clock the morning meal, consisting of plantains, dried fish, fufu, and kanki, was brought to the slaves, who were allowed half-an-hour to dispose of it. They then again set to work, and continued without inter-

mission till about five in the afternoon, when a second meal was served out to them. At six they were marched back to the barracoon and locked in for the night.

That the unfortunate slaves, unaccustomed to labour of any kind, found this a hard life there can be no doubt; and it seems that the mortality amongst them was high, since fresh parties of slaves were frequently sent from Elmina. Yet they were fairly well treated for the age, for they cost money; and the Portuguese were too shrewd to wear them out by over-work, or to weaken them by insufficient nourishment. In that essentially religious age, when the Church was paramount, negroes were regarded as an accursed race, and even as beings hardly human. Even the philanthropic Las Casas, who was roused to so great a pitch of indignation by the sufferings of the aborigines of the New World under the cruelties of the Spaniards, had no pity for the Africans; and indeed it was his proposal to relieve the Indians from working the mines, by importing negro slaves from the Portuguese possessions in West Africa, that gave a first stimulus to the slave-trade. Charles I of Spain thought so well of this plan of replacing the rapidly decreasing Indians, that he granted some Genoese merchants the exclusive right of importing four thousand negroes annually into America. In fact, Las Casas, in common with the majority of the priesthood of that age, considered it both lawful

and expedient to enslave the Africans; and the laity gladly listened to a teaching which was so much in accordance with their own views and interests.

On the 18th of December, 1636, the work was progressing as usual. Most of the slaves were in the four galleries working the quartz; and, in the tunnel, the remainder were employed in filling the bags in which the ore was conveyed by boat to St. Anthony. The day was very close; the overseers dragged their tired legs after them as they went to and fro amongst the slaves, and the soldiers on guard at the two ends of the tunnel were lounging in the shade of the trees or rocks, panting with heat, their weapons lying beside them in the carelessness born of long immunity from danger. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon; the three engineers, Rodrigues, Diaz and Gomez, were standing in the shadow of the northern entrance of the tunnel, where the first-named was showing his comrades a large nugget of pure gold that had just been found, when suddenly a strange noise, as of distant thunder, was heard approaching from the west up the valley of the Duma. The trees on the hill bordering the valley reeled to and fro as the noise approached, then the earth seemed to rise in a wave under their feet, and the next moment the rumbling was heard dying away to the east. A cloud of dust and a few stones fell from the roof of the tunnel before the three engineers had time to collect

themselves, and then they cleared the entrance at a bound. It was an earthquake. Confused shouts and cries were heard from the interior of the mine, and those slaves who were at work in the tunnel ran towards the entrance. The soldiers had sprung to their feet as the shock passed them, seizing their weapons, and they now stood irresolute, uncertain whether they ought to permit the slaves to pass out or not.

The three engineers crossed themselves devoutly, and looked at each other.

"Holy Virgin protect us," stammered Gomez. "It was an earthquake."

"Yes," replied Rodrigues, "and a sharp shock too, but happily 'tis over," and he turned to the guard to tell them to keep the slaves from coming forth.

The latter, terrified at the shock, which had brought down a quantity of small *débris* in the mine, were crowding to the entrance, where the guard were endeavouring to force them back with their pikes, when once more the rumbling was heard approaching swiftly up the valley. The trees reeled and tottered on the hills, great rocks fell crashing through the forest towards the Duma, and in an instant the second shock was upon them. It was much more violent than the first; the earth seemed to rise and fall, and then oscillated so violently that Diaz was thrown to the ground. Rodrigues clung to a stout sapling, and, looking upwards, saw one of the im-

mense granite boulders on the summit of the Ahboassi hill totter. The next instant it fell with a crash, snapping the trees in its path like twigs; then it leapt high in the air, and, bounding clear of the bush, fell with a deafening roar almost at his feet. The clatter of falling stones sounded for a few seconds, and then all was still. Rodrigues, almost stunned by the fall of the vast granite boulder, recovered himself. Diaz was still on the ground, where the shock had thrown him, Gomez was at a little distance, vomiting; but where was the mine? Not a trace of the entrance of the tunnel could be seen. The mass of granite, weighing scores of tons, had fallen directly upon it, breaking it in and hermetically sealing it with its enormous mass.

"They are all lost," cried Rodrigues, wringing his hands, and he was about to run to the fallen rock, when again the distant rumbling noise was heard approaching up the valley. Then the three men fled towards the stream; but the third shock was comparatively slight; a few stones and rocks, loosened by the second shock, fell, and for a few minutes rained with a clattering noise all down the valley, and then again all was still. Here and there, where the Duma had scoured into the flank of a hill, the stream was dammed back by the masses of earth and rock which had fallen into it; and all down the valley reddish scars appeared on the hill-sides, standing out vividly against the surrounding green of the forest, places

where vast rocks had ploughed a way down to the valley, or where whole patches of earth and forest had slipped away.

The three engineers waited tremblingly, anticipating fresh shocks, but minute after minute passed away and all was still quiet, and after a time they ventured to approach what had once been the mouth of their tunnel. The hinder-part of the granite boulder, which was about the size of a small cottage, had fallen upon the end of the roof of the tunnel and crushed it in, bringing down with it tons of earth, while the front part of it was embedded in the slope to the river. The three men walked cautiously round it, searching. Protruding from beneath one side of the mass was a white man's hand, purple and swollen with the blood pressed into it, and which had spurted from the finger-nails. Beyond this there was nothing to be seen; they shouted, but not a sound was heard in reply. The terrified slaves seeking to escape, and the guard who were thrusting them back, had all equally been overwhelmed in one doom.

The three men were so stunned by this terrible catastrophe, that for a time none of them thought of the other exit from the mine. Diaz was the first to remember it, and they all three set off hastily to it along the path which had been made round the hill. This southern exit was little used, the barracoon and habitations of the engineers and soldiers being all

on the northern side of the hill, and it had in fact been opened merely to create a current of air, and to ventilate the mine. They had not proceeded far along the path, now encumbered with fallen rocks and trees, when they met one of the four men who had been on guard on that side. The entrance to the mine was still open, he said, though much encumbered with fallen earth; but the whole of the centre of the hill seemed to have collapsed; they had found it impossible to go in far. None of the slaves had come out that way. All, in the sudden panic which had overtaken them, had rushed to the entrance they were accustomed to use.

The engineers, on arriving at the southern entrance, found that the soldier's report was but too correct. The tunnel was half filled with earth and rocks which had fallen from the roof, and was in an exceedingly dangerous condition; they could make their way along it for some fifty feet, and then all further progress became impossible. The whole hill seemed to have subsided upon it, and the stout green timbers which had supported the roof were crushed to pieces. Sorrowfully they returned to the light of day, and told the guard there was no hope. Even if the whole mine had not collapsed and crushed those within it, they would inevitably perish from want of air long before those masses of earth could be moved.

The seven survivors of this convulsion of nature returned to the valley of the Duma. The barracoon

was still standing, as were the low and stout huts that had been occupied by the soldiers, though all were tilted over and thrown out of shape. They held a consultation and decided there was no use in remaining on the spot. It would be better, they agreed, to proceed to the fort at the confluence of the Duma and Ancobra, to report what had happened. Who could say? Perhaps that fort was now in ruins, and even St. Anthony itself, and if that was the case they would be required there. But the sun was now setting in the west like a ball of glowing copper, and, anxious as they were to quit the vicinity of this terrible catastrophe, where the bodies of their comrades lay crushed to atoms, they did not relish the prospect of a walk of five miles in the dark through the forest, where the landmarks of the country would now be hardly recognisable, and the path either swept away or obstructed. They therefore determined to pass the night where they were, camping out in the open, for fear fresh earthquake shocks might in the night throw down the shaken buildings.

They found a lantern which had escaped the general wreck of the property, and by the dim light it shed they eat such scraps of food as they were able to glean about the buildings. They felt unutterably lonely as darkness crept on. Instead of the chatter of the slaves in their barracoon, and the song or laugh of the soldiers, the earth seemed hushed in a

strange quiet. They felt oppressed by the silence, and spoke in low tones, shuddering when they thought of their comrades lying under the mass of granite, to which conversation and thoughts ever returned, in spite of their efforts to think of other things.

"'Tis the hand of Pedro Gonsalez that is outstretched beyond the rock," said one of the soldiers; "I know it by the ring on his fore-finger. 'Tis one he brought from St. George."

"*Por Dios*, he was a stout fellow!" replied another; "strong as an ox and handy with his weapons."

"I wonder if they suffered much," ventured a third. "By Saint Jago, a fearful death, to be crushed flat like a griddle-cake."

"And no priest to shrive them," added the first.

"Of a certainty they will walk," said Gomez.

The men looked uneasily over their shoulders into the darkness, and crossed themselves.

"It is as dark as a wolf's throat," said Rodrigues. "What say ye to a fire, comrades?"

This suggestion was welcomed with applause, a wisp of dry grass was lighted at the lantern, and a fire of dry sticks was soon blazing. A mosquito-hawk, pursuing the insects, attracted by its light, came swooping round, its wings nearly brushing the heads of the men. "Avaunt, bird of ill-omen," cried one of the soldiers, striking at it with a firebrand, but the bird soared upwards with its peculiar strident cry and disappeared in the night; while the men,

hot as it was, crouched close round the fire, as if its light afforded them some protection from unknown terrors, and continued conversing in low tones.

"Hist!" said Diaz, suddenly.

The conversation ceased. "What is it?" whispered one.

"Methought I heard a sound," returned Diaz. "Stay, listen now, I hear it again."

All sat still, suspending their breathing, and listening intently. A faint sound as of muffled footsteps could be just heard above the low murmur of the Duma, and seemed to proceed from behind the granite mass which had sealed the entrance to the mine. As they were still gazing and listening, a white figure seemed to appear from the rock and to move slowly towards them. It was followed by another, and another. The seven men actually trembled with horror, their hair felt as if it was bristling on their heads, and cold shivers ran down their backs. They had but one idea; it was their dead comrades walking. The three white figures slowly approached the fire, behind which the terrified men shrunk, invoking the protection of their saints. To their horror-stricken minds, and in the uncertain light of the fire, the white figures seemed of gigantic height, and to glare upon them with eyes gleaming with baleful fires. Suddenly the three white figures sprung aside, a loud yell burst forth, and a crowd of black forms rushed upon the Portuguese. It was a party of

Awooins. Five of them were seized before they could rise from the ground, but two of the soldiers succeeded in shaking off their adversaries, and ran for the river. In an instant a score of bows were bent, and a score of arrows whistled after them. The hindmost fugitive, pierced between the shoulders, threw up his arms and fell prone on his face: the foremost, wounded in the thigh, tore out the arrow and rushed on. Half-a-dozen men were starting in pursuit when a chief stopped them. "Let him go," said he. "We have enough here, and Sasabonsum is impatient"

This is what had happened. The earthquake had thrown down most of the Awooin villages in the neighbourhood; those of Adjusso and Abopo, on a range of hills to the south of the Duma, having specially suffered. In fact in the latter not one habitation remained standing, and several of the inhabitants had been buried under the ruined mud walls. At the first shock most of the people of the village had rushed into the open streets, invoking the protection of their gods; but the old and infirm, together with the young children, had not been able to escape before the second shock threw down the houses, which swayed to and fro, and then collapsed in a cloud of dust, amid the crackings of the light poles which supported the roofs. There was the usual scene of unutterable confusion. Women ran to and fro, howling and shrieking, men shouted and

children screamed; while here and there some unfortunate, half-crushed in the ruins, and held by the fallen beams, uttered yells of pain and terror. The priests ran hither and thither, waving their arms, and calling upon the gods to save them from the wrath of Sasabonsum.

When the panic was over, and the people were standing looking upon the ruins of their former habitations, a tall man, painted white from head to foot, came dancing down the long and broad street. It was the chief priest of the great local god Suhbun Kassi. He was foaming at the mouth, his features were strangely distorted, and from time to time he uttered strange sounds.

"The god has entered him," cried the people. "He has come to aid us, to tell us how to avert the wrath of Sasabonsum," and they ran and crowded round the priest.

The latter continued dancing down the street till he reached a large silk-cotton tree standing to one side of it, and there he stopped, leaping to and fro, and gesticulating wildly. Presently he fell upon his face, and appeared to be seized with convulsions.

"Another god has entered him," cried the people. "Truly we are not deserted."

At this moment two other priests, also painted white, broke through the crowd and commenced dancing round the first, who sprang to his feet and joined them.

"I, Suhbun Kassi, am come," said he, in a strange guttural voice. "Why do my people call me? Why are my villages cast down?"

"I, Sodifo, can tell thee," shouted a second priest in a strident voice. "It is Sasabonsum, the earth-shaker, the leveller of mountains. He it is who has overturned thy villages, as a child overturns a palm-nut."

"And why?" continued the first. "Because that my people turned from the wisdom of the old, old ones, who have done their work, and now sleep in Srahmanadzi.* Because they hearkened not to the words of my priests, and despised the wisdom of their forefathers."

"True, true, oh! Suhbun Kassi, oh! ruler of nations."

"Ask the old grey-heads, can they say if ever man put hoe into the hill of Ahboassi when they were young? Did ever man madly rouse the anger of Sasabonsum, the blood-thirsty, the devourer of peoples, the overthrower of palms?"

"No, no."

"And now what see ye? A strange people, Portus, who have come to my land in floating houses, have hollowed Ahboassi with caves. Can ye wonder that Sasabonsum is wroth? Can ye wonder that my villages are thrown down? What will he do yet? Is

* *Srahman-adzi*, the lower world, the world of spirits.

it finished, think ye? Think ye that his anger is satisfied?"

"No! no!" yelled the two other priests.

"Yes, he will want more. I see, I see! The land turns red; it is blood poured out. It flows in streams, the rivers run red. It is the blood of all these my people, whom Sasabonsum, the earth-shaker, the drinker of blood, requires—unless, unless ye give him these Portus, these disturbers of holy places, as a peace offering."

As the priest finished he threw himself flat on the ground, writhing in every limb, while the crowd, who had been listening with increasing excitement, uttered a loud cry. Yes, that was it. They must avert the impending anger of Sasabonsum by offering him these white men, these people who burrowed into the earth like ground-pigs. The village chiefs, whose former neutrality had enabled the Portuguese to overcome the opposition of the priests, were carried away by the popular sentiment; and they clamoured louder than the rest, in order that their former indifference to the violation of the Ahboassi Hill might be forgotten. They were besides much frightened; one or two of them had lost members of their family, all had lost property, and they feared that Sasabonsum might make terrible examples of them on account of their former apathy; they were therefore most eager for his pacification.

While the men were searching about the ruins of

their houses for their weapons, the priest of Suhbun Kassi rose from the ground and joined them. He pretended to be ignorant of what had occurred; he had felt something, a god no doubt, enter him, he said, and then he remembered nothing till he found himself lying on the ground. What had the god said? Upon being told by the bystanders, he vehemently urged the instant seizure and immolation of the Portuguese. It was, he asserted, the only means of staying the wrath of Sasabonsum. The sacrifice must be immediate, and the mine must be stopped up, otherwise fresh calamities, worse than that they had just experienced, would inevitably happen. They must start at once for Ahboassi, or Sasabonsum would be impatient.

It was not an easy matter, however, to pick out of the ruins of the houses weapons for the some four-score men the village could turn out, and it was not until after sunset that they were ready to start; for, being ignorant of what had taken place at the mine, they expected to have to deal with some two dozen Portuguese, and so took care to be well armed. It was past seven o'clock, and pitch dark, when they reached the southern slope of the Ahboassi Hill, which they moved cautiously along till they reached the southern entrance of the tunnel. A short inspection was sufficient to show them that no white men were there, and that the mine had been much shattered by the earthquake, and they pushed on round the

hill for the northern entrance. While crossing a low spur which stretched out towards the Duma, they first perceived the fire which the Portuguese had lighted; and, sending on two men as scouts, the remainder of the party squatted down in the path to wait.

It was not long before the scouts returned. A great rock, they said, had fallen from above, and was now in the very mouth of the tunnel. Some twenty paces or so beyond this was the fire. When they hid behind the rock and peeped out they could see and hear the Portuguese quite distinctly. There were only seven of them. "Only seven!" murmured the chiefs. "Where could the rest be?" And they hesitated, fearing an ambush or some stratagem, when a priest, who had interrogated one of the scouts and learned that the fallen rock closed the mouth of the mine, boldly declared that Sasabonsum had crushed all the rest under the hill, and that the seven were all that were left. "These have escaped him," said he, "but we will give them to him. That done, he will trouble us no more."

Satisfied with this explanation, the whole party once more moved cautiously onward, the three priests leading. Their naked feet made little or no sound; and they agreed to gather together behind the rock, for in the path they could only move in single file, and suddenly rush out in a body upon their prey. They reached the rock, and the men were closing up,

when the leading priest chanced to place his foot upon the now cold hand which protruded from beneath. He could not repress a slight exclamation, and, starting to one side, came in view of the Portuguese. He was about to call to the others to rush on, although not half of the party was yet up, when he saw that the Portuguese were staring at him with horror-stricken faces, and did not move. Grasping the situation, he saw that the white men mistook him for an evil spirit, or a *srahman*;* and, motioning to his two fellow-priests to follow him, he slowly advanced towards the fire. Then the others rushed from their hiding-place, and the surprise was complete.

In a few minutes the five prisoners were secured, and their hands bound behind their backs. Resistance was perfectly futile, but Diaz, unable to restrain his passion at finding himself thus at the mercy of despised savages, broke forth into torrents of abuse. The chiefs exchanged a few words, and then, upon a sign from one of them, two men who were toying with their knives threw themselves upon Diaz from behind, and from opposite sides drove their knives through his cheeks. The other prisoners, crushed and silent, shuddered at this barbarity, which was to them as the seal of their doom. Never, they thought, would these savages proceed to such lengths unless they had determined to brave all and to take their lives.

* *srahman, ghost.*

Within a quarter of an hour of the capture of the Portuguese, the whole party was traversing the narrow bush-path which led to the southern entrance of the mine. The prisoners were separated from one another by eight or ten armed men, who watched them vigilantly; while here and there in the long train a man carried a torch, made of the dried stems of dwarf palm-branches tied together, and which flared with a bright flame when swung to and fro. It formed a strange spectacle that long line of men, following the curves of the rocky path amid the unutterable stillness of a tropical forest by night; with the eyes and teeth of the natives glistening in the light of the torches, whose glow tinged the naked black bodies with a reddish hue, and danced in little points of fire upon the heads of their spears and the plates of metal on their shields; with the white prisoners, some with hanging head and downcast mien, others looking defiantly before them, driven on, with their hands bound behind their backs, like cattle to the slaughter; and the soldier who had escaped, and who was lying on the hill-side above, faint with loss of blood, shuddered and shrank still further into the blackness of the shadow of the forest, as the procession passed below him.

When the southern entrance of the tunnel was reached the leaders halted, and the prisoners were brought to the front. In a few minutes their legs were tied together at knee and ankle, and then each

man, carried by two or three Awooins, was borne an inert mass into the ruined tunnel, which the torches soon filled with a stifling smoke. The prisoners were carried as far into the mine as the shattered condition of the tunnel admitted, and were thrown upon the earth side by side. Before the horror of the death which had been devised for them they nearly all gave way, one raving and cursing, another weeping and imploring mercy, a third offering to give fabulous rewards if he were only set free; but the Awooins were deaf alike to curses, entreaties, and promises, and, turning their backs upon their victims, they made their way back along the encumbered passage, and left them in darkness. The whole party of natives now set to work to close the entrance of the tunnel, some tearing down the supports which held up the already tottering roof, and others rolling stones and masses of rocks into the aperture; so that before daybreak there was no vestige of any opening left, nor could any one say, positively, exactly where the entrance had been.

Next day, before noon, the Portuguese soldier who had escaped capture arrived at the fort at the mouth of the Duma. He was weak and faint from loss of blood; the wound in his thigh had stiffened, and it had taken him hours to drag himself slowly and painfully over the five miles which lay between Ahboassi and the fort. He found the latter rent in every direction, and tottering from the effects of

the earthquake; the guard-room roof had fallen in and three of the occupants had been killed. The remainder of the small detachment had been discussing the advisability of abandoning the fort, and proceeding to St. Anthony, before his arrival, and the news he brought decided them to lose no time in descending the river. The Awooins, to have acted as they had done, could only mean war to the knife, and what chances of resistance were there for them, in the ruined condition of the fort, if they were attacked? Besides, since the Ahboassi Mine had collapsed and the workmen had been engulfed, there was no object in keeping a garrison at the Duma fort. There would be no boats descending with ore to be guarded and no reliefs of slaves to be watched. They therefore proceeded in their boats to St. Anthony, which they found much shaken by the earthquake, and with its walls fissured in all directions.

The commandant of St. Anthony received the news of the ruin of the mine, and of the sacrifice of the survivors of that catastrophe by the Awooins, with horror, and he promised to soon take a startling revenge. As all his energies were now required to keep his fort from tumbling to pieces, and every available man of the garrison was engaged in the work of repairing it, he sent to Elmina a succinct account of what had occurred, and asked for a reinforcement sufficient to make a terrible example of the Awooins. He would have sent the only survivor of

that fatal day, but that the latter was already stricken with that strange sickness produced by the poison used by the Awooins on their arrows, and a few days later he died. But the Dutch, who had succeeded a short time before these events in obtaining a footing at Moree, were now acting so aggressively against the Portuguese that the captain-general at Elmina found himself unable to spare a single man from the garrison of that place; and he wrote to the commandant of St. Anthony that he was on no account to commence any hostilities with natives. Every effort, he wrote, was to be made to put the fort in a thorough state of repair and defence; the garrison was on no account to be weakened by detachments being sent inland, and the utmost vigilance was to be preserved to prevent surprise by the Dutch. The punishment of the Awooins and the reopening of the Ahboassi Mine were both to be deferred till happier times. These happier times were, however, never fated to occur. A few months later the Dutch captured Elmina, and in 1642 St. Anthony, the last foothold of the Portuguese on the Gold Coast, was also reduced.

The Dutch, after firmly establishing themselves at Axim, set about opening up the interior. They repaired the fort at the mouth of the Duma, and, conceiving that the Portuguese had exhausted all the mines in that neighbourhood, pushed on some forty miles up the Ancobra to the rapids of Adabama,

beyond which the river was impracticable for boats. Three or four miles beyond this point they built Fort Ruyghaver, in the heart of the gold-bearing country, to protect the river communication and to overawe the natives. All this was not effected without opposition on the part of the Awooins; but the Dutch skilfully fomented a quarrel between that tribe and the Ahantas, and, allied with the latter, gradually drove them back inland, and to the westward, beyond the river Wini. For a long time after the expulsion of the Awooins the country remained desolate, but it subsequently gradually became overrun and peopled by the Ahantas.

For two centuries the Dutch ransacked all the country round Fort Ruyghaver, and to the east and west of the Ancobra above the Duma fort, and vast quantities of gold were exported. Then, as the mines ceased to supply gold in paying quantities, they abandoned the district by degrees, and Fort Ruyghaver was suffered to go to ruin. It had served its purpose, and there was no object in maintaining a garrison so far inland now that the country was exhausted.

In 1872 the British purchased the Dutch possessions on the Gold Coast, and they would doubtless have been involved in the general decay which then threatened the British possessions in that part of the world, had not the Ashanti war of 1873-4 brought the Gold Coast, its peoples and its products, prominently before the British public. In consequence of

the reported richness of the colony in gold some practical gold-diggers came out from England. Most of them died, but the reports of the survivors were so satisfactory that a company was projected for opening up the gold region of the Ancobra, and before very long there were three or four companies in existence. In the universal ignorance which prevailed concerning the past history of the Gold Coast, no one dreamed that the Portuguese, and after them the Dutch, had really systematically mined this district. It was known that both peoples had exported gold in large quantities, but it was taken for granted that they had only collected nuggets in the river-beds, or washed the sands for gold-dust.

The greatest difficulties were experienced by these mining companies, who could not utilize slave-labour as the Portuguese and Dutch had done; but at last, after a considerable outlay of capital, they were able to commence operations. Then the truth became apparent. Time after time, after shafts had been sunk and tunnels laboriously dug into hills in order to strike a vein of gold-bearing quartz, it was discovered that others had been there before them. Traces of former workings were found in every direction; ruined galleries, forgotten implements, and broken lamps, were constantly being discovered in the very heart of hills which the miners had fondly imagined to be virgin. Indeed, it seems probable that some of these mines were worked by a

people long anterior to the Portuguese, since, in more than one instance, stone implements have been discovered. Who these people were it is impossible to say; but certainly they were not the present natives of the Gold Coast, who are utterly incapable of undertaking any such work, and whose mining operations are limited to the digging of pits for alluvial gold.

It was while the Axim district was thus being overrun in all directions by exploring parties, mining agents, and persons interested in the formation of new companies, that the long-forgotten Ahboassi Mine was re-discovered. A party, engaged in inspecting the hills along the valley of the Duma, found a considerable opening in the midst of a growth of dense bush which grew on the slope of a hill to the south of the Duma. This hole, which seemed to have been formed by water, excited their curiosity. They cut away some of the bush which surrounded it, and descending a steep incline of stones and rocks they found themselves in what had once been a tunnel. The light of their lanterns showed them that it was in an exceedingly dangerous condition, and after a very hasty inspection they were about to leave it, when a porcupine bolted past them into a dark corner. A terrier belonging to one of the miners at once rushed after it, and, as it declined to answer its owner's call and return, the latter went after it. He had only taken a few steps when his feet became

entangled in some object which cracked under him, and lowering his lantern he saw a human skeleton. Hearing his exclamation] his companions followed him, and there, prostrate on the earth, with feet and hands still secured by bonds which crumbled at a touch, were five skeletons half concealed by the dust of two centuries. In the jaw of one skull was found a rusty piece of iron, which on examination proved to be two knife-blades, corroded out of all shape, and fastened by the oxidization of the metal to the teeth.

V.—THE MISADVENTURES OF ROBERT BAKER IN GUINEA,

IN THE YEARS 1562 AND 1563.

THE first trading voyage of the English to the West Coast of Africa of which we have any record was that undertaken by Captain Windham in 1553, and this was soon followed by others; for though the risks were great, on account of the hostility of the Portuguese, the profits were also great, and a regular trade from England was soon established. The custom was for several gentlemen and merchants to associate together and form a species of company, which then furnished and fitted out vessels, the profits of the voyage being divided between these individuals; while, for their own profit, the officers and crew were allowed to trade on their own account. In 1562 such a venture, as a trading voyage was termed in those days, was fitted out by Sir William Gerrard, Sir William Chester, and Messrs. Thomas Lodge, Anthony

Hickman, and Edward Castelin. It consisted of two vessels, the Minion and the Primrose, and one of the factors or trading-agents for the company on board the former was a certain Robert Baker. This man had a variety of strange adventures in Guinea, of which, on his return from his second voyage, he wrote an account in verse. This the curious may find in the first edition of Hakluyt's *Collection of Voyages*, published in 1582, and from it the following is taken.

The Minion and Primrose left Dartmouth on the 25th of February, 1562, and, sighting Cape Verde on March 20th, they sailed along the land to their first port, Rio de Sestos, on the Malaghetta or Grain Coast, which they reached on April 3rd. There they found a French vessel trading, at which they were much annoyed, fearing that the market would be spoiled for their own goods; but might being right in those lawless seas they ordered the French captain to come on board the Minion, and directed him to cease trading for eight days, to give the English a share in the traffic, stating that he had already had his turn and that now it was theirs. The French captain had to submit; but next morning, not caring to lie idle for eight days, he weighed anchor and sailed to the eastward to try a fresh port. This, however, did not at all suit the English, who wanted to be first at each port, so they despatched the Primrose to keep ahead of the French vessel, it being agreed that the Minion,

after finishing at Rio de Sestos, should come and rejoin her.

This plan was duly carried out, and the Minion, when there was nothing more to be made out of the natives at Rio de Sestos, sailed to the eastward in search of her consort. She had reached Cape Palmas when she fell in with a great ship and a caravel of the Portuguese, and the former at once opened fire and gave chase. The Minion returned the fire, but being over-matched, showed her heels to the enemy, and sailed away, till the Portuguese, seeing they could not overtake her, wore off and continued their voyage to Elmina. The Minion then continued her voyage along the shore to the Rio San Andre (Grand Drewin), which she reached on April the 17th, and there found the Primrose, which the Portuguese vessels must have passed at night without seeing.

The two captains, having consulted together, decided that they were strong enough to attack the Portuguese, and they crowded on all sail and made for Cabo de Tres Puntas (Cape Three Points), their object being to reach that point before the Portuguese, lie in wait for them there, and cut them off from Elmina. They lay at Cape Three Points for two days, and having seen nothing of the Portuguese they concluded they had passed the point and gone on to Elmina before their arrival; so they abandoned their watch, and, rounding the point, went closer to the shore to the eastward and commenced to trade

with the natives. The very next morning, however, showed them at daybreak both the great ship and the caravel, a little way to the eastward, bearing up for Elmina, they having passed Three Points in the night; and the Minion and the Primrose at once made sail in pursuit. But they could not overtake the Portuguese before they got under the protection of the castle guns, which opened so well-directed a fire upon the English ships that they had to draw off.

The two commanders were much angered at the failure of their scheme, and probably the knowledge that they had only themselves to thank for it did not make the disappointment any the more easy to bear; for had they exercised a little more patience, and remained at Three Points another twenty-four hours, the Portuguese vessels would, doubtless, have fallen into their hands. Regrets, however, were fruitless, so leaving the enemy under the castle guns, they sailed defiantly past Elmina, and anchored at Cape Coast, or, as it was then termed, Don Juan or Don John's Town, the chief of the place having apparently being named Juan by the Portuguese.

They found that this Juan had not long been dead, and the people, though very friendly with the English, would not open any trade till they had authority from his successor. Negociations were opened, and the next morning they were arranging the terms of barter, so many ells of cloth or so many brass basins for so much gold-dust, when they were alarmed by

the appearance of two galleys coming from Elmina to attack them. Now in those days, when ships were entirely dependent upon the wind for motion, galleys were very much dreaded; for on a still day, when there was no breeze, they could row up under the stern of a ship lying helpless on the water, and take her at a great disadvantage. The Minion and Primrose were hastily got into fighting order, but fortunately, before the galleys got within range, the sea-breeze sprang up; and making sail they at once bore down upon them and chased them back to Elmina. To get away from the neighbourhood of these galleys, the English ships sailed on to Moree, a village some six miles to the east of Cape Coast; but next morning at day-break they saw their long low forms again approaching over the placid sea. The sea-breeze on this part of the coast does not usually spring up till about nine in the morning, and the galleys were able to creep up and send their shot through the Minion, but as soon as the wind rose they drew off.

To escape from this annoyance, and the risk of being attacked every morning, the English captains decided to go still further to the east, and they arranged to sail for Cormantine early on the next day; but when that day broke they saw to their surprise and alarm the two galleys and the great ship a little way out to sea, and the caravel between them and the shore. It was a dead calm, so they had nothing much to

fear from the two ships, but as soon as it was broad daylight the two galleys came rowing down to the attack. The galleys had eighteen oars on each side, and to each oar was chained three slaves, some of whom, they could see as the galleys approached, were white, being Englishmen or Frenchmen whom the Portuguese had captured on the coast and sentenced to slavery for life. In the forecastle of each galley was a piece of ordnance, and the poop was filled with harquebusiers and crossbow men, over whom flaunted several banners and the arms of Portugal. The two English vessels were nearly a mile apart, and neither could render any assistance to the other, for any boats they might have lowered would at once have been run down by the galleys. The Minion was the nearer to the enemy, and the galleys, making a wide sweep so that her guns could not be brought to bear upon them, came steering straight for her stern, the lines of oars rising and falling with a measured stroke, while two men armed with whips ran up and down between the ranks of the slaves, lashing them on to greater exertions. In a few minutes the galleys were close up, their trumpets sounded a defiance, and two round shot from their cannon came crashing in at the stern ports of the Minion. The crew of the latter were not backward, their trumpets and drums answered the challenge, they raised a cheer, fired their harquebuses, and sent a flight of arrows whistling about the galleys; but they were at a manifest

disadvantage, not being able to bring any of their guns to bear upon their adversaries, whose every cannon-shot told. At last, by great efforts, they contrived to move a demiculverin, which enabled them to reply to the Portuguese cannonade, and then the battle went on merrily.

It had lasted more than an hour, several of the Portuguese were killed or wounded, nearly all the oars on one side of the nearest galley had been broken by a crossbar shot, and a number of the slaves were disabled, so that, though there were a good many killed and wounded on board the Minion, the crew of that ship were well holding their own, when a sudden roar was heard, and a column of white smoke shot up high in the air. A barrel of powder which the master-gunner was bringing up from the steward's room had exploded, seriously injuring the master-gunner and most of the gunners. The Portuguese raised a great shout when they heard the explosion and saw the confusion it caused on board the Minion, and redoubled their attack, to which the English could now only reply with their small arms, there being not enough gunners left to work the gun. A chance shot from one of the galleys cut away the Minion's foremast, quite disabling her, and the Portuguese again raised a shout of exultation, when one of the white galley-slaves, a man with a yellow beard and sun-burned face, called to the English, in their own language, "not to give up, as it was better to die

like men than lead a dog's life as a slave." He had scarcely spoken when one of the Portuguese ran up to him with a whip, and struck him again and again over the back and shoulders so that the blood gushed out, which so filled the English with rage and fury that they swore never to surrender, and, sending a close flight of arrows at the galley, by chance both the English slave and his cruel tyrant were pierced at the same moment. Still the galleys pressed on, the stern of the Minion was riddled with shot, half the crew were killed or disabled, and, though the remainder were still making a gallant resistance, the vessel would inevitably have soon been taken, had not the Portuguese great ship, for some unknown reason, sent her boat to the two galleys, which thereupon immediately drew off and rowed away slowly, half of their oars being broken and a number of the slaves killed.

As soon as the galleys had gone the Primrose lowered a boat, and her captain came on board the Minion to consult as to what should be done. The crew of the latter were much dejected at the loss they had sustained and the crippled condition of their ship; and, as it was evident that they could not trade in safety while the galleys remained on the Gold Coast, they determined to return to the Ivory Coast and try their fortune there. All hands were at once set to work to rig a jury-mast on the Minion, and

after dark, when the land-breeze sprang up, both vessels got quietly under weigh, and ran out to sea without being perceived by the Portuguese.

This was on the 27th of April, and they did not make the land again till the 14th of May, when, sending their boat to the shore to see what place it was, they found they were off the Rio de Barbos, on the Ivory Coast, to the east of San Andre. Here they remained till the 21st, taking in water, losing unfortunately five men by the capsizing of the Primrose's pinnace in the surf, and then beat up for San Andre. The vessels had not traded here on the outward voyage, so on the morning after their arrival Robert Baker had the small pinnace laden with merchandise, and proceeded in her, with nine well-armed men, to the shore, to endeavour to open a trade. They entered a small river, and soon a number of natives came running down to the water-side, one of whom launched a canoe and came towards them. While he was yet at a little distance he stopped, and, dipping his hand in the salt water, dropped two or three drops of it in his eyes, and he would not advance till Baker had done the same. This was the native mode of swearing to deal fairly and without treachery, for the sea was, and indeed is still, one of the chief gods of the Drewin tribes, and they believe that any infraction of an oath thus taken would be punished by the god of the sea with loss of sight. When a native has thus sworn he may be trusted, but the oath is only

binding for one meeting, and has to be repeated on each subsequent occasion, a fact of which Baker and his companions appear to have been ignorant.

When Baker had also taken an oath in the Drewin fashion the native came into the pinnace; a few trifles were given to him, and through him a barter with those on the bank was soon established. At sunset the boat returned to the ships, and Baker was so well satisfied with the result of the day's trade that he took the native on board, feasted him, and gave him some old clothes. It was observed that he took particular notice of the pinnace, which was not hoisted up, but tied astern, with the merchandise that remained from the day's barter still in her; but nobody thought anything of this at the time. Next morning the same party again went to the shore, traded all day, and at nightfall returned to the ship; but this time the friendly native did not come back with them. In the middle of the night one of the watch heard a slight noise, and looking out he saw two or three canoes about the pinnace, which had been tied astern as before. He gave the alarm and the canoes made off, but when the boat was hauled in they found that all the merchandise in her had been carried off—the poor unsophisticated black brother had been too much for his white friends.

Baker was very angry at being robbed in this way, and early next morning went in an armed boat to the river to see if he could manage to recover any

of the goods. They saw several natives on the shore, but they would not reply to Baker's signs, and when the boat had got some little way up the river about a hundred canoes, filled with armed men, shot suddenly out of a creek above them and came towards them. They immediately put about to return to the sea, when they saw another large flotilla of canoes below them, cutting off their retreat. The canoes were but small, like all those used on the Ivory Coast; but each contained two men, armed with spears and shield, and most of the former had cords attached to them, so that they could be recovered if they missed their mark.

The men at the oars pulled with a will, and the boat was steered straight for the centre of the flotilla of canoes which barred the way to the sea. As it approached the natives hurled their spears, but without doing much mischief, while the flash and report of the English harquebuses so terrified them that most of them leaped out of their canoes into the water, and the boat was able to break through and pass on. But in a few seconds the Drewins recovered from their surprise and came in pursuit. Their light canoes, urged through the water by vigorous strokes of the paddle, rapidily overtook the heavy boat, and twenty or thirty were soon abreast of it. There were but nine Englishmen in the boat, four of whom pulled for dear life, while the five others strove to keep off the natives. The latter did not at first attempt to

board; they kept off at a little distance, keeping up with the boat, and hurling their spears, to which the whites replied with their bows and harquebuses. A few of the natives were killed by the English arrows, but the supply of the latter was soon exhausted; there was no time to re-load the clumsy harquebuses, and the natives, seeing this, came crowding on, while the whites snatched up their pikes from the bottom of the boat.

At a signal from the Drewin leader, a very tall and stout man, a number of canoes dashed alongside the boat; and the chief, covering himself with his shield and holding a spear poised, ready to throw, was actually stepping into the boat when the master's mate with a thrust of his pike pierced his shield and throat and stretched him lifeless in his canoe. The pike, however, remained fixed in the shield, and as the master's mate leaned forward to disengage it, a second native pressed forward and struck him in the shoulder with a spear. Turning upon this new assailant he drew the weapon from the wound, and with a vigorous blow pierced his foe through and through; but the pike could not be recovered, it had remained in the canoe of the fallen chief, which had now dropped astern. While this had been taking place the other defenders of the boat were hotly engaged, and had their work cut out for them, for the canoes swarmed on all sides. However, they succeeded in beating off their adversaries, and the

men at the oars pulled hard for the sea, which was now not far off.

The Drewins, who had been much dismayed at the fall of their chief, seeing that their prey was now upon the point of escaping them, made another rush, coming so thickly round that there was barely room to work the oars. Some of them tried to seize these and wrest them from the hands of the oarsmen, while others, standing in their canoes, hurled spear after spear. The gunner was desperately wounded twice, as were Baker and two others; while the gallant master's mate was pierced through the ribs, and fell dead as he drew the spear from the wound. At his fall the natives yelled with delight, and strove to break in where he had stood, but fortunately they had by this time used up most of their spears, and the whites, struggling on, contrived to keep them off with their pikes till at last the sea was reached. It was just time; six out of the eight survivors of the struggle were wounded, and almost fainting from loss of blood, for the broad-bladed spears made horrible gashes.

The two unwounded men pulled out to the ships, and the captains, fearing from what had occurred that they might be attacked under cover of the darkness of night by swarms of canoes, at once weighed anchor and made sail for Rio de Sestos. They reached that place on June 2nd, and, leaving on the 4th, arrived off Dartmouth on August 6th. In

the two ships there were not more than twenty men fit for duty; twenty-one had been killed, or had died of fever, a great many were still disabled by their wounds, and a large number were sick; but from the trading point of view the voyage had been successful, for they brought back 166 elephants' tusks, weighing 1758 lbs., and two butts of Grains of Paradise from the Grain Coast.

After this experience of the West Coast of Africa Baker made a vow to himself never to go there again, but a few months appear to have been sufficient to dim the remembrance of its perils, and in 1563 he suffered himself to be persuaded to make another voyage to Guinea, as chief factor. The venture again consisted of two ships, the John Baptist, Laurence Rondel master, and the Merlin, Robert Revel master, Baker being chief-factor of the former. The two vessels sailed from England in November, 1563, and three days after leaving they fell in with a tall French ship. Baker challenged her from the John Baptist, and she having answered the challenge, he ordered the attack, for in these early trading voyages the chief-factor seems to have always commanded the ship and acted as captain, the master being merely the sailing-master, and charged only with the navigation. The fore and main tops were manned with harquebusiers, powder was got ready on the poop, and with a loud flourish of trumpets the John Baptist gave the French ship a salvo of chain and cross-bar

shot, and bore down upon her. The French on their side showed equal spirit, and replied with a vigorous cannonade, while the men on the main-yard flourished their swords, and dared the English to board. The two vessels were soon locked side by side, and a smart exchange of arrows and harquebuse shot commenced; while the crew of the John Baptist strove to set fire to the enemy's sails "with arrows and pikes carrying wild-fire." Seeing that this manner of fighting would lead to nothing, Baker, after having put more spirit into his men "by making the spiced wine go briskly round among them," gave the order to board. The deck of the French ship was soon carried with a rush, and the men, aloft entering her tops, drove out the defenders, and let all the yards down by the board. The survivors of the French crew were driven below and soon surrendered, and the prize was taken to the Groyne in Spain, and its lading sold.

This was a good beginning for the venture, and the ships went on gaily to the Grain Coast, which they reached without accident, and where they at once commenced a profitable trade. One day about noon, after they had been some weeks upon the coast and had nearly finished their business, Robert Baker loaded the pinnace with merchandize, and taking with him eight well-armed men, among whom was George Gage, son of Sir Edward Gage and factor of the Merlin, pulled towards the shore to trade as

usual. A black arch of clouds was seen over the land, but they thought little of it, till just as they were near the shore, a furious gust of wind struck them, and nearly capsized the boat. It was one of those sudden tornadoes which on this part of the coast always blow off the land, and of which Baker knew nothing, since his former voyage had not been made during the tornado season. This sudden blast was followed by as sudden a lull, and the crew had just time to bring the boat's head round to the wind when another and another furious gust struck them, carrying away the tops of the waves in clouds of driving spray. Then the wind blew in a continuous roar, mingled with the crash and rattle of thunder close over head; while the rain fell in long straight lines from the black clouds, nearly filling the boat and drenching in a moment the cowering men, who crouched down, terrified at the blinding lightning which played around them, and seemed to threaten to strike them every moment. The wind being off the shore there was not much sea, but the gusts of wind made the boat heel right over, and they momentarily expected to be capsized. In vain they looked towards the shore in search of some creek or haven in which they might find shelter; the rain fell n such torrents that both the land and the ships they had left were blotted out. In every direction there was nothing to be seen but grey sheets of falling rain.

The storm raged for hours, and it was not until nightfall, when the rain lessened, that they caught sight of some wind-tossed palms, and saw they were not far from land. The lightning still flickered in the distance, and as each flash lighted up the now darkening horizon they eagerly looked seaward for their ships. But neither of them was to be seen, they had dragged their anchors and been driven out to sea by the fury of the tornado. Even had they ridden out the storm they would not have now been in sight, for there is a current here which runs strongly to the east; and Baker and his companions, though they little guessed it, were already some fifteen or twenty miles to the east of the town at which they had been trading. They were all drenched to the skin and uncomfortable enough, still they made sure that they would find their ships at daybreak, and a night in an open boat was all they had to expect at the worst.

All night long the current carried them to the eastward along the shore, and when the sun rose not a sail was to be seen. Imagining that they were at the most some two or three miles from the spot where the ships had been at anchor, for there are no prominent landmarks on this part of the coast, and each place looks like every other, they thought their vessels must be to the eastward of them, the prevailing wind here being a westerly one, and so decided to row along the shore till they met them. They

continued thus the whole of that day, but saw nothing, and at nightfall they commenced to grow anxious. Hunger, too, began to make itself felt, for they had eaten nothing since they left the ships, and they passed another uncomfortable night in the boat, drenched to the skin by a thunder-shower which passed over them.

Unfortunately, all this time, both the current and their own exertions had been carrying them away from their comrades, for the ships had contrived to beat back to their former anchorage on the morning after the tornado. They lowered their boats to look for the missing one, and searched the neighbourhood for two or three days, with some difficulty, for that dense mist, locally termed "the smokes," had enveloped all the coast-line, and it was impossible to see far in any direction. Naturally, it never occurred to them to look for the missing boat some fifty or sixty miles to leeward; all their efforts being fruitless, they concluded that it had foundered during the storm, and abandoning further search, and having exchanged all their wares, they left the coast to return to England.

On the second morning the castaways, seeing nothing of their ships, rowed eagerly along the shore to the east, hoping to sight them every minute. Thirst they fortunately escaped, as there was a breaker of water in the boat; but the pangs of hunger grew so acute that towards the afternoon

they were obliged to endeavour to get some food from the shore. They did not attempt to land, for Baker's experience at Grand Drewin in his former voyage showed them that it would not do to trust the negroes too much, but they anchored off a cluster of thatched huts that stood between the beach and the forest, and made signs till a canoe or two came off to them. To deter these natives from any hostile attempt they gave them to understand that their ships were close at hand, and they succeeded in obtaining some yams and other vegetable food in exchange for merchandize, after which they again continued to the east, looking for their ships.

Thus for several days they followed the coast-line, where there was nothing but an endless wall of forest coming close down to the beach of yellow sand, with here and there a group of thatched huts, half swallowed up in the surrounding verdure. At sunset they often saw herds of elephants come down to the beach, rolling in the sand and frolicking in the water to cool themselves, taking up water in their trunks and spurting it upon each other. Antelopes, too, they frequently saw, and at night they heard the scream of the leopard. Occasionally they met a native or two in a canoe, fishing; and when they could persuade one of these to approach them, they anchored their boat and offered goods for food and water. Thus from time to time they got from the shore yams, palm-nuts, palm-wine, and wild honey in the

comb, which relieved their hunger for a time, but proved a sorry substitute for the meat diet to which they had been accustomed; and this unusual and insufficient food, combined with exposure, fatigue, and want of rest, soon reduced them to great weakness.

They had been twenty days in this open boat when some natives, who spoke Portuguese, came from a village off which they had anchored, bringing with them gold-dust, with scales and weights, to purchase goods. These natives asked where the white men's ships were, and the English replied that they were at sea, and would be there in a day or two; while from the natives they learned that they had passed the Ivory Coast and were now on the Gold Coast, or the Coast of the Mina as it was then very generally termed by the English. They had now for some days abandoned all hope of finding their ships, and on gaining this information from the natives they began to consider whether the best thing that remained for them to do was not to go to the nearest Portuguese port and surrender themselves. They knew they would fare hardly at their hands, but the only other alternative was to land at some native village, where they would be entirely in the power of the natives. They had hitherto shrunk from regarding either of these two alternatives, preferring to struggle on as long as there was the faintest hope of their again meeting their ships; but

now they felt they could hold out no longer. They were indeed reduced to the greatest extremities. Often they had been without food for two or three days at a time, and, besides being half-starved, they were exposed all day long to the burning rays of a tropical sun, while at night they were drenched and disturbed in their sleep by the frequent tornadoes. From having been so long confined in a sitting position their legs were stiff and cramped, and the joints so swollen that they could scarcely stand. After some discussion it was decided, by Baker's advice, that they would place themselves in the hands of the Portuguese. The worst these could do to them would be to hang them, which would put them out of their misery at once, and if they made them slaves for life and put them into their galleys, they were certain of having a sufficiency of food to enable them to pull at the oars, while in their present condition they rowed and starved. If they trusted themselves to the natives they thought they might fall into the hands of cannibals, who would kill and eat them at once; but, if not, they would be obliged to live amongst a savage people whose customs and manners were repugnant to Europeans, whose food consisted of nothing but vegetables, a diet little suited to English stomachs, and where, in short, they considered their condition would be worse than that of any galley-slave.

When they had decided to put themselves into the

hands of the Portuguese they were, according to their reckoning, only some sixty miles from Elmina, and for that place they now determined to make. They rowed all day and late into the night without stopping, till, observing a light on the shore, and imagining that it was a trading-place, they dropped anchor, intending to try and obtain some food in the morning. At daybreak they pulled towards the shore, and soon perceived through the mist a watch-house upon a rock, with a large black wooden cross standing near it; and as the mist lifted they saw a castle on a high rock on the shore. This was the castle of St. Anthony, at Axim, the most westerly of the Portuguese posts on the Gold Coast, and consequently the one which the castaways would reach first; but they appear to have been ignorant of its existence, and were wondering what place it could be, when one or two Portuguese appeared, and, showing a flag of truce, waved to them to come ashore.

Although they had fully made up their minds to surrender themselves to the Portuguese, and were in fact going to Elmina with that intention, now that they found themselves unexpectedly in front of a Portuguese fort their courage failed them; liberty seemed more dear now that they were upon the point of losing it, and they were beginning to put the boat about to make off, when a gun was fired from the castle, the ball falling within a yard of them. Regard-

ing this as an order to land, and being incapable of offering resistance, they were rowing as fast as they could to the shore, when they were suddenly saluted by a furious discharge of all the ordnance of the castle. Although the balls fell thickly around the boat neither it nor any of its occupants were struck, and, giving way with a will, they were soon under the walls of the castle, where the guns could not touch them.

As soon as the boat grounded they leaped out, intending to go up and surrender themselves, when they and their boat were assailed by volleys of large stones, which were rained down upon them from the castle walls, and which nearly stove in the bottom of the latter. Surprised at this reception, they were standing irresolute, not knowing what to do, when a number of natives came running down, armed with spears, bows, and shields, and let fly a cloud of arrows that wounded some of their number. This treachery on the part of the Portuguese, who had invited them to land, filled them with rage ; and, forgetting their helpless situation, they ran their boat through the surf, sprang on board her, and lying just off the shore where the castle guns could not touch them, opened fire with their harquebuses and bows. Six or seven of the natives soon fell, and the remainder making off, the castaways turned their weapons upon the Portuguese, a number of whom, dressed in long white shirts, were standing on the walls firing at the

boat. They killed or wounded several of these, and then, having sufficiently revenged themselves, rowed off, passing through another furious fusillade when they reached the zone of fire from the castle, and escaping out to sea.

When they had got beyond the range of the castle guns they saw a canoe coming out to them, and, as it contained only three natives, they waited for it to come up. These natives, who spoke very good Portuguese, asked them to what country they belonged, and, on learning that they were English, asked where were their ships. Baker answered that they had two well-appointed ships which would be there in a day or two; and the natives asked them to come on shore, promising to treat them well, but this offer was of course declined. Baker gathered from the natives that the castle was on the western point of Cape Three Points, but he must have mistaken them, for the Portuguese never had any fort or castle there, and the description he gives of the place shows it to have been St. Anthony at Axim.

This experience of the kind of reception they were likely to receive at the hands of the Portuguese decided the castaways to land somewhere beyond Portuguese influence, and trust to the mercy of the negroes; so they rowed back some ninety miles to the west; which, if their estimate of the distance was correct, must have brought them to the Rio Sueira da Costa, near Grand Bassam, on the Ivory Coast.

Here they anchored, and when some natives came off in their canoes they gave them presents, in order to create a friendly feeling. These men returned on shore, and, displaying their gifts, more natives hastened to go and see these generous white strangers, who gave something for nothing, and amongst them went the son of the chief of the place. As soon as the castaways learned the rank of this last, Baker profited by this unexpected chance to explain to him their wants, and asked for food and shelter, offering in payment the boat and its contents, and adding that their comrades in their ships, which would arrive in a day or two, would richly reward them for their hospitality. This last fiction was added in the hope that the natives would be induced to treat them better if they thought they had friends at hand who would be able to reward kindness and revenge ill-treatment.

The chief's son could promise nothing, but he went ashore to consult his father, and presently returned to say they could land; upon which the castaways, delighted to think that their toil and hardships would soon be at an end, at once rowed for the shore, where a crowd of some five hundred natives were waiting to receive them. The landing is particularly bad at this part of the coast, the surf running very high, and, though the boat got over one or two lines of rollers successfully, it was capsized near the shore. However, no lives were lost, nor even the smallest trifle

that had been in the boat, all being saved by the natives gathered on the beach, who plunged in and swam hither and thither till everything was picked up. The famished crew were at once supplied with food, while the natives, most of whom had never before seen white men, crowded round and gazed in wonder. But notwithstanding this hospitable reception the castaways were not without fear of treachery, for every native was armed with a spear; and as night closed in they lay together on the ground, fearing to close their eyes lest they should be murdered in their sleep.

A European-built boat, and the merchandize, which was of some quantity, represented almost fabulous wealth to the natives, so they treated the white men exceedingly well for some days, supplying them with everything they required; but as day after day passed, and there was no sign of the promised ships, they began to be less attentive, suspecting that these ships had no existence except in the imaginations of their guests, and that consequently there was nothing more to be made out of the latter. In truth, what they had already received would have amply paid for the food of the castaways for many months, but they had already got that in their own hands, and so, imagining there was no more profit to be made, they lessened the quantity of food supplied day by day, until at last they ceased to supply anything.

It seems that Baker and his companions had de-

spoiled themselves of everything on first landing, even of their knives, for Baker says they had to range the forest in search of roots to eat, which they were obliged to dig up with their fingers for want of other implements. Edible roots seem to have been few and far between, for the castaways were soon again in a famished condition, and they seized with avidity anything eatable. They had contrived to make an earthen pot, for the natives would neither give nor lend them one, and in this they boiled the roots they dug up in the forest, roasting berries and such things in the fire; while at night they slept on the bare ground, having a large fire beside them to keep off wild beasts. This hard life, added to the unwholesome and insufficient food, soon told upon the less sturdy, who fell sick. Their clothes, rotten with perspiration and sun, gradually dropped from their backs, so that before long each of them had scarce a rag to cover himself with. Then the sick, one by one, died, and in a few weeks six out of the nine who had landed succumbed. Indeed, when the pestilential nature of the climate is taken into consideration, the marvel is that all did not die earlier.

The three survivors, of whom Baker was one and Gage another, contrived to drag on a miserable existence, often envying the happier lot of their comrades in misfortune, who were now past suffering, till one morning they saw a sail in the offing. One can imagine how anxiously they watched it, and

their joy on seeing that the ship was making for that port. They at once put off to her in a canoe, and naked, bronzed by the sun, and with the wolfish aspect of half-starved men, they could not fail to rouse the compassion of the crew of the ship, which was a French one trading on the coast. They were taken on board and well treated, but on the return of the vessel to France, there being then war between France and England, they were detained as prisoners of war; and it was while in France that Robert Baker, at the request of his fellow-prisoner George Gage, wrote his metrical narrative.

VI.—PEDRO BLANCO'S TREASURE.

About one hundred miles north-west of Cape Mesurado the sluggish stream known as the Gallinas river flows down to the sea, and forms a maze of spongy islands covered with reeds and mangroves. This territory is inhabited by the Veis, a pagan people of Mandingo descent. The desolation of this gloomy spot, and the dangerous bar at the mouth of the river, peculiarly adapted it for the slave trade. The innumerable creeks and inlets afforded secure hiding-places for the vessels of the slavers, which could lie in deep water entirely concealed by the mangroves; while the continually shifting channel on the bar rendered it impossible for any ship, unless supplied with a pilot from the shore, to enter the river. It was thus secure from molestation by any of the British ships engaged in the suppression of the slave-trade.

It was probably these advantages which induced

a Spaniard, named Pedro Blanco, who afterwards gained an unenviable notoriety on the West Coast, to establish himself at this place. He first arrived at the Gallinas in command of the slaver *Conquistador;* and, failing to complete his cargo of slaves, he landed a portion of the goods, set up a trading establishment on shore, and sent away his vessel with such slaves as he had been able to obtain. He thus commenced a trade with the natives and such slavers as visited the Gallinas, which was so successful that in a few years he monopolized the entire traffic of the Vei country.

Every precaution was taken against surprise. The labyrinth of islands at the river-mouth was dotted with "look-outs," seats erected on tall trees or on poles from seventy to one hundred feet above the ground, from which the sea was constantly swept by telescopes to announce the approach of slavers or vessels of war. His buildings occupied several of the islands. On one near the river-mouth was his factory for legitimate trade, where European goods were bartered for the produce of the country, palm-oil, hides, wax, and ivory, and to this such naval officers as succeeded in landing were always conducted, in order that they might see how innocent was his traffic, and how much his character was maligned by rumour. About a mile further up the river was his dwelling-house, furnished with barbaric splendour, and supplied with every luxury that could

be obtained; while still further inland, on another island, was his harem, where his numerous native wives dwelt each in her own establishment, according to native custom. Still more remote, some ten or twelve other islands contained the slave barracoons; strong stockaded enclosures, clamped with iron bars, roofed with heavy beams similarly secured, and thatched over with grass. These were capable of holding from three hundred to five hundred slaves, according to their size; and each was guarded by three or four fever-stricken Portuguese or Spaniards; who, armed with loaded muskets, occupied the watch-house built near the entrance of each barracoon.

Blanco, who is said to have been a man of some education, dwelt in this pestilential spot for about fifteen years, with no European companions save the outcasts who were in his service, and his sister, who lived with him. He obtained immense power over the natives, and soon became known as the most successful slaver on the whole West Coast of Africa. Many tales are still extant illustrating his cruelty, his pride, his prodigality, his licentiousness, and his ostentatious liberality. Servants who disobeyed or neglected his orders were flogged to death, and it is said that he shot a European sailor for daring to ask permission to light a cigar at that which he was smoking.

Thousands of slaves were annually sent forth from the Gallinas, and, as the neighbourhood began to

become exhausted, the Vei chiefs, supplied with muskets, powder, and merchandize, extended their forays and man-hunts further into the interior; so that in a few years the whole country was devastated and depopulated as far as the influence of Blanco extended. About 1839, Pedro Blanco, having amassed immense wealth, quitted the Gallinas, and retired into private life at Havana. But, according to report, his lawless life and long residence in Africa had entirely unfitted him for civilized life; and after two or three years he is said to have returned with his sister to the West Coast, and to have settled down at Sierra Leone.

On a long, flat-topped spur, stretching out to the northward from the Sierra Leone range, are the ruins of two stone buildings, which popular tradition asserts to have been Pedro Blanco's. This spur, which is a continuation, at a lower level, of the ridge known as Havelock plateau, is about one thousand feet above the level of the sea. The slopes are covered with dense bush, but the summit is open and grassy. An old road which led up to it by the ravine of the Nicol Brook can still be traced, enclosed throughout with low stone walls long since overthrown and covered with bush. This spur used to be known as Mount Auriol. What its name may be now it is impossible to say, as new designations have recently been scattered round with a lavish hand by an enthusiastic official who imagined himself a discoverer

of unknown regions. The ruins themselves are of small extent. Each building apparently consisted of two rooms built of stone, and was surrounded by broad piazzas or verandahs of wood, of which latter nothing now remains but a raised terrace of stones.

Local tradition says that here lived Pedro Blanco and his sister. The latter died soon after her arrival, and was buried somewhere on the hill. After this event Pedro Blanco, who is said at this time to have found his chief pleasure in looking over and counting his ill-gotten wealth, led a solitary life on the hill-top with a black wife or two. Then it seems that he became anxious about his money, and sent for two native masons from the town, whom he caused to construct a subterranean chamber, intended, so he informed them, for the reception of his own body when it should please a merciful Providence to release him from this world of cares, and grant him his well-earned peace and rest in the kingdoms of the blest. While this vault was in course of construction the black wives were carefully kept out of the way; and the loneliness of the hill was in itself a sufficient guarantee against any curious busybody finding out what was being done. The masons were kept up on the hill till the vault was completed, and, to celebrate its completion, Pedro Blanco invited them to a luxurious breakfast. The masons did justice to the good things set before them, and so fell easy victims to the poison with which their entertainer had sea-

soned their food. As soon as they were dead Pedro Blanco dragged out his iron-bound chests, coffers, and bags, all full, of course, of gold and silver coin, and placed them in the vault, which he then closed. He threw the bodies of the two masons upon the top of the vault and filled up the hole with earth. Not long after this he passed to his fathers. He also was buried somewhere on the hill, which was thenceforward deserted.

Such is the local tradition, another version of which attributes all these acts to an old Portuguese, a member of the Mixed Commission Court, who is said to have become possessed of great wealth by some nefarious means, and who buried it, fearing he might be called upon to disgorge it. His intention was to solace his declining years in Portugal with the income derived from this capital; but he unfortunately died at Sierra Leone, about 1815, before he could remove it.

Although Pedro Blanco was quite capable of murdering two or more masons, I think the tradition does him an injustice, and that he was quite innocent of any such act, since the probability is that he never lived at Sierra Leone at all. We know positively that he left the Gallinas river in 1839 and went to Havana. If he afterwards settled at Sierra Leone, as is supposed, he must have been there at the same time as was Mrs. Melville, the authoress of *Letters from Sierra Leone;* and that lady would scarcely have

omitted to state that she had so notorious a character for her nearest neighbour. Besides, if I am not mistaken, she mentions the buildings on Mount Auriol as being in ruins in her time. The tradition then, I think, really refers to the Portuguese gentleman whose name has not been handed down to posterity; and the notoriety which Pedro Blanco attained led, in later times, to his name being mixed up with it.

About 1880 it pleased the authorities, for some reason best known to themselves, to order the salubrious and convenient rifle-range at Cape Sierra Leone, used by the troops in garrison at Sierra Leone, to be abandoned, and a new one to be constructed upon the damp and misty Havelock plateau. A long disused bush-path which led up the ravine of the Nicol Brook, and close past the ruined buildings on Mount Auriol, was opened up, and a musketry encampment formed on a knoll named Leopard Hill, which was at once re-christened Kortright Hill. This knoll was some three hundred feet higher than Mount Auriol and directly above it.

In the month of November, in the year 188—, there were residing in this musketry camp three officers of the garrison, engaged in musketry duty. Their names were Smith, Jones, and Robinson; Smith, a prematurely decayed subaltern, with a bald head scantily fringed with grey hair; Jones, the inevitable "lady-killer" found in every garrison; and Robinson,

a surgeon of Scotch extraction. Sitting one night in front of their tents, and looking down over the tangle of trees and bush towards Mount Auriol, they were astonished to see a light moving about among the ruins, the tradition concerning which was quite common property.

"Wonder what the deuce it can be?" said Jones.

"Verra probably the *igni-is fatu-u-s*, called by the voolgar 'Jock o' Lantern.' It is caused by the comboostion of—— Dom the mosquitos," and the surgeon interrupted his scientific homily to snatch wildly at the air.

"Who ever heard of an *ignis fatuus* on a rocky hill-top?" said Jones.

"Fireflies, perhaps," hazarded Smith, but nobody paid any attention to this suggestion.

"Do you know what that light is down there?" continued Jones to a servant who was engaged near the tents.

The man came forward.

"Heigh! Light in de ruinate house. No, sar, I donno what it be. Seem to favour duppy."

This solution of the mystery was not considered satisfactory. They could not believe that any duppy (ghost) would be so hard up for amusement as to wander about Mount Auriol at night. They therefore told the servant to go and make inquiries. They sat watching the light for some time, as it flickered to and fro amongst the trees around the

ruins below them. But soon the mist, which enwraps these hill-tops nightly, began to creep upwards in greyish coils and wreaths from the surrounding bush; the raw, damp air struck with a sudden chill, and as a heavy dew commenced to fall they sought the shelter of the mess-tent. Occasionally they looked out, and after about half-an-hour the light left the ruins and descended the path till a turn shut it out from view.

At tattoo the servant returned with news. Soldiers coming up the path from town had seen a white man with a lantern, below Mount Auriol, going down. They did not know who he was, they had never before seen him in Sierra Leone, therefore he was probably a new arrival. What reasons could a strange white man have in wandering about those lonely ruins with a lantern at eight o'clock at night? Here was something mysterious.

"This requires looking into," said Jones.

"Certainly," replied Smith.

Next morning, as they were returning to their camp from the range, a soldier reported that the white man was again at the ruins; so they sauntered quietly down the hill to see what he was doing. The path passed within fifty yards of the ruins, the intermediate space being covered with a thick growth of rank cane-grass, from eight to ten feet high. Pushing slowly through this they reached the first building. The ground beyond was comparatively clear, and they could see for some little distance. About forty

yards off, at a mango-tree which stood at the north-east corner of the second ruined building, and probably dated from its construction, was a sallow European, with black hair, and a slight black moustache. He was looking at the tree, and reading from a paper which he held in his hand. Presently, he stood with his back to the tree, took out a pocket-compass, took a sight with it, and then commenced pacing with measured strides along the east side of the building. As he passed out of sight behind the ruined wall the three hurried on. On turning the corner of the ruin they found the unknown gazing intently at a spot where a large, flat rock protruded from the ground. As he heard their footsteps he looked up, and thrust his paper and compass hastily into his pocket. He raised his hat to the new comers.

"Buenos dias, caballeros."

"A Spaniard, by all that's blue," muttered Jones; while Smith, who posed as a polyglot, and perhaps did not know more than a dozen words of any language except his own, hastened to improve the occasion, and reply—

"Buenos dias, señor. Que voulez-vous here?"

"Habla usted Español?" continued the stranger.

"What's that he says aboot a spaniel, Smith?" asked the surgeon.

"A spaniel!" replied the polyglot. "Ha! ha! you're evidently not a Spanish scholar. He said it was a very fine day."

But in spite of Smith's linguistic accomplishments it is probable that conversation with the Spaniard would have been barren of results, had not a negro, clad in European apparel, who seemed to be in the employ of the stranger, and equally well acquainted with the Spanish and English languages, made his appearance.

Through this medium the officers were informed that Don Rafael, for such it appeared was the name of the unknown, was thinking of growing coffee, for which purpose he had come to Sierra Leone, and was now engaged in looking for a suitable piece of land. He had arrived by the mail-steamer of the previous day. He appeared surprised, and rather annoyed, to learn that there was a musketry camp so close to Mount Auriol. He had thought, he said, that it was all wild round about. He politely declined an invitation to come up to the camp and lunch, and Smith, Jones, and Robinson bowed and retired.

"Coffee, indeed!" said Jones, as they were walking up the hill; "a man doesn't come to look for a suitable place for growing coffee, at night with a lantern."

"Certainly not," replied Smith.

"The whole business is very odd. He could only have landed from the mail yesterday morning, and yet in the evening there he was poking about in the ruins with a lantern. What does that prove, Smith?"

"What does that prove? Really, I — I don't see ——"

"Why it proves that he must have known about the ruins before he landed. He is probably a descendant of what's-his-name, the old Spaniard or Portuguese, who buried his money on that hill. The paper he was reading no doubt contains instructions for finding the exact spot. That was why he was taking bearings with a compass and pacing the ground."

"I moost confess it seems verra probable," remarked Robinson; "nae mon would, on the verra day he deesembarked from the steamer, climb to the top of a lonely hill, after dark, without some object."

"Certainly not," said Smith.

"And he didn't appear pleased to find there was some one up on these hills. He doesn't want people to know what he's doing," continued Jones; "we must just keep an eye on him and see what he's up to."

"Certainly," said Smith.

Next day some half-a-dozen Timni labourers could be seen at work with pickaxes and shovels near the ruins, under the supervision of the Spaniard. At dusk they struck work and went off down to the town for the night. No sooner were they gone than Smith hurried down to see what had been done. He returned in about half-an-hour, panting from his hurried climb, and reported that a hole about six feet square had been commenced on one side of

the flat rock at which the Spaniard had looked so intently.

"Well," said Jones; "what did I tell you? A man doesn't dig holes like that to plant coffee. Depend upon it he's digging for the buried treasure."

The work was continued for several days. As the pit grew deeper the labourers found they were digging between three immense rocks, with vertical sides, forming three sides of a rectangle. They began work every morning at seven and left off at dusk; but the digging progressed slowly, as there were so many boulders of rock that had to be taken out of the hole. A servant, who was sent down to talk to the labourers, ascertained that the Spaniard had told them he was digging for building stone.

After about eight days' work the pit had reached a depth of some twelve feet, and a flat stone, which seemed to cover the whole bottom of the hole, was struck upon. The Spaniard said that was all he wanted. "The stone they had come to was excellent for building purposes. As the day was hot they could leave off working. Next morning they could come back again and quarry the stone." So the Timnis went down the ravine to the town, leaving the Spaniard at the ruins with his black companion or servant.

It was late in the evening when this intelligence was brought to the camp by a man who had overtaken the labourers as they were going down the

ravine about noon. Smith, Jones, and Robinson were much excited. It was evident that the Spaniard was close upon the treasure, which was probably under the flat stone at the bottom of the hole.

"Mon, it will never do to let a measly Portygoos carry off the siller right under our verra noses," said Robinson; "why shouldna' we have a hand in it?"

"Certainly," replied Smith; "why not?"

"Let's go down at once," said Jones.

It was pitch-dark, but, furnished with a couple of lanterns, the three scrambled down the steep and stony path. As they neared the ruins they stopped to listen. Not a sound was to be heard but the rustling of the tall cane-grass as it swayed to and fro in the light night-wind, and the distant boom of a Timni drum, played down on the plain below at Kissi.

"It's all right," whispered Jones; "the coast's clear. But look out for snakes; the grass is full of them."

They pushed their way through the grass, which met over their heads, and soon emerged at the clear space by the second ruined building. Here was a well-beaten track, made by the labourers in going to and from their work, and which terminated at a dark and yawning pit. The lanterns threw a feeble glimmer into the hole, but their light did not penetrate its depths. One was lowered on three

pocket-handkerchiefs tied together, and they could see that the bottom was flat and unbroken.

"I'll go down and see if the stone has been disturbed," said Jones; and, swinging himself over the side, he dropped into the hole. "It's all right," he continued, after a minute or two. "Here is a flat stone which covers the whole floor, and it evidently hasn't been moved. We are in good time after all. Give me a hand up." And he clambered out of the hole.

"What's to be done noo?" asked the surgeon. "We canna dig, for we have no tools here; and we canna leave it, or the Portygoos might come in the night and take the siller."

"Certainly, he might," acquiesced Smith.

They pondered awhile.

"I'll tell you what," said Jones. "We'll roll into the hole some of these boulders that have been taken out of it. That'll make it safe for to-night, and to-morrow we'll see what will happen."

"Right you are."

For half-an-hour they worked, rolling over into the pit the heavy boulders that had been taken out and left near its edge. It required their united efforts to move some of them; and at last, panting, grimy, and soaked with perspiration, they left off. The pit was half full of rocks, which could not be taken out again under two days at least.

"That's enough," said Jones. "Let's go up to camp."

In the middle of the night the sentry woke up Jones to tell him there was some one with a lantern down at the ruins. But Jones felt quite happy about it. He knew no one could uncover the flat stone in a night's work, and he turned over and went to sleep again.

Early next morning he sent down a scout to see what took place. The Timni labourers arrived, and, finding the pit half-full of rocks, sat down under the trees and waited. After about an hour came the Spaniard and his servant. He asked who had thrown the rocks into the hole, and the Timnis said they thought it must be the soldiers. After a little, he said he would defer his work till the musketry was finished and the soldiers had all gone down from the hills, so he paid off the labourers, and they all went away. A day or two later, the Spaniard and his servant left Sierra Leone by the outward-bound mail steamer. They were going to Sherbro, report said, to look for some buried treasure there.

There was nothing now to prevent Smith, Jones, and Robinson from clearing out the hole and securing the treasure. They passed all their spare time down at the ruins; but even with the assistance of some ten soldiers it took them four days to take out of the pit all the rocks they had rolled into it. But at last the flat stone was cleared. They leaped into the hole and carefully cleared away the earth and *débris*. There was no iron ring in its centre, as should have

been the case according to the best authorities, nor was it possible to detect any crack or joint. This was disappointing. It appeared to be one immense slab, which covered the floor of the pit, its edges being still buried in the side-walls.

"We can't dig down the sides from the top," said Jones. "That would take an awful time. We must tunnel in from the bottom, till we reach the edge of the stone."

For two days they worked at this. Smith, who had once seen a working model of a coal-mine, lay on his side at the bottom of the hole, in the orthodox colliery fashion, and worked away with a pickaxe; while Jones sat up above, with his legs dangling in the hole, smoking cigarettes, and encouraging his comrade to persevere. Robinson was ill and could not come down to the ruins. Exposure to the sun and the unusual work had brought on an attack of fever, and he was confined to his tent.

Smith tunneled in to a depth of some two feet on each side of the hole, and still the edge of the stone had not been reached. It would not be safe to undermine the sides any further, or they would fall in.

"I didn't engage to move a stone that covered an acre of ground," said Jones, despondingly.

Next they tried to split the stone. An immense fire was lighted in the pit and kept burning for hours; then the embers were swept aside, and buckets-full of cold water thrown upon the heated stone. But

only a few scales of granite flaked off. Their time was growing short now, and in a few days they would have to leave the hills, so they set a man to work to drill a hole, intending to blast the stone. But when that man drilled a hole ten inches deep into the stone, they were obliged to acknowledge that they were working at bed-rock. No men, without the aid of machinery and tackle, could have placed in position a mass of granite more than ten feet square, at least eleven inches thick, and, perhaps, as many feet. The Spaniard, they concluded, had misunderstood his instructions, and had dug at a wrong spot. Certainly the rock they had been working at had never been moved by man. Reluctantly they gave it up. Next day they quitted the hills and returned to Freetown, leaving Sierra Leone soon after. Robinson's fever had taken a bad turn, and he had been invalided to England.

Three years later the turn of the wheel found Smith and Jones once more at Sierra Leone, and in camp at Kortright Hill. One day it occurred to them to go and look at the scene of their old labours. They found the pit and its surroundings overgrown with grass and bush, but otherwise undisturbed. It was evident that it had not been interfered with since they were there last. They wandered on from the pit, and were walking slowly through the tall grass towards the end of the spur, when they suddenly came upon a flat-topped rock, about three feet high, and as many

broad. On the flat surface was a cross, cut deeply into the stone.

"A grave, I suppose," said Smith.

"Perhaps, and perhaps not," replied Jones. "It may be a mark to indicate the position of the buried treasure. You know the buccaneers in the West Indies used always to cut crosses on rocks to show the direction in which the treasure was to be found. Sometimes it was on a prolongation of the long arm of the cross, and sometimes on the short. Some treasure was found at Turneffe, a cay off Honduras, a year or two ago, by following up a line from a cross like this."

"It may be under the stone," said Smith.

"I don't think that's likely. That would be the first idea to occur to any one. Therefore, a man who wanted to conceal his money wouldn't put it under a marked stone."

The rock with the cross on it was about one hundred and fifty yards beyond the second ruined building. Smith and Jones had often walked over this part of the hill before, but this rock, hidden in the long grass, had hitherto escaped notice, for it was impossible to see anything unless one chanced to come directly upon it. They took careful bearings. The long arm of the cross pointed directly at the mango-tree at the north-east corner of the second ruined building.

"That's the very tree from which the Spaniard

took his measurements," said Jones. "I'm beginning to think this cross is a lucky find."

"Certainly," said Smith.

"Now, we'll put down pegs so that we can keep the bearings of both arms; and then, to make sure the cross does not mark a grave, we'll turn the rock over, and dig under it."

Next day they set to work; the old enthusiasm had quite revived. A few strokes with a pick-axe were sufficient to show that the earth where the marked rock had rested had never been disturbed."

"That proves the cross was not intended to mark a grave," said Jones. "There is only one other thing it could be meant for, and that is to point out the position of the treasure. Let's begin on the long arm first."

"Certainly," said Smith.

They marked a line from their pegs up to the mango-tree at which the cross had pointed. Then, at intervals of a foot or so, they commenced digging along this line to see if the earth had been disturbed. This occupied some days, as they had not much spare time to devote to such work; but at last the whole line from the pegs to the mango-tree had been tried, and it was evident that the earth had not anywhere been disturbed; its stratification was unbroken throughout.

Then they worked on the line of the short arm. They dug along it for about fifty yards to the east,

till they reached the steep and bush-covered slope of the hill, and then they began to the west. They had reached nearly one hundred yards from the cross in this direction, and were working in very rocky ground, when one afternoon about four o'clock, as they were trying the ground at short intervals, as usual, the pick-axe, with which Jones always worked because it was easier than the shovel, on being driven into the earth, sunk right up to the head. They tried all around, with the same result. The earth was quite loose over a space of some six feet square. They looked at each other with flushed faces.

"I believe we've got it at last," cried Jones. "Hurrah! no more military servitude for me, my boy. We'll be able to say good-bye to this infernal country, and go home and live in luxury."

"Most certainly," said Smith.

They threw off their coats and hats and went to work with a will. The sun, though low in the heavens, was still powerful, and struck upon their bare heads; but they paid no attention to it. The perspiration streamed from them, for the temperature was about 88° in the shade; they panted for breath, and every now and then they were obliged to stop and rest. Still, the deeper they dug, the softer grew the earth, which was entirely free from large stones or boulders of rock. At about half-past six it was beginning to get dark, and they had reached a depth of some four feet.

"I shouldn't think it could be much deeper," said Jones. "Four or five feet would be quite deep enough to bury money. I wonder how much there is."

"Certainly two or three hundred pounds, I suppose," suggested Smith.

"Two or three hundred? Two or three thousand. Two or three hundred thousand you mean. Why old Blanco was a millionnaire. He was the most successful slaver on the whole West Coast."

"So much the better. But, I say, the coin will all be obsolete, won't it?"

"Well," replied Jones, "what of that? The doubloons, moidores, or whatever they may be, will still be worth the gold or silver they are made of. You can take them to the mint when you get home."

"Oh! yes, that would be all right of course. But I was thinking the steamer people wouldn't take doubloons in payment for a passage home, and I havn't got enough at Cox's to pay for one."

"Well, it's no use raising difficulties in advance. Let's get the coin out first."

They fell to work again. A faint, sickly smell came from the earth as it was turned up, and some immense worms wriggled about at their feet. Soon it became so dark that they were obliged to collect sticks and light a fire at the edge of the hole; they were frightfully tired, but still they persevered.

Their shadows were projected by the firelight in grotesque and gigantic forms upon the rocky ground; strange moths whirled near the flames, and a mosquito-hawk came swooping by. They had got to a depth of about five feet, when a stroke of the pick brought to the surface a long greyish object. Smith picked it up. It was a human thigh-bone.

"The bones of the murdered masons, by Jove," cried Jones. "We must be close on it now."

More bones were rapidly disinterred, and soon the pick struck with a ringing sound upon some hard object.

"The top of the vault or the strong-box," said Jones.

"It didn't sound hollow, though," remarked Smith.

"How the deuce could it when it's full of coin?" replied Jones, angrily. "Here, clear out all this loose earth with your shovel, and let's see what we've got to."

A quarter of an hour sufficed to remove the earth, and to expose a flat surface of stone. It was sounded all over with the pick-axe, but alas! it soon became only too clear that it was an immense flat-topped mass of granite, similar to that over which they had spent so much time and labour at the first pit that had been dug. They looked at each other despondently.

"What a beastly sell!" said Jones.

"It certainly is," replied Smith.

They put on their coats and hats, collected all the bones they could find, to show to the doctor up in the camp, and started to climb up the hill. The chill night-air struck coldly on their heated bodies and their damp clothing, and as they pushed their way through the long grass the dew fell in showers upon them.

Jones shuddered. "I believe I'm going to have fever," he said. "I can't get the smell of that earth out of my nostrils. Faugh! we've been digging up a grave."

It was past nine when they reached the camp, exhausted with their exertions. Jones was too tired to eat, and went to bed. Next morning he was down with fever, with a temperature of 104°. Three days later Smith was taken ill, and both had to be invalided to England to save their lives.

The bones which they had brought up were pronounced by the doctor to be those of a woman. Amongst them were found three false teeth, carved out of a piece of ivory, the upper part of which was made to fit over the gum, and had no doubt originally been coloured red. This primitive specimen of the dentist's art seemed to show that the woman had been a European.

But is there really any treasure buried on Mount Auriol? I'm sure I don't know. The Spaniard who came out must have had reason for supposing there was; and a man would not undertake an expensive

journey like that from Spain to Sierra Leone without feeling tolerably certain of its results. Perhaps, after all, he found it on that day when he sent his labourers away, saying it was too hot to work—or that night. Who can tell? But Jones is still sanguine. I heard from him the other day. He is still in England, and has not quite recovered his health. He intends to try again when he goes back to Sierra Leone, and his present idea is to dig inside the ruined buildings to try and find the vault. I will make the results of his future explorations known as soon as I hear from him. Probably, if he does not succeed in bagging the treasure, the climate will succeed in bagging him.

VII.—THE BELLE OF EPI.

Amina Ba was certainly the best-looking girl in Epi; on this point all the youths were agreed; and she really was pretty. I do not mean to say that she would have taken London society by storm and have become a professional beauty, or that even she would have turned many heads in England. Negro beauty, to be appreciated, requires a good deal of "living up to," especially at first, though careful culture soon enables the student to distinguish good looks where he would at first have never suspected their existence. But from the African standpoint Amina was a beauty. Rather below the average height of women, her limbs were most delicately proportioned; her skin was as soft as satin, and when it was anointed with the sweet-smelling unguent, which the local traders imported from the British settlement at Lagos, she glistened like a polished mahogany nymph. Her eyes, set rather obliquely, and shaded by lashes

with that upward curl which is so peculiarly a characteristic of some African races, and which their descendants of mixed European blood retain for generations, were arch and expressive. Her nose was nearly straight, her mouth small, and her lips, full, without being of that type which is commonly termed "blubber," parted over a row of lustrous white teeth. Her head was delicately poised upon a pretty neck, and her hands and feet were excessively small.

"What kind of fancy portrait is this?" I hear the petulant reader exclaim. "This description would better suit a European than a prognathous African. Where is the broad flat nose, *minus* a bridge, and with up-tilted and wide-spreading nostrils? Where are the enormous cheek-bones, the capacious mouth with thick blubber lips, the splay-foot with the protruding heel? Where are these, I say?" I crave thy grace, reader. True is it that the *canaille* amongst African races—the Eboes, the Odonkos, the Krus, the Lahous, and others—possess all the characteristics which you have so graphically described; but there are other races, Nature's aristocrats, in Africa, whom such a description as that you have suggested would not fit at all; and our heroine belongs to one of these.

To see Amina coming back from the pool after drawing water, with her earthen pot deftly balanced on her head, moving with the free and unrestrained grace of the young savage, with her arms swinging

and her eyes sparkling, was to see a charming picture of a girl overflowing with youth, health, and animal spirits. The youth of the village would all have sighed after her, only the African youth is not given to sighing. They would all have liked to marry her, but they felt that was impossible; her father, Kosoko, asked so much for her. Did he not demand eight *oke* of cowries for her—160,000 cowries—an immense fortune? * They therefore gazed and admired, told her how charming she was, and hoped she would soon get married and then treat them kindly. Her costume was not exactly that of a European *belle*. A bright-coloured handkerchief was knotted tastefully round her head, and a piece of equally bright-coloured cotton-print depended from the waist to the knee. These, with a few strings of beads, and some copper bangles on wrist and ankle, completed her attire. It was cool, and suitable for the climate; besides, this kind of airy costume possesses the great advantage that a man can know what he is going to marry. He cannot have any hidden deformity sprung upon him on the wedding-night.

The town of Epi is situated, as is of course well known, near Lagos. Some years ago the British laid hands upon it and annexed it to that colony; but at the time of which I am speaking it was still

* An *oke*, 20,000 cowries, is worth about 12*s*. 6*d*.

independent. On this part of the Slave Coast the village chiefs and head-men have, with the priests, formed a secret society for the purpose of terrorising the people and keeping them in subjection. The chief of the village is usually chief of the local branch of the society, and he and the priests play into each other's hands for their own ends. Of course the mainspring of this scheme of despotism and terrorism is here, as elsewhere in the world, superstition. The decrees of the society, promulgated by the priests with mysterious ceremonies, are regarded as divine utterances; and its power is consolidated by secret poisonings, pretended prophesies, conjuring tricks, ventriloquism, and all the usual juggling. Annually, a human victim is selected by the society, and sacrificed to the deity of the lagoon, which here extends along the coast. This victim is invariably a virgin; and it is perhaps with a view of escaping this possible fate that young girls in this part of the world always hasten to remove themselves from that category.

Amina had not long completed her fifteenth year when Amadu Fulani, a Houssa trader from the Yoruba country, came to Epi for a few days; in the course of business, and lodged in one of the houses in her father's court-yard. To see Amina was to admire her, and to admire her was to covet her possession. Amadu Fulani was a man long past middle age, and had two wives already in Yoruba country; but as,

these were a little *passées*, the law, for he was a strict Mohammedan, permitted him to take another; and the old man dreamed a dream of conjugal bliss with a young and comely wife, in which none of the risks involved by coupling age with youth were suffered to intrude.

Amadu was a man of action. Having made up his mind, he engaged the services of a corpulent dame, according to the country etiquette, to go and prepare the parents of his intended for his proposal, and to ascertain how much he would have to pay for her. His overtures and presents were graciously received, and next day he himself waited upon Kosoko. For him, as a pagan, Amadu had of course an unbounded contempt, but he was too politic to allow it to appear. He overwhelmed him with civilities, approached the question of the amount of "head money" to be paid for Amina with great delicacy, and haggled about it with much subtlety. On learning that the rich trader sought his daughter in marriage, Kosoko had at once doubled her price, and Amadu found that the sum was greater than he could pay then and there, he not having anticipated such a contingency as the purchase of a new wife when he left his home. But he paid a portion of the "head-money" down on the spot, to give him a legal claim upon the girl, and promised to return in a month or two with the balance, from Abbeokuta, where he was

going to trade. In the meantime the girl would, of course, remain with her parents.

Amina made a little pout when Amadu was presented to her as her future husband, and she compared his grave face and grizzled beard unfavourably with the youthful charms of some of her village friends. But girls in West Africa have little or nothing to do with the choice of a husband; it is a mere question of barter between the suitors and parents. Consequently, as the wives have no voice in the contract, they have no scruples about acting after marriage as if they had entered into none. A few days after this, Amadu Fulani quitted Epi, taking with him some immense bundles of kola nuts, which were borne on the heads of his slaves. This was in August, and he promised to return before the end of November.

One day, when Amina was pounding corn with her long wooden pestle, Possu, the village chief, a stout man of some forty years, rather addicted to intemperate habits, chanced to pass by. Perhaps he had not noticed before that she had grown up, but in any case he was evidently pleased with her now.

"Child," he said "you work too hard, and the sun is hot. You must come and rest in my court, where I have many curious things to show you," and he passed on.

Amina would have blushed had she known how; but she did not; so she merely readjusted her waist-

cloth, which had slipped aside during the process of pounding, and went on with her work.

"Go to his court, indeed!" she thought. "Does he think I will bring disgrace upon my father, who has promised me to the rich Amadu Fulani? Oh, no."

Possu, in his kingly way, had regarded his invitation almost as an order, and was somewhat surprised when she did not come. But he said nothing, for a West African chief is not an autocrat; a great deal of power is retained in the hands of the sub-chiefs and headmen, and if a chief outrages popular prejudices he is soon deposed, and he is lucky if he does not lose his head into the bargain.

A few weeks later, as Amina was passing one evening before the door of the mud guard-house, through which access was gained to Possu's compound, a hand was suddenly stretched out, and she was seized by the arm and dragged in. It was Possu. She bit, fought, and struggled. Possu was rather short of breath, and it is doubtful if he was quite sober, while the girl wriggled like an eel, and finally broke from him and fled out of the gate, leaving her solitary garment in his hand, like a female Joseph.

This unusual resistance only stimulated Possu's ardour the more, and, as Amina now carefully avoided passing near his compound, he made overtures to her through one of his wives. "Anything she wanted, in reason," he promised, "she should have. What

did she say to two new handkerchiefs and four yards of blue baft?" But Amina remained deaf to all these seductions. Doubtless, had her admirer been young and good-looking, she would have relented; but Possu did not possess these attractions. He had never been handsome, and intemperance had not added any charm to his appearance. When the go-between remonstrated with her for being a fool, and making such a fuss about a trifle, she always had the same reply. Her parents had promised her to the Houssa trader, and she could not bring disgrace upon them.

One day, to her great surprise, she saw Possu come into her father's court-yard. She at once ran away and hid herself, but she had nothing to fear that day. In fact, Possu, stimulated by continual failure, had determined to marry the girl, and had come to open negotiations with her father. Kosoko heard the proposal in silence. Had he known, he said in reply, that his daughter had found favour in the eyes of the chief, nothing would have pleased him more than to have given her to him. But he had no idea of any such thing, no hint had been given; and so, only two months ago, he had betrothed her to Amadu Fulani, the rich Houssa trader, who had paid so-much on deposit on her account.

Possu, of course, knew all this before; but he pretended to have been ignorant of it, and endeavoured to persuade Kosoko to break his agreement

with the Houssa. "I will give the same amount that he was going to pay," said he; "only I will pay it now, to-morrow, instead of waiting two months. Perhaps your Houssa will never come back, but if he does you can repay him what he has already given you." But Kosoko remained firm, for such a breach of faith would be almost unheard of. Amadu Fulani had a legal claim upon Amina, he said; he could not break his agreement, spoil his name, and run the risk of having palavers brought against him. Still, he was anxious not to offend his chief, so he said, that if he would wait till the Houssa returned, then they could see if he might not be induced to waive his claim. But this did not suit the impatient Possu. He wanted Amina at once, he said; and he went away cursing.

A fortnight passed away, and, as nothing more was said or done by Possu, Amina and her parents hoped he had abandoned his design, or at least deferred it till the return of the Houssa. Towards the end of October, it was announced, in accordance with the usual custom, that on the first night of the new moon in November, the *ovisha*, or familiar demon of the god of the lagoon, the chief local deity, would make his annual progress through the town; the inhabitants of which were therefore forbidden to leave their houses after sunset, while all lights and fires were to be extinguished. This announcment naturally aroused great alarm amongst the virgins of Epi, each of whom

feared that the *ovisha's* choice would fall upon her; and they all did their best to render themselves ineligible. Amina, this year, was not alarmed. According to native custom she could not properly be classed as a virgin, since she was betrothed, that is, half married. For by native law a betrothed girl is regarded almost as a wife, and the man to whom she is betrothed can demand and obtain damages from a paramour just as if she were actually his wife, and for even the most innocent liberties that may be taken with her by men who were perhaps ignorant of the betrothal.

The eventful night drew near. One evening, early in November, the pale crescent of the new moon was seen, and all the people fled to their houses, the doors of which they believed themselves compelled to leave open, so that the *ovisha* might enter if he wished. A profound silence reigned throughout the town until midnight, when a sudden outburst of savage and discordant sounds from the tract of bush near the town, sacred to the god of the lagoon, announced that the dreaded *ovisha* was approaching. At this terrible warning the affrighted inhabitants, in fear and trembling, threw themselves flat on the floors of their dwellings, and grovelled in the dust, lest they should chance to attract the notice of the *ovisha*, and perhaps arouse his anger.

A band of men, frightfully disguised, now entered the town. He who played the part of the *ovisha*

wore a costume well calculated to strike terror into his credulous fellow-townsmen. He was clothed from neck to heels in a long flowing robe of black monkey-skin, and his head was covered with a tall bristling head-dress of the same material. The face was concealed by a hideous wooden mask, painted white, whose thin lips and long pointed nose presented a horrible representation of cruelty and cunning. His hands were thrust into gloves formed of leopard's paws, which terminated in five long and gleaming claws. The *ovisha* was accompanied by ten or twelve men, similarly masked and attired, but less elaborately so. Each of them howled and yelled, while some beat drums, and others sounded horns, or struck together pieces of iron pots—it was a true charivari. Throughout the night this frightful din was kept up, the *ovisha* visiting every part of the town, and occasionally entering a house, as if in search of a victim. Towards morning the *ovisha* and his band suddenly entered Kosoko's courtyard, and Amina was instantly seized. She screamed with terror, but a cloth was thrown over her head; Kosoko, who, in defiance of established custom, ventured to raise his head from the ground, was stunned by a blow from behind, and the girl was borne off.

Next day the unfortunate parents, so far from being able to lament the fate of their child, were obliged to profess to be proud of the choice the *ovisha* had made, and to pretend to regard it as an honourable

distinction. Two days passed without anything being heard of Amina; the third, they knew only too well would be that of the sacrifice.

Neither Kosoko nor Amina's mother were present at the dread ceremony. Directly they heard the sound of the drums which announced the approach of the priests with their victim, they closed the doors and windows of the house, and sat mourning with their faces covered. Possu and all the inhabitants of Epi had already assembled at the place of sacrifice, an enormous silk-cotton tree, which stood on the shore of the lagoon; and thither the priests slowly wended, preceded by a band of horns and drums, and leading in their midst the victim. Amina was barely recognizable. Stripped perfectly naked, and with the head shaved, she was painted from head to foot with white clay. Her senses were probably numbed by the horror of the situation in which she found herself, or it may be that the priests had drugged her, which their knowledge of the properties of herbs well enabled them to do; for she made neither sign nor sound, and advanced slowly as if dazed.

At the approach of the victim the crowd raised a hymn in praise of the god of the lagoon, and the drums and horns sounded their loudest. The poor girl was led to the tree, under which stood the stool of sacrifice. Her hands were tied behind her back, her legs fastened together, and she was forced to kneel before the stool. She submitted quietly, look-

ing round with wide opened and expressionless eyes, as if the meaning of these preparations utterly escaped her; while the chief priest outstretched his arms over the lagoon, and invoked the favour and protection of the god. Then, taking a sword from an attendant, with one blow he severed the head from the body. The chant rose louder and louder, the drums and horns sounded more furiously, the people swayed to and fro, and, intoxicated with blood, some of them broke into a strange dance. For half-an-hour there reigned a scene of savage excitement; men, women and children, screamed, shouted, and yelled, and danced with the wildest extravagance, while rum and gin flowed freely; then they began to cool down, and gradually dispersed to their homes. Amina's body was, according to custom, left on the shore of the lagoon; to be removed, it was believed, by the spirits.

In this barbarous custom a victim is always decided upon beforehand by the priests and the chief, and they are usually careful to select one belonging to a poor and uninfluential family, in order that there may be no possibility of resistance or complaint; though the chances of these would be very remote, since all the people, not in the secrets of the fraternity, believe that it is really a superhuman being who annually searches for a victim in each town. The feigned doubts and hesitations of the disguised *ovisha* in selecting a victim are naturally designed to pro-

long and heighten the terror; thus every family is kept in suspense till near daybreak, when the girl who has already been secretly decided upon is seized. In this case, Possu, bringing his influence to bear, had demanded the selection of Amina, and the priests had found it to their interests to comply. Immediately after her seizure she had been removed to the inviolable depths of the tract of sacred bush, and had there been delivered up to him for two days. After her execution her body was removed by the priests at night, and secretly buried.

Amina had only been dead a fortnight when Amadu Fulani returned to Epi, with the balance of the "head-money," to claim his bride. On being informed of what had taken place he tore his beard and threw dust upon his head. Being a Mohammedan he regarded the native superstitions with contempt; he knew that the *ovisha* and his gang must be impostors, and he bitterly upbraided Kosoko, whose position he failed altogether to understand, with having tamely suffered his child to be murdered. In vain the wretched father urged that it was both useless and blasphemous to struggle against the wishes and edicts of the gods, that such conduct would have effected nothing for Amina, and would have involved himself and his whole family in destruction. He refused to listen, stopping his ears when the Houssa declared that the whole affair was a fraud, and that the *ovisha* and his followers were

only disguised men. Amadu Fulani was full of contempt and disgust, and could scarcely refrain from spitting at him.

After having overcome his first outburst of rage, he carefully questioned Kosoko concerning all that had taken place since his departure. The latter told him of Possu's offer for Amina, and the sagacious Houssa at once saw in this the clue to the mystery, and determined, if possible, to trace it home to him. But although he made the most minute inquiries he found it impossible to prove anything. On the one hand the superstition of the natives barred the way, and on the other the secret society baffled or stifled inquiry. He made Kosoko refund the sum he had paid in advance, and left the town vowing vengeance. But before leaving he bearded Possu, whom he met in the street, and cursed him in a long and most elaborate curse, invoking every possible calamity on his head. Possu was much alarmed at this, for the better class of Mohammedans, who read and write Arabic, and who are termed "doctors" by the pagans, are believed by the latter to possess certain occult and mysterious powers; and their blessing is believed to be as productive of good fortune as their curse is of the reverse.

A year had nearly passed away, and the period of the annual ceremony was close at hand, when Amadu Fulani once more appeared in Epi. This time he did not come alone, but was accompanied

by Osumanu Sokatu and Abubukari Kadara, who were also Houssa traders, and their followers. They brought no merchandise with them. They were going, they said, to purchase goods at Lagos with which to trade in the interior. The whole party, some twenty in number, were accommodated in Kosoko's courtyard.

The announcement of the approaching visit of the *ovisha* had been made a few days before their arrival, and it was on the evening of the fourth day of their sojourn in Epi that the new moon was observed. The credulous inhabitants at once sought their dwellings and extinguished their fires, as usual. The Houssas at first refused compliance with this custom, but, moved by the entreaties of Kosoko, who represented that non-compliance would only be productive of misfortune to himself, since he, as their host, was responsible for their behaviour, they at last consented. The embers of their fire in the yard were scattered, and they withdrew to the house they occupied, extinguishing their lamp.

The dead silence of the night was at last broken by the discordant sounds which announced the approach of the dreaded demon. The yelling, drumming, and clashing of iron continued for some time on the hill in the centre of the town, near Possu's house, but after an hour or so gradually descended towards the quarter in which Kosoko dwelt. Dancing a grotesque dance along the streets, the *ovisha*, whose

ghastly mask gleamed in a white patch in the darkness of the night, followed by his band, neared Kosoko's court-yard, the door of which was, as the law required, open. Here the din was raised to its utmost, probably to impose upon the Mohammedans, and the *ovisha*, prancing and capering, entered the court. Suddenly a stream of fire shot from the house occupied by the traders; the loud report of a musket echoed over the town, and the *ovisha* fell, riddled with lead. The band stopped their drumming and stood for a moment dumbfounded; then two fresh streams of fire shot from the door, two of their number were stretched upon the earth, and the rest fled like antelopes. A dead silence followed these reports; the charivari had ceased, and the townspeople shuddered in their houses, wondering what was taking place, and afraid to stir.

The three Houssas emerged from their dwelling, each carrying in his hand a long gun, from the muzzle of which smoke was still curling. They approached the fallen *ovisha* and examined the body. He was quite dead. They tore off the mask, and the features of the chief priest of Epi were exposed to view. Leaving his two comrades to look at the other men who had fallen, Amadu strode into Kosoko's house. He was lying prone upon the ground, with his head covered. Amadu kicked him in the ribs.

"Get up, fool," said he, "and come and see of

what your precious god is made ; " and he took him by the nape of the neck and forced him to rise.

On first perceiving the dreaded form of the *ovisha* stretched upon the earth in his court-yard, Kosoko was seized with a violent trembling, and strove to escape. But Amadu held him fast, and, dragging him to the body, showed him the face. Next he led him to the two other bodies, which his comrades had equally relieved of their masks. They were two other priests. Then Kosoko became like one mad. Breaking from the Houssa he ran into his house, seized his gun, and endeavoured to rush into the street. But the three traders with their followers held him back.

" What would you do ? " asked they.

" Kill Possu," he yelled.

" A most praiseworthy intent, by Allah," said Amadu, " but do not act like a fool. Possu has many friends. First go and bring here all those who have had children murdered for your false god. Let them see the body of this impostor, and they will be as eager as you. Bid them bring guns."

Kosoko listened to reason. Accompanied by two of the followers of the traders, he ran from house to house of those families in his neighbourhood who had during the last few years furnished a victim to the *ovisha ;* and before long some twenty or thirty men were standing round the corpse of the chief priest, vowing vengeance, and behaving with all the

extravagance only possible to excited Africans. The news gradually spread and the whole quarter was aroused. Lights began to gleam from the houses, and the people thronged to Kosoko's yard; but the remainder of the town was still hushed, and the inhabitants remained cowering in their huts, wondering what was happening, and afraid to move, lest they should meet the dreaded *ovisha*, of whose whereabouts they were uncertain.

When about forty men were assembled, the Houssas said it was time to act.

"Let us mount the hill quietly," said Amadu, "so that Possu be not alarmed. Then shall we take him unprepared."

They filed quietly into the dark street, and moved cautiously but rapidly up the hill to Possu's compound. It was surrounded by a lofty mud wall, the top of which was thatched over, to protect it from the tropical rains. The only entrance to the yard was through a one-storied guard house, built in the wall, and loopholed for musketry. Creeping along close to the wall, the party reached the guard-house door. It was closed, but was torn from its hinges in a moment by the dead weight of bodies that rushed against it, and the men burst into the yard. As these ran towards the group of houses in the centre of the compound, Osumanu Sokatu applied a firebrand to the thatch on the wall. "It is always as well," he remarked, "to be able to see what one is

doing." The dry thatch caught like tinder, and a red pyramid of flame shot up, throwing a lurid glare over the town.

In the meantime those who had entered the yard had not been idle. Bursting into a house they had discovered Possu, who had apparently just been roused by two priests, who had probably come to tell him what had happened. Possu had, with unexpected agility, dashed out at the back of the house, but the priests had no time to follow him. They were at once seized, and in less than a minute their bleeding heads were tossed into the yard. Possu, notwithing his corpulence, maddened with fear, ran swiftly towards an angle of the compound, where there were a number of poles, which had been stacked there for repairing roofs, leaning against the wall. He climbed up these like a cat, reached the summit of the wall, and in another second would have dropped into the bush, which on this side grew close up to the compound, when a dozen muskets were discharged at him. He slipped, made an effort to draw himself up, and again slipped, hung for a few seconds with a gradually relaxing grasp, and then falling with a crash upon the poles beneath, rolled into the courtyard. In a moment he was surrounded and hacked to pieces.

The whole town was now alarmed by the fire and the sound of musketry, and the inhabitants, overcoming their dread of the *ovisha*, ran to the hill. Upon

being told all that had occurred they were at first incredulous, but seeing that those who had already been at work were so much in earnest, they suffered themselves to be convinced; and, as Possu was already dead, they commenced most zealously to plunder his property, succeeding so well that by daybreak nothing but bare walls remained. The fire on the wall had burnt itself out, for fortunately the night had been still, with little or no land-breeze, and the flames had not spread; otherwise the whole town might have been involved in one conflagration.

In the morning the bodies of the chief priest and his two confederates were removed from Kosoko's yard, and exposed in the market-place, with their masks and costumes of monkey skin. Young and old flocked to look at them, and even the most credulous were forced to acknowledge that they had been duped. The more timorous and superstitious, however, almost regarded the exposure with regret. "Whom can we now turn to in misfortune?" they cried. "Our god is no god. We have been deceived." The wealthier families, too, who had succeeded in getting into their hands all the good things of the world, murmured regretfully, "How now are the idlers, slaves, and common people to be kept in order? What is there we can substitute to frighten them?"

But all those who, like Kosoko, had had relatives seized and slain by the priests, carried the matter through to the bitter end. They penetrated the

sacred tract of bush, and found in it three small huts, stocked with masks, disguises, and the other paraphernalia of imposture. These were also brought into the town, and exhibited in the market-place. Not a priest, however, had been discovered. They had all hastened to betake themselves to more favourable scenes, and those sub-chiefs and head-men, who had secretly been lay-members of the society, eagerly swore by all their gods that they had never belonged to it or even suspected its existence.

This affair made a great noise, and it might be supposed that it was fatal to the further existence of the secret fraternity in that part of the world. But such was not the case. Superstition dies very hard indeed, and however keen-sighted people may be in discovering the absurdities of the religious beliefs of their neighbours, they remain absolutely blind to those of their own. There was an end to the society in Epi, but it continued to flourish in the neighbouring towns, where, indeed, it still exists. Because the *ovisha* in Epi had been shown to be a fraud, said these people, proved nothing with regard to the *ovishas* who visited their towns. If the people in Epi had been fools, and had allowed the priests to trick them, they were not. Their *ovishas* were horrible, terrible, and utterly superhuman. Did not so-and-so prove it? and so-and-so?

The three Houssas proceeded to Lagos a few days after the exposure. There, Abubukari Seydu, one

of the slaves of Osumanu Sokatu, got into some little trouble with the police, and was sentenced to three months' imprisonment by the District Commissioner. When he was released from gaol he found that his master had long quitted Lagos, and, having no means of following him or gaining a livelihood, he enlisted in the Houssa Constabulary. Seventeen years later he was serving at Accra, on the Gold Coast, as a sergeant of constabulary, and it is to him that we are indebted for the foregoing history.

VIII.—THE PIRATES OF THE WEST COAST.

A PIRATICAL craft, according to the popular notion, is a vessel with a long, low, and black hull, raking masts, an immense spread of canvas, and light draught. A row of carronades grins from her ports, while amidship she carries a "long Tom," a twenty-four pounder, which works on a pivot, and can at need be lowered out of sight between decks. With this she is able to send shot after shot through the hulls of the unfortunate merchantmen, while herself lying out of range of their guns. Usually she is schooner-rigged, and can outsail most vessels afloat.

This craft is manned by a crew of desperadoes who are always armed to the teeth. The captain is a gentlemanly cut-throat, often a dandy, who wears costly attire, and whose pistols are invariably silver-mounted. Commonly he is slight, pale, and pensive, with finely cut aquiline features, black eyes, and a

mass of raven hair; but, notwithstanding his slight and occasionally effeminate appearance, he has an iron grip and muscles of steel. Generally he has been misjudged by a cold and calculating world; or a romantic passion, which has terminated unfortunately, has led him to adopt his career of crime.

The sternest discipline is maintained upon pirate vessels, and for the slightest dereliction of duty the captain's silver-mounted pistols are always forthcoming to blow out the brains of the offender. The crew are brawny, black-bearded men: they commonly wear gaily-striped jerseys, their fingers are covered with jewellery, and costly rings glisten in their ears. Blood and carnage are the delight of these gentry. Whenever they capture a merchant vessel they cut the throats of all the crew and passengers, or make them walk the plank. None are ever spared, for the pirate's motto is "Dead men tell no tales." After killing the crew of their prize, and taking everything they consider useful or of value out of her, they set fire to her or scuttle her. When they fall in with a man-of-war of superior armament, and cannot escape, they defiantly run up the black flag, and fight more like demons than men. They never surrender, and when capture is inevitable they blow up their ship and go up to the clouds with her.

It is not clear what they do with their plunder. They never seem to go into port and have a good

time ashore, and their discipline is so stern they can have no relaxation on board, besides they cannot spend their money there. Usually they seem to have gone about the world burying their doubloons and golden moidores in iron-bound chests upon uninhabited cays and coral reefs, and indicating the position by crosses carved on rocks, or by strange hieroglyphics on parchment. Doubtless they always intended coming back to dig up the treasure, but, almost invariably, circumstances over which they had no control prevented them doing so ; so the chests remain buried, or some fortunate fisherman or treasure-seeker discovers the clue and digs them up.

This is the popular notion of a pirate vessel and her crew. The pirate's life was a wildly exciting career of peril, carnage, and plunder ; and pirates themselves were reckless dare-devils, who were utterly remorseless, and never felt the slightest compunction at cutting the swan-like throat of the most bewitching maiden who had the misfortune to be a cabin passenger in a vessel captured by them.

Such are the pirates of romance ; but, stripped of the glamour that surrounds them, they appear very different beings. They turn out to be poor wretches who keep up a show of bravado by a liberal recourse to alcoholic beverages, and who are haunted by a perpetual dread of the gallows. Their vaunted discipline does not exist, their ships are floating pandemoniums, and when attacked by king's ships,

so far from facing death like men, they offer but a feeble resistance; and, although the halter is dangling before their eyes, surrender like cowards. Such, at all events, they are described to be by Captain William Snelgrave, who, in the year 1719, fell into the hands of some pirates at Sierra Leone, and has left us an account of them and their proceedings.

In the beginning of the eighteenth century the west coast of Africa swarmed with pirates, who infested the whole coast from the Cape Verde Islands to Angola, and committed the greatest depredations. The buccaneers in the West Indies had been stamped out; a few cut-throats still infested the Bahamas and the cays of Florida, but these were pirates in a very small way. Their vessels were exceedingly small, their crews averaged from ten to thirty men only, and when, by lying in wait amongst the cays on the south coast of Cuba, they contrived to capture a Jamaica drogher-boat, they considered they had achieved a great exploit. In fact, piracy in the West Indies had declined, and the reason was, that there were no longer any rich galleons and plate-ships to be robbed; there were no tempting prizes which could only be taken after a smart struggle, and for whose capture a well-armed and well-manned vessel was necessary; and piracy had degenerated from the open attack and seizure of large vessels, to the surprise of small trading cutters and schooners manned by three or four men. But on the west

coast of Africa there were still prizes worth having. Every homeward-bound vessel had amongst her cargo gold-dust and ivory, often in large quantities; while the slaves with which others were laden were a commodity easily exchangeable for gold. Hence the scene of operations came to be shifted from the West Indies to West Africa; and the pirates, three or four of whose vessels usually sailed in company, became the terror of all peaceable traders.

In the early part of the year 1719 several pirate vessels rendezvoused at Sierra Leone, which was the best place on the coast for wood and water. The first to arrive was the Rising Sun, commanded by a pirate named Cocklyn, who had with him a crew of some twenty-five men only. The Rising Sun had, a few months before, been captured by a pirate named Moody, under whom Cocklyn and his present crew were then serving; and, for some reason or other, Moody had marooned them on board the prize and sent them adrift without their share of the plunder. At Sierra Leone they kidnapped a wealthy negro, who had been educated in England, and kept up some state in the place, and with the ransom they forced him to pay, they laid in a good store of provisions and ammunition, which enabled them to attack and capture some Bristol ships which arrived in the harbour soon after. Several of the seamen from these joined the pirates, and there were soon nearly eighty men under Cocklyn, who, Snelgrave tells us,

had been elected captain on account of his .brutality and ignorance, the crew having resolved never again to have a *gentlemanly* commander such as Moody was considered to have been.

When Cocklyn arrived at Sierra Leone, Bennett and Thompson, the masters of two English vessels lying in the harbour, on discovering his character weighed anchor and went up with the flood-tide to Bunce or Brent's Island, where the Royal African Company had a fort, for protection, and, landing some guns and ammunition, they constructed a battery and prepared for a vigorous resistance should the pirates attempt to attack them. Cocklyn made no such attempt, but shortly after the capture of the Bristol ships another pirate, named Le Boose, came into the harbour, and, hearing of the two merchantmen at Bunce Island, went up to attack them. This Le Boose was the successor of Moody. It seems that the crew, disapproving of his action in marooning Cocklyn and his men, mutinied, put Moody and twelve others into an open boat they had taken from the Spaniards at the Canaries, and, setting them adrift, chose Le Boose, a Frenchman, for their new commander. The men thus set adrift were never again heard of, and it is supposed they all perished.

The two merchant captains, aided by Plunket, the Governor of Bunce Island, made so determined a resistance that Le Boose, unable to effect anything by himself, had to send to Cocklyn for assistance.

The latter came to his aid, and the two captains were driven from their guns, and compelled, with Plunket and several of the officers of the Royal African Company, to fly to the woods for safety. Their two ships were plundered and burned, and Le Boose took for his own use a third vessel which he found lying further up the river.

On the same day on which Le Boose came into the harbour arrived Howel Davis, a very superior kind of pirate to such small fry as Cocklyn and Le Boose. He had a large ship, which he had captured at the Cape Verde Islands, with a crew of one hundred and fifty men, and he boldly entered the river with a black flag flying at the masthead.

It is necessary to say, perhaps, that the captain of a pirate ship was elected chiefly to fight the vessel, and had little to do with the interior economy. Next to the captain ranked the quarter-master, who was also elected. This officer supervised all the affairs of the ship, and often controlled and modified the orders of the captain. The latter never left the vessel to conduct an attack, but it was the duty of the quarter-master to be the first to board any ship, and to take the lead in all dangerous enterprises.

These pirate vessels remained in Sierra Leone harbour, and had captured ten English vessels, when, on April 1st, 1719, Captain William Snelgrave arrived off that port in a galley-built vessel named the Bird, bound to Guinea with a cargo from Holland. Snel-

grave made the land about nine miles from the mouth of the river, and, seeing some smoke on shore and knowing that the coast was infested with pirates, he was about to send the pinnace to see if the place was clear of them, when Simon Jones, the first mate, who had been at Sierra Leone before, assured him that no people lived in that part, and that the smoke was only caused by some travellers roasting mangrove oysters. About five in the evening Snelgrave stood in with a strong flood tide for the river-mouth, and at sunset saw a ship at anchor some way up the river. This was one of the pirate vessels, the other two being hidden behind King Tom Point, but he thought it a peaceable merchantman, and anchored about seven, when the wind fell, a little way inside the cape.

About eight o'clock, Snelgrave was having supper, when the officer of the watch on deck sent to say he heard the sound of oars approaching the ship. He at once went on deck, and ordered Jones, the first mate, to send up twenty men with firearms and cutlasses, as a precautionary measure. It was a pitch-dark night, and as the boat continued to approach it was hailed, upon which those in her replied that they belonged to the Two Friends, Captain Eliot, of Barbadoes. Snelgrave, however, was not quite satisfied; he ordered the firearms to be got up quickly, and, lanterns having been brought up, he again hailed the boat, which was now quite close. This time those in

her answered that they were from America, and at the same time fired a volley, which, however, did no damage. There being no longer any doubt as to the character of these people, Snelgrave called to Jones to fire upon them from the steerage ports, but to his surprise not a shot was fired, and, upon his hastening down to see what was the cause of the delay, the men told him they could not find the arm-chest. In the meantime the pirates boarded, and coming on to the quarter-deck, fired down into the steerage, mortally wounding one sailor. They also threw several hand-grenades, which burst among the crew, but fortunately injured no one.

The sailors, having no arms, called for quarter; and thus the Bird, a vessel of considerable strength, carrying sixteen guns, and a crew of forty-five men, was captured by a single boat, containing only twelve men. But there was treachery on board. It seems that Simon Jones, anticipating that he would fall in with pirates, had purposely hidden the arm-chest some days before; and when at last the men found it and wanted to break it open to defend themselves he prevented them, saying they would all be cut to pieces if they fired a shot. It afterwards transpired that he had expressed a hope that they would meet some pirates, as he wanted to join them.

When the sailors cried for quarter the pirate quartermaster came down into the steerage, asking for the captain, and when Snelgrave came forward

he asked him what he meant by ordering his people to fire through the steerage ports. Snelgrave, replying that he thought it his duty to defend his ship, the pirate put a pistol to his breast, but Snelgrave pushed it aside, and the ball went between his arm and his side. The quartermaster then struck him such a blow on the head with the butt-end of his pistol that he was brought to his knees; but quickly recovering, he jumped up and ran upon the quarter-deck, his assailant closely following. The pistols of the latter being empty, he struck at the unfortunate Snelgrave with his cutlass, swearing that no quarter should be given to any captain who offered to defend his ship. He made a furious cut, which Snelgrave fortunately avoided, and the cutlass, striking the quarter-deck rail, into which it cut an inch deep, was broken to pieces; then, having no other weapons, he seized him by the throat, and was proceeding to beat out his brains with the butt-end of a pistol, when some of the crew called out to him not to kill the captain, as they had never sailed with a better man. Upon this he spared his life, but in the scuffle one of the crew had had his chin nearly cut off, and another was so seriously wounded that he lay on the deck as if dead.

The quartermaster now ordered Snelgrave to lower a boat and send some men to pick up his boat, which he had let go adrift on boarding. Simon Jones went after her and brought her back; upon

which the pirates, who belonged to Cocklyn's vessel, which was the one Snelgrave had seen at anchor up the river, fired several vollies to celebrate their success. This very nearly caused their destruction, for their comrades in the ship, hearing the continued firing and thinking their boat had been beaten off, cut their cable, and, driving down with the tide upon the Bird, fired a whole broadside into her, without asking any question. For a minute all was confusion, but the quartermaster speedily hailed the pirate ship, saying they had taken a brave prize, with all kinds of good liquors and fresh provisions on board.

The pirates were so eager to fall upon the good things in the Bird that Cocklyn at once sent word for some to be cooked. Their manner of cooking was, to say the least, not very delicate. They took a number of turkeys, geese, fowls, and ducks, and without plucking them, but merely pulling out the large wing feathers, handed them, with several Westphalia hams, and a large sow with pig, which they disembowled, leaving the hair on, to the cook, ordering him to boil them at once. While this barbarous feast was being prepared, the quartermaster sent a man to Snelgrave to know what the time was by his watch. The latter naturally supposed this was an indirect mode of demanding it, so he sent it, a gold one, with the remark that it kept very good time; but the quartermaster, after looking at it, laid it on the deck, and, remarking that it was a pretty foot-

ball, began kicking it about, till another pirate picked it up, saying he would put it in the common chest, to be sold at the mast.

Immediately after this Snelgrave was taken on board the pirate ship and brought before Cocklyn, who said he was sorry to hear that he had been ill-treated after quarter had been given, but that it was sometimes the fortune of war. He added, that if he answered truly all the questions he asked, and his crew made no complaints about him, he would find it the best voyage he ever made in his life, they would give him so much; but if he lied he would be cut to pieces. These questions referred to the cargo, and the qualities of the ship. One was, "How the ship sailed, both large and on a wind?" and when Snelgrave answered, "Very well," Cocklyn threw up his hat, saying she would make a fine pirate man-of-war.

When his examination was finished, a tall man, with four pistols in his belt and a broadsword in his hand, came up to him and introduced himself as James Griffin, an old schoolfellow. Snelgrave, though he remembered him perfectly well, thought it best to pretend not to know him; but upon his explaining privately that he was a forced man and not one of the pirate crew, that he had been chief mate to Captain James Creichton of Bristol, whose ship was then in the river in the hands of the pirates, and that they had compelled him to act as master, Snelgrave owned

that he knew him. Griffin said that he went armed for self-protection, and promised to look after him that night, when he would run most danger, as nearly all the pirates would be drunk with the good liquor found in the Bird.

A bowl of punch was then made, which Cocklyn, Griffin, and Snelgrave drank, sitting upon the cabin deck, for there were no seats; and Cocklyn, among several other toasts, drank the health of the Pretender, by the name of King James III. At midnight Griffin begged a hammock for his old schoolfellow, for the pirates, the captain not excepted, slept on the decks. This request was granted, but Snelgrave could not sleep on account of the din made by the pirates, who were uproariously drunk, shouting, cursing, and swearing all around. Griffin, according to his promise, kept guard over him sword in hand, and this precaution was not unnecessary, for about two in the morning the boatswain came on board from the prize very drunk; and seeing the hammock, and learning that Snelgrave was in it, drew his cutlass and ran towards it. Griffin asking him what he was going to do, he replied, "To slice Snelgrave's liver, for that he was a vile dog for ordering his people to fire on their boat, and that besides he would not deliver his watch when the quartermaster first demanded it." Griffin ordered him to keep off or he would cut him down; and as he continued to push towards the hammock made a cut at him, which he so narrowly

escaped that it brought him to his senses, and he ran away.

In the morning, when the pirates had recovered from their debauch, Griffin complained to the quartermaster and crew of the boatswain's conduct, which was a violation of their law never to permit prisoners to be ill-used after quarter had been given. Several of the pirates voted that the boatswain should be flogged, but Snelgrave prudently interceded for him, and he was finally let off with an admonition to give no future offence. The same morning Simon Jones came to Snelgrave, and, premising that he was in bad circumstances at home, and had a wife that he could not love, said that he had entered with the pirates and signed their articles. Jones induced ten men of the crew of the Bird to take the same step, but several of them repented in a few days, and begged Snelgrave to get them cleared again. They could not themselves ask to be released from their engagement, it being, according to the piratical code, an offence punishable with death; but naturally Snelgrave could not, in his critical position, interfere in so delicate a matter.

When the pirates had become fairly sober, all hands went to work to clear the prize. They threw overboard bales of goods and cases of all kinds, money and provisions being all they cared about; and before nightfall on April 2nd they had destroyed

cargo to the extent of some three or four thousand pounds.

There were at this time residing at Sierra Leone some twenty or thirty private traders, whose houses stood on the ground now covered by Freetown, and who had nothing to do with the Royal African Company's establishment at Bunce Island. They appear generally to have been a dissolute and brutal lot. One of them was an old buccaneer named Leadstone, alias Old Cracker, and all were on the most friendly and intimate terms with the pirates. One of these private traders, named Harry Glynn, who does not appear to have been so bad as the others, came with the two captains, Davis and Le Boose, to visit Snelgrave on board Cocklyn's ship; and soon after their arrival, Cocklyn, the quarter-master and others, happening to come on board from the prize, Davis, who seems to have been a much better type of man, spoke to them in Snelgrave's favour, saying he hoped they would use him kindly, and give him what remained of the goods he had brought out as his own private venture. This was not at all relished by Cocklyn; however he asked Davis and Glynn to dine with him on board the prize, and, at their request, Snelgrave was included.

On going into the cabin of the Bird, Snelgrave found that everything he had had there had been plundered, and that two chests of books had been thrown overboard, one of the pirates having sworn

that "there was jaw-work enough there to serve a nation, and that there might be some books among them which would breed mischief, and prevent some of their comrades going on in their voyage to hell, where they were all bound." However, the liquor going merrily round, and the chief pirates being in a good humour, Glynn took advantage of it to beg some clothing and other things for Snelgrave from the quartermaster. This was readily granted, and the clothes were tied up in bundles for Glynn to take on shore to his house, when a disturbance arose which caused the loss of them.

Some of Davis's men had come on board the prize, and one of them, a young fellow of eighteen, broke open a chest and began to plunder it. This was at once reported to Cocklyn's quartermaster, who went out of the cabin and charged the culprit with his offence, which the youth did not deny, but said that as they were all pirates he thought he had only done right. This so enraged the quartermaster that he drew his sword and made a cut at him, but he escaped the blow and fled for protection to his captain in the cabin; where the quartermaster following and making a thrust at him, slit the ball of one of his thumbs and slightly wounded Davis in the back of the hand. Davis at once vowed vengeance, saying, that, though his man had done wrong, yet nobody had a right to punish him in his presence without first referring the matter to him. He left the prize in a

great fury, and immediately going on board his ship, cleared for action, weighed anchor, and bore down with the tide upon Cocklyn's vessel. The latter would most certainly have been destroyed with most of her crew, a consummation most devoutly to have been wished for, had not Snelgrave most unfortunately and most short-sightedly begged Glynn to go on board Davis's ship and try to make peace, instead of letting the pirates do the world a service by cutting each other's throats. Glynn succeeded in pacifying Davis, who consented to forego his vengeance on condition that he and his crew should have a share of the provisions and liquor on board the Bird, and that Cocklyn's quartermaster should, before all Davis's crew, acknowledge his fault and ask for pardon.

By the time all this was settled it was nearly dark, and Glynn was obliged to go ashore without the bundles, while Snelgrave remained on board the Bird with three or four of the pirates. Amongst these was the boatswain who had tried to cut him down when he was in the hammock; and as Snelgrave and the carpenter were talking together in the cabin he came down, very drunk, and again began to abuse him, but the carpenter turned him out. Soon after a puff of wind blew out the candle, and, both getting up together to try and blow the smouldering wick into a flame, they changed places in the dark on sitting down. Just after this the boatswain came out of the steerage, and, finding the

candle out, swore that Snelgrave had done it so that he might creep down to the powder-room unobserved and blow up the ship. The carpenter told him the wind had blown out the candle; but he came down into the cabin in the dark, and, not knowing of the change of places, presented a pistol at the carpenter's head, swearing he would blow out Snelgrave's brains. Fortunately the pistol only flashed in the pan, and the carpenter, seeing by the flash what a narrow escape he had had, wrenched the pistol away, and, in a furious rage, beat the boatswain about the head with it till he fell senseless; after which he was taken away by a boat from Cocklyn's ship, which had been alarmed by the noise of the struggle.

Early next morning Davis's crew came on board the prize to fetch away their share of the liquor and provisions, and, together with Cocklyn's men, committed the most wanton waste. They hoisted several half-hogsheads of claret and French brandy on deck, and, knocking out the heads, dipped cans and bowls into them to drink out of, and then threw buckets-full of the liquor over each other in sport. They never waited to draw corks in the case of bottled wines, but knocked the necks off with their cutlasses, and that so clumsily that every third bottle got broken. In the evening they washed the decks with the wine and brandy that remained in the casks.

Snelgrave's bundles, which Glynn had been unable to take away, fared no better. There had been

originally four of them, but some drunken pirates who stumbled over them on coming into the cabin threw three of them overboard. The one that remained contained a black suit of clothes, with a hat and wig, and this another pirate, who was tolerably sober and who came in after the drunken gang had left, persisted in opening. Snelgrave ventured to remonstrate, but the pirate, striking him on the shoulder with the flat of his sword, cautioned him never to dispute the will of a pirate; and putting on the black suit went out and walked on deck, where his comrades, amused at seeing him thus dressed, soused him with buckets of claret till he took off the clothes and threw them overboard. This man's name was Francis Kennedy, and he was afterwards hanged at Execution Dock. In the evening a half-drunken man came into the cabin and went off with the hat and wig, so that Snelgrave had then nothing left of the things that had been spared for him. However, though they plundered his property, the pirates did not ill-treat him. On the contrary, several brought him food and drink, saying they pitied his condition.

The next day, Le Boose's crew were permitted to go on board the prize, where they soon finished all the food and drink that was left. Snelgrave, having obtained leave to go ashore, went to Glynn's house, where he met the pirate captains, and upon his telling them that he had lost all the clothing that had been given him, they promised to do what they

could to get some more for him. The captains were as good as their word, and, taking Snelgrave on board the Bird with them next day, Cocklyn called all his people together on the quarter-deck, and Davis made a speech to them on Snelgrave's behalf. After a little discussion the pirates proposed to give him a brigantine they were about to abandon, with what cargo was left in the Bird. Others proposed to add the cargo that still remained in some of the other prizes, worth, in the aggregate, several thousand pounds; and another suggested that Snelgrave should accompany them in their projected voyage down the coast, take the slaves from the various French and Portuguese they were certain to capture, and sell them in the West Indies. Upon Snelgrave demurring to these plans the pirates grew angry, for they believed that such a gift of cargoes and slaves as they proposed would be quite legal, and the affair was beginning to turn out badly when Davis suggested that they should give him merely what remained in the Bird, both of cargo and of his private venture. This being agreed to, Snelgrave took possession of Le Boose's brigantine, which that pirate had just abandoned for the ship he had taken up the river, and, bringing her alongside the Bird, saved a considerable part of the cargo. But he was only allowed a few of his own crew for this work, and when they could not take the cases and bales on board as fast as the pirates got them up from the hold of the Bird, the

latter dropped them overboard. Of his own private goods which he had brought out to trade with along the coast, Snelgrave saved barely thirty pounds value. They had principally been clothing and linen goods, most of which had been wantonly destroyed; the pirates taking the finest pieces of stuff to spread on the deck to lie on, and then throwing them overboard because of their being drenched with the claret that was flung about in buckets-full.

Snelgrave was employed for four days in saving the remainder of the cargo, and on one of them he and all the other prisoners were put in imminent peril through a report that was brought by some natives that a pirate had been killed by the two English captains Bennett and Thompson, who, since their attempted defence of their vessels at Bunce Island, had been leading a miserable existence in the bush. The pirates were so furious when this report was brought to them that they were on the point of hanging all their prisoners out of hand, when Snelgrave begged them to wait for some confirmation of the rumour, its truth being so uncertain, and before long the man who was supposed to have been killed came on board. He had really been met by Bennett and Thompson at a trader's house far up the river, but they had done nothing more than threaten him.

About this time Cocklyn's quartermaster was suddenly taken ill with fever, and, fearing that he was about to die, sent for Snelgrave, asked his for-

giveness, and supplied him with underclothing from his chest. From Snelgrave's account he appears to have exhibited the most abject terror at the prospect of death. He died the same night, probably delirious, and cursing and yelling in so shocking a manner that some of the newly-joined pirates were quite terrified, and applied to Snelgrave for advice how to get away. He had on board the Bird the royal proclamation offering pardon to all such pirates as should surrender themselves at any of the British plantations by July 1st, 1719, and also the declaration of war against Spain. Both these documents fell into the hands of the pirates, who, not being able to read, told him to do so for them. They flew into a great rage because in the proclamation rewards were offered to those who should take and destroy pirates; but, on hearing of the declaration of war, some of them said they wished they had known of it before they had left the West Indies. Snelgrave pointed out that there was still time to get to the West Indies before July, it being only then April, and that they could go privateering against the Spaniards and make their fortunes. Many of the pirates seemed pleased with the idea, but an old buccaneer, who had been guilty of such crimes in the West Indies that he could not venture to return there, tore the proclamation to pieces to show his contempt for it.

One day when Snelgrave was on board Cocklyn's

vessel, a ship was seen standing boldly into the harbour, and the pirates were thrown into the greatest panic and confusion, they believing from her boldness that it was the Launceston man-of-war, of forty guns, which they had heard was bound for Guinea. It turned out, however, to be a French ship, which had run out of her course, and, seeing such a number of ships in the harbour, the captain had stood straight in, not imagining that they could be pirates. The Frenchman made no resistance, but because he did not strike at the first shot fired at him, the pirates put a rope round his neck and hoisted him several times up and down to the main-yard, till he was nearly dead. He probably would have been killed had not Le Boose happened to come on board, and indignantly interposed to save the life of his countryman. He protested that he would no longer remain in partnership with such barbarians, so to pacify him the Frenchman was left to his care. The cargo of the vessel was destroyed, the masts cut away, and the hulk run ashore, for she was very old and of no use to the pirates. Snelgrave observes that he wishes the French vessel had really been the Launceston, or even a twenty-gun ship, for either might have easily destroyed the pirates, so great was their panic and want of discipline. In that case the destruction of above a hundred sail of ships, which fell into their hands as they went down the coast, would have been averted.

One incident mentioned by Snelgrave shows how limited was the authority of pirate captains. It was a rule amongst pirates never to allow any women on board their ships when in harbour, and if they took a prize at sea with a woman on board no one dare ill-use her. This rule, which it seems was devised to prevent quarrels and jealousies, was strictly observed; and, whenever the pirates desired to enjoy the refining influence of the softer sex, they had to go ashore. One day Davis, Le Boose, and Cocklyn arranged to go on shore to visit the negro women, and, in order to appear to advantage, they took three second-hand embroidered coats which were amongst Snelgrave's private venture, and, putting them on, went ashore. But these coats being taken without the quartermaster's leave having been first obtained, greatly offended the whole crew, who said that if they allowed the captains to do such things they would soon assume a right to take what they pleased for themselves; and next morning, when the captains returned on board, the coats were taken away from them, and put into the common chest, to be sold at the mast. Snelgrave got some share of the ill-humour caused by this incident, it being reported that he had urged the captains to wear the coats.

When Snelgrave had taken on board the brigantine all the cargo that had remained in his vessel, he commenced moving it for safety to Glynn's house. This took some time, for all of his crew who had not

joined the pirates were obliged to work in fitting the Bird for them; and the natives on shore had had such quantities of goods given them by the pirates that they would do no work. However, both Snelgrave and Glynn worked hard, and at last the cargo was safely housed.

On April 20th the Bird was completely fitted for the pirates, and the re-christening of the vessel took place next day. To this ceremony Snelgrave was invited. All the chief pirates being assembled in the captain's cabin, bumpers of punch were handed round, and upon Cocklyn crying, "God bless the Wyndham galley," all drank and dashed down their glasses, while a salute was fired from the guns. One of the stern guns, blowing at the vent, set fire to some small-arm cartridges lying near, which exploded in all directions, filling the cabin with smoke and fire. When these had been stamped out, or thrown overboard, it was seen that the powder-room scuttle, which was in the cabin, the vessel being galley-built with only two flush decks, was open; and Davis could not help remarking what great danger they had all been in, there being in the room directly below some ten tons of powder, which any chance spark might have ignited. To this Cocklyn replied that he wished it had taken fire, for it would have been a noble blast to have gone to hell with.

After this, three prizes which remained undestroyed were ordered to be burnt; but upon Snelgrave's

application to Davis they were all spared, and only the Rising Sun, Cocklyn's old vessel, was set on fire. Davis also obtained Snelgrave his liberty, for up till now he had been obliged to sleep on board the Two Friends, one of the prizes, and he went ashore and took up his abode at Glynn's house.

Two days later Captain Elliot, of the Two Friends, asked Snelgrave to give him a certificate to the effect that he had been compelled to act as tender to the pirates, and had thus been obliged to receive into his vessel a quantity of goods belonging to other people. This was to protect him from possible charges of complicity with the pirates, and Snelgrave readily complied. Elliot, when the pirates eventually left the river, had to accompany them as their tender; but he contrived to give them the slip the first night, during a tornado, and escaped to Barbados, where he fell a victim to yellow fever.

While Snelgrave was on board the Two Friends, the three pirate captains happened to pass in their boat, and took him with them to sup on board Davis's ship. About the middle of supper there was a sudden cry of "fire," and a man, running into the cabin, said the main hatchway was all ablaze. In a moment all was confusion. Besides the crew, most of whom were drunk, there were on board some fifty prisoners, and most of these jumped into the boats which were alongside, and put off; but upon Snelgrave pointing out to Davis that they were being left without a boat,

the latter fired a gun and brought them back. Still no orders were given for subduing the fire or even for finding out where it was located; and there was such an utter absence of order and discipline, that, when the gunner's mate called out from the main hatchway for water and blankets to lay upon the bulk-head of the magazine, it was only with the greatest difficulty that they could be procured. The boats made away unobserved one by one, and presently Snelgrave found that there was not one left. He lowered one of the quarter-deck gratings over the ship's side, intending to get on it if it became necessary to leave the ship; but nobody seemed to know how the fire was progressing or even if anybody was trying to extinguish it. The deck was encumbered with some sixty or seventy men, half drunk, who never stirred a hand to lend any assistance. Suddenly a cheer came up from the main deck for a brave blast to go to hell with, and Snelgrave, knowing there was a very large quantity of powder on board, which had been taken from various prizes, moved towards his grating, while about fifty panic-stricken pirates crowded out on to the bowsprit and spritsail yard, to get as far as possible from the magazine. Snelgrave, expecting the ship to blow up every minute, was just on the point of slipping down a rope on to his grating when the master, a man named Taylor, and fifteen of the crew who had been with him, came up on deck and said the fire was out. While the remainder of the

crew had been deserting the ship in the boats, or running hither and thither in a drunken panic, these men had been gallantly battling with the fire in the hold, and were all dreadfully burned. The fire occurred through the carelessnes of a negro, who by holding a candle too near the bunghole of a hogshead of rum allowed a spark to fall in it. The rum at once caught fire and ignited another cask, both their heads being blown out with a loud explosion; but though there were twenty casks of rum, and as many barrels of pitch and tar near them, the conflagration spread no further.

Two days after the fire, a small vessel called the Despatch, belonging to the Royal African Company, came into the harbour and was taken by the pirates. Simon Jones demanded that it should be burnt, on the ground that he had once commanded a ship hired and freighted by the Company, and had not been fairly treated; and this would have been done had not a pirate pointed out that it would serve the Company's interests to burn her, as they would thereby save all the men's wages, which would amount to more than the value of the ship and cargo, she being very old and rotten, and the cargo of but little account.

On April 29th Snelgrave's clothing, &c. was sold at the mast on board the Wyndham galley, late Bird, and he went on board at the invitation of several of the pirates. Some of these bought dif-

ferent articles and gave them to him, and Griffin begged from others. All these things made a considerable heap, and some of the pirates beginning to grumble, saying that Snelgrave was insatiable, and that it would be a good thing to throw them overboard, he wisely went ashore with what he had got. And it was fortunate that he did so, for soon after his watch was put up for sale, and after it had been run up to 100*l.*, to spite Davis, who had announced his intention of buying it, one of the pirates said he believed it was not gold, and tried it with a touchstone. The stone leaving a copper-coloured mark, on account of the alloy in the gold, this pirate declaimed against Snelgrave, saying that he was much worse than they who openly professed piracy, for he brought out base-metal watches and tried to pass them off as gold. Davis laughed at this, but several pirates cursed Snelgrave, and swore they would have flogged him had he been on board. Griffin sent word of this to his old school-fellow, and advised him to take to the bush and hide, which he was just about to do when he saw the three pirate vessels, with their tender, under way and leaving the harbour.

When the pirates had left Sierra Leone, Bennett, Thompson, and several others came out of the woods to Glynn's house, and it was decided to fit the Bristol, snow, one of the vessels which had been spared at Snelgrave's request, and return to England. After

provisioning her and putting on board the goods the pirates had spared they embarked on May 10th, to the number of sixty passengers, besides six masters of ships which had been destroyed or fitted for the pirates' use, and arrived safely at Bristol on August 1st, 1719. Griffin, Snelgrave tells us, contrived to escape from the pirates by taking a boat that was towing astern, when off Anamaboe, on the Gold Coast. Thence he proceeded to Barbados, where he died of yellow fever.

A few days after Davis left Sierra Leone he discovered a conspiracy, carried on by Taylor, the master, to deprive him of the command. Taylor and the other conspirators fled to Cocklyn's ship, and Davis, finding that the latter had fomented the conspiracy and instigated Taylor to supplant him, refused to sail in company with him any longer. After parting company with Cocklyn and Le Boose he took the Princess of London, Captain Plumb, whose second mate, Roberts, joined him, and afterwards earned an unenviable notoriety. The pirates, after plundering this vessel, restored her to her captain, and sailed to Prince's Island, a Portuguese possession in the bight of Biafra.

Davis here gave out that his vessel was a king's ship, but her true character was soon discovered by the lavish way in which the pirates exchanged goods of all kinds for fresh provisions. The Portuguese governor made such a profit out of the pirates that

for some time he pretended to be ignorant of the character of the ship; but at last, being afraid that he would be found out by the Portuguese Government and deprived of his appointment, he strove to cover his neglect by plotting to destroy Davis and his crew.

Davis, when ashore one day with the governor, had told him that he would sail in three days' time, and that he would come and take leave of him the day before sailing. On the appointed day he accordingly landed, taking with him, besides his boat's crew, his chief surgeon, a trumpeter, and some others; but on arriving at the governor's house he found nobody to receive him. They entered a long verandah facing the street, where the major-domo presently came to them, saying that his master was in the country, but he had sent a messenger to him, and he would no doubt soon arrive. The surgeon, chancing to look out into the street, was surprised to see a number of people with arms; he called Davis's attention, and, suspecting some treachery was afoot, they all went out together to return to the boat. No sooner had they got into the street than the major-domo called to the people to fire, and the surgeon and two others were shot dead on the spot. The trumpeter, who was wounded in the arm, ran to two Capuchin friars who were standing near, to claim their protection; but, though one of them took him in his arms to save him, the Portuguese came round

and blew out his brains. In the meantime, Davis, who had four bullets in his body, was running towards the boat, when a fifth shot brought him down, and the Portuguese, coming up, cut his throat to make sure of him.

The boat's crew, on seeing the termination of this affray, rowed off quickly to the ship; where the pirates, filled with rage at the treacherous murder of their comrades, at once chose Roberts for their new commander, and vowed to take a terrible revenge upon the Portuguese. The water being shallow, they could not bring their ship within range of the town, so they mounted several pieces of cannon on a raft, and opened fire against it. The inhabitants hastily quitted the town, but remained in the bush on the outskirts in such numbers that the pirates could not venture to land to burn it; and after a time, finding that their cannonade did not do much material damage to the wooden buildings, the pirates' desire for vengeance seems to have suddenly evaporated, for they returned to their ship and next day left the island.

Roberts, the successor of Davis, soon made his name a terror on the West African Coast, and was so audacious and successful in his enterprises that before long he had three ships under his command. With these, in 1720, he captured Bunce Island, after a smart action in which the fortifications were much damaged, and rifled the warehouses of the Royal

African Company. At the same time he took a vessel in Sierra Leone harbour, and, carrying her to the entrance of Aberdeen Creek, plundered and burnt her. When Smith, the surveyor of the Royal African Company, visited Sierra Leone in 1726, part of the hull of this ship was still to be seen at low water; and it was on that account that he termed the bay from which the creek opens Pirates' Bay.

Such a number of vessels were captured and destroyed by Roberts that trade on the West Coast became absolutely paralysed; and in February, 1721, the Government despatched the Swallow and the Weymouth, both 50 gun ships, the first of which was commanded by Captain Chaloner Ogle, to seize and destroy his vessels. The two men-of-war ran down the coast as far as Whydah without meeting the pirates, and on returning to Cape Coast Castle on September 30th they learned that Roberts, after having been plundering vessels down the whole coast behind them, had now gone off, to the West Indies it was supposed. The pirates having escaped them, the men-of-war parted company, but remained upon the coast engaged in various matters; and in January, 1722, when the Swallow put in to Cape Coast Castle on returning from the Ivory Coast, they learned to their surprise that Roberts had reappeared, had taken a vessel a few leagues off, and committed great cruelties. The pirates' ships were reported to be well manned, the successful manner in which

Roberts had swept the whole coast in the previous August having drawn numbers of seamen to him.

The Swallow at once sailed for Whydah, that being, next to Cape Coast Castle, the place that pirates would be most likely to make for in search of booty; and arriving there on January 15th, found that they had plundered and ransomed eleven sail of ships, and had left the place but two days before. Following in pursuit, the Swallow went to Prince's Island, and, getting no news of the pirates there, tried the mouth of the Gaboon river, a difficult harbour where it was thought they might be lying. Thence she sailed for Cape Lopez, where at last the three pirate-ships were discovered, at anchor in the bay. One of them, which was upon the heel, righted at sight of the Swallow, and, taking her for a merchantman, slipped her cable and began the chase, bending some of her sails as she came out. The man-of-war drew her away from her consorts, till, when she discovered her mistake, it was too late to escape; and she was taken before night after a very slight resistance.

Owing to calms and contrary winds seven days elapsed before the Swallow could beat back to Cape Lopez, where, to the surprise of everybody, the other two pirates were found still quietly at anchor. She at once stood boldly in to engage them, and the pirates, taken by surprise, and in great confusion and terror, hastily abandoned the smaller of their

two vessels, and, cutting the cable and making sail on the larger, ran up the black flag and stood out to try and escape. They continued a running fight as long as only the bow-chasers of the Swallow could play upon them, but struck at the first broadside, drunkenness and want of discipline making them fall an easy prey. Not the slightest damage was done to the Swallow, but Roberts and several of the pirates were killed.

The crews of the three pirate ships amounted together to nearly three hundred Englishmen, besides some sixty or seventy stout slaves. A great deal of spoil was captured: goods of all kinds, and jewellery, besides gold-dust to the value of nearly 10,000*l*. The officers of the Swallow made a most careful inventory of all these effects, thinking to come in for a share of the prize-money; but Captain Chaloner Ogle, in addition to being knighted for his success, obtained a grant of the whole from the Privy Seal; and, though the officers petitioned for a proper division of the spoil, they did so without success.

The pirates were carried to Cape Coast Castle, two attempts to mutiny and escape having been promptly suppressed, and were there tried. Fifty-two were executed, seventy-four acquitted, twenty condemned to servitude, and seventeen to be imprisoned in the Marshalsea. One hundred and sixty-three are thus accounted for, but what became of the remainder is not said. Several, however, were killed in the cap-

ture of the vessels, and probably some more in the suppression of the two mutinies, while the climate perhaps will answer for the rest. When Smith visited Cape Coast Castle in 1727 the remains of the pirates who had been executed were still hanging there in chains.

IX.—JAMES PEACOCK.

When James Peacock, standing on the deck of the African Steamship Company's steamer Bijouga, outside the bar of the Mersey, saw the pilot-boat which was taking away the pilot who had brought them from the river gradually grow smaller and smaller in the distance, and realized that the last link which connected him with England was now severed, he heaved a sigh of relief. He was glad to cut himself adrift from all old associations, for they were hardly of a pleasant nature, and he fully intended to get on in the world, honestly if he could, but anyhow to get on.

He had never known exactly who his father was. His mother herself was undecided as to whether to ascribe that honour to a sergeant of the Coast Brigade of the Royal Artillery, stationed at the Mersey forts, or to a waiter at the Adelphi Hotel: but she thought the balance of probability was in favour of the

waiter. He had but a dim recollection of his mother. He could just remember how she looked, a fine, strapping Lancashire lass, as he now judged, with dark brown eyes, a *retroussé* nose, a rather large mouth, and a superb complexion; who generally seemed to have plenty of money, and had a large circle of male friends. She was always well dressed, had plenty to eat and drink, never did any work, and seemed to be universally admired. Then, when he was about six years of age, a respectably connected tradesman, whose acquaintance she had made, utterly captivated by her charms, had married her, and carried her off with him to the States, where he was going to try his fortune; and he, James, had been consigned to the care of an aunt, a widow it was said, who kept a small toy and sweet shop in a back street.

His life was hardly so pleasant in his new domicile as it had hitherto been. There were no more male visitors to pet him and give him stray pence, he was no longer permitted to do pretty much as he liked, and, worst of all, he had to go to school. His aunt, a hard-working woman who found it was all she could do to make both ends meet, had not accepted the charge of the child without some pressing; but when her sister's husband positively declared that James would not be allowed to accompany his mother to America, and it became a question of what to do with him, she consented to take charge of him, upon

her sister promising with the most solemn asseverations to remit monthly a small sum, which would suffice for his keep and education and leave a little over. He had the three R's well drummed into him at the elementary school he attended, and his aunt made him useful in his playhours by making him serve in the shop. At first he had revenged himself for this curtailment of his recreation by confiscating here and there an apple or a handful of sweets; but his aunt, who had a keen eye to business, was not long in discovering his peculations, and she administered such a chastisement to the "little bastard," as she termed him in her anger, that he felt a delicacy about sitting down for at least a week, and the memory of it made him wince for months. This strong measure proved effectual, and James was honest for a long time; but before he was ten years old he discovered that, by giving short weight to the children who came in to spend their pence, he could indulge his appetite without any unexplained hiatus being discovered in the glass jars which embellished the counter, and he profited by that discovery whenever he had an opportunity.

He lived thus, going to school daily and pilfering in the shop, till the age of fourteen, when the remittances, hitherto made by his mother with the most praiseworthy punctuality, suddenly ceased. His aunt waited a month, then another and another, and nothing was heard of her sister; she wrote two or

three letters, but no answer was returned. She did not know what to do. She could not turn the boy into the streets, for though he was not very loveable she felt some affection for him; besides, she doubted if the law would allow her to throw him upon the rate-payers. Still she could not be at the charge of his education and keep, her circumstances would not permit it; so, though she had not intended to take him from school so early, she busied herself in finding some situation for him, and after some little time was fortunate enough to secure for him the post of office-boy in the well-known firm of Shoddy and Dressing, African merchants. Here he remained for ten years, being gradually promoted from sweeping out and cleaning the office, running on errands, and such work, to the copying of letters and invoices; for he showed some aptitude with his pen, and wrote a clerkly hand.

He had been in the office, as I say, ten years, when Muggridge, a Sierra Leone trader who had extensive dealings with the firm of Shoddy and Dressing, wrote to the head of the house to ask him to find and send out to Sierra Leone a clerk, to replace the last, for whom the climate had proved too much. He offered 40*l* a year, and the usual extras, namely, food, drink, and lodging. When this letter was received, and the chief clerk in the outer office ironically asked his juniors which of them was going to apply for the appointment, the question was received with derision.

"What? Expatriate oneself, and go out to the White Man's Grave, with every chance of leaving one's bones there, for 40*l.* a year and one's keep? Hardly!" But Peacock eagerly jumped at the chance. He would go, and be glad to, he said. There would be a chance of getting on there, he thought, whereas in his present position he had no prospects. And so it was settled, and three weeks later he sailed.

James Peacock was not handsome. He had derived from his mother a fine, large-limbed body, but he possessed none of her good looks. His nose was flat, the jaw hard and square, the cheek-bones prominent, and the eyes, brown in colour, were small and rather close together. Altogether his face was of that type commonly met with in professional pugilists or dog-fanciers, and there was not the slightest resemblance either to the artillery sergeant or the waiter, so perhaps after all his mother was mistaken. As he looked over the stern of the Bijouga at the rapidly lessening pilot-boat, a hard and cruel look came into his face, and his eyes were lighted with a cunning gleam. He was going to take the world by the throat, and force it to disgorge.

Upon arriving at Sierra Leone James Peacock was rather surprised to find that a West Coast "merchant" was nothing more than a shop-keeper, who retailed all kinds of articles, from rum and gin to felt hats or nails, and was not above serving behind the counter

himself. The designation "merchant" had led him to expect a superior kind of wholesale business; still he was not proud, and he did not care what he did so long as he got money by it. Muggridge informed him that his duties would be to assist in the clerical work, and to supervise the affairs of the shop, where there were two negro shopmen. Above all he was never to allow a native trader, Timni or Susu, to escape him. If any of these had any country produce, of which indeed there is not much, if they had a few bags of country rice, some beeswax, or a few hides, the whole shop must be turned upside down, and no stone left unturned to induce them to barter their goods, so that the business might be extended, and connections formed, if possible, with natives from the interior.

Peacock had not been many days with Muggridge before he discovered that his employer drank; not in the sense that he frequently became helplessly intoxicated, or that at irregular intervals he indulged in "bursts" of three or four days' duration, but in the far more fatal way that from early morning till late at night he was always taking "nips." He began at six, directly he got up, and from that hour till he went to bed he had recourse to various kinds of stimulants at short intervals. Towards night his speech became a little thick and indistinct, but otherwise he always carried his liquor well. At first Peacock paid but little attention to this, but before many weeks passed

it dawned upon him that his employer's failing might easily be turned to his profit. Muggridge, who had been leading this life for two or three years, and whose brain was rapidly becoming stupefied, had been accustomed to leave nearly all the work to Peacock's predecessor; the death of that individual had temporarily roused him from his condition of careless apathy, and the necessity of looking after things himself had led him to live more soberly, but after Peacock's arrival he soon relapsed. He kept up some show of doing some work himself for a little time, and then when he had, as he thought, gauged Peacock's capacity and character, and found he was capable of managing affairs, he gradually fell away into his old lazy habits.

Then Peacock began his old habit of pilfering. Muggridge had instituted an arrangement which, if properly carried out, would have rendered theft almost impossible. All goods as they were received from England were stored in a long and large room called the warehouse, the description and quantities of each article being entered in the warehouse books.

From the warehouse goods were supplied as required to the shop, where about noon every day there was a stock-taking, and the difference between that and the stock-taking of the previous day had to be accounted for by money in the till. Thus, every article in the shop being priced, any deficiency could at once be detected.

This was Muggridge's system as theoretically carried out, but there was one fatal defect, and that was, that of late the warehouse-books had not been kept up; several consignments had only been partially entered, and time after time goods had been supplied to the shop without having been struck off the warehouse-books. Thus it was impossible to say what quantities ought to be in the warehouse, and any one who had the key of that building could make good deficiencies in the shop without detection. Now Peacock had charge of that key, as his predecessor had had before him, and it was his duty whenever he removed articles from the warehouse to the shop, to hand in to Muggridge a slip of paper with a list of the articles. These slips Muggridge was supposed to enter in the warehouse-books, but as a matter of fact he hardly ever did, and they remained lying about the office, till they were lost. Hence Peacock found it easy to rob his employer. When the negro shopmen were out of the way he helped himself to money out of the till, and from the warehouse replaced on the shop-shelves the articles that had been sold. To make it safer, he took care to destroy the slips the careless Muggridge left lying about the office.

As usual in the houses of traders on the West Coast, there were but two meals a day in the Muggridge establishment. The first, denominated breakfast, took place at 11 a.m., and was a heavy

meal, washed down with beer, claret, and brandy and water; the second was the dinner, which took place at 7 p.m. After the breakfast it was Peacock's duty to wait in the shop while the two black assistants went away to their meal, and on their return the stock-taking took place. When he was alone in the shop during the absence of these two, he had ample time to note what articles had been sold, take their sale price out of the till, and replace them with similar articles from the warehouse. At first Muggridge used to preside at the daily stock-taking, but after a few weeks he left it to Peacock, and, plethoric from over-eating and over-drinking, used to throw himself on his bed and go off into a heavy slumber, from which he awoke with a headache and a feeling of depression that it took several "nips" to remove.

When Muggridge ceased to attend at the stock-taking Peacock might have dispensed with the formality of keeping the stock up to the mark, had it not been for the two assistants, who would have been clever enough to find out what was going on. Indeed one of them had some half-formed suspicions of Peacock lurking in his brain. Time after time he had found the full number of certain articles on a shelf, when he was almost sure in his own mind that he had sold some of them.

"Heigh," said he one morning to Peacock at stock-taking, "twelf tin of salmon still dere. I

certain I sell two yesterday afternoon. Dere be someting goin' on in dis shop dat I doan' understan'."

"You must be mistaken," said Peacock, coolly. "It must have been something else you sold. You see the twelve tins are still here."

The assistant was silenced but not convinced, and he shook his head, and talked *sotto voce* to himself for some minutes, with an occasional subdued "chah," as an interjection.

Another time he remarked that a five-shilling piece was not in the till. He was certain he had taken one, and now it was gone; but Peacock, while inwardly cursing his own stupidity in having appropriated a coin that was sure to be missed, explained that he was collecting five-shilling pieces, and had changed it; and he pulled the piece out of his pocket, in proof.

Peacock found the suspicions of this negro very inconvenient, and he was obliged to be more cautious. However, from the very careful manner in which he went over the money every morning, to see how much he could take with safety before handing over the balance to the easy-going Muggridge, he soon noticed that almost every day there was some very small sum, threepence or sixpence, short. He mentioned this to the suspicious shopman, who explained it by saying it was the loss on retailing tobacco and sugar in very small quantities; but while making this

explanation his glance shifted so uneasily from Peacock's face, that the latter, with the acuteness of a fellow-thief, at once decided in his own mind that the shopman robbed the till. "Well, I'm d——d," thought Peacock, full of virtuous indignation. "Who can one trust next? What a black brute!" The fact was that the wretched assistant, tempted by the carelessness of his employer, did steal in a miserable way. His wages were very small, he was intensely vain, like all his compatriots, and since his lawful emoluments were insufficient to supply him with those clothes, white collars and patent-leather shoes, without which existence would be a dreary void, he surreptitiously added to them.

Peacock, a few days after forming his suspicion of the assistant's integrity, laid a trap for him. He marked all the small coin that was to be left in the till for the day's use, and then, before the poor devil went for his breakfast, he made him turn out his pockets, in which two marked threepenny-pieces were found. The shopman at first tried to bluster, and then, when he saw that was no use, cringed abjectly. He implored Peacock not to tell Muggridge, he would be sent to jail, he would lose his situation, he would be ruined. Peacock affected to be implacable, then he gradually pretended to relent, and finally promised to give his subordinate another chance, on condition that he would sign a paper acknowledging his guilt. The terrified negro eagerly assented, he would have

signed anything to get out of the scrape, and Peacock carefully placed the confession in a place of safety. Henceforward the shopman was quite under his thumb.

When Peacock had been seven months at Sierra Leone the rainy season commenced; day after day there was an incessant down-pour, the earth reeked and steamed with moisture, and a dank, chilly mist rolled in heavy folds over the sodden ground. About the middle of the rainy season Peacock found himself feeling very unwell one morning; he had a splitting headache, felt sick, and his hands and feet were burning hot. He got up for an hour or two, and then Muggridge told him to go to bed, and sent for the colonial surgeon, who was paid an annual stipend of 40*l.* to look after the health of Muggridge and all his *employés*. The surgeon said Peacock had got an attack of malarial fever, and on his second visit pronounced that it was of a rather bad remittent type.

Peacock was very ill for some days, and but for the sound constitution he possessed would have certainly succumbed. Doubtless the good nursing he received also counted for something, for Muggridge could not have taken more care of him if he had been his own child, and sat up with him two or three nights when the fever was at its worst. When Peacock saw Muggridge so anxious and attentive, sitting by his bedside, and getting him arrowroot

and beef-tea, he felt quite a pang of remorse, and promised himself not to abuse such kindness in future by robbing him; but as he gained strength and was able to get about again, these good resolutions gradually oozed out, and a fortnight after his recovery he was robbing him as systematically as ever.

When Peacock had been a little more than a year with Muggridge he had become possessed, by fair means and foul, of some 200*l*. His expenses were but small, and he lived quietly. He had a few acquaintances, clerks like himself in trading-houses, and he had been made an honorary member of the sergeants' mess at Tower Hill; though, had the honest old soldiers there had any idea of the manner of man he really was, he would soon have been deprived of that privilege. He really made these acquaintances so as not to appear peculiar, but he grudged every penny he had to spend in their company, and to account for his close-fistedness he dropped here and there a word from which it was understood that he had to be careful because he had a widowed mother and two orphan sisters dependent on him. He never lost sight of his purpose, and that was, as soon as he had got enough capital, to start in trade on his own account; not in Sierra Leone, where there was too much competition, and where the Timni and Susu traders generally wanted money for their beeswax or rice, which money, after

one experience of Shoddy and Dressing's cotton goods, they generally spent at other shops; but somewhere down in the Oil Rivers, in the great delta of the Niger, where the natives bartered their palm-oil, palm-kernels, or ivory for European goods, and the traders made a profit both on the goods and on the produce they shipped home.

If Muggridge had not of late given way more and more to drink he would most certainly have suspected that something was wrong; but, though he occasionally took up a book and added up a column of figures, he soon put it down again, and as he invariably found the addition correct, he congratulated himself in having a perfect treasure in Peacock. He was now hardly ever thoroughly sober. When he awoke in the morning, with the fumes of the alcohol of the previous night partially evaporated, he felt so ill and depressed that he at once flew to that bottle which he regarded as the only panacea; and by the time breakfast was over he was quite incapable of doing anything. Then he would sleep till four or five o'clock, when he would commence his potations again, and carry them on till he staggered to his bed. Peacock did not like openly to encourage him to persevere in this pernicious course, he was conscious that it would appear suspicious; but he contrived to put drink in his way, and indirectly to suggest it. He wondered how Muggridge could keep on in this way, that the fever did not seize and prostrate him;

but it is a remarkable fact that intemperance seems to give a certain immunity from fever in some cases, for a time. It seems as if the alcoholic poison in the blood neutralizes the malarial poison; but when the man of intemperate habits does at last get fever, and few escape it, it is all up with him, and two or three days generally bring about the finale.

In the meantime the business was going to the dogs. Muggridge was a good deal in Shoddy and Dressing's debt, and that debt kept increasing, because the remittances he made, whether in produce or bills, were always of smaller amount than the consignments he ordered. But how could any business prosper, with a drunken principal who neglected everything, and a dishonest clerk, who like a vampire secretly drained its life-blood?

As Muggridge grew more and more incapable, Peacock grew bolder in his peculations, and at the same time he cunningly threw out hints to his acquaintances that the business was going to the bad. He privately deplored to his friends his principal's neglect and mania for drink, and allowed it to be understood that he himself had to work like a horse to try to keep things straight. People in Sierra Leone began to have a very high opinion of Peacock. "There was a clerk if you like," they said. "Muggridge was a hopeless drunkard, and that young fellow had the whole burden of the business on his shoulders, and did his best too. A most praise-

worthy young man." His reputation was so enhanced that the head of a large firm in Freetown gave him to understand that a clerkship in his house was open to him whenever he liked to take it, and at a higher salary. Peacock expressed his most fervent gratitude, but he said he could not quit Muggridge now that he was in difficulties; it would not, he thought, be honourable, especially after the great kindness Muggridge had shown him when he was ill. The head of the large firm shook Peacock warmly by the hand at this evidence of self-abnegation. His sentiments did him honour, he said. He would not press the matter now. Still, there was the clerkship for him, if time should make it appear desirable.

By the time Peacock had been two years in Sierra Leone he had become possessed of between five and six hundred pounds. This he had remitted little by little to a Liverpool bank with which he had opened an account: but he had been obliged to be very cautious, picking up here a cheque and there a bill, so that no one could suspect he was sending money home. Muggridge was getting worse and worse. His body was completely soaked with alcohol; he was prematurely aged, with hollow cheeks and a vacillating step. His nerves were entirely shattered, his nights were disturbed by hideous visions, and his hand trembled so violently that he could not write legibly.

One morning, while partially sober, Muggridge

gave Peacock 300*l.*, and told him to get bills to remit to Shoddy and Dressing, who had sent out an imperative demand for a remittance, with a threat of unpleasant consequences. As it was near the breakfast hour, Peacock said he would get the bills at the Colonial Treasury after that meal, to which he and Muggridge then sat down. The latter had no appetite, and barely ate a mouthful, though this was not an unusual occurrence, for his stomach had for some weeks refused to retain solid food. Breakfast was over, and Peacock was just putting on his helmet to go out to the Treasury, when he saw Muggridge shaken by a convulsive shudder, and turn ghastly pale. He approached him and found him trembling violently; he took his hand, and it felt like fire. "You are not well, sir," he said soothingly. "Take this and let me put you to bed;" and he poured out half a tumbler of brandy. The wretched Muggridge gulped down the poison and tottered to his feet, while Peacock supported him to his bed and helped him to undress. He seemed to fall at once into a condition of stupor, and Peacock stood looking at him for a few minutes; then, as the result of his reflections, he hung up his helmet on a peg in the breakfast-room, and carried off the 300*l.* to his own apartment.

He reappeared in a few minutes, and sent a servant to call the colonial surgeon. The latter was engaged at the hospital and could not come at once,

but after an hour or two he arrived. Muggridge was lying on his back, breathing heavily, his hands and feet twitching every now and then with convulsive movements. He roused himself when the surgeon came in, complained of violent pains in the back and legs, and said his head felt red hot. The surgeon took his hand, it was hot and dry; he put a clinical thermometer under his arm, and when he withdrew it the mercury stood at 102°. Peacock had been carefully watching all this, and when the doctor left Muggridge, saying that he would send some medicine at once and come and see him again at night, he eagerly followed him into the next room.

"There's no danger I hope, doctor," he said.

"Hum," said the surgeon, meditating, "I shouldn't like to say that. You see, Muggridge has not taken care of himself, he has not lived quietly. Still, a temperature of 102° is seen every day, and if it doesn't rise I daresay we'll put him on his legs again. But above all don't let him touch liquor."

Peacock went back to the sick-room, and, ensconcing himself in a cane-chair, took up a book and began to read. Muggridge appeared to be asleep. Two hours passed, and Peacock was beginning to find it rather irksome to have to keep quiet so long, when Muggridge suddenly opened his eyes and asked for something to drink.

"What would you like?" asked Peacock. "Brandy and soda?"

"Ugh, it would make me sick" said the patient, with a shudder. "Make me a lime-drink, will you? Are there any limes in the house?"

"No," replied Peacock, with a ready lie, "but I'll send to the market if you like."

"It would take too long. Think of something else."

"Try champagne," suggested Peacock; "it's strengthening, you know, and not heady."

Muggridge nodded assent, and Peacock, hastily fetching a bottle from the next room, opened it and poured the contents into a soda-water tumbler. The sick man put his parched lips to the glass, gulped down three quarters of the fluid, and fell back on his pillow. He closed his eyes; soon the heavy breathing recommenced, and he appeared again to sleep.

About nine at night the surgeon returned. Muggridge was lying on his back breathing heavily; he spoke to him but he did not answer, he looked at him closely and found that he was unconscious. On taking his temperature he found it had risen to 106°. He called Peacock aside.

"I'm afraid it's all up with him," he said. "There's just a chance that the temperature may fall as rapidly as it has risen. It sometimes does. But if not he can't last long. Has he taken anything since I saw him?"

"No, nothing," replied Peacock; "he's been sleeping all the evening."

"If one could only get ice in this wretched place," continued the surgeon, "one might do something; but we must make the best of what we have."

He went back to the sick-room, had plenty of cold water brought up, stripped Muggridge, with Peacock's assistance, and began to sponge him all over. When Peacock thought of the bag of money concealed in his tin box, and reflected that if Muggridge recovered he would have to disgorge it, he cursed the surgeon in his heart. It would probably take him a whole year to collect that sum by daily peculations, and if Muggridge only died it would be his at once. A whole year's labour saved, and it depended upon so little. Ah! if Muggridge would only die. Certainly he would not do anything to hasten that end; he would not have murder on his conscience, but he would let nature take her chance; he would not interfere one way or the other; he would leave it to fate. But now he had to pretend to be most anxious for his recovery, and to assist that cursed doctor in sponging him.

After a quarter of an hour the surgeon again took Muggridge's temperature. It had fallen half a degree.

"Capital!" he said; "if we go on like this we'll pull him round after all."

Peacock's heart fell.

"You see how it's done," continued the surgeon; "you can do it just as well as I can, and I have to go and see young Smith. He's in a very bad way, and I hardly think he'll get over it. As soon as I can leave him I'll come back."

Peacock eagerly expressed his ability to continue the sponging treatment; he had buckets of fresh water brought up, and the surgeon hurried off. Then Peacock sat on the bed beside the unconscious Muggridge, sponge in hand, so that if any one should come in he could appear hard at work, and remained watching him. One hour passed, then another, and the surgeon had not returned. Peacock thought Muggridge was breathing less heavily; was it a good sign or a bad? He leant over him to see if there was any change, when he saw some dark fluid oozing from the corners of the mouth; at the same moment he heard the surgeon's step on the stairs, and, plunging his sponge into the water, dashed it over Muggridge's body.

"Any change?" asked the surgeon softly, as he entered the room.

"None," replied Peacock.

The surgeon approached the bed, started slightly, then bent over the motionless form, and rose again.

"You can leave off that now," said he; "he's dead."

At daybreak next morning Peacock sent news of the melancholy event to two traders who had for-

merly been intimate with Muggridge, but had of late ceased to see much of him, asking them to come to the house. They soon arrived, shocked at this sudden death; arrangements were at once made for the funeral, and at Peacock's suggestion they took charge of the keys. The funeral took place in the afternoon, and Peacock was an edifying spectacle as chief mourner, in a suit of blue serge, the nearest approach to black that he could arrive at, and with a crape streamer wound round his white helmet.

A homeward-bound steamer had come into the harbour very early in the morning, and, as soon as everybody had left the house after the funeral, Peacock set to work on a matter which he had been maturing in his mind all day. This was no less than to send an order to a Liverpool house for a consignment of goods to be sent in his name to Bonny, remitting at the same time a draft on the bank in which he had his money, in payment. He had long been collecting information about the trade in the Oil Rivers, and he knew to a nicety what kind of goods would be required there; so he determined now to make his venture, and commence business on his own account. The windfall of 300*l.* he had concealed in his tin box would take him to Bonny, enable him to hire temporary premises there, and make arrangements for the receipt of his goods; which, if all went well, ought to reach Bonny some three weeks after he got there. Ever since Mug-

gridge's death he had thought of nothing else. It was a risk, certainly; he was staking his all in this one venture; but, after all, what was the use of a few hundred pounds? He wanted to roll in money, to have thousands, and anything short of that he cared nothing for.

He drew up his letter with infinite care, specifying exactly the kind of goods he wanted and at what price. Item after item was entered, and, when at last he added up the columns of figures, the total came to nearly 500*l.* Naturally he did not send this order to Shoddy and Dressing. Those experienced merchants would have gasped with astonishment at such an order from a man whom they knew to be only a clerk in receipt of 40*l.* a year; they would have smelt a rat, and as Muggridge was considerably in their debt they might have demanded from Peacock some explanation as to how he had come into the possession of so much money; so he addressed his letter to the great rival firm of Glaze Brothers, African merchants. He had put in a first advice bill at thirty days for 500*l.* on the bank where he had lodged his money, and had closed the envelope, when a sudden thought struck him, and he tore it open and added a postscript. This was to the effect that if Glaze Brothers were willing to give him credit they might send such and such additional goods, in such proportion, to the extent of 200*l.* more, and he would consign produce to them from Bonny

in payment. He thought very likely they would, for the payment of 500*l.* down on the nail would give them confidence in him.

The day after the funeral the two traders looked into Muggridge's affairs. They would be found in great confusion, he was afraid, Peacock said. Mr. Muggridge had always liked to keep the warehouse-books himself, and he did not think he had kept them up to date. The two traders found that indeed he had not. There was no entry in them of any kind for the last nine months, and it was impossible to say how matters stood; but Peacock showed them the letter-books with some recent urgent demands for payment from Shoddy and Dressing, and they came to the conclusion that the assets would not cover the liabilities. Peacock himself put in a claim for three months' salary, which one of the traders paid.

In a day or two the house was closed, and Peacock removed to the only hotel which Freetown boasts. The firm which had formerly offered him a clerkship now renewed the offer, but Peacock, while expressing his gratitude, politely declined. He had decided, he said, to go to Lagos, where trade was on a different footing. He had, he said, accepted an engagement with a firm there, the name of which he was not at present at liberty to mention. By the next outward-bound steamer he took passage to Bonny River, carrying with him the good opinion of all the traders in

Sierra Leone. Not only was he a most exemplary and painstaking young man, but he had refused good offers in order to stand by Muggridge in bad times, and then the manner in which he had nursed him was beyond all praise. If human aid could have saved Muggridge, he would now be alive.

Peacock had formed a fairly correct idea of what Bonny River was like, but when the steamer anchored there, and he gazed upon the broad muddy stream, flanked by its vast mangrove-swamps seamed with interminable creeks, he was forced to acknowledge that it was a most desolate spot. The traders already established in the river lived in hulks, floating shops, moored in the stream; but he had no hulk, nor the means of obtaining one, so he went ashore to see what arrangements he could make about hiring or buying a house. He found Bonny Town a miserable collection of mud and wattle huts, built on a few acres of firm ground in the midst of the swamp, and which a few hours' rain converted into liquid mud. The only object of interest was the Juju house, with its array of human skulls arranged in wattle-racks; but Peacock cared little for things of this sort, and hardly gave it a passing glance.

His good luck did not desert him. He was able to rent from Oko Jumbo, the principal chief and real king of Bonny, though that nominal honour (?) is enjoyed by a so-called educated negro named Pepple, a long, low, one-storied, wooden building on the

river-bank, which had by some means or other come into the chief's hands. This building, with a little alteration, would house his goods and himself; and he set about engaging the usual staff, a native cooper, a watchman, and a labourer or two. He did not propose keeping a clerk or shopman at first, and wisely intended looking after things himself. Having thus put everything in train in the course of a week or ten days, he sat down to await the arrival of his goods.

The Bonny traders naturally were not pleased at the prospect of having another competitor in the river, where, according to their ideas, there was already competition enough; but Peacock was so deferential, so grateful for advice, and so unassuming, that they soon came to the conclusion that he "wasn't a bad sort," and that "things might have been worse." It is needless to say that he spared no effort to ingratiate himself.

He had been at Bonny a month when his goods arrived, and he was full of joy when he looked over his invoices and found that Glaze Brothers had given the asked for-credit. This month had not been by any means wasted. He had sought information concerning the trade from every possible source, and was now fully qualified to commence operations. The natives of Bonny, like those in most of the Oil Rivers, "toil not, neither do they spin." They act as middlemen to the native producers of the Niger and its outfalls, and live upon the percentage which they

exact from them; a state of affairs which both the up-country natives and the traders themselves would willingly dispense with, but which is, unfortunately, supported by the treaties which have been entered into with the chiefs on the seaboard, and which prohibit the traders going beyond a few miles up the rivers and dealing at first hand with the producers.

At first Peacock found it rather up-hill work. The other traders in the river had all a long-established connection, and monopolised most of the trade. They had also allowed many of the producers to get slightly in their debt, so that they should not be able to take their palm-oil to others. But as he had no large establishment to keep up, or salaries to pay, he found himself able to undersell most of the other traders, who were themselves only agents for firms in England, and whose salaries had to come out of the profits. Thus he gradually got custom, for the negro never allows sentiment to interfere with business, and always goes to the cheapest market; while his very position on shore gave him some advantages, the natives often finding it more convenient to go to his store than to take a canoe and go off to a hulk. He certainly worked like a horse, looking after everything himself. There were no afternoon snoozes for him, no debaucheries carried late into the night, at which liquor flowed like water, and the profits of days were eaten, or rather drunk up, in a night. But then, you see, he would have had to pay for the

liquor, while in the case of the other traders it was all charged to the firm. To give the devil his due, he never spared himself; and, as he possessed to a remarkable degree the chicanery of the trader, he soon found himself doing so well that at the end of a year he was out of Glaze Brothers' debt, and had goods in his store to the extent of some 2000*l.*

Thus year after year matters went on improving, till at the end of five years he was the principal trader in Bonny River, and there was quite an imposing row of buildings on the river-bank, among which the long, low building in which he had at first commenced operations was hardly noticeable. During all this time he had not quitted the river. Other traders came, and died, or were invalided to England, but Peacock was always at his post. He seemed to possess an iron constitution, for, though he had had two or three attacks of fever, they had all been of a mild type, and he had shaken them off easily.

Then, when a war broke out between the Bonny people and those of Opobo, he made a grand *coup*. Watching the signs of the times, and collecting all kinds of information from native sources, he had foreseen the outbreak some two months before it occurred, and had ordered out a very large consignment of gunpowder. This was actually on the way out when a meeting of the Bonny traders was held to consider what steps should be taken to try to put a stop to hostilities, which could only have the effect

of paralysing trade. Peacock suggested that the most effective way to stop the war would be to cut off the sinews of war, to cease supplying the natives with muskets and gunpowder; and he proposed that they should all agree to stop the sale of these articles till peace had been made. This was rather a novel doctrine, for the traders had been accustomed to do a roaring trade in gunpowder at such times, which partially compensated for the cessation of more peaceable commerce; but one or two traders supported Peacock, and the meeting finally pledged itself to adopt this course. Next day Peacock sailed for Lagos in a brig of some two hundred tons burden, of which he had become the owner, alleging that he wanted a holiday, and that now would be the best time to take one, since the trade was stopped. He arrived at Lagos, as he had calculated, some four or five days before the outward-bound steamer arrived there with his consignment of powder; and, lying outside the bar, he proceeded to tranship the whole of it to his brig. The outward-bound steamer, after staying three days at Lagos, went on to Bonny, thence to Old Calabar, and returned; and as soon as she had got out of the way, with all those who knew he had the powder in his brig, he quietly went back to Bonny.

Then, for some days, hundreds of cases and barrels were seen being landed and carried up to his warehouses. Manchester goods and crockery, thought

those traders who happened to pass, and who little dreamed that each case or barrel contained some half-a-dozen of the small kegs of powder used in the West African trade, carefully concealed under wrappers. When all was landed, Peacock communicated with the native chiefs. They could have gunpowder, but it must be taken away privately, just as it was packed, and the greatest secrecy must be preserved. Owing to the risk, the price would be double that usually charged. The native chiefs eagerly consented to everything. Their stock of powder was nearly exhausted, and they had already lost one engagement for want of ammunition. In a few days the whole consignment of powder was disposed of, and not a single trader suspected anything. However, a secret known to so many people could not long remain a secret, and it soon became public property. The other traders were most indignant at what they termed Peacock's "sharp practice." They called him all manner of hard names, but he did not care; his position was now established in the river, and he could afford to laugh at them. When the other traders found how they had been duped they too tried to sell gunpowder; but Peacock had been first in the field, and had sold such enormous quantities that there was not much market for them.

When Peacock had been established in Bonny some eight years he launched out still further. He had long thought of a plan of dealing with the native

producers at first-hand, and buying the palm-oil, ivory, and camwood from them, without having the percentage of the middle-men tacked on to the price; so on taking a six months' holiday to England, and leaving his factory in charge of a white clerk, three of whom he had now in his employ, he contrived to pick up as a bargain a small steamer, suitable for river navigation; and, having equipped and fitted her in every respect, sent her up the Nun mouth of the Niger to trade. Some of the middle-men natives tried to object, but they found the bullets from the rifles with which the officers of the steamer were provided such powerful arguments that they withdrew their objections after having on one or two occasions tried to prevent the vessel passing up the river.

This speculation succeeded so well that next year Peacock purchased a second steamer, and, two years later, a third. His position was now assured, and though he was regarded as a "sharp customer," and as not over-scrupulous, he was respected by all those who worship money, and the name of those is, as every one knows, legion. But there was some peculiar warp in his character which seemed to prevent him acting honestly and fairly, and before long this brought him into disrepute.

The engineers of his steamers were engaged for fixed periods, ranging from eighteen months to two or three years, at the expiration of which periods

they were entitled to be sent to England free of cost; but Peacock found it more profitable to keep them out over their time, on one pretext and another, until they sickened and died, by which means he saved the cost of their passages home. Then it invariably happened in such cases that the engineers were in his debt, and when the widows of the poor wretches he had constructively killed wrote heartrending letters, saying they were in great straits and asking for any salary that might have been due to their dead husbands, he always replied regretting, that, so far from anything being due to them, they were in his debt, he having made advances on their salaries. On three or four occasions he hinted that if the husband had spent less in drink he would have been able to send more to his wife, and would perhaps have still been alive.

This happened so often that it began to be remarked, for most of the engineers on the West Coast hailed from Glasgow, they nearly all knew one another, and they were very clannish. Two of the men Peacock had accused of intemperance were known to have been exceedingly temperate; and in one case a man, whom he asserted to have been in his debt, had written to his wife only a fortnight before he died, saying that he could not send any money by that mail because he could not get any money out of Peacock, who owed him two months' pay. This letter was read by several people, and

the feeling against Peacock grew very bad. Besides, it was well known that he was not the kind of man to make advances of pay to any one.

But a case soon occurred which brought matters to a climax. One day, when Peacock was on board a homeward-bound mail-steamer in Bonny River, the engineer of one of his steamers, then lying in the river, came on board the mail and asked him to pay him his salary, as he wanted to remit some money to his wife, who had just been confined. "I've touched no pay for three months, you know, Mr. Peacock," he said. But Peacock put him off. He really had not got any money at present; there had just been a heavy call made upon him; besides, why need he bother about it? The money was safe, as safe as if in a bank; if he left it now he would have the more to take home. Then, as the engineer persisted, he promised to give him his pay in time for the next mail. This conversation took place outside the smoking-room of the mail-steamer, in the presence of the chief and second engineers of the mail and of the captain.

Now two days later, before the mail-steamer had left the river, Peacock's engineer was unfortunately drowned by the capsizing of the dingy one night when he was returning to his ship; and the chief engineer of the mail had to convey the intelligence of the death of her husband to the widow, whom he knew, and who lived near Liverpool. The poor

woman was almost heart-broken at this dreadful news. She had two children, a baby two or three months old and a girl of some two years, and she was in straitened circumstances, for she had not received any money from her husband for some months. The chief engineer did what he could to comfort her; told her that he knew there was some money due to her husband, and said that he would bring it home for her next voyage, she giving him a written authority to receive it.

When the steamer again anchored in Bonny River Peacock, as usual, came on board, and the chief engineer, producing the authority, asked him for the money for the widow.

"Money!" said Peacock, as if astonished. "My dear fellow, I assure you that R—— owed *me* money. I had made him an advance just about a week before he died."

The chief engineer's grey eyes sparkled viciously, and his lips twitched.

"Perhaps you'll allow me to tell you, Mr. Peacock, that you're a dom'd leear. I heard the puir fellow claim three months' pay from you, aboard this verra ship, just twa days before he died."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Peacock, "you've been drinking. I can show you his receipts."

"Ouy, aye, receipts! Nae doubt as you're so handy a leear and a thief you're a forger also. Mon, would ye rob the widow and orphans?"

Peacock still asserted that he owed nothing, and the chief engineer brought forward his second as a witness. He also appealed to the captain, but the captain said he could not remember; he remembered a conversation, but not quite what it was about. The fact was that he did not want to be mixed up in any unpleasantness; Peacock was a large shipper, and it was to his interest to get a full cargo, for he got a percentage on the profits of the voyage. Then the two engineers got so threatening in their manner, and the stokers came round and spoke their minds so freely about Peacock, that he thought it desirable to call his boat to the gangway, and quitted the mail under a shower of epithets and imprecations that must have penetrated even his thick skin.

Of course all the traders in the river were on board the mail, for the arrival of the steamers is the only break in the monotony of their miserable existences, and they had heard the whole dispute. This affair, coming on the top of all the former rumours, convinced them that Peacock was a scoundrel, and that he was really swindling this poor woman, as he had systematically swindled others. Sharp practice in trade they could overlook, especially if it proved successful, but this was too much, and they decided to have as little to do with him as possible.

Peacock found all this very unpleasant, and he

cursed himself for having forgotten that conversation outside the smoking-room of the mail steamer; his memory must be beginning to fail, he thought. Then, finding himself avoided by every one on the river, and that he could not go on board a steamer without hearing unpleasant remarks from the engineers, he decided to go to England, and give the storm time to blow over. No one knew better than he that a few months might remove the majority of the Europeans in the river to another sphere, and at all events the story would be half forgotten when he came back; so he went down to Old Calabar, and there took passage in a south-coast boat, which would not touch at Bonny, or at any port on the coast except Sierra Leone.

When he got to Liverpool he found that the story had preceded him. Even Glaze Brothers, good customer though he was, showed a marked coolness in their manner; there was no longer that geniality in their welcome, and as he passed through the outer office he saw the clerks whispering together and looking at him. He felt this was all very annoying. Then he received an anonymous letter from the coast, threatening to lynch him if he dared to return there, and giving a very unconventional and unrestrained opinion of his character. Peacock was not a coward, and the threats did not frighten him; still there was no knowing what might not be done in an out-of-the-way place like Bonny, and anyhow

he could hardly live there if everybody cut him. Yet he must go back. Doubtless he was now in a position to give up trade and live on his gains, but he would have to go back to Bonny to wind up the business.

However, the good luck which had hitherto attended all his speculations stuck to him to the last. While he was debating about returning to Bonny, the great "Niger and Binue Amalgamated Trading Company" was started, with a capital of fifteen millions. The objects of this Company were to acquire and organise all the trade in the Niger delta, and in the Niger river and its tributaries as far as Timbuctoo, above which point the French had tapped the river from their possessions in Senegambia. The directors proposed to buy out all the existing traders, and to make treaties of their own with the native chiefs. They were going to have a flotilla of steamers, and open up vast tracts of unknown country.

Peacock at once commenced negotiations with the Company. He had, he said, three steamers already on the Niger, completely equipped and in thorough repair. The officers of these steamers were thoroughly acquainted with the navigation of the Lower Niger, and knew as much about the Upper Niger as anybody. The Company would find it greatly to its advantage to take over these vessels as they stood; it would thereby secure the services of men who possessed the most valuable local knowledge, who

knew the river, the trade, and the natives. None of the officers would, he was sure, make any difficulty about the transfer. Then there was his establishment at Bonny , which would be most valuable as a depôt; it comprised a number of substantial buildings, and was stocked with goods to the value of 10,000*l.* The Company eagerly jumped at this offer; it was, in fact, just what was wanted. The directors sent out an agent to inspect the steamers and the Bonny factory, and, on receiving his report, finally came to terms with Peacock, who received 20,000*l.* in cash and 40,000*l.* in fully-paid-up shares. As he had said, none of his employés had raise any objection to transferring their services to the Company, they had all been intensely delighted to get rid of Peacock.

After finally severing his connection with West Africa, Peacock, then about forty-two years of age, married a sufficiently-well-connected young woman some twenty years younger thanhimself, and settled in the south of England, near Eastbourne, where nobody knew anything about his antecedents, and where he was not likely to meet traders from the coast. He has now four or five children, and is a much-respected member of society, owning a large house, horses and carriages, and several servants. He hunts regularly, and his is quite a familiar figure with the Eastbourne Harriers and the East Sussex Foxhounds. His shares in the Company bring him in a good income, and he is never tired of insinuating how very well off he is;

telling you what fabulous prices he gives for his pictures, his wines, and his hunters; but, as he had a lot of trouble and ran a good deal of risk in scraping this money together, he is perhaps right in thinking a great deal of it.

A few hypercritical people say they do not like him or his manners; a very few even pretend not to know him, but, generally, he is much looked up to. Of course, considering his birth and bringing-up, it is inevitable that he should occasionally commit breaches of good manners, but his admirers easily overlook these or explain them away. "The poor dear man, you know, my dear, lived so long abroad in Africa amongst those savage Ashantis, or Zulus, or some native tribe, that he has acquired a little of their unconventionality and primitive candour. But he can afford to dispense with mere polish, for he has a thoroughly good heart, and then, you know, he is so e-NOR-mously rich."

X.—THE LEGEND OF HOW THE DUTCH CAPTURED ELMINA.

It was a rainy morning early in the month of July, 1637, and the grave and dignified João Antonio Perez Lorenzo de Salvatierra y Grandioso, Governor and Generalissimo of the Portuguese settlement of La Mina, found the time hang very heavily on his hands. As he walked to and fro in the state apartments of the castle of St. George, with his thin hands folded behind his back, stopping occasionally at a window to look out over the sea, now obscured by sheets of falling rain, he yawned so liberally that the king's *procurador*, who was lingering over his breakfast at a side-table, was really afraid he would be unable to close his jaws again. Don João was a hidalgo of the pure *sang azur*, as indeed the most casual observer could hardly fail to notice by the tracery of blue veins which marked his narrow and rather receding forehead. In his youth he had

served against the Moors, and, after a very regular attendance at court for some years, his services, or his persistency, had been finally rewarded by his nomination to the little-coveted post of General of the Coast of La Mina. But he had found life at La Mina even more dreary than he had been led to anticipate, and, as he stood gazing mechanically out over the rain-swept sea, his high aquiline features were marked by an expression of intense weariness; while, when he yawned, the dim light of the cloudy day lent a deeper sallow tinge to his hollow cheeks.

There was really nothing to do. The soldiers of the garrison, criminals who had been banished to Africa for life, had been behaving with the most detestable and unusual exemplariness, and there was not even the smallest peccadillo to be inquired into to pass the time. It was no use looking over the accounts of the *viedor*, for nothing had been entered for months; the rascally English and Hollanders, who frequented the coast in their ships, and had no respect for the injunctions of His Holiness, having seduced the heathen natives from their proper allegiance and carried off all the trade. He had no books; besides, reading always made his head ache; and it was so troublesome to have to make out the meaning of the long words. What was he to do? He thought for a moment of Pepita, his pretty mulatto handmaiden, but dismissed the thought as soon as half-formed, for he was getting on in years and his

blood was not so fiery as it had been. Should he order the chaplain to perform mass; it would be easy to discover a saint to whom the day was dedicated? No, that was no novelty, and now it even failed to send him to sleep. Besides, the ribald soldiery secretly scoffed at the chaplain, whose manner of life was, in truth, anything but edifying. Should he send for the captain of the garrison and order him to parade the men for inspection? No, that would not do either. He was sick of seeing those thirty red-nosed scamps, with their rusty accoutrements and antiquated weapons; besides, they were nearly all sick, which naturally accounted for the absence of military crime. Maledictions on the place! it was enough to drive a man mad.

"May the devil fly away with me if I know what to do!" he yawned.

"Ah, yes," remarked the *procurador*, at last rising from the table and wiping his lips; "La Mina, your Excellency, has not been what it was since the king reduced the establishment—thanks to those heretical Hollanders, who have so ruined our commerce that the place brings neither profit nor pleasure."

"And whom may the saints confound."

"A most pious wish, your Excellency, and one that doubtless will be accomplished in good time, though not in time to be of any service to us, I fear."

"But what is to be done to pass the time? Think of something, my excellent *procurador*. You men of the law should never be at a loss."

"True, but the choice here is somewhat limited. What saith your Excellency to a party at quadrille? Doubtless Captain Tavera and the *viedor* will play. Shall I fetch the cards?"

"No, 'tis too early. That will suit better for the afternoon."

"Have a slave tied up and flogged. 'Twill pass half-an-hour."

"Nay, nay. You men of the law are too heartless. I like not such sights."

"Well, then, suppose that——"

We shall never know what the worthy *procurador* was going to suggest next, for his speech was cut short by the sudden entrance of the captain of the garrison, who ran into the room crying,

"Your Excellency, your Excellency, there are nine sail of ships in the offing."

"Ah! poor young man," said the *procurador*, smiling. "Nine sail of ships. Has it come to this? I warned you not to be so free with the pernicious *schnaps* of those heretical Hollanders. Nine sail of ships! Go and call the leech."

"I tell you there are nine vessels in the offing," persisted the captain, angrily. "They are under full sail and bearing up for this port. This is no time

for buffoonery, *procurador*. Who knows? They may be an enemy."

"And who has seen them, my gallant captain?" asked the Governor.

"I have, your Excellency. Suspecting that that good-for-nothing Pedro Bartas, who is sentinel on the ramparts for to-day, had gone to sleep in some corner, for I had not seen him for an hour, I went to look after him; when, chancing to look seaward, I saw the ships standing in."

The three men hastily went out on the walls and looked over the sea. True enough; there, indistinctly seen through the sheets of falling rain, were nine ships. What could they be? Not the half-yearly ships from Lisbon, for there were never more than two of them now that the trade had declined; besides, they would not be due for another three months. They strained their eyes to try and distinguish the colours that were flying; but the ships were still at some distance, and the bunting, soaked with rain, hung in heavy folds that barely stirred in the light wind. In the meantime the three men were getting drenched.

"Shall I fetch your Excellency's mantle," suggested the *procurador*, looking ruefully at his black velvet doublet which was soaking up the rain like a sponge, and anxious to find a pretext for getting under cover.

"Thanks, my friend," replied Don João, "it is of no

moment. But, Captain Tavera," he continued, turning to the captain, "how is it there is no flag on our staff? Surely it is not fitting that a castle of His Majesty of Portugal should be without an ensign. This needs some explanation," and he drew himself up stiffly.

"I crave your pardon, your Excellency, but there is none. Last week's tornado carried away our last."

"Ah well! ah well. To what are we reduced? No flag? It will be well then, perhaps, to discharge a cannon, to show, at least, that the castle is not deserted."

"I again crave your Excellency's pardon, but all the gunners are sick."

The Governor for a moment nearly forgot his punctilio in his annoyance, but he restrained himself, and again turning seaward watched the approaching ships.

"The devil!" murmured the *procurador* under his breath. "Is the old ass going to stand prosing here all the day?" and he tried to adjust his saturated ruff so as to keep the rain from trickling down his back.

Suddenly a flash, followed by a puff of white smoke, was seen to shoot forth from the bows of the leading vessel; the three men involuntarily ducked behind the parapet, and in a second or two the boom of a heavy gun came echoing over the sea; then, finding that nothing happened, they rose from their shelter. The gun had evidently not been shotted

and had been fired as a signal to the other ships; for the leading vessel backed her sails and dropped anchor, and each ship as it came up in succession did likewise, until all nine were lying in a crescent formation about a mile and a half off the castle.

"They come with no hostile intent, it would seem," said the Governor, much relieved. "Yet it will be perhaps as well to get the garrison under arms. Let the soldiery parade upon the battlements, so that the strangers may see we are not unprepared."

The captain hastened away and descended to the guard-room of the castle. It was empty, except for a little yellow-skinned urchin of some eight years, who was sitting on the floor playing with the head-piece of one of the guard, and whose features strangely resembled those of the somewhat unctious *procurador*.

"Where the devil is the guard?" asked the captain. "Do you know, Nino?"

"Oh yes, *senhor capitan*, they have gone to chief Attah's. He is marrying another wife to-day, and there is feasting and drinking in his house."

"A pretty state of affairs!" grumbled the captain. "What? they go off without even asking leave? The service is going to the dogs." And he ran out into the court-yard to look after the rest of his men.

He found that nearly all those who were well had also been enticed away by the prospect of a free

drink at the chief's house, but after some searching he got together six men, three of whom had ague; and, having made them put on their accoutrements, marched gallantly at their head to the ramparts. Don João Antonio Perez Lorenzo de Salvatierra y Grandioso made a grimace when he saw these six scarecrows approach, but he said nothing, and the men were placed in positions where they could be seen to advantage from the strange ships. The rain had fortunately ceased, but the air was damp and chill, and the three sufferers from ague stood shaking till their morions and breast-pieces rattled again.

Presently a pinnace appeared from round the bows of the largest ship, and came pulling rapidly towards the shore. A white flag was displayed in the bows, and in the stern hung a large banner, which a puff of wind caused to stream out for a moment, and the spectators caught a glimpse of a yellow lion rampant on a blue field.

"Hollanders, by all the saints!" ejaculated the Governor.

"Hollanders," echoed the *procurador*.

"What can they want?" said the captain.

"Gentlemen," said the Governor, "the boat is approaching the landing-place. 'Twould be indiscreet to allow them to gain an inkling of our weakness; therefore we will waive our dignity so far as to

descend to the river-wall, and learn what they wish with us."

Don João Antonio Perez Lorenzo de Salvatierra y Grandioso donned a plumed hat, fastened a long Toledo blade to his side, where it flapped at every step against his thin legs, twirled up his long iron-grey mustachios, and descended in a stately and dignified manner to the castle-gate; attended by two of the most presentable soldiers from the ramparts, the *procurador*, and the captain, who had thrust an enormous pair of wheel-lock pistols into his belt. The other officials were not to be found, the *viedor* having gone off to Chief Attah's, while the chaplain had not been seen since the previous evening, when he had gone out, presumably to offer spiritual consolation to some suffering heathen. They walked past the guard-room, of which the yellow-skinned urchin was still the only occupant, passed under the arch of the gateway and traversed the drawbridge, when the captain, suddenly remembering that the services of the trumpeter would probably be required, called Nino, and bade him call him from Chief Attah's. Then the party continued its stately progress to the landing-place.

On reaching the river-wall they found a crowd of eighty or a hundred natives, who had been drawn together by the unusual spectacle of so many ships; the pinnace was coming straight in to the mouth of the river, and was nearly within hailing distance.

The Governor made his way to the front, the *procurador* supported him on the right, and the captain on the left, while the two soldiers, armed with harquebuses, stood behind. When the boat was some forty yards from the wall the rowers lay on their oars, and a flourish of trumpets came pealing over the water. Then they paused, waiting for the Portuguese to return the compliment, but the trumpeter had not arrived. Don João's mustachios absolutely bristled with rage, like those of an angry tom-cat, and the captain, seeing the boy Nino approaching, hastily called him.

"Where is the trumpeter?" he asked.

"The trumpeter says he is engaged until to-morrow," replied the boy.

The Governor nearly burst with rage.

"Ten thousand furies!" he roared, "what a disgrace. What will these Hollanders think of our courtesy? Captain Tavera, send a file of the guard, and have the insolent instantly placed in irons."

The two harquebusiers pricked up their ears, exchanged a wink, and were on the point of starting off, when the captain stopped them.

"If we let these two men go, your Excellency," he whispered, "they will not return till Attah's wedding-feast is over. Their mouths have been watering for his good cheer all the morning."

Don João bit his lips. "True, true. We must not be rash, we must temporize. Ah! if His Majesty

only knew the trouble these Lisbon gaol-birds give us. A pretty garrison indeed."

The Dutchmen in the boat, after waiting vainly for a response, sounded a second and more prolonged flourish; the Governor beckoned to them, and the pinnace approached to within some fifteen yards. Then a herald rose in the stern and spoke.

"The most valiant and puissant Michael Adrian de Ruyter, Lord High Admiral of His Netherlands Majesty's sea-forces, sends greeting."

"Lord High Admiral de Ruyter sends greeting," murmured the *procurador*. "Very good."

"Silence, gentlemen," exclaimed the Governor.

"And," continued the herald, "craves a favour at the hands of the Generalissimo of His Portuguese Majesty's forces on the coast of La Mina.

"Craves a favour," whispered the *procurador*.

"His men," pursued the herald, "are now sorely stricken with a pestilence, which bids fair soon to leave his ships without sailors, and against which the skill of the leeches avails nought. He therefore craves your gracious permission to land those who are sick at some point on these shores, not far from one of your settlements, where they may enjoy your protection against the heathen of these parts, whom, he hath been given to understand, are treacherous and cruel. Thus, by the grace of God, he would hope to spare those who are still in health from the contagion. The Lord High Admiral will take all

due precautions to prevent his men holding any communication with the inhabitants of this land; and he has ordered me to say that, if you are graciously pleased to grant his petition, yonder hill would well suit his purpose." And he pointed towards a hill covered with bush, on the other side of the river Beyah, some four hundred yards from the castle of St. George, which it overlooked.

"What is the nature of the pestilence?" inquired the Governor.

"'Tis the black plague," replied the herald.

"What say ye, gentlemen?" said the Governor, turning to the *procurador* and the captain, "shall we accede to this request?"

"Certainly not," answered the *procurador*, already pale and trembling at the thought of catching the disease. "The black plague! Heavens and earth, 'tis no joke. Oh! certainly not."

"With all due respect to the opinion of our learned *procurador*," said the captain, "I do not see, your Excellency, how we can refuse. It would be churlish to deny so simple a request. Moreover, if we withhold permission, the cursed Hollanders will probably take it; and how can we prevent them? Those nine ships would make short work of our defences, the gunners are all sick, and most of our cannon are useless. Then, if they take permission they will probably take the castle as well. Since we are so defenceless, we should be careful to avoid doing aught that might

lead to blows, and to that end a refusal might lead. It seems to me, therefore, your Excellency, that our wiser plan is to make the best of a necessity, and grant that which they ask, hoping that they will soon go away peaceably."

"The captain is right," exclaimed Don João after a pause. "We must needs grant that which we have not the power of refusing. We are disposed to hearken to your prayer," he continued, raising his voice and turning to the herald, "but on certain conditions which we will send to you anon. When the High Admiral has signified his acceptance of these conditions, the sick may be landed. In the meantime wait here, but at a safe distance from the shore."

The boat moved a hundred yards or so away, and the Governor and his following returned to the castle, where the *procurador* was directed to draw up the conditions. These were that the sick should be landed at a distance of at least half-a-mile from the castle, that they should be at once moved to the hill selected by the admiral, and that none of the Hollanders should attempt to enter the native town of Oddena, or have any intercourse with the inhabitants. The paper containing these terms was tied up in a bladder, thrown into the sea, and picked up by the pinnace, which at once made its way back to the ships, and in the course of an hour returned to convey the

thanks of the Lord High Admiral, and his full acceptance of the conditions.

Early next morning a whole flotilla of boats was seen making its way from the fleet to a point about a mile to leeward of the castle of St. George; about an hour later a party of men was observed cutting bush and clearing the ground on the top of the hill, and by evening several tents whitened its summit. Most of the unruly garrison of St. George had straggled back before noon, limp and jaded from their debauch. The Governor promised himself to make them smart severely for their escapade, but he felt that the present was no time for strong measures; they might mutiny and invite the Hollanders to take possession of the castle, so he contented himself with reprimanding them, having the drawbridge raised and the castle-gate locked, and prohibiting them from going out.

The next day they saw the sick being landed. Hammocks were lifted carefully from the boats, and borne to the shore by six or seven men, who carried them up the sandy beach and disappeared in the bush.

"Those sick Hollanders seem to be men of substance," observed the Governor; "there are six or eight men to each hammock."

"It is the nature of the disease," said the *procurador*; "all those stricken with it swell fearfully, and then Hollanders are always as fat as swine."

"They are sailors," said the captain, "and not accustomed to carry men. Doubtless four of the heathen from the town would carry one of those hammocks easily enough."

For three or four days the transportation of the sick continued, and then, although boats frequently passed from the ships to the shore, no more hammocks were sent to land. The *procurador* calculated that over one hundred sick had been landed, and he invoked all the saints in the calendar to prevent the contagion spreading to the castle. But he was forced to acknowledge that the Hollanders had most scrupulously observed the terms imposed by the governor. Not only had they not entered the town of Oddena, but they had posted sentinels all round the hill on which they had established their hospital, and none of the natives, drawn thither by curiosity, were suffered to approach.

Some nine days after the arrival of the Netherlands fleet the *procurador*, Captain Tavera, and the chaplain were invited by the Governor to breakfast in his apartments about 11 a.m. They were sitting round the table, congratulating themselves that the Hollanders, who had gained no inkling of the defenceless condition of the place, would soon be going away, for during the last four days no hammocks had been sent ashore, whence it was evident there were no fresh cases of sickness on board, and the *procurador* was wondering if the Governor would

think him gluttonous if he asked for another plate-full of the ragout of green pigeons, when the sound of a loud blast of trumpets came rolling in at the open windows. The Governor and his guests started to their feet and ran to look out.

"What the devil can it be?" said the captain; "unless I am dreaming that sounded uncommonly like a defiance."

As they reached the windows a second blast re-sounded, and they could discern the forms of four or five trumpeters, with their instruments to their lips, on the summit of the hill where the Hollanders had pitched tents for their sick. Near them a number of men could be seen running along pulling up bushes, and that with so much ease that it was evident they had only been stuck loosely in the earth, and were not rooted there. As the bushes were pulled up some dark objects became apparent behind. The Governor looked anxiously at these.

"What are those round and black objects, Captain Tavera?" he said; "my eyesight is not so clear as it once was."

The captain had also been attentively looking at them.

"Treachery, treachery!" he cried; "they are the muzzles of cannons, your Excellency, and, what is more, there are the gunners about to fire them."

He threw himself under cover of the wall; the others hastened to follow his example, and the next

moment a storm of shot rained down upon the castle. In an instant all was confusion. The *procurador* and the chaplain rushed away to the deep dungeon designed for refractory slaves, where, if anywhere, they would be safe from the iron hail; Don João Antonio Perez Lorenzo de Salvatierra y Grandioso stamped about the room, cursed his blindness, clutched at the few grey hairs that adorned the sides of his dome-shaped head, and called for his sword; while the captain ran down to the courtyard to get the garrison under arms.

The surprise was complete. The perfidious Hollanders, instead of landing sick men, had been landing pieces of ordnance, gunpowder, solid shot, cross-bar-shot, chain-shot, and all the other fashionable shot of the day, and conveying them in hammocks to the top of the hill, which entirely commanded the castle. There, secure from discovery on account of the dread the Portuguese had of the pretended black plague, they had quietly erected a battery, and, when all the preparations were complete, had unmasked it.

Every few minutes a fresh shower of iron rained down on the castle; the window-shutters were riddled to pieces and smashed, and the courtyard was littered with bricks, plaster, and pieces of stone knocked off the parapets and the corners of buildings; but the guns on the hill, being of small calibre, did not do much material damage to the solid de-

fences. The garrison was drawn up in the courtyard, and were hastily trying to get their rusty harquebuses and calivers into working order, but not a man dared mount the battlements to face that iron storm. And indeed it would have done no good if they had. There were no cannon on the side of the land defences of the castle, for for more than a century there had not been the smallest probability of an attack being made on that side, and the thirty brass guns the place mounted had all been moved to the sea faces.

The nineteen or twenty men of the garrison who were fit for duty were still standing together in the court-yard when a cross-bar-shot struck against a projecting corner of masonry, and, coming whizzing down amongst them, knocked over three of their number like nine-pins. In a minute the court-yard was empty, save for the three bleeding forms on the ground, and the captain, Tavera. The remainder had sought shelter so precipitately that they had even neglected to take their weapons with them. In vain the captain swore and stormed, and ordered them to come out. What was the use? they said. What good would it do to come and stand in the way of those pretty little iron pellets that were flying about? They preferred remaining where they were. Resistance was impossible. The best thing to do would be to surrender on terms, and be sent back to Portugal. And at this idea they all

raised their voices and shouted, "Surrender! surrender!"

Tavera hastily ascended the stone steps three at a time, and returned to the Governor's apartments. Don João was still stamping and imprecating himself, and the floor was littered with the shreds of hair he had pulled out.

"The men will not fight, your Excellency," said the captain, "and in truth there is for once some reason in their argument, for we can do nothing. That battery on the hill sweeps the whole castle, and we have not one piece of cannon in position with which to reply. We must needs make the best of a bad business and surrender. Shall I hang out a white flag?"

"Never, never," cried the Governor. "A Salvatierra y Grandioso dies, but never surrenders."

"If we delay much longer you will be able to do both," remarked the captain with a shrug, as a chain-shot sailed in at an open window and reduced an old-fashioned wooden press to matchwood.

The next moment a frightful detonation was heard from the sea, and a storm of missiles flew about the castle from that direction. Tavera cautiously peered out. The nine ships were close in shore, and, having delivered one broadside, were going about to deliver the other.

"There are the ships beginning now," he said. "They will batter the place to pieces. It is madness to resist, your Excellency."

"Ah! Tavera," cried the unfortunate Governor, while two tears of rage ran down his high cheek-bones, "how can I with honour surrender that which His Gracious Majesty has committed to my keeping?"

"Then, saving your presence, His Gracious Majesty should have furnished the means of defence, and not send out a miserable score of scape-gallows gaol-sweepings."

Don João wrung his hands, and another shot, entering a window, wrecked the breakfast table.

"Shall I hang out a white flag?" again asked the captain. "'Twill be no dishonour, for never in honest warfare was there such a dastardly stratagem as this."

The Governor groaned.

"Yes, my friend, we must," he said at last, "for Heaven deserts us.'

Tavera looked about for a flag, but naturally there was not one there. Then the shattered wooden-press caught his eye, and, snatching one of the Governor's linen shirts from the wreck, he ran along to the flagstaff, waving it over his head, hastily knotting the sleeves to the halyards, and ran the garment up. As it floated out on the morning breeze the cannonade ceased, trumpets sounded on the hill, and the sound of exulting cheers came wafted down.

Thus fell the redoubted castle of St. George del Mina, for more than a hundred and fifty years the

stronghold of the Portuguese on the Gold Coast. Terms were soon arranged. The Governor merely stipulated that the garrison should retain their personal effects, march out with the honours of war, and be conveyed to Lisbon. The Dutch raised no objection to such reasonable demands, and the place is still shown where Don João met De Ruyter outside the gates of the castle and delivered up the keys.

This is the legend current on the Gold Coast at the present day, and it may be found, somewhat abridged, in *The Story of the Ashantee Campaign*, by Winwood Reade, who apparently placed full faith in it. But, though it is ingenious, it will not bear inspection. These events are said to have taken place in 1637, but since 1599 the Dutch had been established at Moree, some fourteen miles to the east of Elmina, and they had built Fort Nassau there in 1621. There was therefore no necessity for asking permission to make a hospital on shore near a Portuguese settlement for protection from the natives, since the Dutch already had a settlement of their own at a distance of a few miles. Moreover, in 1625, a Dutch force from Moree, under Jan Dirks Lamb, made an unsuccessful attempt to capture Elmina; and after such an act of aggression the Portuguese would hardly be likely to be so unsuspicious as the legend makes them out to have been. Then, De Ruyter, who was not an admiral till 1641, was not in West Africa in 1637; and in

the latter year there was no such person as "His Portuguese Majesty"; for it was not till 1640 that the rebellion took place which freed Portugal from the Spanish yoke, and placed the Duke of Braganza on the throne of Portugal under the title of John IV.

These facts are quite sufficient to throw doubt upon the authenticity of the legend; and, in addition, Barbot gives a very circumstantial account of the capture of Elmina by the Dutch. It did take place in 1637, but he tells us that the expeditionary force, consisting of eight hundred soldiers and five hundred seamen, under Colonel Hans Coine, landed half a mile to the west of Cape Coast, and thence marched to Elmina, where after some sharp fighting they carried the hill of St. Jago. They carried up a mortar and two pieces of cannon, and from that point of 'vantage bombarded the castle for two or three days. But the cannonade did little damage, so an assault was ordered; and it was only when the Dutch grenadiers were actually at the out-works of the castle that the Portuguese beat the chamade and capitulated.

On the whole, legends do not seem very trustworthy.

THE END.