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THE  
LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE





# THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

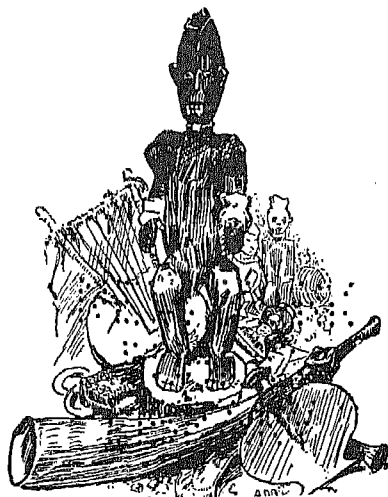
[WEST AFRICA]

BY

JOHN LANG

AUTHOR OF 'OUTPOSTS OF EMPIRE,' ETC.

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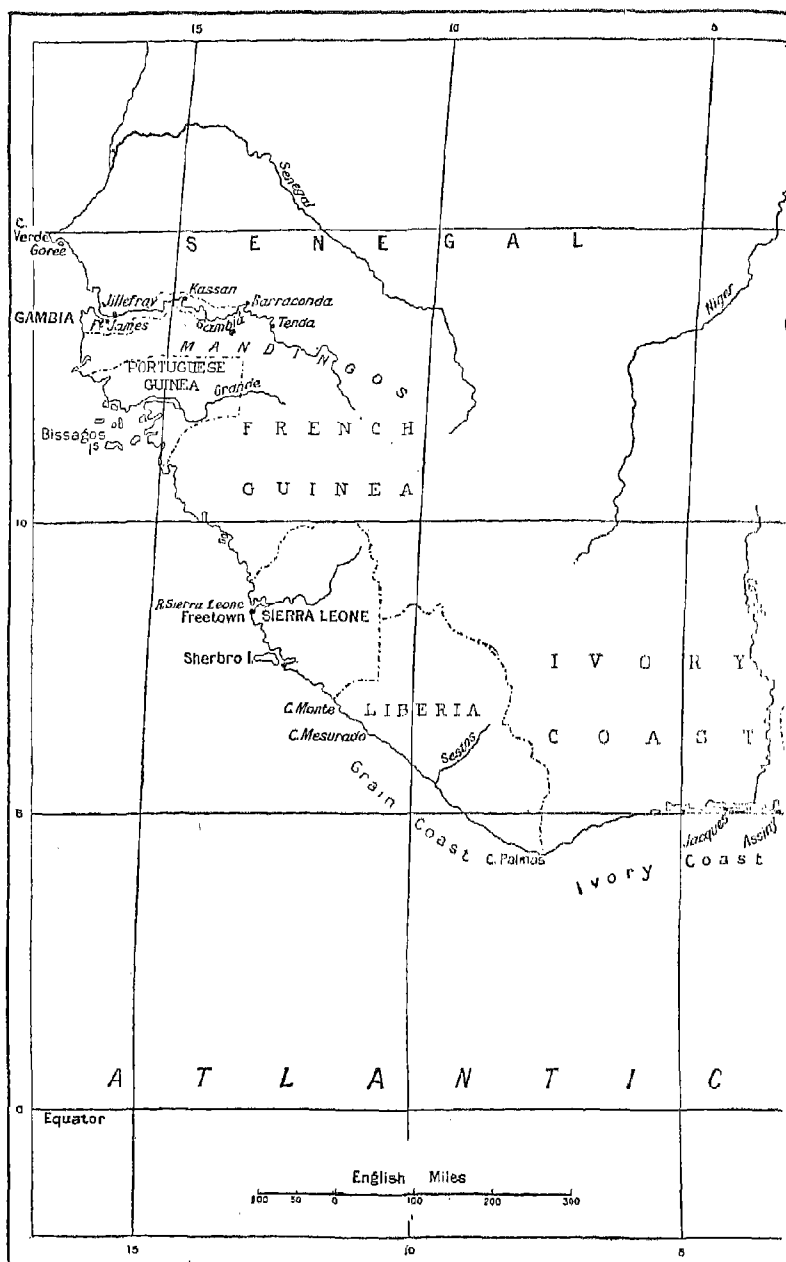
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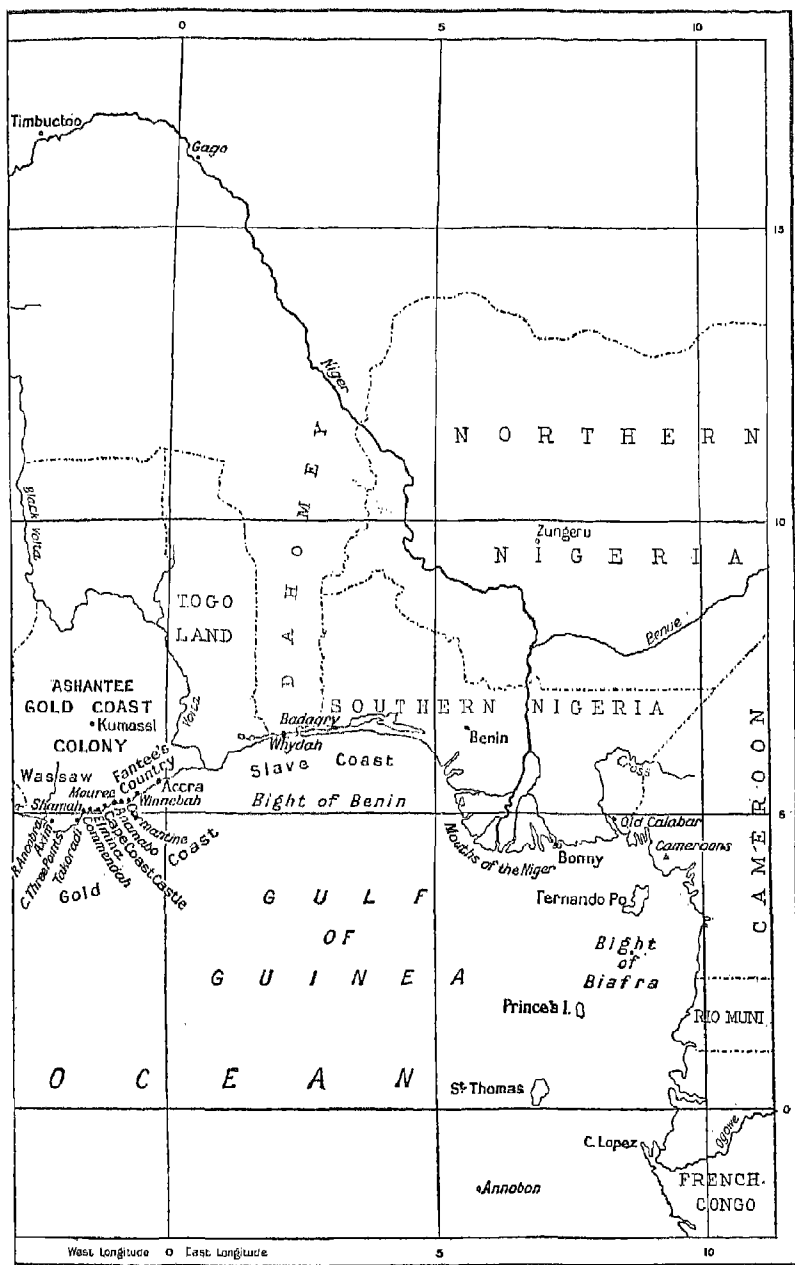
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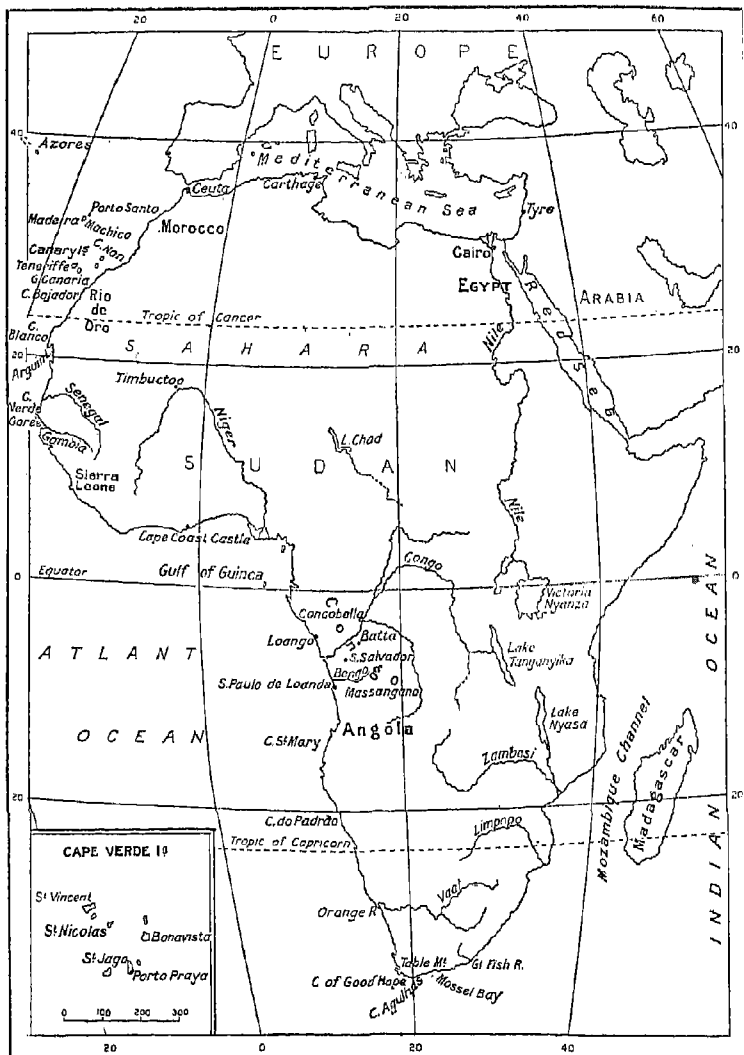
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# THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

## CHAPTER I

### IN THE BEGINNING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

---

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## CHAPTER II

### THE CARTHAGINIANS IN WEST AFRICA

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## THE CARTHAGINIANS IN WEST AFRICA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

## CHAPTER III

### THE REDISCOVERY OF WEST AFRICA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

But still Cape Bojador remained unconquered. Time and again Portuguese ships approached that dreaded headland; time and again they returned, baffled by their own fears, and discouraged. Then in 1484 one Gilianez, more bold than his fellows, ventured round, and returned to report a sea not more terrible than that to the north of the cape, a heat as little to be feared. But in the hearts of those who succeeded Gilianez, as they pushed south, dread reawakened. They found men with black skins. "See," said they, "how the terrible sun has scorched these unhappy wretches!" And to the same cause they attributed the woolly hair of the natives. The surf that fringed the shore, even in calm weather, raged as at home it had never been known to rage, the foam was whiter. "Look," they said, "the very ocean boils from the great heat!" And they hastened back to Prince Henry to report that, as their fathers had believed, so it was,—the land was unfit for habitation. But not thus was Prince Henry to be discouraged. In face of every obstacle, in spite of difficulties greater than in our day it is possible to realise, undismayed he clung to his project, firm in the belief that perseverance must be rewarded, not alone by the discovery of new lands, but even by the finding of a new route to the Indies.

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

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

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

In 1443, Tristan, working for Prince Henry,

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

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

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

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

With mainspring broken, the nation's work for

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<sup>1</sup> Washington Irving.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## CHAPTER IV

### EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA: LOK

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## CHAPTER V

### EARLY ENGLISH VOYAGES TO GUINEA : TOWRSON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

## CHAPTER VI

### PRISONERS OF THE PORTUGUESE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“We see  
A number of black soules,  
Whose likeliness seemed men to be,  
But all as blacke as coles.  
“Their captaine comes to me  
As naked as my naile,  
Not having witte or honesty  
To cover once his taile.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But the months rolled on, and still came no word

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

## CHAPTER VII

### EARLY ENGLISH EXPLORERS ON THE GAMBIA

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

In 1591 Richard Rainolds and Thomas Dassel

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

## CHAPTER VIII

### PORTUGUESE AND DUTCH ON THE GOLD COAST

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There must be no mistake in the Dutch second

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

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



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man. But with this the Portuguese successes ended. The native levies, satisfied for the moment with the victory, in order to celebrate their triumph and desirous to display in the town the heads taken, withdrew from the position to which they should have clung at whatever cost, and it was at once, and almost without loss, seized by a second Dutch detachment. The Portuguese, hastily reassembling their native allies, twice made desperate attempts to retake this all-important position, but without success. It is easy to make a blunder, not so easy to repair it. On each occasion they were repulsed with heavy loss, and finally they were driven back on a second position near the summit of the hill, a redoubt which they had prepared beforehand. But out of this, too, they were quickly forced, and very soon from the top of the hill Dutch guns were playing on San Jorge.

After two days' fighting—the Dutch being unable to carry and hold the town of Elmina owing to the heavy fire of the fort's guns—Colonel Coine summoned San Jorge to surrender, threatening with death the entire garrison if the summons should be disregarded. Time to consider the question was demanded by the Portuguese commandant; in three days he would be prepared to answer "Yea" or "Nay." But this by no means suited the Dutch, who had left their ships carrying with them but a bare three days' rations. Here already was the third day. It must be now or never; either they must have the castle that day, or a retreat to the ships was inevitable. Accordingly Colonel Hans Coine ordered an immediate assault. But even as the men

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began to move forward on their desperate and uncertain task, above the frowning ramparts rose heavily in the stagnant air a white flag, and the roll of Portuguese drums beating the "chamade" announced that the garrison was prepared to discuss terms of surrender.

It was, after all, no great feat to capture this stronghold, for (leaving out of account the native levies on either side) there were no more than thirty-eight or forty Portuguese in the castle to withstand the thirteen hundred Dutch soldiers and sailors; and of this slender Portuguese garrison, the entire European rank and file were "banisht men," persons sent out of their country for crime. Not that it is an unknown thing for convicts to do loyal service,—our own annals in Australia have shown that,—but the average Portuguese official of the time was little likely to have gained either the affection or the confidence of those under his command. We know from Andrew Battell and from others the material of which both officers and men were composed. Of this particular garrison Barbot says that it was "commonly composed of leud and debauch'd persons, as well officers as soldiers, both of them used to commit outrages and to plunder, or of such as were banish'd Portugal for heinous crimes and misdemeanors. No wonder therefore that the histories of those times give an account of unparallel'd violence, and inhumanities committed there by those unsatiable Portuguese during the time that place was under their subjection, not only against the natives of the country and such European nations as resorted hither,

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but even among themselves." A successful, or even a prolonged, resistance, under such circumstances was not within the realms of possibility. Van Ypren had made no mistake in his estimate.

The Dutch were now virtually masters of the Gold Coast. Of important posts there was but Fort S. Anthony at Axim remaining in Portuguese hands, and ere long that too followed the example of San Jorge. It is not easy to understand why Holland did not seize Fort S. Anthony before Coine returned to Brazil. Van Ypren did indeed then demand that it should be surrendered, but he took no action after the Portuguese commandant's spirited rejection of his summons. Perhaps he thought that, like an over-ripe pear, it must soon drop of its own weight, and that bloodshed might thereby be saved. In any case, it was not until January 1642 that the Dutch laid hands on Fort S. Anthony, some considerable time indeed after a treaty had been signed between Holland and the now restored King of Portugal, a treaty whereby her conquests in West Africa were secured to the former. Unless there is some confusion of dates, the Netherlands were here acting in most high-handed fashion.

Whatever the facts of the case, however, the Portuguese, after an occupation of one hundred and sixty years, were now finally ejected from the Gold Coast. Traces of that occupation are still to be found in the language of the native tribes, and, in certain instances, in place-names. Amongst the words mentioned by Colonel Ellis in his *History of the Gold Coast* as being still in use are "palaver,"

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from the Portuguese "palabra"; "caboccer," from "cabeceiro"; "picanniny," from "picania"; and "fetish," from "feitiço." Colonel Ellis also says that although the Dutch remained on the Gold Coast for two hundred and thirty-two years, there are no similar traces of their occupation, nor are even now in general use many words derived from our own language. From all accounts it would seem that the Portuguese mingled with the native population in much more intimate fashion than did either Dutch or English.

Of the place-names a good many survive, though, either translated into English or corrupted. As instances may be mentioned Cape Three Points (Cabo de Tres Puntas), Gold Coast (Costa del Oro), Ancobra (Rio Cobre), Elmina (La Mina), Cape Coast (Cabo Corso).

## CHAPTER IX

### OUR DUTCH RIVALS

THE Dutch at this time were practically the World's carriers, and not the least profitable part of their business was that connected with the West Coast of Africa and the ever-increasing traffic thence in slaves.

Even had there been no other inducement to take them there, the profits of the Slave Trade alone could scarcely fail to have brought other nations to the Coast of Guinea. Hence we see at various dates and for various periods,—like wasps about the Dutch sugar-barrel,—besides the English and the French, the Swedes, the Brandenburgers (or Prussians), and the Danes, establishing trading posts and building forts along the Gold Coast, often in close proximity to, and even in instances commanding, existing strongholds. The Brandenburgers, it is true, made no prolonged stay,—half a century saw them come and go,—and the Swedes were never very formidable rivals; but Denmark held on to her old possessions on the Coast down even to a recent day (1872), when she sold them to Great Britain. Even now one finds trace of them in the term “Dane gun,” a distinction

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applied to a peculiar—very peculiar, one may imagine—brand of firearm vended to the blacks.

As to the Brandenburgers, it is not unsafe to conclude that they were ever ready for a “deal.” On 28th March 1708 Sir Dalby Thomas, Chief Factor at Cape Coast, writes: “By a Portuguese ship which came from Lisbon I was informed that the King of Portugal had offered the King of Prussia £40,000 for his fort at Cape Tres Pontas and the two other settlements belonging to it. I think it a great deal of money to be given for any situation on this coast, and I am apt to believe, if it is ever bought by the Portuguese, the Dutch will take it from them; for they fear no consequences can they but gain their point by all the deceitful ways possible.”

Mention, also, of another Brandenburger fort is made in 1727 by William Smith, Surveyor of the Royal African Company. “Seven or eight leagues south-east of Axim,” says he, “is another large and beautiful Fort, built by the Brandenburgers, but now in the hands of the Dutch, and well known by the name of Conny’s Castle. For when the Prussians, who had it last in possession, quitted the coast, they left the fort to the charge of one John Conny, a black Kaboshîr, with strict orders not to deliver it to any nation but the Prussians. Soon after, the King of Prussia sold all his interest in the Coast of Guinea to the Dutch West India Company, including with this another fort belonging to him near Cape Three Points. When the Dutch came to demand the Fort, John Conny refused to deliver

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it; on which a war ensued for some years, which cost the Dutch a great deal of blood and money. Conny, flushed with his victories, became a mortal enemy to the Dutch, having paved a little path from the outer gate to the inner apartment of his castle with the skulls of Dutchmen killed in his engagement with them. He had also a large Dutchman's skull tipped with silver, which he used as a Punch bowl. However, in the year 1724 he was beaten out of his castle, and forced to fly up into the Fantin country from the incensed Dutch."

Since 1558 the English had at no time entirely ceased to send an occasional ship trading to the Gold Coast,—there were ever plenty of bold spirits, in well-armed craft, willing to run the risk of capture by the Portuguese,—and now, encouraged by Dutch successes, they began to come in increasing numbers. The Royal African Company of 1681 had latterly, with caution, established trading posts and forts along the coast, and after the fall of the Portuguese, private adventurers of various nationalities began to put in an appearance, undeterred by the monopoly of trade claimed by the Dutch West India Company. Such a monopoly had also with as little efficacy been granted by Charles to the English Company of 1631. Occasionally, indeed, when it came to the ears of the Directors of that Company that a vessel was fitting out in England for West Africa, in order to assert its right to that monopoly, application for her detention would be made; but this merely led to greater care being taken to conceal the port of destination of craft "fitting foreign,"

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and in no way deterred adventurers from taking their share in West African trade.

By the Dutch, not merely the English, but interlopers of their own or any other nation, were regarded as equally undesirable. And though the Netherlanders had at the beginning treated the natives with considerable kindness and forbearance—that is, as long as they themselves were striving to obtain a footing at the expense of Portugal—they now began to attempt forcibly to prevent the negroes from trading with any but themselves. When the English came, says Barbot, the Dutch changed their former “civility towards the Blacks into severity.” Having effectually broken down the Portuguese monopoly, their policy was now to establish, and hold, a monopoly of their own, as vigorous as anything the Portuguese had attempted, and to effect their purpose Barbot hints that they did not shrink from condemning to death, or from occasionally executing, Europeans caught trading on the coast, and that to natives they dealt out measure as severe as that to which they treated Europeans. Bosman himself makes no mention of the death-penalty, but he says that the negroes drove “a great Trade with the Europeans for Gold, which they chiefly vend to the English and Zealand Interlopers, notwithstanding the severe penalty they incur thereby, for if we catch them their so bought goods are not only forfeited, but a heavy fine is laid upon ’em. . . . The plain reason why the Natives run this Risque of Trading with the Interlopers is that their goods are sometimes better



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than ours, and always to be had one third part cheaper." Captain John Phillips, an Englishman, who in 1693 went trading to the Guinea Coast in command of the *Hannibal*, a powerful four hundred and fifty ton ship, of 36 guns, says that "the Dutch Castles have frequently by Stratagem seized some of these Interlopers, and used them with the utmost Rigour; yet it does no whit deter them, they providing themselves with nimble ships, which outsail the Company's, and go well manned and armed, and generally fight it out to the last man rather than yield." Phillips mentions that he had seen as many as four or five at a time lying off Mina Castle, trading, caring nothing for the Company's prohibition, though the men knew well that capture meant for them imprisonment in the dungeon at El Mina. Captains and the senior officers of captured ships Phillips thinks were generally condemned to death.

At Axim, the Dutch Factor of that place came aboard Phillips' ship enquiring for home news. He was invited to remain, "which he did, and proved a boon Companion, taking his glass off very smartly, and singing and dancing several Jiggs by himself." But this lively Dutchman was speedily sobered and his mirth quenched at sight of a large canoe, flying a flag, heading towards the ship from the direction of El Mina. In spite of Phillips' friendly offer to fire on this large canoe, the Dutch Agent refused to remain on board, tumbled hastily over the side farthest from the approaching canoe, and, getting into a small canoe that lay trading with the ship, "and squatting

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himself down flat upon his Belly, made the Men row away to the west as fast as they could; and having taken a large Compass, landed about a quarter of a mile from the Castle." The cause of this sudden stampede, as Phillips learned later, was that the Dutch Factor's uneasy conscience caused him to imagine that any large canoe flying a flag must necessarily have on board the Company's Inspector, an official of almost unlimited power, whose visits were greatly dreaded by Factors inclined to indulge in clandestine trade on their own account. If detected in any malpractice, "the gentlest Usage he meets with is to be well fined, and forced to carry a Musket in the Castle as a common Centinel, another being put into his Government." He was, in fact, only a little lower than an Interloper in the scale of crime. However, in this instance no dreaded Inspector made inopportune arrival, and the Factor, having "banished his Fear, resolved to have the other Jug with them. Accordingly, they had him aboard, where he continued till late at Night, and was carried ashore well-ballasted with Wine and Punch." They were not a very moral set of youths, those West Coast Factors, whether Dutch or English, one fears. But neither were the times very moral, and no doubt their temptations were great—books and rational recreation almost non-existent, restraints few or none. A life more enervating, more trying, it would be hard to imagine. In a climate of the worst description, the lassitude consequent on which driving them constantly to the spur of brandy, living almost necessarily without exercise either physical or mental, can

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one wonder that men went to the bad and died before their time? Phillips mentions that at Sukkandi he found Mr. Johnson, the English Agent, in bed, raving mad, "through Resentment of an Affront put upon him by one Vanbukeline," an official of Mina Castle. The "Affront"—result of a pitiful quarrel over a not ill-looking native woman—was not very creditable to either party, and no doubt Mr Johnson flew to the bowl for consolation. His second in command, "a young Lad, and had been a Blue-coat Hospital Boy," had apparently no pleasant billet. Johnson was afterwards cut in pieces by the blacks, at the instigation of Vanbukeline.

Specially to enforce that prohibition of English trade on which they were intent, armed Dutch vessels were kept continually cruising along the coast, seizing here a weakly-armed English ship, pouncing there on natives and forfeiting their goods. With so many stubborn men of inflammable temperament on either side, in such a state of affairs it could not fail that friction should speedily become acute, and when in 1662 "The Company of Royal Adventurers of England Trading into Africa" received its charter and took the West Coast trade in hand (the Company of 1631 having expired, overwhelmed in the throes of Civil War), it can readily be seen how little was needed to cause a renewal of those hostilities between England and the Netherlands which had been closed so short a period before. That little was not long delayed.

The Dutch in effect claimed that the entire Guinea Coast was theirs by right of conquest over

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Portugal,—a claim which indeed was actually made in 1663 by Valckenburgh, their Director General of the West Coast of Africa, when protesting against the action of the English at various places. That claim, however, the English were little likely to acknowledge in face of the fact that since the early days of the Company of 1618 they had uninterruptedly held Cormantine, a fort not far removed from Mouree, where stood the earliest established Dutch armed post. Arising from this claim, and fostered by high-handed acts committed by the more turbulent spirits of both nations, the condition of affairs on the coast speedily resolved itself into a kind of chronic petty warfare. The Colonial State Papers of that period teem with complaints of Dutch aggression. The Netherlanders, we read in letters written at Cormantine and other places on the Coast in the year 1663, followed our ships “from port to port, and hindered the English coming near the shore to trade.” They “give daily great presents to the King of Fulton to exclude their Honours” [the Royal Company of Adventurers] “from the trade, and to the King of Fantyn to make war on the English castle of Cormantyn, saying if they could get that place never Englishman more should have trading upon that coast. Had not Captain Stokes arrived it’s much to be feared the Flemish flag had been on Cormantyn as it is now on the Castle on Cape Corso.” “The Dutch told the King of Ardra that they had conquered the Portugals, the potentest nation that ever was in those countries, and turned out the Dane and Swede, and in a short

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time should do the same to the English." Mr. Brett, Factor at Commenda, relates how a ship of the Royal African Company "came to the place the 21st and the Dutch man of war told them they must not go ashore; in two days more the *Amsterdam* came from Castle de Myne and sent two men on board to see if they belonged to the Royal Company, pretending if they had been interlopers that they had power to take them. Next day the Dutch manned out three long-boats and continued firing at all canoes that would have traded with the English, and those canoes that were made fast to the English ship the Dutch cut from the ship's side, which one of the seamen endeavouring to prevent, a Dutchman cut him on the leg. So the English ship weighed anchor, the long-boats' men 'giving us such base language as was not to be endured.'" <sup>1</sup> Probably this English vessel was very weakly armed, and no match for the *Amsterdam*, but one cannot help wondering how Towrson in his *Minion* or the *Tyger* would have "endured" such treatment. He certainly would have "weighed anchor," but it would have been for the purpose of laying his ship alongside the Dutchman in no friendly mood. Men with the temperament of him who with his little squadron defied the powerful Spanish fleet do not readily offer the other cheek to the smiter, or under any circumstances permit themselves to be cowed by the bluster of a bully, however formidable in appearance that bully may be. But truly, "the Dutch were very insolent on this

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<sup>1</sup> *Col. Pap.* vol. xvii. No. 60.

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coast, endeavouring by all methods to undermine and ruin the English commerce there."

We read further in those old records that the ship *Merchant's Delight* was seized and her crew imprisoned. At Cape Corso and at Commenda, where Dutch trading posts did not exist, English traders were interfered with, and at the former place the Dutch war vessel *Golden Lyon* fired on the boats of an English ship and drove them out to sea. Further, the Dutch surprised and took the English castle at Cape Coast, and attempted to repeat this success at Cormantine. Protests by the English Ambassador at The Hague led to no improvement, but rather, it may be, made matters worse. In 1664 a statement of their grievances and of the wrongs inflicted on them was laid before Parliament by the English merchants. Attention was drawn to the long list of ships illegally captured by the Dutch on the Gold Coast, and immediate redress was asked for a total damage which was said to amount to several hundred thousand pounds. Mr. Samuel Pepys, however, in his *Diary* under date 29th May 1664 throws doubt on this estimate, appears, indeed, to reduce the total to vanishing point. He states that in conversation on the subject with Sir W. Coventry the latter "seemed to argue mightily upon the little reason that there is for all this," and stated his belief that the loss incurred "did not amount to above £200 or £300." If, however, the Dutch took any vessel at all, or committed any act of aggression of whatever nature, (and it cannot be disputed that they did both), it is difficult

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to see how Sir W. Coventry arrived at his total, unless indeed he struck a balance between the damage done to us by the Dutch and the injury already inflicted on them by Captain Holmes. And even then one would imagine that the seizure by the Dutch of Cape Coast Castle alone would weigh heavily against the doings of Holmes and the others. The acts of Holmes were acts of war committed during time of peace—peace at least in Europe; but so undoubtedly was the seizure of Cape Coast Castle, so also was the attempted seizure of Cormantine an act of war. Possibly Sir W. Coventry was of that class of Briton which unfortunately is never absent from us, the class which delights in attempting to show that in any controversy with a foreign nation its own country must necessarily be in the wrong; or in any question as between white man and black, that its own countryman must be the bully and the aggressor. It is a strangely common form of perverted patriotism, wholly unadmirable, and only to be accounted for by the fact that its holders are persons intensely self-centred, imbued from infancy with the conviction that the narrow views held by them are the only possible or reasonable views on any and every subject; persons who, sitting at home, microscopically study a section, instead of in their view embracing a whole; or who, if by chance they travel, travel with eyes closed to all things except to those which they wish to see.

As regards acts committed in West Africa, neither England nor Holland was free from blame; if the Dutch had been aggressive and guilty of overt

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acts of war, so undoubtedly had been the English. When in 1663 the newly-formed English African Company began operations, they found on the Gold Coast a state of affairs which was intolerable, and to cope with which remonstrances were of no avail. Now, it chanced that the Governor of the new Company was no less a man than James Duke of York, brother of Charles II., and at that time High Admiral of England. His Majesty himself was also a shareholder. In the State Papers of June 1661 appear warrants to pay to Thomas Holder sums of £90 and £250 "for the King's additional venture in the business of Guinea." Influenced no doubt by the Duke, as well as by personal considerations, the King—probably nothing loth—consented to the making of reprisals against the Dutch on the Guinea Coast, and accordingly Captain Robert Holmes (afterwards Admiral Sir Robert Holmes) was directed to take there a small squadron, with instructions—as he showed at his examination in March 1665—to avoid hostilities as far as possible, but to protect the property of the Royal African Company "by force if needful and if he were able." Holmes was already not unknown on the Coast; he was, indeed, anathema to the Dutch, who went so far as to set a price on his head. Under date 19th October 1661 there appears in the State Papers a memorandum from the Dutch Ambassadors to Charles, reminding His Majesty that in his letter of 14th August he absolutely disclaims the proceedings of Captain Holmes, commander of some of His Majesty's ships upon the coast of Africa, which he promises to inform



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himself of particularly. "The States General being informed that said Holmes is in England, have commanded said Ambassadors to pray His Majesty to cause him to give account of what he has enterprised against the States' Subjects, hindering that freedom of trade of the coasts of Africa which they have long enjoyed, and seizing the fort of St. Andrews, which the Dutch held by good title: that said fort may be restored to said Company and the damage repaired: and that henceforth His Majesty's subjects may more regularly observe the law of nations, and that His Majesty's allies may continue their trade in the River Gambia and at Cape Verd without hindrance."<sup>1</sup> Both nations, pretty innocents, were playing the game of the wolf and the lamb.

Holmes sailed towards the end of 1663, "but searching a Dutch ship by the way, he found express orders, as King Charles informs the States in his letter of 4th October 1666, from the Dutch West India Company to their Governor, General Valckenburgh, to seize the English fort at Cormantine, which discovery disposed him to go, as he thought he had a right, beyond his original commission."<sup>2</sup> Arrived at Cape Verde towards the end of January 1664, Holmes captured in the offing two Dutch vessels, then, running inshore, summoned the Dutch forts on the island of Goree to surrender. This demand was refused with contempt, and not only with contempt but with violence, for the Dutch Governor, it is said, took it on himself to have the English messengers flogged. So Holmes, landing a

<sup>1</sup> *Col. Pap.* vol. xv. No. 86.

<sup>2</sup> *Campbell's Lives of the Admirals.*

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party of his men, stormed and took the works, capturing at the same time a vessel which lay ready for sea under the protection of the forts' eight-and-twenty guns.

From Goree Holmes wrote to the African Company reporting its capture, and requesting that reinforcements might be sent without delay. To this course the Company consented willingly, giving as their reasons that "it is a strong fortified place where the ship may conveniently ride, and has been the chief Dutch factory for all the north part of Guinea. That if it please the Company to keep possession of said island, no nation can have any trade in any of these north parts." It did please the Company to keep possession of said island, but they omitted at the time to take into their calculations the existence of an energetic and inconvenient person named de Ruyter, whose views on the subject of Goree, and of the Guinea Coast as a whole, with scant delay so far prevailed over those held by the English Company that on January 2nd, 1665, we find the latter in a Petition to the King not only repudiating any connection with Captain Holmes or his acts, but requesting that the Dutch prizes taken by him should be handed to the Company, "seeing that de Ruyter declares his acts have been done in compensation for losses inflicted by Holmes." "Heads I win, tails you lose" seems to have been then the creed of this injured and innocent Company—a creed not altogether unknown in connection with certain phases of commercial morality in our own day. However, in this case it paid them, to the extent

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at least that the Dutch vessel *Golden Lyon*, which Holmes had captured, was handed over to them,—the outcome, no doubt, of possessing a powerful Chairman of Directors.

After the taking of Goree, Holmes proceeded leisurely down the coast, strengthening Fort James on the Gambia, “the next best fortification to Cape Coast Castle of all that are to be found on either the north or south coasts of Guinea,” as Barbot says; then attacking and capturing Fort Witsen at Takoradi. Leaving in that place a sufficient garrison, he next made an attempt on St. George del Mina. But here he broke his teeth; St. George was too strong for the force at his command, and he drew off, leaving behind him as the price of failure more men than he could afford to lose. Better luck attended him at Cape Coast, or Cape Coast was less stubbornly defended, for that Castle, the strength of whose position alone should have made it impregnable to any force such as Holmes could launch against it, was soon in his hands. Fifty men were left here as garrison, along with workmen and material to strengthen and put in order the fortifications,—a wise precaution, as things turned out ere many months had passed. From Cape Coast Holmes went to Mouree, out of which the Dutch were quickly driven. Anamabo followed suit, then Egyah; and now the whole Gold Coast was in his hands, with the exception of Elmina and Axim.

Thus was war rendered inevitable between England and the Netherlands; Holland was bound to retaliate. From this “White Man’s Grave,” the

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Guinea Coast, arose and spread the flames of a war whose consequences were world-wide, a war in whose battles brave men freely shed their blood, not in African seas alone, but in the Channel, and in the North Sea, in the East Indies, in America North and South, among the many-isled waters of the West Indies, wherever, indeed, English ship could meet Dutch. London itself ere that war ended shook to her foundations, when the Dutch Admiral de Ruyter swept like a hurricane up the Thames, burning and destroying.

But before the actual declaration of war, many things happened. "The cursed cause" of the trouble, as some delighted to brand Captain Holmes,—though that fountain of ill sprang from a somewhat higher source,—sailed west to America and there fell upon New Amsterdam, the Dutch colony that is now New York. And New Amstersdam passed for ever out of the hands of Holland.

Meantime the English settlements on the Guinea Coast were left unprotected. The reinforcements for which Holmes had written did not arrive, or arrived tardily and in force insufficient to prove effective. There were on the coast no English armed ships, beyond a few traders of no account as a fighting force. The way was open, the door set wide on its hinges, inviting counter attack.

Nor were the English long kept in suspense. On October 11th, 1664, as the workers toiled at Goree "mounting great guns and mending the breaches made by Captain Holmes," a fleet of twelve or thirteen sail hove in sight and ran in, showing Dutch

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colours. De Ruyter, who had been in the Mediterranean when news of Holmes's reprisals reached him, slipped through the Straits of Gibraltar and hurried down to Goree, demanding that "the island and the Company's goods in the ships" there at anchor should be at once handed over to him. De Ruyter held in his hand all the trump cards; there was nothing to be done but, with as good a grace as might be, to comply with his request. Following on this, Fort James on the Gambia was harried, Sierra Leone, Mesurado, Sesters, and other English "factories" destroyed. Then on Christmas Day the Dutch "went against Tacorady with great store of men, but were repulsed by ten Englishmen and negroes, upon which with a thousand negroes from their factory they burnt the town and blew up the castle, stripping the English naked." The ruins of this "castle," says Colonel Ellis, were still in existence a few years ago. Meanwhile all down the coast, as the news of de Ruyter's arrival spread, there followed on its heels the rumour that Prince Rupert was coming and that all would yet be well. But the hopes of the English watchers were doomed to disappointment. Never came Rupert; his work was elsewhere.

And now de Ruyter reached Cape Coast, where stood the Castle which he was specially desirous of taking. But to do this proved no more easy task than Holmes had found the taking of d'Elmina. The fort's guns commanded the only available landing-place, thus preventing any direct attempt from the sea; nor could the Dutch ships approach near enough to silence the English guns. And de Ruyter was

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not equipped for operations by land. To the bitter disappointment of Valckenburgh, the Dutch Director General, de Ruyter refused to make any attempt on the Castle; but he did not scruple to give free vent to his opinion of the Dutchmen who had in the first instance permitted Holmes to steal a march on them and to plant a garrison there.

However, if he could not take Cape Coast, there were other places to be laid hold of. Fort Nassau, at Mouree, which Holmes had taken, was recaptured, Cormantine and Anamabo reduced. At the former place the Dutch and their native allies, the Fantees and others, suffered severely. There was but a sprinkling of Englishmen in that fort, but "John Cabessa," the local native chief, and three hundred of his men fought for the English with extraordinary bravery and vigour. The place was attacked both by sea and by land, de Ruyter's ships pouring a heavy fire on the works, whilst a large body of native auxiliaries under Valckenburgh himself, a body estimated at ten thousand men, assaulted it from the land. So obstinate was the resistance that the Dutch advance was for hours held in check, whilst the ground near the fort was littered with bodies of the dead. But in the end numbers prevailed; the fort surrendered without terms. John Cabessa, who, the account says, "was truer to the English than any of His Majesty's subjects there," rather than fall into the hands of the enemy, killed himself. "Great reward was offered for whoever should bring his head to the Dutch, but the Blacks buried him at Old Cormantine." The negroes of this coast did

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not scruple in the olden days eagerly to accept reward from the Portuguese for the head of an Englishman or a Frenchman, but where the head of one of their own chiefs was concerned—even when that chief was already dead—they were not to be bought; they were as deaf to the voice of the tempter, as incorruptible, as were the Highlanders of the '45 when a great price was put on the head of the young Chevalier.

In this castle of Cormantine when it was taken, there was found, we are told, “a tried lump of gold in the wall 105 lbs. weight, which was brought aboard the *de Ruyter*”; a welcome and substantial little salve, no doubt, to wounded national feelings.

Except Cape Coast Castle, the whole Gold Coast was now in the hands of the Dutch. We were indeed, as Pepys records in his *Diary*, “beaten to dirt at Guinny by *de Ruyter* and his fleet.” The Company of Royal Adventurers, as has already been noticed, was stripped pretty clean, and did not long survive the process. *De Ruyter* had done his work well, and though amongst the Colonial Papers of that day appears one entitled “An Account of *De Ruyter's* Barbaryties on the Guinea Coast,” those “barbaryties” do not appear to have been anything at which we could afford to cast a stone. He burned ships, it is true, and blew up fortifications, but he gave quarter to the English at Cormantine and at other places; and, for the rest, he seems to have been no worse than Holmes or any other of our own men. War, (and it was nothing else, though formal declaration was as yet delayed), war is not made with kid gloves.

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Official declaration of war, however, speedily followed from both parties, and the principal scenes of that war were soon being enacted in other waters. Under date 28th January 1665 there also appears in the State Papers the following letter addressed to the Commandants of our Settlements in New England, a letter signed by the King and countersigned by Secretary Bennet: "Because of the iniquities, spoils, and affronts of the Dutch and their notorious proceedings on the Coast of Guinea, de Ruyter being sent thither with twelve ships of war to destroy all the King's interests in those parts, and His Majesty having cause to suspect, on his return to invade all the English shipping he can meet with and assault the Plantations in New England and other Colonies, they are required to take care of the forts and defences, and empowered to do what is necessary for the safety of the islands and navigation of English merchants." The King made no mistake as to de Ruyter's designs on the Plantations, but the proceedings of the Dutch on the Guinea Coast were certainly no more "notorious" than were those of our own people at Goree and at New York. On either side were fire-eaters whose actions rendered war sooner or later inevitable, and if the Dutch were the first aggressors, our own men were little behind them. Moreover, it is certain that Charles wilfully closed his eyes to a good deal that was going on in West Africa.

It is beyond the scope of this volume to trace the course of the war that now raged. The Peace of Breda in 1667 confirmed to both nations the conquests each had made. Hence England in America



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retained the New Netherlands (or the State of New York as it was now called out of compliment to James Duke of York, Charles's brother), and in West Africa was confirmed in her possession of Cape Coast Castle; whilst Holland, once more possessed of Goree and Fort Nassau at Mouree, gained also Cormantine and sundry other English factories and posts.

The net result on the Gold Coast was greatly to the advantage of Holland, but the balance did not long remain in her favour; with the advent of the new Royal African Company in 1672 English influence began once more to extend, forts were built at Accra, Winnebah, Secondee, Commenda, Anamabo, and other places, and the Castle at Cape Coast, enlarged and put in a thorough state of defence, became headquarters of the English Company.

Treaties are very excellent things. The difficulty is, when they concern far distant and little known parts of the world, to see that they are properly enforced. As regards the Treaty of Breda, a clause ran to the effect that "whereas in countries far remote . . . especially in Guinea, certain protestations and declarations, and other writings of that kind, prejudicial to the liberty of trade and navigation have been emitted and published on either side," for the future such protestations and declarations should be ignored, considered null and void, and trade and navigation should be free and unhampered. A truly desirable state of affairs, but more desirable than easy to enforce. Before a year was out English and Dutch on the Gold Coast were again

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squabbling fiercely. The English had established themselves at Egyah. That, said the Dutch, was contrary to the terms of Treaty, for Egyah being under the guns of Cormantine, which had been ceded to Holland, was in the bargain necessarily regarded as Dutch property; therefore the English must evacuate their post at Egyah, a step which the latter refused to take. Then, owing to native troubles the Dutch blockaded that part of the coast on which stands Cape Coast Castle, and demanded that until such time as their quarrel with the natives should be settled the English must cease to trade in those parts, —a preposterous demand, and one that led to great local friction. Neither side, we may take it, “played quite fair.” Bosman in his History complains of English treachery, accuses us of setting the blacks against the Dutch, and states that by bribes we induced the negroes to make war. It may be, but these are precisely the acts with which we charged the Dutch. The probabilities are that nobody’s hands were very clean, no one quite void of offence. Yet no really serious trouble arose out of this or any other of these burning questions, not even during the war between England and the Netherlands in 1672-4. In matters of trade the two nations continued bitterly to oppose each other, but throat-cutting was confined to matters commercial, and where one party had succeeded in monopolising the trade of a district, the other merely endeavoured to oust the first comer, possibly even to the building of a fort, as we did at Commenda, under the very guns of the Dutch.

Such anxiety to monopolise trade did not tend

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towards improved treatment of the black man—at least by the Dutch ; one hopes, perhaps in vain, that our own countrymen were more humane. In 1687, at Elmina, during a native rebellion, Barbot, who in that year visited the Settlement, saw three negroes, prisoners, who had been kept by the Dutch for nine months in irons, exposed during the day to the fierce rays of the sun or to the lashing of tropical rain-storms, and during the night left without shelter from the inclemencies of whatever weather might be experienced.

Bosman, too, gives an account of what General Swerts, the Dutch officer in command at Commenda when that fort was attacked by the blacks in 1695, calls “a comical accident.” “Here,” says the General, “I cannot forbear relating a comical accident that happen’d. Going to visit the posts of our fort, to see whether every man did his duty, one of the soldiers, quitting his post, told me that the Blacks, well knowing he had but one hat in the world, had maliciously shot away the crown, which he would revenge, if I would give him a few granadoes” [hand grenades]. “I had no sooner ordered him two, than he called out to the Blacks from the breastwork in their own language, telling them he would present them with something to eat : and giving fire to the granadoes, immediately threw them down among the crowd, who observing them to burn, throng’d about them, and were at first very agreeably diverted : but when they burst, they so galled them that they had no great stomach to such another meal.” General Swerts’ ideas with regard to what is comic do not

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commend themselves to the ordinary individual. Where officers of rank sanctioned, and enjoyed, "jokes" so inhuman, one may conclude that the treatment of the wretched negroes by the rank and file was unspeakably cruel. We shall see later something of the manner of treatment adopted by the various European nations where natives, and more especially where Slaves, were concerned.

## CHAPTER X

### TROUBLES WITH THE FRENCH IN WEST AFRICA

WHILST Dutch and English were fighting, and cutting each other's throats, at first actually as well as in a commercial sense, the French, under Louis Quatorze, had been steadily consolidating their power to the north and were now a thorn in the side of both English and Dutch. In Goree, which had been captured by Holmes and retaken by de Ruyter so short a time before, the Dutch first suffered at their hands. The year 1677 saw that island seized by the French Admiral d'Estrées, and the forts utterly destroyed. Nor was the position ever recovered by Holland, and from that date Dutch operations were chiefly confined to the Gold Coast.

France, however, was not allowed to sit down on her new possession unassailed. In 1692 the island was seized by England, only to be retaken by the French in the following year. And then came our turn to suffer, Fort James on the Gambia being our vulnerable point. The Sieur de Brüe, who went to the Coast in 1697 as Director of the French Company's affairs on the Senegal, says that Fort James would be a strong place if it had "Cisterns and

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Magazines Bomb-proof . . . but for want of these advantages it has been often taken, plundered and demolished both by the French and Pirates, which at last reduced the English Company's affairs to so low an ebb that nothing could have recovered them but a Parliamentary Assistance."

For this—from an English point of view—deplorable state of affairs, M. de Gennes, a French Admiral who raided the Gold Coast in 1695 with a squadron of four frigates, a corvette, and two "pinks," was the first to be responsible. Profiting by information supplied by an English deserter, he fell on the fort at a time when nearly the entire garrison was prostrate from fever, and provisions at lowest ebb. The Governor was absent on the mainland, and no suspicions were entertained by the garrison when seven sail, showing English colours, ran quietly in and let go their anchors within gunshot of the fort. Sick men concerned themselves not at all; convalescents gazed languidly across the turbid waters and idly speculated on the news that this squadron must be bringing from home; men still fit for duty thought probably only of fresh supplies and the luxury of being no longer on short rations, no longer stinted in the matter of rum. And suspicion slept, nor waked till every vessel was found to have been warped round so that their broadsides bore direct on the fort. Then indeed there was hurry and a running to and fro; but almost ere men had fallen in or guns been manned—such guns as there were crews for in that fever-stricken garrison—an armed gig, making for the landing wharf, brought an officer bearing

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summons to surrender Fort James to His Majesty of France. Blindfold, the French officer was led inside the fort, nor did surprise and dismay prevent the acting commandant from playing the game to the last trick. Royally the Frenchman was entertained to the best the fort could provide; enthusiastically were drunk the healths of the Kings of England and of France, and merrily ran the carouse into the small hours, when the Frenchman, none too sober, was sent off to his ship with the message to M. de Genneſ that the fort would be defended "to the laſt extremity." Brave words! But there were not men available to make them good. Moreover, the French had cut off all communication with the land, and food ſupplies of any ſort were as unattainable by the Engliſhmen as if they had been in another hemisphere. The Governor, trying to gain the fort unobſerved, was chaſed ſo hotly that as a laſt reſource he jumped into the water and lay hid amongſt the mangroves, only eventually, by ſtealth and with great difficulty, finding his way to his friends through the thick darkneſs of a moonleſs tropical night. The French had the whip hand of uſ. There was no poſſibility of beating them off, no delay could ſave, nor have other reſult than to ſtarve men already but half fed. A few days ſaw the end, and many an Engliſhman exchanged for the ſqualor of a French priſon ſuch freedom as the Gambia gave,—a fate ſimilar to that which later befell M. de Genneſ himſelf, who ended his gallant life in priſon at Plymouth.

Before leaving the Gambia, de Genneſ wrecked Fort James, deſtroyed the cannon, undermined and

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blew up the walls; so that, says the chronicle, as "the profits they [the English] receive from thence are computed to amount to one million livres yearly . . . the loss of that place cannot be easily repaired."

The English Company, however, speedily reconstructed the fortifications and recommenced trade; but again, in 1702, says the *Paris Gazette* of that year, it was retaken, and ransomed this time at a cost of one hundred thousand crowns "that it might not be demolished"; two hundred and fifty slaves and a large quantity of merchandise being carried off in addition to the ransom.

Again in 1709 a similar fate befell it, and "after so many assaults by the French on Fort James . . . the Company thought fit to abandon the said fort during the late war with France, and thus the trade of that river was left open to all Europeans indifferently and has turned to the great advantage of several private adventurers."

Nor was the Gambia the only point on the Guinea Coast where we suffered loss at French hands. On 17th July 1704 the Sieur Guerin, with two small ships of war, took our fort at Sierra Leone "without any resistance made by the English commander, who fled from the fort with about one hundred men before he was attacked." This is the French version of the affair. One must hope that at least there were extenuating circumstances, or that perhaps the commanding officer's cowardice when enquired into might turn out to be (as in Scottish law) "not proven." We have, however, only the French version, and that to a patriotic Briton is



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sorry reading. But even Monsieur Tessier, the officer who told the tale, admits that there were *some* gallant soldiers in the garrison of Sierra Leone. The gunner, he says, and eleven or twelve men did what brave men may do, and fired forty or fifty rounds from the big guns before they were forced to surrender. What were a dozen men, however, where there were four-and-forty guns wanting crews! A strong place was this, "very handsomely built with four regular bastions, and had very fine warehouses and lodgings within it . . . ; over the gate was a platform and on it four large pieces, which might have done very good service upon occasion." Yet with so pitiful a number of men of spirit left to defend it, the fight was necessarily but short, the end foredoomed. Many a time in later years has our Navy claimed astonishing minor victories over the French, in boat actions, cutting-out expeditions, and what not,—even to the extent on one occasion towards the end of the Eighteenth Century of capturing an armed French vessel, in the fight for which our sailors were armed with nothing more formidable than their boat stretchers,—but it takes many such to wipe out this regrettable little incident of Sierra Leone, if the French account of the affair be a true one.

And so Sierra Leone was pillaged very thoroughly, the fortifications levelled to the ground, ere the Sieur Guerin departed, taking with him, amongst other booty, four thousand elephants' tusks from within the fort and three thousand which were found on a small vessel that lay at anchor behind the island. It is consoling, however, to read that

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Nemesis overtook the French vessels. On their way home from New Spain, whither they had gone from the Guinea Coast, bearing rich cargoes mostly of bullion and gold, they were captured by British men of war. M. de Guerin was unfortunately killed, but "one Tessier, who was an officer in his ship and gave me this account on the 5th December 1706, was brought over from Jamaica and New York to the prison of Southampton,"—where let us hope his stay was not very protracted. Yet, like so many of both nations, perhaps he too died a prisoner; for exchanges were few, and escape not easy.

With all their endeavours, however, the French never succeeded in establishing a permanent footing south of Senegal. They did indeed for a time—from 1702 to 1704—hold a post at the mouth of the Assiny River, a post which the Dutch vainly attempted to capture. According to the *Paris Gazette*, the Dutch attacked it in force, but "were received with so much bravery by the Sieur Lavie, the Chief Factor, that they were forced to retire with the loss of twenty-five men killed, amongst them their chief engineer, and eleven taken prisoner, leaving their cannon behind them." What the Dutch could not do by force, however, was accomplished by other means. The French failed to establish a trade on that part of the coast, and in 1704, finding it no paying concern, they blew up their "lodge" and retired.

That the Dutch were very bitter over their defeat at Assiny we may gather from the delight with which Bosman relates a story wherein the French are made to appear ridiculous. The French, says Bosman,

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were in the habit of seizing all blacks who might happen to come aboard their ships for the purpose of trading, and these men they afterwards used to sell in the West Indies. This in itself was little like the French, for they have ever as a nation been noted for making friends with uncivilised races more readily than have any other European people, and where they were endeavouring to gain a footing it is improbable that they would by treachery jeopardise the prospect of attaining their ends. However, Bosman says that they did do so, and that amongst the negroes abducted was one "of more sprightly genius than his other countrymen," who was carried to France and there after a period, by dint of ceaseless priestly persuasion, was baptized and received into the arms of Holy Church. This black convert, says Bosman, did not fail to see on which side his bread was buttered, and craftily he let it be understood that he was the son of the King of Assiny, heir to the throne; and "he so insinuated himself into the good opinion of the Court that the King made him several rich presents and sent him back to his own country." Once there, however, the fraud was exposed. The "Prince" was but a slave after all, a slave even in his own country, and indeed shortly after landing he went back to his former master; and, says Bosman, "instead of converting his subjects to Christianity, is himself returned to Paganism." What most appears to delight Bosman is that the French Court should have been "so ridiculously bubbled" by a slave, and he rejoices that by this means they "lost their aim, which was to get a

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footing on the Gold Coast." Besides, as he gleefully adds, "the pious intentions of His Most Christian Majesty to convert a heathen prince and establish him on the throne were frustrated; the Cardinal de Noailles and the Bishop of Meaux labour'd in vain, and in short the whole French Court was disappointed in its expectations."

On the Gold Coast, henceforward English and Dutch were left practically to fight out the question of mastery; to them the chief stations and the chief trade belonged; other nations played but a subsidiary part.

North of the Gold Coast, on the other hand, it was English and French who took and kept the lead, almost to the exclusion of Dutch, Portuguese, and all other European races.

But none, north or south, possessed territory,—excepting perhaps in such instances as the island of Goree; they were there, so to speak, on sufferance, and as occupiers paying a yearly subsidy to the black owners of the soil, a subsidy which in the case of the Danes lasted until the transference of their rights to Britain. It was trade, not colonies, that European nations then sought to establish, and, excepting as regards the Gambia and the Senegal, in those early days little attempt was made to penetrate into the interior. Thompson, as we have seen, and Jobson, amongst Englishmen, ascended the Gambia a great way, and others followed suit, or professed to follow suit. Vermuyden (if indeed he were a real adventurer and not merely a romancer) claimed to have ascended the river farther than any other white man,

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and he gives a richly glowing account of his discoveries of gold on or near the river-banks. Finally he reached, or says he reached, a spot where "the exceed of gold was such that I was surprised with joy and admiration." In truth, could anything so payable have been found whilst the gold fever generated by the discoveries of 1849 and 1851 in California and Australia still throbbed in the veins of men, West Africa must have seen a Gold "Rush" the like of which the present generation has known only in Klondyke.

Unfortunately no later traveller has been able to locate the spot where lies Vermuyden's mine covered by the easily wrought river sands; it has vanished as completely as has Sindbad's Valley of Diamonds or the buried Pirates' Treasure of some lonely isle. Not even the infallible *virga divina* has been potent to rediscover that seductive "pocket." Vermuyden was one of those who hunted for gold, as men sometimes to this day in parched lands hunt for hidden water-springs, with the divining rod. But he does not profess to have found this rich deposit by aid of his rod. On the contrary, he admits that for once in a way it was a failure; and for this failure he accounts by the fact that during the voyage from England the hazel twig had become dry and brittle and had consequently lost virtue. How otherwise, indeed, could it have failed?

Amongst the French, the Sieur Brûe, of whom mention has already been made, was by far the most energetic explorer; but prior to his day, in 1687, Claude Jannequin, Sieur de Rochefort, had pene-

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trated some hundreds of miles up the Senegal, where, it may be noted, he complains bitterly of the assaults of "certain small flies,"—doubtless mosquitoes. It is Jannequin, too, who gives it as his opinion that the negro youths could by no possibility learn to read and write Arabic without the aid of the Devil. Truly that personage is responsible for many of the troubles of this world, and Arabic is no weighty addition to the load of sin he already bears.

## CHAPTER XI

### OLD MISSIONS

AGAINST this same Devil went forth also in those days, and from the earliest times of the Portuguese occupation, many missionaries, Capuchin Friars and others, burning to convert the natives to the True Faith. Hard, austere men, the most of them, determined to achieve their purpose by any and every means, even, in the early days, by aid of the lash if need be; but men too much absorbed by their one idea to be relied on to shed much light on the country from a geographical point of view. Converts they must make, and converts in a sense they made, no doubt, by the thousand. With the utmost alacrity the natives came to be baptized, whole villages at a time, man, woman, and child, so that the good and pious priests could scarce find time to eat or sleep. It was a novelty; there was also from the native point of view something to be gained—beads and what not, salt perhaps, to them a prized luxury,—but the childish mind of the black converts did not soar higher. In a word, it amused them to become Christians—provided always that it did not interfere with their comfort or their mode of living.

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But when the good Fathers, conscientious, earnest men, without doubt seeking to do right according to their lights, began to interfere with ancient custom, the scene somewhat changed. From the point of view of the negro, the possession of many wives and of many concubines was a thing greatly to be desired; each man possessed as many as seemed good to him, or as his means permitted. The higher the rank, the greater number of wives and concubines did he own; the more he had, the greater was his wealth. Women in those latitudes were the beasts of burden, theirs the toil that kept husbands in ease and luxury. Man in those primitive communities was purely a fighting animal, woman the willing toiler, the breadwinner. Except as a slave (probably captured in war), man did not soil his hands by work. The arrangement suited all parties concerned; it was a custom from time immemorial.

But in the eyes of those excellent Fathers it was sin of no ordinary dye, and against this device of Satan they proceeded to wage war fierce and relentless. The faith of even the most zealous and enthusiastic of their native flock was staggered by the announcement that all wives save one must be put away. Concubines were anathema; of them a clean sweep must be made. The situation admitted of no compromise; there must be no evasion, no attempt to change the status of these unholy women by the flimsy device of styling them "servants." Root and branch must the custom be torn up and cast aside for ever.

So, with intemperate zeal ruled the Fathers; and



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dismay fell on the blacks. It was not for innovations such as this that they had bargained when renouncing their fetishes and clumsy idols. Outraged feeling ran high, and for a time Martyrdom for their Faith was a probability never far removed from the Fathers. But they survived, and even—at least temporarily—made some impression on that custom which so shocked their sense of propriety, an impression short-lived at the best in most instances, one fears.

When about the year 1645 Fathers Gabriel and Anthony undertook a mission to Batta, they found the “Duke” of that kingdom,—they were all “Kings,” “Dukes,” “Marquises,” or “Counts,” those black chiefs, in the estimation of the simple-minded Friars,—they found the “Duke” of Batta a particularly hardened sinner in the matter of concubines, and without delay they attacked this powerful chief and endeavoured to persuade him to put away his superfluous womenkind. The abominable sinfulness of the custom was eloquently dwelt upon, the soundest and most potent of arguments against it were advanced, the whole artillery of the Church was brought to bear. But the “Duke” remained unconvinced, he failed wholly to see wherein lay the sin; the custom was an old custom, and a good custom. What! His ancestors, and himself, condemned to perdition and to everlasting torment for the sake of a few trumpery extra wives? It was preposterous, an outrage! Finally, losing temper, he used strong talk with regard to the question of foreigners, newly arrived and ignorant of the habits

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and requirements of a country, presuming to interfere with, or even to express an opinion on, established use and custom. There is much to be said for the "Duke's" point of view as regards the foreigner; yet in a little time he gave way on the other point, made a clean sweep of his entire female staff, and was married according to the rites of Holy Church to the daughter of a neighbouring chief. So far so good, and the Fathers Gilbert and Anthony, pleased by their speedy and astonishing success, went on their way rejoicing.

Farther inland the impression those good men made was not so marked; indeed it is grievous to relate that they became to the people subjects for mirth, and the objects of practical joke rather than of reverence or respect. It became popular pastime amongst the youth of the villages to wait until the Fathers were addressing an open-air meeting, then, as the preacher, borne on the wave's crest of his own eloquence, approached his climax, to scream "A lion, a lion! Run! Run!" make a dash for the nearest tree, and there cling in helpless ecstasies of mirth while they watched the vain efforts of the unskilled monks to scramble out of danger. Nor was it safe to disregard the warning cry; the lion *might* be there. The joke was unfailing in effect, a phenomenal success that added zest to life in the villages.

Depressed by their want of success here, the Fathers decided to return to Batta, a more fruitful field where doubtless they might add to the power already gained, farther extend the influence of the

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Church, and confirm in their faith those who wavered. So to Batta eagerly they hastened.

Alas for their enthusiasm! Not only was the "Duke" a backslider, but he had backslidden to a point never before attained by him; his harem was nearly twice the size that it had been in pre-Gilbert and Anthony days. And not only was this the case, but all the lesser chiefs also had hurried to follow an example so popular. It was a grievous blow to the poor Fathers, one that their influence did not survive, for before they could do more than express pious horror and grief, the "Duke" and all his subsidiary chiefs departed on summons from their lord and master, the King of Congo. Thereupon the women shut themselves and their children up in the houses and refused to listen to, or even to see, the priests. There was nothing for the good Fathers to do, and in bitter disappointment they closed the mission and returned to the Portuguese settlement of San Salvador.

Father Jerome was another who about the same period went about the country, at peril of his life destroying and burning the wooden idols of the natives, converting *vi et armis*, raking into the Fold of the Church armies of darkened Pagan souls. Fame of the miraculous power of his exorcisms against a devastating horde of locusts aided him in his campaign against the evils of concubinage and plurality of wives. Christianity made great strides.

But the success won by Jerome might have been cause of embarrassment to St. Anthony himself. Far up the River Congo, the King of Concobella,

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ruler of a barbarous semi-cannibal tribe, eager to obtain the favour of wizard so potent, sent to Jerome as a choice and acceptable gift one of his subjects who for some fault or crime had lately fallen from favour with the King, and had been condemned to die. Now, the custom in these cases was for the recipient of such donation to kill and eat the prisoner. It was a thing well understood that this should be done; etiquette demanded it. No higher mark of appreciation and favour could have been offered to Jerome, and he accepted the gift, with the intention, no doubt, of setting free the wretched victim.

Then the King, gratified by this apparent appreciation of his bounty, went farther, and pressed on Jerome the hand of his daughter in marriage. Nor was this the end; for thereupon every chief—a great multitude, it seemed to the unhappy priest,—every chief, incited by the royal example and eager to bask in the sun of Jerome's favour, also pressed his daughter on the disconcerted Friar, and would take no denial! "Timeo Danaos," well might Jerome cry, "et dona ferentes." It was an embarrassing situation. For it is ill to flout the matrimonial aspirations of Kings, and of powerful and hasty-tempered Nobles; they cannot always be trusted to view in proper light the motives actuating the person who declines, from whatever cause, the proffered alliance. So much depends on the point of view.

But a veritable St. Anthony was Father Jerome. He said that it cost him nothing to abjure all dealings in the matrimonial market. He even succeeded in convincing the King that to bestow his royal smiles

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on too many Queens was sinful in the last degree; one Queen there might be, no more. And to one the King adhered—till Jerome went away.

Not so easily were the chiefs or the people pacified. Proffer of their daughters in wedlock had been rejected with scorn and horror! Who was this wretched stranger who put on them a slight so marked? Who was he that went so far as to presume to dictate to them how many wives they should keep, and who even took it on himself to insist that they must give up the cherished practice of eating human flesh? Such interference was intolerable, as indeed they were at some pains to convince him; and the unhappy Jerome found it expedient to quit the scene of his labours.

Alas! poor Father Jerome. He was a good man and a brave, but like most of his kind at that day he did not well understand the negro, nor was capable of plumbing the depths of ignorance and superstition in which the childish native mind lies fathom deep. Not that one desires that he should have wedded, or pretended to wed, all or any of the throng of royal and noble young black ladies who were offered to him in marriage. Heaven forbid! In a priest, it were mortal sin. But there be ways and ways of declining a matrimonial alliance, and in the end the *suaviter in modo* is probably the more efficacious method. Jerome's was the *fortiter in re*. Even a bigoted priest may not hope in a benighted land to accomplish great things if the chief weapon in his store of arguments is of the nature of a cudgel.

But Jerome's methods were mild when compared

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to those employed by two missionaries who in 1655 left Massangano (where for six weary years had pined Andrew Battell) on a mission to Maopongo. It chanced that one of these pious men in the course of his peregrinations fell in with a Queen of that country. Now the Queen, as the fashion was, had taken with her—for an airing, as it were—her favourite idol, a god wooden and hideous, but precious in her eyes. Here indeed was a chance to strike a death-blow to Paganism, and zealously the ardent priest seized his opportunity. He argued high, he argued low; but all his fervour and eloquence were thrown away; impervious to argument, the Queen at the end still clung to her idol.

There remained one last convincing method, and with zealous soul the fervid missionary adopted it. The lash! Mid shrieks of pain the whip rose and fell, rose and fell, and the Queen's tears flowed as the stripes bit deep into her tender flesh. But never shrank the holy Father from his duty, till the idol was dropped and its owner had ceased to dispute with one so much more powerful in argument than she. Little short of miraculous was the rapidity with which her understanding was quickened.

Then the good priest, never doubting but that he had gained the day, departed to his own abode, the glow caused by sense of duty well done pervading his being, the joy of noted victory won over the Devil simmering within him. Alas! poor man, little did he dream what weapons the Devil was now about to hurl.

Was it the prompting of the little heathen god,

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outraged and revengeful, or was it the cunning of her own base mind that led the Queen to adopt the course she took? In any event, the weapon she used was—in the case of a holy Father—one well calculated to rain dismay and confusion on the head of him against whom it should be employed.

It chanced that the little hut occupied by the priests stood on the bank of a secluded, shady rivulet, its one door opening almost on to the clear waters of the placid stream. A spot more conducive to thought, better suited to pious meditation, to holy communing, might not be found in all West Africa. Now, the injured woman had taken thought with her fellow-queens, and to them it seemed plain that the only part of the river at all suitable for bathing was that immediately fronting the hut where dwelt the Fathers. Here therefore, morning, noon, and night, collected crowds of young women; shrill laughter and screams disturbed the meditations of the holy men, and never could either issue forth but his eyes were rudely shocked, his mind pained, by sights that drove those simple-minded priests to the verge of despair, and filled them with horror and consternation.

Even the good St. Anthony himself might in such turmoil and trouble have failed for an instant to keep his eyes fixed on the page of his book. But the Fathers ran speedily to the King, never doubting that an end would at once be put to this scandal. Indifferent to their complaint was the King, however; nay, he smiled, smiled broadly; in any but a King, one would have said that he grinned, as if amused,

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and the scandal waxed greater. There was no peace for the Fathers till they had set to with feverish haste and builded a high impenetrable fence round their modest home ; and then, indeed, if still the ear might be troubled, at least the eye no longer was offended ; for be sure that the gateway of the fence opened onto the forest and away from the river, so that the good men might go and come unabashed. Nevertheless, their credit and influence waxed threadbare and died, their favour both with King and people was a thing of the past, and nothing remained to them but to return, sad and halting, whence they had set forth.

Such are a few instances of the early Portuguese missionaries and their methods. All, doubtless, were not of this stamp ; there were no doubt some who tried to lead, and not to drive ; yet the Age was one of credulity, ignorance, and superstition, and those priests in such matters were no whit in advance of the Age, nay, probably they were even in some respects behind it. Other nations besides the Portuguese also sent out missionaries to West Africa. Carli of Piacenza, for instance, and Merolla of Sorrento, two Italians, visited the Coast in 1666 and 1682, and have left full accounts of all they did and saw. But theirs too are mostly records of conversion by compulsion, as, for example, where Carli began his work, at which place the chief *ordered* all the people to bring their children so that they might at once be baptized. The entire village was thus officially “converted,”—each convert, by the way, bringing with him as an offering



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some small article, such as a fowl or other trifle useful to his reverence. A few, indeed, who had nothing to offer were, as Carli says, "christened for God's sake." After which the natives celebrated the occasion by much beating of drums and blowing of wind instruments, "that they might be heard half a league off." But what they understood of the ceremony of baptism Carli does not venture to tell us.

Once as Carli and his party travelled, a bush fire drove down on to them a terrified horde of wild beasts, lions, rhinoceroses, and many other ravening animals, so many that the entire party "would scarcely have made one good meal for them." To the negroes it was a simple matter to scramble out of the way up some convenient tree, but to the Fathers no such ready means of escape was possible; they had never learned how to climb trees, and after many futile efforts and severe struggles they remained breathless on the ground until rescued ignominiously by the treed natives by aid of ropes. The lions, we are told, eyed the fugitives "very earnestly," but the approaching fire appears to have prevented any attempt on their part to make closer acquaintance with the refugees.

Nor were lions the only trials under which Carli suffered. Rats, rats of giant bulk, infested his hut and ran riot over his body of nights, nor could the poor man devise any plan for getting rid of them; move his bed where he would, they "always found him out." Then he tried the plan of protecting himself by causing his negroes to sleep on the floor, on

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mats, all round his bed. But the remedy was worse than the disease. Not only did the rats still run over him, but the portentous snoring of the negroes, and what he calls "their wild and disagreeable smell," effectually murdered what sleep the rats might otherwise have permitted him to take. Finally, by favour of the "Grand Duke," Carli obtained a monkey which smelt so strongly of musk that it counteracted the other unbearable odours, whilst its movements were so incessant and so quick that it fairly drove the rats from its master's bed, and the good man slept in peace.

As to his converts, Carli mentions a most gratifying instance of their piety. One night, it seems, his ears were deafened by a loud and very piteous wailing, which on investigation was found to be caused by the arrival of the entire population of a neighbouring village, come to do penance for their sins, beating their breasts and with shoulders bent low under the penitential weight of great logs of wood. The good priest preached long and earnestly, and great was his gratification on the lights being put out to hear those erring sinners draw out scourges of leather and cords of bark, and continue for an entire hour to flagellate themselves. Thus, says Carli, did those "miserable Ethiopians" put to shame European Christians, who are more inclined shamelessly to cast ridicule on such piety than themselves to emulate the example.

They were indeed very pious, these Ethiopians—so long as they remained in good health. But, (to reverse the old saw concerning the Devil), no sooner

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did they become sick than their former errors were apt to recapture them, and they would have resort to the magicians of their tribe. And who can blame them? They and their fathers for centuries had been wont in cases of sickness to consult the tribal wizard. Now they were asked to put their trust in a Faith which was new to them, and to abandon that which was familiar. If a patient under these circumstances should die, was it not to them proof positive that the old was more powerful than the new plan? And so the faith even of the most steadfast was occasionally shaken to the foundations during the long conflict between priest and wizard. Has that conflict even to this day altogether ceased on the West Coast?

Merolla, also, was a priest who strove forcefully against the magicians, a preacher whose eloquence carried all before it. At least so it pleased him to think. There was in the neighbourhood where the good Merolla lived a black lady of high rank whom the Friar believed to be a witch, for she openly practised certain doubtful arts; and not only this but she wore her hair in a scandalously rumpled condition, and had a drum beaten in front of her as she walked. A witch? Of course she was a witch! And not only so, but she was bringing up her son to follow the same evil course. It must be put a stop to, said Merolla. Accordingly, the lady and her son were pursued rigorously, till captured and brought before "the Count," (as Merolla styled the local chief). But that prince, though anxious to oblige the Father, was unaccountably prejudiced in favour of the prisoners, whom he caused to be smuggled off to an

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island in the river, to the great scandal and grief of Merolla, who with his tongue unmercifully lashed the miserable backslider, reminding him of the glorious example of the late "Count," who, whenever a wizard was known to exist in the country, at once had his head "lopt off without further ceremony." However, if Merolla's eloquence on this occasion failed, he had later a gratifying tribute to its power. So convincing were the burning words that flowed from him as he addressed his hearers one day on the evil of their ways, that a repentant sinner straightway arose, and, running home, beat his wife and daughter "without intermission" till they were persuaded to come and confess that they were in truth addicted to magic.

"The Portuguese Missionaries," we read in that part of Astley's *Travels and Voyages* which deals with Sierra Leone, "made many Converts formerly in this Country, the People following the example of their King Fatima and some Grandees, whom the Jesuit Bareira baptized about the year 1607. But they all returned again to their own more natural Idolatry."

They meant well, those early missionaries, but their methods were a trifle over-masterful. Brave even to rashness, passionately devoted as they were to the cause they had at heart, their very excess of zeal defeated its own object. It was reserved for other and less masterful hands to leave more permanent impression on the unstable negro mind, to make a beginning, at least, with the slaying of ignorance and brutal superstition in West Africa.

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Yet in all the years since European occupation began, how comparatively small has been the result of the labours undertaken, how great is the work that remains to do. Little was accomplished, little, indeed, *could* be accomplished, so long as the Slave Trade with all its horrors poisoned the atmosphere of West Africa. But even since that foul plant in the early part of the Nineteenth Century began to wither, even since at a later date its roots were finally torn up, progress has been slow, and we have yet, in spite of vast efforts, as it were but touched the fringe of the great work that must be done.

Good men in our own day have taken their lives in their hands, and have gone forth upon their Master's business, every whit as fearless as were the Portuguese missionaries of old, as much in earnest, as devoted as were the most zealous of the Friars, but with infinitely more of tact and sympathy, and less of intolerance, wider-minded, and better equipped in every way for the fight. Yet for all their efforts, all their devotion, can we claim that much more than the fringe has been attacked ?

The West African negro is the product of a race corrupted by countless centuries of idleness, debased by ages of ignorance, bloodshed, and superstition, a race in whose midst Slavery has ever been present, and which, less than one hundred years ago, still was subject to the awful atrocities of the over-sea traffic in Slaves. Necessarily the field is one of difficulty ; the outcome of ages cannot be reconstructed in a generation or two. The wonder may perhaps rather be, not that so little, but that so much, has already

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been accomplished. A beginning at least has been made, and magnificent work is being done.

But the task is great. Do not, for instance, the native Secret Societies still exist? Is it certain that their malign influence, their hideous power, are things of the past, that no exciting cause could now re-awaken the old evil? Is the noxious thing in truth slain?

Writing in 1903,<sup>1</sup> Mr. C. Braithwaite Wallis, late Acting District Commissioner Sierra Leone Protectorate, says regarding the Human Alligator and Leopard Societies: "Their objective and their operation were fiendish and devilish even in a land where deviltry flourished practically unchecked. No one, whether of high rank or of low, was safe from their bloody machinations. They struck swiftly, stealthily, and in the dark; and always their blow meant—*death*. . . . In very many directions Great Britain has, through her faithful servants, done splendid and enduring work in Western Africa; and in nothing more than by the placing of a sharp check upon these dreadful practices has she deserved the plaudits of humanity at large. I used the phrase 'placed a check' advisedly. It is generally thought that these societies, and others like them, have been absolutely and finally eradicated. I wish that I were in a position to say that this was a *fait accompli*. Unfortunately I am afraid that matters are not so well as that. Although their machinations are no longer so openly devised as was the case, say, ten years ago, it is not possible to deny that these odious

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<sup>1</sup> *The Advance of our West African Empire.*



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cults are still existent ; as the ghastly details of some crime which, for want of direct evidence for conviction, has to remain unpunished, still occasionally go to show."

Where Government and Christianity combined have taken strong hold, doubtless the Societies are now seldom harmful, but the bush is vast and dense, and the arm of the law cannot everywhere stretch with equal promptitude. What but our determination to make an end of the iniquitous and degrading practices of these Societies led to the terrible native rising of 1898-9? Terrible indeed was that outbreak. And yet how little is its story known to the general public. "I will wager a moderate stake," writes Mr. Braithwaite Wallis, "that a very considerable portion of the British Public have never so much as heard, even, of the rising in Sierra Leone and the terrible massacre which followed it. Nevertheless, the latter was the immediate outcome of a widespread plot, hatched with all the diabolical cunning, allied to secrecy, which forms so conspicuous a trait in the character of the indigenous African. Spreading, as it did, almost in a day, over an immense area, this conspiracy showed the nature of the Negro in all his primitive savagery and barbarism, a barbarism which generations of missionary effort towards civilization seem, somehow, to have failed to eradicate, although one must confess that enormous strides in the right direction have been made."

It is of the Hinterland, of course, rather than of the actual colony of Sierra Leone, that Mr. Wallis speaks. Here, he says, is "a land reek-

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ing with fetish and superstition, and teeming with dark and bloody secrets. And here it was that in 1898 and part of the year succeeding, a handful of British troops fought grimly to maintain the supremacy of the old Flag. . . . Here some of the most atrocious and treacherous murders recorded in history occurred—murders preceded by all the ingenious devices of torture of which the depraved mind of the African bush savage is capable. Black and white, old and young alike, were cut down and butchered in cold blood. Delicate white ladies were first outraged and then brutally done to death. Hundreds of educated Sierra Leoneans, clergymen, missionaries, traders, and even innocent little children, were tortured and afterwards hacked literally to pieces, or burnt alive. It was a very carnival of slaughter, engineered by hordes of ruffians in whose veins ran some of the cruellest blood in all wild Africa. . . . And ever their rallying cry was ‘Death to the White Man.’”

Ten years ago, no farther back, these awful atrocities were perpetrated! And how little already are those dark days remembered by the stay-at-home public of Great Britain! How much indeed of the terrible tale was ever known, save by the few?

We heard much frothy talk some few years back on the subject of so-called Chinese Slavery. Certain persons, cursed with the *cacoethes loquendi*, persons whose positions cause them to be more or less conspicuous, and lend to them an ill-deserved publicity, have “in a fine frenzy” spoken on that question. From time to time also, these persons continue to

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speaking injudicious and misleading words with regard to the supposed wrongs of our Indian brethren, words the disastrous effect of which they do not pause to calculate. All their compassion is lavished on the alien; it is to them apparently a thing not worthy of consideration that their words may incite that alien to crime, even to the crime of assassination. Is there not one of them to dilate on the wrongs of his own countrymen abroad, none whose heart is tender to the sufferings and misfortunes of Britons in parts of the Empire remote and ill-defended? There is room and to spare, Heaven knows, for sympathy with the hapless victims, and with the sorrowing relatives of the victims, of tragedies such as this of Sierra Leone. It were better, surely, to be for ever dumb than by wild talk to run risk of moving the passions which lead to like tragedies. Responsibility for murder is an ill thing to bear. Is not the man who incites to that crime, whether wilfully or through want of thought, as much guilty as is he who commits the crime? In truth,

"It hath the primal eldest curse upon 't,  
A brother's murder."

## CHAPTER XII

### THE SLAVE TRADE

THERE comes now to be mentioned a subject which it is not easy to treat with absolute impartiality—the Slave Trade. One is carried away by horror, the blood chills, the flesh creeps, as we read of the ghastly atrocities that were enacted in West African waters and on the Guinea Coast. As is well said by Mr. Lucas, in vol. iii. of his admirable *Historical Geography*: “The details are so revolting, the inevitable accompaniments of the traffic were so horrible, that any sober estimate of its causes and effects may appear at the present time as an attempt to condone the wickedness of white men, and to explain away the sufferings which for so many years they inflicted on a lower and a coloured race. Yet, in good truth, the Slave trade, in its origin and in its development, was due to natural, to economic causes.” That is most true; and it is also what we have ever a tendency, almost a desire, indeed, to forget.

In the first place, white men did not originate slavery in West Africa; the loathly plant flourished in that fruitful soil long prior to the advent there of Europeans. The natural outcome of war amongst

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savage races is slavery, that or indiscriminate slaughter. Kill your enemy, "extirpate the vipers,"—unless they can be of more use as slaves,—is the savage's creed.

Human life in West Africa was cheap, and the black man well accustomed to see blood flow on slender excuse,—the death of a chief and the consequent necessity of sending victims to bear him company, the whim of a king, the ill-will of some local wizard. Just as any stick is good enough to beat a dead dog with, so was any excuse sufficient to justify the shedding of blood. Slavery and bloodshed were the normal conditions of life. Prisoners captured in war, and offenders against the laws of the land or the will of the king, were alike condemned either to death or to life-long bondage. No man was safe.

When the white man first arrived on the Guinea Coast he was not actuated by any special desire to make slaves; indeed the first few negroes who were taken to Portugal were taken more as rare and curious specimens of mankind than for any other reason. But the explorers found on all the coast south of Senegal slavery ready to their hand, and when early in the Sixteenth Century the Portuguese began to colonise Brazil, and when, more especially, there arose in the Spanish West Indian islands the necessity of finding a labour supply to take the place of the physically weak races native to those lands, (races for whose extinction Spanish cruelty was responsible), what more natural than that Spain and Portugal should utilise that which lay ready

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to their hand? But though the Portuguese from a very early date abused the Slave Trade, raiding villages by night and carrying off the inhabitants, even so they did not from the outset, except in rare instances, kidnap the black man. Prompted by cupidity, driven sometimes no doubt by famine, (when parents for a handful of corn parted with their children), it was the negroes themselves who first brought their fellow blacks to the Portuguese for sale,—though it would seem that the Portuguese were extremely apt pupils. Cadamosto mentions that even in his time (1454-1460) seven to eight hundred negro slaves were imported into Portugal from Africa.

Here, then, on the one hand were a climate and a country where Europeans could live and thrive, where life was pleasant, under certain circumstances ideal, but where no adequate supply of labour existed; on the other, a country and a climate such that permanent settlement, the making of a home, was to white races an impossibility, but where an unlimited supply of robust labour, ("the most magnificent mass of labour material in the world," Miss Mary Kingsley calls it), was to be had for comparatively little beyond the cost of transport.

It was as inevitable as the rising of the sun that those who, for the lack of labour, saw fortune and home slipping from their grasp, should stretch out a hand to West Africa and help themselves to what lay there ready to be taken up. The negro was a pawn on the great chess-board of world-

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development. Without him the West Indian islands must have remained what they were in the days of Columbus, a tropical paradise of no particular use to the outside world. Can we wonder if those old-time settlers regarded him as having been directly meant by a far-seeing Providence to fulfil the very purpose for which he was now being used? Save our Puritan forefathers, none probably of the many nations concerned from time to time in the Slave Trade felt necessity to soothe their consciences by quoting that Scriptural curse on the children of Ham: "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren."

We must either go forward or go back; in this case there could be no going back, such a land *must* be developed. So the exploiting of the black man was inevitable.

The same conditions which applied to the West Indies applied equally to Brazil, the one country that Portugal ever really colonised. To colonise it, labour must be obtained; the white man, in the nature of things, could not in that climate, and in the then state of sanitary knowledge, develop the land or cultivate that crop which best suited it—sugar. Here too the black man was needed; and he was taken. Nor, though in our present-day eyes it is grievous, can we blame Spain and Portugal that in their share of world-development they took up the weapon that lay readiest to their grasp. In no other way could the work be done. There was no such thing as "free" labour; in Africa the free man did not work, his slaves or his womenkind worked for

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him. If ground were not cleared and tilled by slaves, it remained jungle or bush. The early European colonists, therefore, had no choice but between stagnation and development of the land by slave labour.

So began the hideous over-sea traffic in human beings, a traffic carried on under conditions which to us of the Twentieth Century are beyond all possibility of conception or understanding. Bad at its best from the beginning, as men's minds became corrupted and their feelings blunted by familiarity with its vileness, the utter lack of humanity with which the trade was carried on became rapidly more and more marked, till it left on the history of the world a stain foul and for all time ineradicable.

Nor did the evil die with the death of the Slave Trade. Dregs of that poisoned cauldron still simmer in the complex race problems which the traffic has bequeathed to certain quarters of the globe, problems that have yet to be solved, and the solution of which may be attained only through much tribulation, and perchance through shedding of blood. You cannot upset the balance of nature without paying the cost; Nature never forgives, never writes off bad debts.

In the beginning, as we have seen, it was the Portuguese alone who carried slaves over-sea, and from very early times the numbers carried seem to have been considerable. Thomas Turner, a contemporary of Andrew Battell, and, like him, once for some years a prisoner of the Portuguese, reported to the Rev. Mr. Purchas that "it was supposed eight and twenty thousand slaves (a number almost



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incredible, yet such as the Portugals told him) were yearly shipped from Angola and Congo to the Haven of Loando. He named to me a rich Portugal in Brazil which had ten thousand of his own working in his Ingenios" (sugar mills).

In the early days of the traffic, the English would have none of it, except, as has been already related, casually as in the case of Sir John Hawkins. But certainly by the beginning of the Seventeenth Century there were not wanting many of our countrymen who touched the pitch which already had defiled the hands of Hawkins. Peter van den Broeck, a Dutchman, writing in 1606, relates how, whilst his ship was watering at Goree, an English boat arrived from Juvalé and drove a bargain with him under the following circumstances. They knew, said the boat's crew, where lay a vessel richly laden with goods and slaves, the crew mostly down with fever. It would be no hard task to take that ship, and if the Dutch "would grant them the Black Slaves of either sex as part of the Booty," they (the Englishmen) were willing to act as guides to the cove where she lay at anchor. The bargain was struck, the vessel taken. She was "a Lubecker of two hundred and forty tons, loaded with Sugar from S. Thomas, Elephants' Teeth, Cottons, a quantity of Rials of Eight, some Chains of Gold, and ninety Slaves of either sex. She had on board four Portuguese and eleven Lubeckers sick. The Master was dead, and she was bound for Lisbon." One does not admire that English boat's crew who played jackal to the Dutch lion, and one would without sorrow have read that the Dutchmen repu-

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diated their bargain and seized the entire cargo; but we learn that the slaves were duly handed over to the English, who no doubt made a handsome profit out of them in Brazil or in one of the Spanish West Indian islands.

No doubt from this time onward the English increasingly dealt in slaves, and when our West Indian and American colonies, following the example of the Spaniards, saw the necessity of importing African labour, it did not suit them to depend for their supply on Dutch ships. Thus, whereas prior to 1672 Dutch over-sea traffic in slaves was ten times that of England, in 1768 of ninety-seven thousand negroes imported into our American and West Indian colonies, British shipping carried sixty thousand and French twenty-three thousand, leaving only fourteen thousand to divide between the Dutch and Portuguese, and other nations.

In 1665 a Petition of the Royal African Company to the King concludes with the words: "If the Company cannot continue to supply the American Plantations with negro servants . . . the Plantations will either be useless or must take their slaves from the Dutch, which will utterly divert English shipping from those parts." In 1663 one of the objects of the Royal African Company was stated to be "For the supply of the Plantations with negro servants"; and the Company was "to grant licenses to all His Majesty's subjects to fetch negroes on payment of £3 per ton on the tonnage of their ships, but binding them not to touch at certain points; also to make offers to Governors to furnish them annually

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with as many negroes as they will contract for at £17 per head at Barbadoes, £18 at Antigua, and £19 at Jamaica, with reduction of £1 per head at each place to any one contracting for a whole ship load and paying one fourth of the price in advance with security for the remainder.”<sup>1</sup> The Company in this year “Humbly represent that the trade of Africa is so necessary to England that the very being of the Plantations depends upon the supply of negro servants for their works.”

We were now fully committed to the trade, and not alone to supply our own necessities, for in 1665 the Company had a contract with the Spaniards to supply three thousand five hundred negroes annually, “that will bring into the kingdom £86,000 in Spanish silver per annum.”

In accounting for this rapid fall from grace on the part of our ancestors, (a fall from that lofty pinnacle indicated by the words of Jobson to Buckor Sano at Barraconda), down to the debased standpoint which weighs Spanish silver in the balance against human suffering and misery, one must not forget that Slavery was a condition with which from the dawn of this world’s history men’s minds had been familiar. Of the ancient Eastern races, none were without their slaves, mostly captives taken in war. Hebrew law allowed them to the Jews, not alone in the case of prisoners of war but even of men of their own race, poverty-stricken debtors who had sold themselves in discharge of their debts. Greeks and Romans had them,—did not Odysseus himself narrowly escape the

<sup>1</sup> *Dom. Chas.* II. vol. lxvii. No. 162; *Cal.* p. 36.

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fate of a prisoner of war! The Celts in Britain were in numbers enslaved by the Anglo-Saxons, and from Bristol the Christian Anglo-Saxons carried on with the Continent a regular traffic in Irish slaves. In later days, serfdom in Europe was practically slavery, and in England serfdom was not dead in the days of Elizabeth; indeed even towards the end of the Eighteenth Century colliers and salters were virtually slaves, bound by law to perpetual bondage, to perpetual burrowing underground, nor were their sons at liberty to seek employment elsewhere than in the mines with which by birth they were connected.

Europeans of all nations were captured and made slaves by the Barbary pirates, who raided even to the shores of Ireland; in English and Scottish churches as late as the Eighteenth Century collections were wont to be made for the purpose of ransoming Christian slaves from the hands of the Corsairs. What, too, but slavery was the life of those poor wretches—innocent often of all crime—sent by law, or sold sometimes, to His Majesty's Plantations; and what but slavery in its worst form was the fate of those fifteen hundred luckless Scottish prisoners taken at Worcester fight in September 1651, who were granted to the Guinea Merchants "to be transported to Guinea to work in the mines there?"<sup>1</sup>

Men's minds were indeed familiar with the abominable thing, and if this over-sea bondage was comparatively a new phase in its history, at least it did not seem a great step downward from one

<sup>1</sup> Whitelock's *Memorials*, p. 485.

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merely in order that a translation of his description of a Slaver's 'tween decks may be quoted. "What brought him most credit among the slave merchants," proceeds the tale, "was the building, that he personally superintended, of a brig destined for the trade, a smart sailor, narrow of beam, long like a ship of war, and able nevertheless to accommodate a very large number of negroes. . . . It was his idea that the 'tween decks, narrow and cramped as they were, should be only three feet four inches in height. He maintained that this space allowed slaves of reasonable height to be comfortably seated; and what need have they of getting up?"

'When they get to the Colonies,' said Ledoux, 'they will be only too long on their feet.'

The negroes, arranged in two parallel lines, with their backs against the vessel's sides, left an empty space between their feet, used in all other ships for moving about. Ledoux thought of putting other negroes in this space, lying at right angles to the others. In this way his ship held ten more slaves than any other of the same tonnage. It would have been possible to squeeze in still more, but one must have some humanity, and leave a nigger at least a space of five feet long and two broad in which to disport himself during a voyage of six weeks and more.

'For after all,' said Ledoux to his owner, to justify this liberal allowance, 'the niggers are men like the whites.'

It seems scarcely credible that human beings, (or live stock of any kind, for that matter), should be sent

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a voyage even of a couple of days' duration—let alone six weeks and more—cooped up in a space no higher than three feet four inches. Yet, as we shall learn on undoubted authority, this space, in which now we would not confine a cargo of monkeys, this wild beasts' den, was by the insertion of another deck, or shelf, on not a few slave-ships reduced to incredibly small dimensions, sometimes to as little as eighteen inches in height, in order that another tier, or layer, of slaves might be carried.

The miserable creatures used to be brought up on deck daily in batches<sup>1</sup> if the weather were fine, and forced to take exercise, to dance to the tune of the whip, in fact, if need be; for owing to one cause or another,—exhaustion from long confinement in a vitiated atmosphere, depression of spirits, sea-sickness, from which the negroes suffered even more than do Europeans,—it was no easy task to keep them on their feet whilst on deck. If the weather were not fine, then there was no exercise; and no fresh air, for the hatches necessarily were kept on and the air ports were closed if a heavy sea ran. In either case they died fast, in crowds if the weather were dirty; the dead, indeed, those who succumbed early, were the more fortunate.

A vivid and terrible picture of a Spanish Slaver is given in his *Notices of Brazil* by Dr. Walsh, who was returning from Brazil to England in May 1829 on a British ship of war which overhauled the Spaniard. When boarded, says Dr. Walsh, "we found her full of slaves; she had taken on board

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<sup>1</sup> Falconbridge, *Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*.

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five hundred and sixty-two, and had been out seventeen days, during which she lost fifty-five. The slaves were all enclosed under grated hatchways between decks. The space was so low that they sat between each other's legs, and stowed so close together that there was no possibility of their lying down, or at all changing their position by night or day. As they belonged to, and were shipped on account of different individuals, they were all branded like sheep, with the owners' marks of different forms. These were impressed under their breasts or on their arms; and as the mate informed me with perfect indifference, 'burnt with the red hot iron.' . . . The poor beings were all turned up together. They came swarming up like bees from the aperture of a hive, till the whole deck was covered to suffocation from stem to stern. On looking into the places where they had been crammed, there were found some children next the sides of the ship. The little creatures seemed indifferent as to life or death, and when they were carried on deck many of them could not stand. Some water was brought; it was then that the extent of their sufferings was exposed in a fearful manner. They all rushed like maniacs towards it. No entreaties, or threats, or blows could restrain them; they shrieked and struggled and fought with one another for a drop of the precious liquid, as if they grew rabid at the sight of it. There is nothing which slaves during the middle passage suffer from so much, as want of water. It is sometimes usual to take out casks filled with sea water as ballast, and when the slaves

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are received on board, to start the casks, and refill them with fresh. On one occasion a ship from Bahia neglected to change the contents of the casks, and on the mid-passage found to their horror that they were filled with nothing but salt water. *All the slaves on board perished!* We could judge of the extent of their sufferings from the sight we now saw. When the poor creatures were ordered down again, several of them came and pressed their heads against our knees with looks of the greatest anguish, at the prospect of returning to the horrid place of suffering below. It was not surprising that they had lost fifty-five in the space of seventeen days. Indeed many of the survivors were seen lying about the decks in the last stage of emaciation, and in a state of filth and misery not to be looked at. While expressing my horror at what I saw, and exclaiming against the state of this vessel, I was informed by my friends who had passed so long a time on the coast of Africa that this was one of the best they had seen. The height sometimes between decks was only eighteen inches; so that the unfortunate beings could not turn round, or even on their sides, the elevation being less than the breadth of their shoulders; and here they are usually chained to the decks by the neck and legs."

This ship was reluctantly allowed to proceed on her way. Red tape, or some legal flaw, one supposes forbade that her master and crew should be promptly hanged from their own yard-arms. In what unenviable position was the Captain of a British ship of war, impotent to succour those tortured human



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beings! "It was dark when we separated," continues Dr. Walsh, "and the last parting sounds we heard from the unhallowed ship were the cries and shrieks of the slaves suffering under some bodily infliction."

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE SLAVE TRADE—ON SHORE

BEFORE entering fully into the tale of the Middle Passage, it may be well to make some mention of the shore trade, between capture and shipment of the unhappy slaves.

When the over-sea trade was fully established, it necessarily gave enormous impulse to local abuses. Petty prince now warred on petty prince in order that he might get slaves for sale to the white man. Did a chief high in power desire to provide a marriage portion for his daughter, there were districts to be despoiled and inhabitants to be carried off. Had any villager a hated rival, to stun him with a blow on the head and dispose of him to the dealers was easy; were parents like to perish of famine, there was food to be got for the price paid by the white man for their children; were a man urged by cupidity, did he, in short, for any reason desire to obtain money, there was the Slave-Dealer at his hand ready to supply funds—for a consideration, the consideration being in every instance what was called “black ivory”; and the Dealer did not concern himself with the source of supply. Had a villager become possessed

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of property sufficient to make him an object of envy to some neighbouring petty chief ; did he chance to have a large family ; then almost assuredly his house would be raided some dark night, his property burned, or, if portable, carried off, he himself murdered, and his children, fastened together by the neck with forked sticks, driven hurriedly down to the coast to be sold as slaves. No one was safe ; nowhere was security. Village raided village, neighbour warred on neighbour, and the Dealer preyed on all. In no part of Africa, in fact, was safety.

Bruce, who travelled in Abyssinia in 1770, and Mungo Park, who made for himself so great a name through his explorations in West Africa late in the Eighteenth and early in the Nineteenth Centuries, both comment on the terrible prevalence of "village breaking." Settlements were attacked during the night, and at the very beginning of the attack were generally set on fire. Then as the bewildered, panic-stricken inhabitants rushed from the fiercely blazing huts, most of the grown-up men, and all the old of both sexes, were knocked on the head, the women and the children taken down to the coast for sale. The frequency of the practice in West Africa seems to have depended greatly on the number of ships which happened to be on the coast.

No doubt this method of obtaining slaves was in existence long prior to the establishment of an over-sea traffic, but equally without doubt the over-sea trade to a hideous extent intensified the evil. And for every native who was thus enslaved one must reckon that at least two were killed. A well-authen-

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ticated instance corroborative of this is mentioned by Mr. T. Fowell Buxton<sup>1</sup> on the authority of a report to the Board of Directors of the American Colonial Society from their agent at Liberia. A local "King," it seems, had arranged with a French Slaver to provide him on a certain date with a cargo of young slaves, and on his part the Slaver had advanced goods on credit to the value of the cargo. Date of delivery arrived, and the "King" had not collected any slaves. "Looking around on the peaceable tribes about him for his victims, he singled out the Queahs, a small agricultural and trading people of most inoffensive character. His warriors were skilfully distributed to the different hamlets, and making a simultaneous assault on the sleeping occupants in the dead of the night, accomplished, without difficulty or resistance, in one hour, the annihilation of the whole tribe;—every adult, man and woman, was murdered, every hut fired! Very young children, generally, shared the fate of their parents; the boys and girls alone were reserved to pay the Frenchman."<sup>2</sup>

In very truth, the Slave Trade, as Mr. Lander notes in his journal,<sup>3</sup> had "produced the most baleful effects, causing anarchy, injustice, and oppression to reign in Africa, and exciting nation to rise against nation, and man against man; it has covered the face of the country with desolation. All these evils, and many others, has slavery accomplished; in return for which the Europeans, for whose benefit, and by whose connivance and encouragement it has

<sup>1</sup> *The Slave Trade*, 1839.

<sup>3</sup> *Lander's Records*, 1830.

<sup>2</sup> *Ashmun's Life*. New York, 1835.

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flourished so extensively, have given to the heartless natives ardent spirits, tawdry silk dresses, and paltry necklaces of beads."

Of the numbers who were killed in the various "wars" caused by these slave-hunting expeditions, it is impossible to form any estimate, but Bosman mentions one hundred thousand as having been the victims of two such wars, and Villault (1668) says that in one raid over sixty thousand perished. Truly, with the Prophet Isaiah may one say: "This is a people robbed and spoiled; . . . they are for a prey, and none delivereth."

As to the treatment of the unfortunate creatures after capture, there can be no doubt that it was in the last degree inhuman. Mungo Park tells how he fell in with a caravan consisting of about fifty slaves *en route* to the coast. "They were tied together by their necks, with thongs of bullock's hide twisted like a rope, seven slaves upon a thong, and a man with a musket between every seven. Many of the slaves were ill conditioned, and a great number of them women." Methods of lashing them together, however, differed. Dr. Holroyd mentions that "a wooden stake, six or seven feet long, and forked at one extremity, was attached to the neck of one by means of a cross bar retained in its position by stripes of bull's hide; to the other end of the stake an iron ring was fastened which encircled the throat of another of these poor harmless creatures."

Elsewhere, Park says that during detention prior to the start of the caravan for the coast, "the slaves are commonly secured by putting the right leg of

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one and the left leg of another into the same pair of fetters. By supporting the fetters with a string, they can walk, though very slowly. Every four slaves are likewise fastened together by the neck with a strong pair of twisted thongs; and in the night an additional pair of fetters is put on their hands, and sometimes a light iron chain passed round their necks. Such of them as evince marks of discontent are secured in a different manner; a thick billet of wood is cut about three feet long, and a smooth notch being made upon one side of it, the ankle of the slave is bolted to the smooth part by means of a strong iron staple, one prong of which passes on each side of the ankle."

On the march, when, as happened frequently, the crack of the whip or the sting of the lash proved a stimulant insufficient to enable some poor exhausted slave to keep up with the caravan, according to Park "the general cry of the *coffle* [caravan] was '*kang-tegi*' (cut her throat)"; and there ended the troubles of the poor over-driven creature.

Cruelly ill-used, insufficiently fed, marching during endless burning days under scorching sun on meagre supply of water, is it to be wondered at that men and women in numbers sank exhausted, far beyond the power of whips to rouse, and so perished?

But if it were dreadful for adults, what of the children? Major Gray<sup>1</sup> mentions that of one detachment of slaves which he met, "the women and children (all nearly naked and carrying heavy loads) were tied together by the neck, and hurried along over a rough

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## THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN TRADE

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Mr. Lyon, another explorer, tells us that "Children are thrown with the baggage on the camels if unable to walk, but if five or six years of age, the poor little creatures are obliged to trot on all day, even should no stop be made for fourteen or fifteen hours, as I have sometimes witnessed." "The daily allowance of food," continues Mr. Lyon, "is a quart of dates in the morning, and half a pint of flour made into *bazeen*, at night. Some masters never allow their slaves to drink after a meal, except at a watering place. . . . None of the owners ever moved without their whips, which were in constant use. Drinking too much water, bringing too little wood, or falling asleep before the cooking was finished, were considered nearly capital crimes; and it was in vain for these poor creatures to plead the excuse of being

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It is no matter for wonder that an estimate, made in the early part of the Nineteenth Century, of the average number of those who thus died on the journey from the interior to the coast, puts the figures as high as five-twelfths of the whole.

And what of the condition of affairs after the cruel journey to the coast was ended, and before the horrors of the "middle passage" began? Disease, insufficient food, close confinement, the fetid and poisonous atmosphere bred of prisons, these were the lot of the unfortunates who reached the sea. It is ill work to picture the result in such circumstances of an outbreak of small-pox or of dysentery, two maladies to which the unhappy creatures were peculiarly liable. The marvel is that so many survived to be still farther tortured on ship-board. Lander mentions that at Badagry, in the Bight of Benin, he saw four hundred slaves "fastened by the neck in pairs, only one-fourth of a yard of chain being allowed for each," driven and pulled down to the beach and there packed into an 80 ton schooner. Four hundred human beings crammed into the 'tween decks of so small a craft, to undergo a voyage of six or seven weeks in the tropics!

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For cold-blooded atrocity it must be hard to match this King of Badagry. But another instance is given where the King of Loango having no market for a large number of slaves taken by him in a raid, (and who had been forced by their captors to carry to the coast the store of ivory which till now had

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been their own), "had them taken to the side of a hill a little beyond the town, and coolly knocked on the head."<sup>1</sup> In savage cruelty this can only be equalled by the methods of a King of Ashantee as revealed by him to a Mr. Dupuis, who about the year 1820 was British Consul at Kumasi. "My fetishe made me strong, like my ancestors," said the King to Mr. Dupuis, "and I killed Dinkera, and took his gold, and brought more than twenty thousand slaves to Kumasi. Some of these people being bad men, I washed my stool in their blood for the fetishe. But then some were good people, and these I sold or gave to my captains; many, moreover, died, because this country does not grow too much corn, like Sarem, and what can I do? Unless I kill or sell them, they will grow strong and kill my people. Now you must tell my master" (the King of England) "that these slaves can work for him, and if he wants ten thousand he can have them." The difference between "good people" and "bad people" one may conclude was with this monarch not so much a question of moral worth as of intrinsic value.

Chains and the locks and bars of a prison, however, were not of themselves sufficient to deter the poor wretches from attempting to escape from their devilish captors. Captain Thomas Phillips, who, in command of the ship *Hannibal*, of 450 tons and 36 guns, visited the Gold Coast in 1693, mentions other means that were employed.

Though a man more humane than most of his fellows at that time, Phillips yet dealt in slaves, at

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<sup>1</sup> Leonard's *Voyage to Western Africa*.

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least to the extent of taking a cargo of them to Barbadoes. To prevent their running away after he had bought them, he says he was advised "to cut off the arms and legs of some to terrify the rest (as other captains had done)." But Phillips refused to make any use of a remedy so drastic; he could not think, he said, "of treating with such Barbarity, poor Creatures, who being equally the Work of God's Hands, are, no doubt, as dear to Him as the Whites. Neither could he imagine why they should be despised for their Colour, which they have from Nature; or that White is intrinsically a better Hue than Black." He observes that "all Sorts of People are prone to judge favourably in their own Case; and that the Blacks, in Contempt of the Colour, say the Devil is White, and so paint him." Doubtless the blacks had abundant excuse for painting Satan white!

"The Negros," says Phillips, "are so loath to leave their own Country, that they have often leaped out of the Canoa, Boat and Ship, into the Sea, and kept under Water till they are drowned, to avoid being taken up and saved by the Boats which pursued them: Having a more dreadful Apprehension of Barbadoes than they have of Hell; though in reality they live much better there than in their own Country."

Whilst the ship was still at Whydah, Phillips had twelve negroes who "wilfully drowned themselves"; several others persistently refused food, and so starved themselves to death, "for it is their Belief that when they die they return to their own Country and Friends again."

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To prevent the slaves from attempting to escape from his ship, Captain Shurley, the master of an English vessel which sailed in company with the *Hannibal*, “used to make his Negros take the *Fatish* that they would not swim ashore and run away, and then would let them out of irons. His Potion was a Cup of English Beer with a little Aloes: which operated upon their Faith as much as if it had been made by the best *Fatishes* in Guinea.” On the Guinea Coast, we are told, when the natives “make any solemn Promise or Oath, they take about six spoonfuls” of some concoction “mixed with some Powders of divers Colours which the *Fatishman* puts into it. This Potion is to kill them the Minute they break the Oath, and which they firmly believe.”

We do not hear if Captain Shurley’s Fetish was effective, but at least it was more humane than clapping the poor wretches in irons below hatches. “For my part,” says Phillips, “I put more Dependance upon my Shackles than any *Fatish* I could give them.”

Sharks are very plentiful along the coast, and at Whydah Phillips saw several slaves eaten by those monsters, “of which a prodigious number kept about the ship . . . and the Author had been told would follow her hence to Barbadoes for the dead Negros thrown over on the Way.” Phillips says they “saw some every day, but could not affirm they were always the same.”

As a general rule, the trade in slaves was conducted from certain places on the coast where the

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And what of the condition of affairs after the cruel journey to the coast was ended, and before the horrors of the "middle passage" began? Disease, insufficient food, close confinement, the fetid and poisonous atmosphere bred of prisons, these were the lot of the unfortunates who reached the sea. It is ill work to picture the result in such circumstances of an outbreak of small-pox or of dysentery, two maladies to which the unhappy creatures were peculiarly liable. The marvel is that so many survived to be still farther tortured on ship-board. Lander mentions that at Badagry, in the Bight of Benin, he saw four hundred slaves "fastened by the neck in pairs, only one-fourth of a yard of chain being allowed for each," driven and pulled down to the beach and there packed into an 80 ton schooner. Four hundred human beings crammed into the 'tween decks of so small a craft, to undergo a voyage of six or seven weeks in the tropics!

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For cold-blooded atrocity it must be hard to match this King of Badagry. But another instance is given where the King of Loango having no market for a large number of slaves taken by him in a raid, (and who had been forced by their captors to carry to the coast the store of ivory which till now had

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been their own), "had them taken to the side of a hill a little beyond the town, and coolly knocked on the head."<sup>1</sup> In savage cruelty this can only be equalled by the methods of a King of Ashantee as revealed by him to a Mr. Dupuis, who about the year 1820 was British Consul at Kumasi. "My fetishe made me strong, like my ancestors," said the King to Mr. Dupuis, "and I killed Dinkera, and took his gold, and brought more than twenty thousand slaves to Kumasi. Some of these people being bad men, I washed my stool in their blood for the fetishe. But then some were good people, and these I sold or gave to my captains; many, moreover, died, because this country does not grow too much corn, like Sarem, and what can I do? Unless I kill or sell them, they will grow strong and kill my people. Now you must tell my master" (the King of England) "that these slaves can work for him, and if he wants ten thousand he can have them." The difference between "good people" and "bad people" one may conclude was with this monarch not so much a question of moral worth as of intrinsic value.

Chains and the locks and bars of a prison, however, were not of themselves sufficient to deter the poor wretches from attempting to escape from their devilish captors. Captain Thomas Phillips, who, in command of the ship *Hannibal*, of 450 tons and 36 guns, visited the Gold Coast in 1693, mentions other means that were employed.

Though a man more humane than most of his fellows at that time, Phillips yet dealt in slaves, at

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<sup>1</sup> Leonard's *Voyage to Western Africa*.

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least to the extent of taking a cargo of them to Barbadoes. To prevent their running away after he had bought them, he says he was advised "to cut off the arms and legs of some to terrify the rest (as other captains had done)." But Phillips refused to make any use of a remedy so drastic; he could not think, he said, "of treating with such Barbarity, poor Creatures, who being equally the Work of God's Hands, are, no doubt, as dear to Him as the Whites. Neither could he imagine why they should be despised for their Colour, which they have from Nature; or that White is intrinsically a better Hue than Black." He observes that "all Sorts of People are prone to judge favourably in their own Case; and that the Blacks, in Contempt of the Colour, say the Devil is White, and so paint him." Doubtless the blacks had abundant excuse for painting Satan white!

"The Negros," says Phillips, "are so loath to leave their own Country, that they have often leaped out of the Canoa, Boat and Ship, into the Sea, and kept under Water till they are drowned, to avoid being taken up and saved by the Boats which pursued them: Having a more dreadful Apprehension of Barbadoes than they have of Hell; though in reality they live much better there than in their own Country."

Whilst the ship was still at Whydah, Phillips had twelve negroes who "wilfully drowned themselves"; several others persistently refused food, and so starved themselves to death, "for it is their Belief that when they die they return to their own Country and Friends again."

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To prevent the slaves from attempting to escape from his ship, Captain Shurley, the master of an English vessel which sailed in company with the *Hannibal*, “used to make his Negros take the *Fatish* that they would not swim ashore and run away, and then would let them out of irons. His Potion was a Cup of English Beer with a little Aloes: which operated upon their Faith as much as if it had been made by the best *Fatishes* in Guinea.” On the Guinea Coast, we are told, when the natives “make any solemn Promise or Oath, they take about six spoonfuls” of some concoction “mixed with some Powders of divers Colours which the *Fatishman* puts into it. This Potion is to kill them the Minute they break the Oath, and which they firmly believe.”

We do not hear if Captain Shurley's Fetish was effective, but at least it was more humane than clapping the poor wretches in irons below hatches. “For my part,” says Phillips, “I put more Dependence upon my Shackles than any *Fatish* I could give them.”

Sharks are very plentiful along the coast, and at Whydah Phillips saw several slaves eaten by those monsters, “of which a prodigious number kept about the ship . . . and the Author had been told would follow her hence to Barbadoes for the dead Negros thrown over on the Way.” Phillips says they “saw some every day, but could not affirm they were always the same.”

As a general rule, the trade in slaves was conducted from certain places on the coast where the

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poor creatures hopelessly pined in what were called "barracoons," there in misery of mind and torment of body awaiting shipment or death. "Ju Ju town (Bonny River) contains about twelve barracoons; they are built to contain from three hundred to seven hundred slaves each. I have seen from fifteen hundred to two thousand slaves at a time, belonging to the several vessels then in the river," wrote the master of a merchant ship about the year 1825. Many of these prisons were erected on sites which from a sanitary point of view were simply hotbeds of disease. Anything was good enough for a slave; whether he lived or died was no great matter,—there were plenty more to take his place if he did happen to die. When Phillips, accompanied by Captain Shurley of the *East India Merchant*, went ashore at Whydah to purchase their complement of slaves—seven hundred for the *Hannibal*, and six hundred and fifty for Shurley's vessel—the building in which they stowed the slaves pending shipment is described as standing in the marshes and "very unwholesome . . . it is a most unpleasant place to live in, by reason of the neighbouring swamps, whence proceed noisome Stinks, and vast Swarms of Mosquitos." The ships lay here nine weeks, so that for that space of time some of the unhappy creatures must have been confined either in this horrible prison, or under hatches on board ship, before ever setting out on their six weeks' voyage to the West Indies. It is dreadful to contemplate those fifteen weeks of helpless agony and despair.

Besides filling up from those depôts of human

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misery, there were also other ways in which a ship might pick up cargo; as she stood along the coast, here and there odds and ends would fall to her. Phillips mentions that when the *Hannibal* was on the Alampo coast "a Canoa came off with three Women and four Children to sell: but they asked very dear for them, though they were not worth buying, for they were mere Skeletons, and so weak, being Hunger-starved, that they could not stand. The Master of the Canoa promised two or three hundred slaves if he would come ashore and stay two or three Days; but judging of the rest by the sample that he brought, and being loth to trust People where they did not use to trade, and had no Factory, they declined it. . . . The Natives here are reckoned the worst and most washy of any brought to the West Indies, where they yield the least Price; but he knew not why, for they seemed to him as well limbed and lusty as any other Negros. . . . The Golden Coast, (or, as they call them,) Kormantin Negros, are most in demand at Barbados, which will yield three or four pounds a head more than the Whydah or (as they are called) Papa Negros; but these are preferred before the Angola, as they are before the Alampo, which are accounted worst of all."

But wherever they were got, and wherever detained, their lot was misery, and the transfer from barracoon to ship as the transfer from frying-pan to fire.

If the ghosts of those who have died in sin in very truth haunt the spot where their wicked deeds have been committed, what a mob of the Damned,

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what a multitude of evil spirits of white men, must in an agony of remorse go to and fro upon the Gold Coast of West Africa! How many million years of Purgatory may suffice to purge of all the wickedness that has been there perpetrated?

And surely the ghost of Captain Oiseau of the brig *Le Louis* will be not the least of those who now suffer torment. In 1824 this vile wretch on completing his cargo forced the whole of his slaves down between decks, a space not three feet in height, and closed the hatches on them for the night. With the passing of the night passed away the lives of fifty of those poor creatures. "Pitch the — overboard!" was Oiseau's only comment, as he hastened ashore to get fifty more. Nothing must interfere with his having a full cargo at the start.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE SLAVE TRADE—MIDDLE PASSAGE

*DEATH* by asphyxiation was a fate by no means uncommon on slave-ships. When M. de Gennes in 1695 captured Fort James in the Gambia, he sent the English officers to Cayenne in one of the French "pinks," with one hundred and fifty slaves "shut up in the hold ; but these poor wretches scarce having room to breathe, threw themselves one upon another, as it were in despair, so that thirty-four of them were found stifled."

Needless to say that the slaves now and again—though at rare intervals—rose, and murdered the crew of the ship whereon they were confined. To guard against this contingency, some Slavers carried fierce Brazilian bloodhounds, trained to keep watch over the hatchways and to tear to pieces any slave venturing on deck during the night.

But even supposing that no dogs were on board, what chance of success had the slaves ? How did it advantage them if they did succeed in capturing the ship ? The white crew were speedily made food for the sharks. So far, so good ; but then, in their turn, the blacks probably died a lingering death from



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hunger and thirst, for of skill in handling a ship or knowledge of the science of navigation they were utterly destitute. A few weeks at most of spurious liberty, a few weeks of freedom from chains, a period during which all day the ship "boxed the compass," continually taken aback, continually with thunder of flapping sails going off on fresh tack, like man bereft of reason flying from mood to mood. Till the inevitable end came; either she capsized in sudden squall, so bringing merciful death, or she lay, dismasted and helpless, a tangle of wreck on the heaving waters, whilst human beings perished miserably. In his story, *Tamango*, Prosper Mérimée draws a ghastly picture of such a scene.

It was, however, not invariably the negroes who suffered in this way. In the year 1797, on the 10th of October, a boat containing two men and a boy drifted ashore on the north-east coast of Barbadoes. They were the sole survivors of the ship *Thomas* of Liverpool, which had been on her passage with a cargo of slaves from the Guinea Coast to Barbadoes. West Indian waters being at that time infested by French privateers, Captain M'Quay of the *Thomas*, who had been more than once attacked in the course of former voyages, had, as he thought for the better protection of the ship, during the voyage trained his male slaves to the use of arms, so that if the *Thomas* should be attacked they might help him at least to repel boarders. The exercise was no doubt extremely beneficial as regards the health of the slaves, but from the point of view of safety the expedient was of doubtful utility. It was like

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training tigers to act as watch-dogs ; at any moment they might turn and rend their master.

And so it proved in this instance. Early in the morning of 2nd September two hundred of the slaves, overpowering the guard, seized the ammunition chest, and rushing on deck, fired on the crew. Some fell, some jumped overboard, others cut away the boat carried at the stern, into which twelve escaped through the quarter-gallery windows, leaving the captain and a few men who stood by him to the last vainly trying, with what arms were in the cabins, to quell the mutiny. Smitten with shame at their cowardly conduct, however, the twelve gave ear to Captain M'Quay's angry remonstrances, and put back to the ship, and all might yet have gone well. But panic once more seized them as they neared the cursing, swaying throng of fighting men ; they hesitated, wavered, and again fled, leaving their ship-mates to perish.

Days passed, days of torment, for of food there was none, and of water little, on board the boat, and the heat was unbearable. A sleeping turtle, floating on the surface of the sea, was caught and ravenously devoured, his blood eagerly gulped down the parched throats. Now, driven to extremity, they soaked, and when soft, chewed their shoes and "two hairy caps which they had among them." At last—the last dread expedient of starving humanity—lots were cast. And he on whom the lot fell only bargained that he should be bled to death. Madness seized on most after this, and they died—all who had partaken of that dreadful Thing—leaving but the three to

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reach land; and of these, the boy fell in the surf from weakness as he tried to drag himself ashore, and he was drowned. History is silent as to the fate of the revolted slaves.

Mr. Atkins, a surgeon in the Royal Navy, who visited the Guinea Coast in 1721 on H.M.S. *Swallow*, tells the story of a rising on a Slaver. There was a noted negro chief "of a tall, strong Make, and bold, stern Aspect," who had for long been a thorn in the side of Slave dealers. At length, surprised in the night, this negro, "Captain" Tomba, had been taken, and when Atkins saw him a month later he was in the "Lodge," or barracoon, of a hoary villain named John Leadstone, commonly called "Old Cracker," a friend of Pirates, himself indeed a veteran of that brotherhood. Atkins particularly noticed this man Tomba because he "seemed to disdain the other Slaves for their Readiness to be examined, and scorned to look at the Buyers, refusing to rise or stretch out his Limbs as the Master commanded. This got him an unmerciful Whipping, with a cutting *Manatea* Strap, from Cracker's own Hand; who had certainly killed him, but for the Loss he must have sustained by it." Later, at Jacque-a-Jacques, Atkins' ship fell in with the *Robert* of Bristol, a Slaver whose Master had bought this "Captain" Tomba from Old Cracker. The tale told by the Master of this Slaver makes the flesh creep. Says the account given by Atkins: "He gave them the following melancholy Story: that this Tomba about a Week before, had combined with three or four of the stoutest of his Countrymen

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to mutiny, being assisted by a Woman-Slave, who telling him one Night that there were only five white Men on Deck, and they asleep, brought him a Hammer at the same time to execute his Treachery : He could only engage one more besides the Woman to follow him on Deck, where finding three sailors on the Forecastle, he presently dispatched two with single Strokes on the Temples : the other rousing with the Noise of his Companions [being] seized, Tomba murdered him in the same Manner. But the last two of the five taking the Alarm stood upon their Guard, and their Defence soon awaked the Master underneath, who running up took a Hand Spike and felling Tomba with it, secured them all in Irons." Here follows what was done by the Slaver's Master, a man named Harding, before whom even Captain Oiseau is as a healing angel. Harding, "weighing the Stoutness and Worth of the two Slaves, did, as in other Countries they do by Rogues of Dignity, whip and scarify them only ; whilst three other Abettors (but not Actors, nor of Strength for it) he sentenced to cruel Deaths, making them first eat the Heart and Liver of one of them he killed. The woman he hoisted by the Thumbs, whipped and slashed her with Knives before the other Slaves till she died."

It is hard to believe that this tale can be true ; harder still to realise that the perpetrator of inhumanity so awful was of our own blood and race. Yet if Phillips' tale be true of amputations of legs and arms to discourage attempts at escape, this also may well be so ; it is no step downward from one to

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the other. It is instructive too to note how Tomba's attempt is styled "treachery." Had it been a case of white men rising against black, "heroism" would probably have been the term used!

Captain William Snelgrave, who was much on the West Coast of Africa in the early part of the Eighteenth Century, and who wrote an account of the Slave Trade in 1730, says that the women and children were never chained, and that after the vessels got to sea the men's chains were taken off, that all were fed twice a day, and that in fine weather they were brought on deck at seven in the morning, where they remained till sunset. Every Monday pipes and tobacco were served out, and each day the places where they slept were thoroughly cleansed under the inspection of white men.

It may have been so, doubtless it *was* so, in ships on which Snelgrave served—there were humane men even among Slavers—but this account does not tally with such evidence as one gets from other sources.

Even Snelgrave, however, though he says that "Negros are easily governed," has some grim tales of mutinies to record. In 1704, when under his father's command on the *Eagle*, of London, Snelgrave first knew what it was to cope with mutiny. It was at Old Calabar. They lay in the river, with a cargo of four hundred slaves, and of the white crew there were on board only eleven who were fit for duty, "for many were dead, and others sick," and part of the sound men were on shore cutting wood. Young Snelgrave, lying on a cot in the cuddy one afternoon, racked by fever and ague,

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heard sounds of a scuffle in the fore part of the ship, and a strangled cry for help.

Dragging himself painfully on deck with his pistols, he found on the poop his father and the mate, unarmed, to whom he gave each a pistol. In the waist of the ship a seething mob of negroes was struggling to overpower one of the crew who had been on sentry duty ; they were trying to tear from him his cutlass, which was fastened by a string to his wrist. But their very numbers were against them, and having failed to snap the lanyard and so secure the cutlass, they were now attempting to throw the man overboard. In spite of blows and fierce violence, the sailor clung tenaciously to their naked bodies or to whatever his hands could clutch ; and in the meantime old Snelgrave, followed by the mate, scrambling forward on the booms, in vain threatened the mutineers, who paid to his threats no attention whatever. Then old Snelgrave, thinking to frighten them, jumped down and fired his pistol over their heads, whereupon one of the ringleaders with a billet of wood hit him a fierce blow on the head which brought him to his knees and partially stunned him. As the blow was about to be repeated, probably this time with fatal force, a boy to whom the captain had been kind jumped between the two and received the full effect of the stroke on his arm, which it shattered. Then the mate, seeing that the time had come for strong measures, shot the negro dead. That ended the affair ; the two other ringleaders jumped overboard and were drowned, and the remaining mutineers threw up the sponge. It was an attempt

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that nearly succeeded, and doubtless but for the fact that the slaves had been unable to get rid of their chains, in a few more minutes not a white man would have been left alive on board the *Eagle*.

Again, in 1721, when in command of the *Henry* of London, Snelgrave's ship was twice nearly being overpowered. It was in each case the Kormantine natives who rose, stubborn fellows and hard to deal with, in their greater determination and tenacity differing from all other tribes of those coasts; "desperate Fellows, who despised punishment and even Death itself," says Snelgrave as he describes how at Barbadoes and other of the West Indian islands, frequently "on their being in any ways hardly dealt with to break them from their Stubbornness in refusing to work," as many as twenty at a time on one plantation have been known deliberately to hang themselves.

It does not appear that on Snelgrave's ship the slaves had any specially harsh treatment to complain of, not even, indeed, in the measures taken to secure them after the risings were suppressed; but they were determined to get ashore again, poor wretches, by any means, even by cutting the ship's cable and letting her drive ashore during the night, as they had planned in the second of the two attempts.

What Snelgrave describes as a "sad Accident," however, soon afterwards "brought the Slaves to a better Temper." On the coast the *Henry* fell in with the *Elizabeth*, another ship belonging to the same owner. The Captain of the *Elizabeth* and his chief mate were both dead of fever; she herself had

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fallen into the hands of Roberts, the notorious Pirate, who had, however, in an amiable mood (after inducing several of the *Elizabeth's* crew to serve under the Black Flag), handed the ship back to the second mate, saying that this was done "out of Respect to the generous Character his Owner bore, in doing good to poor Sailors." Respect not being a commodity in which pirates usually deal to any appreciable extent, we may perhaps conclude that the *Elizabeth* was too dull a sailer to be of use to Roberts and his crew of villains, and that she had no cargo on board that suited them. In any case, when the *Henry* fell in with her at Animabo, she had collected about one hundred and twenty slaves, all of which Snelgrave offered to take on his ship, leaving to the *Elizabeth* all of the *Henry's* trading goods that had not been disposed of. The mate was quite ready to follow this course, but the ship's company, and especially her cooper, would have none of it, saying that the slaves had now been with them a long time, and that, as a great friendship existed between them and the crew, they would not part with the blacks.

Snelgrave left for his own ship, but that very night about ten o'clock, "the Moon shining now very bright," two or three musket-shots were heard on board the *Elizabeth*. Snelgrave jumped at once into his pinnace and made for the *Elizabeth*, followed by other boats from the *Henry*. As they neared that vessel, two negroes were seen swimming shoreward, but before the boats could come up with them both were torn to pieces by sharks. Holding on by a rope trailing over the



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*Elizabeth's* side were two more blacks, their heads just showing above water, trembling with fear at the awful sight they had witnessed, but unable, or unwilling, to regain the ship's deck. On board, Snelgrave found the slaves all quiet, but the ship's company in great confusion gathered in a bunch behind the quarter-deck barricade, where he was told that they feared the cooper, who had been on sentry duty over the fore hatch, must be killed. Snelgrave's scorn was unbounded when he found that, though there was no lack of arms amongst them, muskets, pistols, cutlasses, not one had had the courage to venture forward to ascertain what had been the cooper's fate. So with some of his own people Snelgrave went forward, where he found the cooper lying on his back quite dead, with skull split in two, and lying beside him the hatchet with which the murder had been committed.

This mutiny also, it turned out, was the work of Kormantines, a few of whom had been bought two or three days before. One of the two men found in the water by the ship's side quite coolly confessed that the murder had been committed by him. He and a few other slaves, it seemed, had succeeded in getting up on deck, where they found not only the whole watch, but the sentry as well, sound asleep,—a piece of reckless carelessness not uncharacteristic of the British seaman, one fancies.

Finding their way clear, the slaves were stealing quietly to the ship's side, when unfortunately the cooper moved in his sleep. Equally unfortunately the cook's axe was lying in the galley, conspicuous in

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the moonlight. Such temptation was too great ; the slave snatched up the axe, brought it down with a crash on the sleeping man's skull, and jumped overboard after the others.

Snelgrave's first care was to remove all the slaves to under hatches in his own ship. The next day, in presence of the captains of eight other vessels lying in the roads,—rather a packed jury, one fears,—the murderer was tried and condemned to die in an hour's time. The condemned man argued that though it was "rash" of him to kill the cooper, yet if he were hanged they must remember that they would lose the money already paid for him. The white man would do anything for the sake of money, thought those poor blacks ; but in this instance the argument did not prevail. Snelgrave deliberately and impressively turned the hour-glass. "As soon as that sand runs out, you die," said he.

Then each captain returned to his own ship, turned up and armed all hands, and brought every slave up on deck, that they might witness and take warning from the execution. By a rope under his arms the condemned man was run up to the fore yard-arm, and instantly shot by a firing party of ten whites, and the body being lowered, the head was cut off and thrown overboard, for the greater punishment, because many of the blacks believed that if they were killed and not dismembered, their spirits would certainly return to their own land. The early Eighteenth Century was not distinguished for its humanity !

As a finish to the scene Snelgrave harangued the

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slaves on his own ship, warning them that the fate of the murderer should be the fate of any of them who killed a white man. The warning had good effect, for though those blacks were on board for more than four months ere they were sold, never once in that time did the poor creatures give cause for the slightest uneasiness.

Snelgrave mentions, however, the case of another vessel where mutiny was not suppressed at so little cost of human life as in the instance already mentioned. About ten days after quitting the coast, the captain of the *Ferrers* of London, a slave ship, contrary to Snelgrave's repeated advice, had imprudently gone alone amongst the slaves while they were at dinner. It was as if he had gone unprotected into a cage of hungry wolves; they fell on him, beat out his brains with the little tubs out of which they ate, and tore him almost in pieces. Then they tried to rush the quarter-deck barricade, utterly fearless of the muskets and half-pikes presented at them through the loopholes by the white crew. So furious was the mob, so menacing the situation, that the chief mate ordered one of the quarter-deck guns to be "loaden with Partridge shot" and fired into the mob. This ended the mutiny. Nearly eighty human beings were accounted for by that one discharge, either from the actual shot itself (which swept a lane through the dense crowd of blacks) or from the number of the frightened wretches who sprang overboard and were drowned when the gun was discharged. And afterwards, as we read in Astley's *Voyages*, "most of the rest, through sullenness, starved themselves

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to Death; and after the Ship arrived at Jamaica, they attempted twice to mutiny before the Sale began; which with their former Behaviour, coming to be publickly known, none of the Planters cared to buy them, though offer'd at a low Price: So that this proved a very unsuccessful Voyage; for the ship was detained many Months at Jamaica on that Account, and at last was lost there in a Hurricane." In reading those old pages of Astley, one is at a loss to decide whether the misfortunes of this ship are not considered to be directly attributable to the grievous wickedness and ingratitude of the blacks in objecting to capture and sale. It would almost seem that in the opinion of white men of the period, by expatriating them a direct benefit was being conferred on the negroes. It is, as a matter of fact, much what Boswell said.

Later than other nations England entered on the Slave Trade. Certainly once she did enter on it, she seems, like Satan "by merit rais'd," to have lost no time in attaining to bad eminence therein. Cruelty and treachery went hand in hand in the treatment of black by white; and treachery, especially, one grieves to read, on the part of English ships, appears to have been all too common an experience of the natives. Naturally it led to reprisals on their part; many an Englishman was kidnapped and long held to ransom because of this villainous practice, which prevailed particularly, one reads, amongst Liverpool and Bristol ships—"a great Detriment to the Slave Trade on the Windward Coast."

When, in the fall of the year 1726, Mr. Smith,

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Surveyor to the Royal African Company, visited the coast in the sloop *Bonetta* for the purpose of making "exact Plans, Draughts, and Prospects of all their Forts and Settlements; as also of all the principal Rivers, Harbours, and other Places of Trade on the Coast of Africa from the Gambia to Whidaw," he was shown by the Master of the *Queen Elizabeth* "a Letter from one Benjamin Cross who had been panyared [kidnapped] by the Natives of Cape Monte three Months before and detained there by way of Reprisal for some of their Men carried off by an English Trader." Deserted by his own ship, Cross wrote to the master of the *Queen Elizabeth*, and eventually was ransomed "at the Expense of about £50 sterling" by Smith's vessel. Smith noticed at Cape Monte "that the Natives who came off to trade with them were very cautious of coming on board for fear of being panyared; and even those who ventured on board, if they chanced to see any Arms about the Ship, immediately leaped into their Canoas and got ashore." Elsewhere, too, we read that at the Rio St. Andre "the Men are robust and well made, and want neither Sense nor Courage. They are very jealous, since some of them have been carried off by the Europeans. For this Reason they will venture on board no Ship whatever, till the Captain performs the Ceremony of dropping Sea Water in the Eye: nor will they when they come on board ever be prevailed on to go under-Deck or into the Cabins." This dropping of sea-water into the eye was looked upon by the poor creatures as a binding oath, equivalent to praying to the white man's God that the eye

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might be blinded if faith were broken. One sickens to read that this was considered "the most effectual Way to allure them." Hideous comment on our national honour!

Yet bad as she was, and, in this, bankrupt of faith and honour, it was after England had set her face sternly against the Trade that the worst abuses crept into it.

Then came into use a class of vessel in which the conditions were infinitely worse than anything that had been known on the old transports, (bad as things then were), in the days when the trade was legal. "Instead of the large and commodious vessels which it would be the interest of the slave trader to employ, we have by our interference forced him to use a class of vessels, (well known to Naval men as American Clippers), of the very worst description that could have been imagined for the purpose, every quality being sacrificed for speed. In the holds of these vessels the unhappy victims of European cupidity are stowed literally in bulk."<sup>1</sup>

These American clippers were built in the United States, sailed thence to the Havanah and on to the West Coast of Africa, under the American flag, and took in there a cargo of slaves, which they landed in Cuba under the flag of Portugal. From June to September 1838 no less than ten ships fitted for the Slave Trade sailed from Havanah for the coast of Africa under the flag of the United States, one of the most notorious of them being the *Venus*, said to be the "smartest clipper-built

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<sup>1</sup> Laird, vol. ii.

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vessel ever constructed at Baltimore," that home of clippers.

In 1788 British vessels under one hundred and fifty tons were not allowed to carry more than five slaves to every three tons; vessels over one hundred and fifty tons might not carry more than three men to two tons; and the height between decks must in no case be less than five feet. The Spanish and Portuguese regulations fixed a standard somewhat lower. But insufficient as was even the British allowance, after the General Abolition Bill came into force, whereby all slave trade was made illegal for British subjects after 1st January 1808, conditions arose which infinitely increased the sufferings of negroes during the Middle Passage.

The acquisition by Great Britain of the Dutch West Indian islands had naturally led to enormous increase of British Slaving. When in 1805 an Order in Council prohibited that traffic in the conquered Colonies, when in the following year British subjects were forbidden to take part in this trade either for the supply of the newly-acquired Dutch islands or for that of foreign parts, and when to these regulations was added the measure of 1st January 1808, great numbers of British seamen,—men for the most part of loose moral character,<sup>1</sup> and demoralised by familiarity with every sort of cruelty, where at least black men were concerned,—were thrown out of employment. To them the obvious solution of the difficulty was then to sail under cover of the flag

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<sup>1</sup> See Falconbridge's account of the conduct of officers and men on Slave ships.

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of some other nation, preferably that of Spain or of Portugal. A new class of vessel was utilised, longer and narrower, with less height between decks, and built specially for fast sailing, so as to avoid capture by the British cruisers. These slave ships now were even more hideously overcrowded than before, and little or no attention was paid to the earlier Spanish and Portuguese regulation of five men to two tons. Provided they could evade the cruisers, what mattered the torments endured by a few slaves! It was worth risking, they thought, for even if chased and in danger of being captured, it was easy to throw a few slaves overboard and so bring the numbers down to regulation before the cruiser could overhaul them.

A hideously common practice was this of throwing slaves overboard. The Spanish brig *Carlos*, captured in 1814, was seen to jettison eighty before she was taken. The Paris Petition of 1825 states that "it is established by authentic documents that the slave captains throw into the sea every year about three thousand negroes, men, women, and children; of whom more than half are thus sacrificed, whilst yet alive, either to escape from the visits of cruisers, or because, worn down by their sufferings, they could not be sold to advantage."

Not that this hideous practice of wholesale murder arose after the Slave Trade was made illegal. Unhappily it seems never to have been quite absent from the Trade if occasion arose. In 1783, the master of a ship on passage from the island of San Thomé to Jamaica threw overboard one hundred and thirty-two slaves, and his owners



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in England claimed on the underwriters for the full value of the slaves, on the ground that in order to save ship and crew and remainder of cargo there was absolute necessity to sacrifice these hundred and thirty-two, because the supply of drinking water had run dangerously short, and there was not sufficient on board to preserve the lives of all. The underwriters denied the necessity, and refused payment of the claim, whereupon an action was brought to compel payment.

The trial brought to light a dreadful tale. Evidence proved that "the ship *Zong*, Luke Collingwood, master, sailed from the island of St. Thomas on the coast of Africa, September 6, 1781, with four hundred and forty slaves and fourteen whites on board, for Jamaica, and that in the November following she fell in with that island; but instead of proceeding to some port, the master, mistaking, as he alleges, Jamaica for Hispaniola, ran her to leeward. Sickness and mortality had by this time taken place on board the crowded vessel, so that between the time of leaving the coast of Africa and the 29th of November, sixty slaves and seven white people had died, and a great number of the surviving slaves were then sick and not likely to live. On that day the master of the ship called together a few of the officers, and stated to them that, if the sick slaves died a natural death, the loss would fall on the owners of the ship; but if they were thrown alive into the sea on any sufficient pretext of necessity for the safety of the ship, it would be the loss of the underwriters, alleging, at

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the same time, that it would be less cruel to throw sick wretches into the sea than to suffer them to linger out a few days under the disorder with which they were afflicted. To this inhuman proposal the mate, James Kelsal, at first objected; but Collingwood at length prevailed on the crew to listen to it. He then chose out from the cargo one hundred and thirty-two slaves, and brought them on deck, all or most of whom were sickly and not likely to recover, and he ordered the crew to throw them into the sea. A 'parcel' of them were accordingly thrown overboard, and on counting over the remainder next morning, it appeared that the number so drowned had been fifty-four. He then ordered another 'parcel' to be thrown over, which, on a second counting on the succeeding day, was proved to have amounted to forty-two. On the third day the remaining thirty-six were brought on deck, and as these now resisted the cruel purpose of their masters, the arms of twenty-six were fettered with irons, and the savage crew proceeded with the diabolical work, casting them down to join their comrades of the former days."<sup>1</sup> The remaining ten jumped into the sea.

Unhappily this is not a solitary instance of such brutality; there are many cases as bad to be found in the evidence given before Parliamentary Committees in 1790. And as a further example, there is the instance when Admiral Collier, in 1820, captured the French schooner *La Jeune Estelle* after a chase which lasted many hours. As the

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<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Granville Sharp*, 1820.

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frigate began to close on the slaver, but before she got within gun range, it was noticed that from the latter a good many casks were being thrown into the sea. To lay the frigate to for the purpose of picking up or examining these casks would, of course, have rendered the escape of the slaver a certainty, so the frigate under heavy press of sail continued the chase.

On the schooner being boarded, her master strenuously denied that he carried any slaves whatever, and expressed great indignation at the insult offered to him and to the French flag in compelling him to heave to. He did, however, protest too much; and there were, besides, certain suspicious circumstances which caused the officer in charge of the frigate's boat to order close search to be made through every part of the suspected slaver. The result was nil; no trace of a slave was found; and, lashed by the foul tongue of the schooner's master, the British boat's crew were about to return crest-fallen to the ship.

The *Estelle's* master had better have held his tongue, better have been content to get rid of his unwelcome visitors without attempting to express in too strong terms his triumph and his scorn for perfidious Albion. The delay occasioned by his indulgence in the luxury of abusing the British Navy was fatal to him and to his schooner. It enabled an A.B. to give an extra blow on the head of a cask in the *Estelle's* hold. That blow was answered by a feeble cry from within, and on the head of the cask being knocked out, two girl children,

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from twelve to fourteen years of age, were found packed inside. They were, it seemed, two remaining out of fourteen carried off from a village on the coast by this virtuous and humane mariner. The fate of the others was only too apparent, but they were never found. The chase had led the frigate far to leeward of the spot where the casks had been seen floating, and they were never picked up.

It was a practice not uncommon to head up negroes in casks for purposes of concealment: no less than five young men were found in one water-butt on board a Brazilian slaver by Captain Hamilton, R.N., in the year 1831.

It would be easy indeed to go on multiplying indefinitely the number of those cases of atrocity, but many of the stories, especially some told by Falconbridge, who was at one time that *rara avis*, a surgeon on a slaver, are quite unfit for reproduction. Those "good old days," about which the most of us love to talk, were not so very good after all, it would seem.

In 1811 the British Parliament unanimously passed a Bill which made the Slave Trade felony, punishable with fourteen years' transportation, or with three to five years' imprisonment with hard labour. In 1824 the Trade was declared to be Piracy, a capital offence if committed within Admiralty jurisdiction; and though in 1837 the death penalty was abolished, it was still left punishable by transportation for life. At various later dates most of the countries of the world fell more or less—generally less—into line with Great Britain

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in their treatment of the Slave Trade; even Brazil in 1826 declared that after the year 1830 it should be piracy for her subjects to engage in it.

But for many years prior to 1830 a custom had prevailed whereby masters of slaving vessels when overhauled attempted to deceive officers boarding them from ships of war. In taking out their license to trade, it was an easy thing to overestimate the tonnage of their vessels;—a little “palm oil” would ensure the document being signed without inconvenient questions being asked, or scrutiny demanded, by the official whose duty it might be to issue ships’ papers. In a letter written by Lord Palmerston to the British Ambassador at Lisbon, bearing date 30th April 1838, was enclosed a document which stated that the Governor of Angola had “established an impost or fee of seven hundred thousand reis, to be paid to him for every vessel which embarks slaves from thence, it being understood that upon payment of the above-mentioned sum no impediment to the illicit trade shall be interposed by the Governor, nor any further risk be incurred by the persons engaged in the trade.” In this way (as reported in the *Sierra Leone Advertiser* of 20th November 1824) the Portuguese slaver *Diana*,—one of three vessels captured about that date and sent into port by British cruisers,—held a royal license as a ship of one hundred and twenty tons to carry three hundred slaves. But she was found to be of little more than sixty tons, which gives a rate of nearly five slaves to the ton. Another of these vessels, of ninety-five tons, masqueraded as being of

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one hundred and forty-six tons, and held a license to carry three hundred and sixty-five slaves ; whilst the third, which was stated to be of two hundred and thirty-one tons, measured only one hundred and sixty-five,—all this, of course, after making due allowance for the difference between a Spanish or Portuguese and an English ton. Two others, the *Deux Sœurs* of forty-one tons, and the *Eleanor* of sixty, had crammed, the first one hundred and thirty-two, and the last one hundred and thirty-five slaves, into a space barely capable of holding thirty under reasonable, or what were then thought to be reasonable, conditions.

In the year 1819 Captain Kelly of H.M.S. *Pheasant* sent in the Portuguese schooner *Novo Felicidade* with seventy-one slaves and a crew of eleven, including the master. The schooner measured only eleven tons. Captain Kelly in his judicial declaration said that “the state in which these unfortunate creatures were found is shocking to every principle of humanity ; seventeen men shackled together in pairs by the legs, and twenty boys, one on the other, in the main hold—a space measuring 18 feet in length, 7 feet 8 inches main breadth, and 1 foot 8 inches in height, and under them the yams for their support.”

It is no matter for wonder that the mortality on the Middle Passage was so excessive ; the wonder almost is that it was not greater,—though in respect of deaths it would be hard to beat the record of the brig *Adamastor*, on which vessel, out of eight hundred slaves, three hundred and four died during the

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voyage; or of the *Aguila Vengadora*, which arrived at the Havanah in June 1838, having lost three hundred and sixty out of five hundred and sixty negroes. Heavy weather had made it necessary to close the hatches for two days, at the end of which time, when the weather had moderated and the hatches been removed, nearly three hundred were found to have perished. We lament yet the sufferings of our fellow-countrymen in the Black Hole of Calcutta in the year 1757, and shudder at the cruelty for which Surajah Dowlah was responsible. How does it compare with the white man's treatment of the black on West Africa's coasts, about the same date and later?

Suicide also of course largely added to the long death-roll on board Slaving ships. Numberless instances are on record where men chained together deliberately jumped overboard rather than return to the hell which awaited them below hatches, and a necessary adjunct to the outfit of a slave ship was a high and very strong net fixed above the bulwarks all round that part of the ship where the slaves were allowed to come on deck. As to the fate of slaves on a vessel which by evil fortune ran ashore, or which for any cause had to be abandoned at sea, it is well not to speak.

The excessive mortality of course did not end with the landing; numbers were put on shore in a state of weakness and disease so miserable that a large proportion never recovered. It was reckoned that of the hundred and fifty thousand, or thereabout, landed in Brazil and Cuba, thirty thousand died in the "seasoning."

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Yet in spite of the appalling mortality, so great were the profits of the hideous trade that the slavers were not greatly concerned, considered indeed that they had made not altogether an unfavourable voyage, if they landed anything much over one-third of the number originally embarked.

The price paid for slaves on the African Coast, like that of every other commodity, varied according to circumstances. A native raid more than ordinarily successful, or it might be, a dearth of shipping on the coast, would cause a glut in the market, and send values down; whilst, on the other hand, a long continuance of favourable winds might fill the chief ports with more ships than there were cargoes ready for, when holders of course stood out for a higher figure.

The greatest recorded boom in slaves occurred in 1698, after the destruction of Fort James, Gambia River, by M. de Gennes. So that the fort might be rebuilt without an expenditure so great that it would have crippled the Company, Parliament threw open the West African trade on condition that each ship visiting the coast should pay to the African Company's Directors ten per cent value on her outward cargo, or twenty per cent after her return to England.

"It is scarcely possible to conceive," bitterly writes a contemporary French writer, "what a number of English vessels this permission brought to the Gambia, and what confusion it occasioned in the Trade. Each captain outbidding the other to get the sooner loaded, the price of negroes at Jilfray rose



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to forty Bars a head ; so that the Mercadores or Mandingo Merchants would no longer sell their slaves either at Barraconda or Guisches to the French or English Companies for the usual price of fifteen to seventeen Bars, but chose to come down the River, tempted by the great Profits made. . . . By this means the Servants of the French and English Companies were forced to sit idle and wait patiently to see the issue of this ruinous Commerce. Between January and June 1698 these separate Traders exported no fewer than three thousand six hundred Slaves, by which means they overstocked the Country with more Goods than they could consume in some Years. Nothing could be more imprudent than the Conduct of the English Company, who had better have received nothing from the Parliament for the reparation of their Fort than have accepted this Benevolence of ten per cent on conditions wholly destructive to their Trade, as appears from the extravagant Rate to which the Price of Slaves has risen. It was easy to see their Intention was to ruin the French Company, without reflecting that, while they hurt them but a little, they ruined themselves entirely."

The French, however, seem to have attempted to retaliate on the English. According to Moore, the African Company's Superintendent on the Gambia, French trade was greatly hampered by the English "not allowing them to give above forty Bars a head for Slaves. But in the year 1735, there being a great demand for them at the Mississippi, the French broke through that Agreement and gave fifty Bars a

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head for Slaves, with six or seven of each of the Heads of Goods, which amounted to more than £10 sterling: And though there were no fewer than three Liverpool ships trading at Jillefray, a mile above the French, who gave eighty Bars a head, yet they could not get near so many Slaves that year as the French did, their Goods being generally better than the English."

A "Bar," it is necessary to explain, is a "Denomination given to a certain quantity of Goods of any kind; which quantity was of equal Value, among the Natives, to a Bar of Iron when this River was first traded to. Thus a Pound of Fringe is a Bar; as are two Pound of Gun Powder, an Ounce of Silver, two hundred Gun Flints: So their Way of reckoning is by Bars or Crowns, one of which sometimes does not amount to above one shilling sterling, being dear or cheap according to the Goods they want. These five Articles, viz. Spread Eagle Dollars, Crystal Beads, Iron Bars, Brass Pans, and Arrangoes, are called the Heads of Goods, because they are dearest." According to Park, a "bar" in current value should be equal to two shillings sterling. Even eighty bars, therefore, was no very extravagant price for a slave.

Atkins mentions that at Sierra Leone in 1721 the price of a good slave was about £15, "allowing the Buyer forty or fifty per cent Advance on his Goods." In later days, however, when the Trade had been declared contraband, prices were lower and profits vastly greater. Then, as was stated by the Governor of Cape Coast Castle in 1838, "a prime slave on that

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part of the coast with which I have most knowledge, costs about \$50 in goods, or about from \$25 to \$30 in money, including prime cost and charges; the same slave will sell in Cuba for \$350 readily, but from this large profit must be deducted freight, insurance, commission, cost of feeding during the middle passage, and incidental charges, which will reduce the profit to, I should say, \$200 on each prime slave; and this must be still further reduced, to make up for Casualties, to perhaps \$150 per head."

About the year 1835, too, Commissioner Macleay says:<sup>1</sup> "Of the enormous profits of the Slave Trade, the most correct idea will be formed by taking an example. The last vessel condemned by the Mixed Commission" [the Court of the Mixed Commission for the adjudication of captured slave vessels] "was the *Firm*." As stated by Mr. Macleay, the price paid for the cargo of this ship was \$28,000; cost of provisions and ammunition, and allowance for wear and tear, \$10,600; wages paid, \$13,400; making a total outlay of \$52,000. The slaves on board fetched \$145,000; making a clear profit of \$93,000 (roughly £19,000), a gain of just about *one hundred and eighty per cent*.

Is there room for wonder that when profits such as this could be made (and made with comparatively little danger, for over all that wide stretch of coast necessarily the percentage of captures was small), an inexhaustible supply of scoundrels should have been found, willing to peril body and soul, to run any risk, capable of committing any atrocity, for the

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<sup>1</sup> *Parl. Paper*, No. 381.

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sake of gains so easily come by, and that all Great Britain's efforts to cleanse this Augean Stable should for so many years have been of no avail?

The average *minimum* number of slaves estimated to have been yearly landed in Brazil alone from the Guinea Coast, after the beginning of strong efforts to put an end to the trade, was seventy-eight thousand three hundred and thirty-one; but as more than half the vessels arriving on the Brazilian coast from Africa reported themselves as in ballast, it is safe to conclude that very large numbers of slaves were smuggled ashore by them at places other than Bahia, Pernambuco, Maranhão, Rio, etc., so that it is probable the seventy-eight thousand might without risk of exaggeration have been put down as close on one hundred thousand. In the thirty-eight degrees of latitude over which the Brazilian coast-line extends, there are spots in abundance where whole cargoes might have been set ashore without exciting remark.

A number certainly not smaller must be set down as entering Cuba; (the Governor of Cape Coast Castle, who was assuredly in a position to judge, in 1838 set down the number of slave ships for Cuba, as compared with Brazil, as in the proportion of three to two).

If, therefore, to the huge total of human beings annually enslaved in those two countries we add the totals consigned to Porto Rico, Uruguay, Buenos Ayres, Rio de la Plata, and probably Texas, it will be realised how almost incredibly large was the annual drain of human life from African coasts as a whole,—

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for east as well as west groaned under the awful rod of the white tyrant. From the Bight of Biafra and Benin alone, Captain M'Lean in 1838 stated that "in the year 1834 I have every reason to believe that the number of slaves carried off . . . amounted to one hundred and forty thousand."

That this is no exaggeration, the following extract from a letter written from our Mission Station at Old Calabar in 1874 goes far to prove: "The country here is thinly populated. I do not think it is possible to arrive at any approximation of the real numbers. It is certain that early statements (this I suppose refers to statistics sent home in connection with the Mission) made upon native authority are much exaggerated. The Slave Trade decimated this part of Africa. Dr. Robb has a book in his possession written by a Calabar Chief over eighty years ago, in which are entered the names of all the Slave ships that came to the river during that time (*sic*), with the names of their captains and mates, and also the number of slaves which they took away each time, with the various districts from which batches of slaves were taken. And during those three years not less than seventy thousand were sent out of the Calabar River alone. Now the Slave Trade was continued through many years, and if seventy thousand were taken away in three years, how great the number that must have been taken altogether."

In 1662, the third African Company undertook to supply the British West Indian and American Colonies with three thousand slaves annually. Making every allowance for the fact that in the

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“seasoning” something like fifty per cent died, and that the wretched survivors were probably, most of them, permanently unfit, after the horrors and sufferings of their voyage, to produce healthy offspring, how rapidly this annual import must have increased may be gathered from the fact that eighty years later the number of slaves in the British West Indian islands and in Virginia totalled three hundred and forty thousand.

But those evil days are ended, thanks chiefly to the tireless efforts of Great Britain. Yet for many a year she fought on, not only apparently without good resulting from her efforts, but almost, it would seem, as if from them arose fresh evil. The only changes at first effected were a change in the flag under which the trade was carried on, and a change for the worse in the treatment endured by the slaves during the voyage. At first it was the French flag that gave protection. (Mr. Fowell Buxton, writing in 1839, says that our Ambassador at Paris in 1824 stated to the French Minister that that flag “covered the villains of all nations.”) Later, it was under the flag of Spain that those villains took refuge; and, finally, they sheltered under that of Portugal.

So far as in her lay, Great Britain wiped from off her shield the foul stain that participation in the Slave Trade had left upon it, and by every means in her power she made atonement for the evil which in earlier days her sons had committed. Seventy-five years have passed since Britain gave to the world a lead in emancipation, and one would fain believe

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that now over all the Globe Slavery is but a terrible memory. Yet who shall say that in that vast continent of Africa the evil thing does not even now lift its head in remoter parts, and in islands little visited by the greater nations does not even yet live, perhaps under a name at least of fairer sound ?

## CHAPTER XV

### PIRATES OF THE GUINEA COAST: ENGLAND AND DAVIS

THERE exists in an early Eighteenth Century book of travels an interesting chart of Sierra Leone Bay. On this chart, on the south side of the Bay, on a deeply-indented little bit of coast inside of Cape Sierra Leone, appears the following entry: "Pyrates' Bay." A little to the east we find "Frenchman's Bay," with a "Water Place. Where a Boat may get in at high Water"; and farther along, opposite the Watering Place, the words: "Plenty of Oysters on the Mangrove Trees along this River." Farther still to the east lies "Bay de France," where is a "Spring descending from y<sup>e</sup> Hills."

It reads as if the entries were culled direct from some piratical chart in a Boys' Romance, especially when one finds, in connection with old sailing directions, that "The Cape of Sierra Leona is known by a single Tree much larger than the rest and high Land on the back of it." But they are genuine enough, those entries, and each bay and point no doubt had its own special tradition and history.

From Mr. William Finch, a merchant of London



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who touched at Sierra Leone in 1607 on his voyage to the East Indies, we learn that "on the further Side of the fourth Cove is the Watering Place of excellent Water continually running," where in six fathom of water ships lay "within Musket shot of the Fountain," (Bay de France, in all probability). "Here," one reads in Astley's *Voyages*, "on the Rocks they found the Names of divers Englishmen : Amongst the rest, those of Sir Francis Drake, who had been there twenty-seven years before ; Thomas Candish, Captain Lister, and others." Drake, no doubt, as a young man may have been there more than once. Cavendish visited the Bay in 1586 when on his way, *viâ* the Straits of Magellan, with a little squadron to harry the Spaniards in the Pacific.

This watering-place in the Bay de France is described by Barbot as being "one of the most delightful Places in all Guinea"; but, as to the source of that water, "there is no approaching it, for the many Tigers, Lions, and Crocodiles which harbour there"; and, alas, says Astley, "it must be observed that this Water has an ill Effect if taken in the beginning of the Winter, or Rainy Season . . . because the violent Heats having corrupted the Earth, and killed Abundance of venomous Creatures, all that malignant Matter is brought down by the great Floods, which descend at that Time and infect the Water, as hath been found to the Cost of many Sailors. Care likewise must be taken not to eat the Fruit or drink the Water to Excess, because it causes a Sort of pestilential Distemper which is almost certain Death."

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Moreover, there were also Serpents “so monstrous big . . . that they swallow a Man whole.”

This Pyrates’ Bay, then, in spite of its close proximity to one of the most delightful spots in Guinea, and in spite of its romantic surroundings, had its drawbacks. But doubtless it suited reasonably well the gentlemen after whom it took its title. Here, at as late a date as 1720,—when the 50 gun frigate *Swallow*, under Sir Chaloner Ogle, visited the coast with her sister ship the *Weymouth*, for the purpose of putting down piracy,—dwelt the private Traders, or Interlopers, “about thirty in number, loose privateering Blades,” who traded if they could, and if they could not trade, stole, “not so much to amass Riches as to put themselves in a Capacity of living well and treating their Friends . . . and with their Profits purchase from Time to Time Strong Beer, Wine, Cyder, and such Necessaries, of Bristol Ships, which more frequently than others put in there.”

John Leadstone, “Old Cracker,” was the chief of those private Traders; he “had been an old Buccaneer, and in 1720 had the best house among them, with two or three Guns before his Door, to salute his Friends the Pirates when they put in there.”

It was a haunt favoured of pirates in the olden days, this coast of Guinea; ships of war in those latitudes were never numerous, and seldom of great size or heavily armed, and if things piratical should chance to be dull, why, it was easy to load up with slaves and be off to a good market, another haunt

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of their kind more pleasant than West Africa, the Spanish Main.

"The world of waters is our home,  
And merry men are we,"

they might have sung, had Alan Cunningham's song of the sea then been written. "Merry" men they were, according to their own somewhat primitive and bestial ideas of merriment, rum, much rum, being one of their necessities of life, and their chief ambition of no higher elevation than to lead a short life and a merry one.

Many a notorious pirate served his apprenticeship on this Guinea Coast, or perchance there ended his days. There were Roberts and Avery—Long Ben Avery—among the more famous; there was Massey—surely the gentlest pirate that ever

"Left a corsair's name to other times,  
Link'd with one virtue and a thousand crimes."

*His* crimes were not many, however, not numerous enough indeed to suit a pirate crew. Poor Massey! He gave himself up later, and insisted on being hanged as a salve to his conscience.

There were Cocklyn, England, Davis, Moody, Lowther, and many another, before some of whom—typical pirates, brutes without redeeming point—

"Hope withering fled, and Mercy sighed farewell!"

When Captain Thomas Phillips of the ship *Hannibal* (36), Letter of Marque, visited the Coast in 1693, he found everywhere the fear of pirates, in every port men looked at him askance. Even at the

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Cape de Verde islands, where he called on the way south, suspicion awoke with every strange sail that appeared. At St. Jago, in the Bay of Porto Prayo, the *Hannibal* was fired on before she brought to, for what cause Phillips knew not till he landed. Then the officer in command of the guard, "a well looking old man," explained matters in his quarters, over a glass.

"This old Officer had an old House, with a crazy Pair of Stairs, which they ascended into a large open Room. Here he gave them a satisfactory Account why he fired so eagerly at their Entrance, (for he had shot three Times, and the last with a Ball,) taking them to be Pirates." A pathetic, neglected figure, courteous and dignified, was this old officer, "decoyed hither by fair Promises from the Governor of Lisbon, which were never performed"; a brave man, flung aside and forgotten, yet putting the best face on the matter, and striving to do his duty, though sore harassed by his commanding officer, the Lieutenant-Governor, a youth of twenty, "proud and empty," with an "insolent Air," says Phillips.

The Governor, an older man than this youth, gave Phillips a most indifferent meal, consisting of "a Loaf of good white Bread, a Box of Marmalade served on a Napkin; and for Drink there was a Squeeze-Case Bottle half full of Madeira wine, but so thick, foul and hot, that the Author had much ado to drink it." Even for this unappetising repast Phillips had to pay in presents; but not to be out-done in hospitality, he invited the Governor to come on board the *Hannibal*.

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His Excellency, however, could not be prevailed on to quit solid land. How did he know, indeed, that Phillips was not a pirate, who merely wanted to get him on board in order to keep him there till he (the Governor) had sent ashore orders to supply the ship with whatever was demanded, and having got everything the island could provide, then be off to sea, paying for all with a fictitious bill of Exchange on London, drawn, (as was later done by Avery in dealing with the Governor of San Thomé), "on John a Noakes or the Pump at Aldgate"? (Avery had a pretty wit—for a pirate.)

The Governor of St. Jago was a "a Man of good Parts, Experience, and Subtility," we read, and of noble family; but his "Cloaths very ordinary. He had a long black Wig which reached to his Middle, but somebody had plucked out all the Curls." Even a pirate might not covet that wig. He had not, perhaps, a very attractive personality, this Governor.

It was not till she had run some way down the African coast, and sighted Cape Mesurado, that the *Hannibal* fell in with trace of pirates. Off this cape, signals from her consort, the *East India Merchant*, under Captain Shurley, which had lost her fore topmast and fore yard in a tornado, caused her to run in and let go her anchor. Here, living amongst the blacks, they found a Scotchman "who could give no good account of himself." Anxious to get away, this man wished to ship as A.B. on board one of the two English vessels, but he had "so much of the villain in his face" that neither Phillips nor Shurley "cared to meddle with him."

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He was a pirate, Phillips learned later, and had belonged to a small brigantine, under a ruffian named Herbert, who had seized her in the West Indies, and, to avoid unpleasant results, had made his way with her over to the Guinea Coast. Here the crew quarrelled and fought desperately amongst themselves—as pirate crews were wont to do when over-much rum was aboard. When the fight ended, there was but this one man left capable of handling the vessel, and he, to save his own life, ran the brigantine ashore, when all his wounded shipmates perished. He had, we learn, “a long flaxen Wig, and a white Bever Hat”—a costume singularly inappropriate to the West African coast, one would suppose,—and with “much of the villain in his face,” he was no doubt a sufficiently unattractive object. Another ship did eventually take pity on him, but speedily put him ashore again on Sherbro Island, and one hears no more of this particular rascal. If he did not die of fever and rum, not improbably he ended his days at Execution Dock, or perhaps, as John Silver said of Roberts’s crew, he was “hanged like a dog, and sun-dried like the rest, at Corso Castle.”

Men changed their flag easily in those breezy times; it was that of England which flew over them one day, and the next, perhaps, they were under the *Jolly Roger*, showing their heels to a frigate, or were themselves snoring through the water in hot pursuit of some fleeing, hard-pressed merchant-vessel, half of whose crew when the chase ended—as it mostly did—in capture, would light-heartedly turn pirates. After all, for those who already were inured to the

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horror of trading in human flesh, it was no great step from Slaving to Piracy. It was the commonest thing in the world. Some of the very men-of-war's men, for example, who behaved with such conspicuous gallantry when capturing the notorious pirate Teach, or Black Beard, themselves afterwards became pirates. And of the crews of nine vessels (of from two to twelve guns each) taken by England the pirate on the Guinea Coast in the year 1719, no less than fifty-five without hesitation joined the Black Flag. One of Phillips' own men, indeed, at the end of this voyage turned pirate. William Lord, his trumpeter, "a most dissolute, wicked Wretch," having the misfortune in a drunken quarrel to stab in the stomach another roysterer, was put in irons, and so kept on the ship's poop during the voyage from St. Thomas to Barbadoes, where it was Phillips' intention to hand him over to the discipline of a man-of-war. But Phillips relented, and pardoned the man, who straightway ran off, and with many seamen from other ships joined a vessel which was then setting out with the ill-concealed purpose of preying upon the ships of the Great Mogul in the Red Sea. Piracy was winked at in those days by men in high places, or was called by some prettier name. In this particular instance, Colonel Russel, then Governor of Barbadoes, was a shareholder in the venture. "The Pretence of the Voyage was for Madagascar to purchase Negros; but Phillips had been well assured that her Design was for the Red Sea, to make the best of her Market with the Mogul's Ships; which having done, and bought a few Negros for a Colour, she might safely

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return to Barbadoes. . . . What became of her he knew not."

Whilst Phillips was still on the African coast, at Cape Coast Castle, there arrived two Danish ships of twenty-six guns each, specially sent out from Denmark to treat with the blacks for the restoration to the Danes of their fort at Cape Corso, "for which end they had brought a Governor, Soldiers, Provisions, Ammunition, Merchandise, etc." This Danish fort had, a little time before, been surprised and pillaged by the negroes, the Governor escaping, sore hurt, by flinging himself from a window. At the time of Phillips' visit, the black "General,"—or "King," as he is indifferently called, though he had in reality merely been cook at one of the English factories,—was masquerading as Governor, amusing himself generally by indulging in too much strong drink, and in firing salutes on every possible and impossible occasion ; even when Phillips was regaled with rum, the occasion was celebrated by every gun in the fort being discharged.

This coloured gentleman, however, when sober was remarkably acute, and he not only successfully bargained with the Danish ships that neither he nor his followers were to be held responsible for the plundering of the fort, but that in consideration of his vacating the building, he was to receive fifty marks in gold.

Having concluded this bargain, and left in the fort a new Governor and garrison, the two Danish vessels sailed for Whydah to buy slaves ; but unfortunately for themselves on the way thence to the



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West Indies they called at Prince's Isle to water. Here they fell in with Avery, the pirate, who, in spite of their fifty-two guns, "fought, took, plundered, and burnt them, which was the unhappy End of their Voyage." It was a notable exploit for Long Ben, who indeed was more famed for his cunning than for his courage. But perhaps sight of the dreaded black flag flying at Avery's peak took all fight out of the Danes; crews that allowed a rebel black cook to overreach and browbeat them, in any case probably had little backbone. Ill fortune pursued that Danish Governor whom the negroes had turned out of his fort. Depressed by prospect of the censure and probable ruin that awaited him in Denmark, he had accepted a passage to England offered to him by Phillips, but when ships under the flag of his own nation arrived on the coast, not unnaturally he had changed his mind and preferred to sail with them, with the result that in the end he fell into the hands of Long Ben and his crew of ruffians.

Edward England was another pirate who was on the Guinea Coast after this time. Mate of a sloop trading out of Jamaica, he was captured by Captain Winter, a notorious West Indian pirate. Nothing loth, England joined Winter's crew, and soon was given command of a small vessel, in which he presently set off to the African coast.

England was a man not ill educated, possessed of "a great deal of good Nature, and did not want for Courage; he was not avaricious, and always averse to the ill Usage Prisoners received; he would have been contented with moderate Plunder, and left

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mischievous Pranks, could his Companions have been brought to the same Temper; but he was generally over-rul'd, and as he was engaged in that abominable Society, he was obliged to be a Partner in all their vile Actions, in spite of his natural Inclinations."<sup>1</sup>

However good his natural disposition, he had not that ascendancy over his men which would have enabled him to maintain some sort of discipline, and consequently terrible scenes were sometimes enacted on his ships, or on vessels captured by him. There was, for instance, that dreadful business of the *Cadogan* snow of Bristol, which he captured at Sierra Leone. Her master, Skinner, was brought on board England's vessel, and it so happened that the first man of the pirate crew Skinner there set eyes on had at one time been his own boatswain. There had been, it appears, something of the nature of a mutiny on board, and this boatswain, with a few of the other hands prominent in the mutiny, had been handed over by Skinner to a man-of-war with which he fell in. At the same time, he considered this an occasion on which it was right to refuse payment of wages due to the mutineers. These men had afterwards deserted from the man-of-war, and had joined England.

Now the tables were indeed turned on poor Skinner. Swaggering up to him with the look of a malignant fiend, the boatswain stared hard in his face, then, with the smile of a devil, said :

"Ho! It's *you*, Skinner! The very man I most wanted to meet. I've owed you something this long

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson's *History of the Pirates*.

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while, and now I'm going to pay you in your own coin."

Calling some of his fellow-ruffians, they lashed poor Skinner to the capstan, and amused themselves for a time throwing glass bottles at him, till his face and hands streamed with blood ; then stripping the poor man, they flogged him round the decks till that amusement, too, palled upon them. Finally, because, said they, he had been a good master to his men, and should therefore die an easy death, they put a pistol to his head and blew out his brains.

Doubtless England was powerless to prevent such horrors, even if he had the inclination to do so. There is no doubt that occasionally—as for instance in the case of Captain Mackra of the *Cassandra*, whom he captured off the coast of Madagascar—he did successfully incline his ruffians to mercy, at least to a modified form of mercy. And by such acts he quickly lost influence with his crew. "D—n England! We may thank *him* for this," they began to say when things went not to their liking. The end was that, led by a scoundrel named Taylor—who afterwards took command—"a fellow of a most barbarous Nature, who was become a Favourite amongst them for no other Reason than that he was a greater Brute than the rest," the crew marooned England and three of the more mercifully inclined of his men on the island of Mauritius.

It was to the Indies that England had sailed in the *Cassandra* after converting her to his own use; the same *Cassandra* that Jim Hawkins (of *Treasure Island*), lying hid in the apple barrel, heard

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John Silver talking of: “. . . the *Cassandra*, as brought us all safe home from Malabar, after England took the Viceroy of the Indies.” And John Silver,—surely *he* sailed with England! In Johnson’s *History of the Pirates* it is told of Captain Mackra that “when they were in a Tumult whether they should make an End of him or no . . . an Accident happened which turn’d to the Favour of the unfortunate Captain; a Fellow with a terrible pair of Whiskers, and a wooden Leg, being stuck round with Pistols . . . comes swearing upon the Quarter-Deck, and asks, in a damning Manner, which was Captain Mackra; the Captain expected no less than that this Fellow would be his Executioner;—but when he came near him, he took him by the Hand, swearing, ‘D—n him, he was glad to see him; and show me the Man,’ says he, ‘that offers to hurt Captain Mackra, for I’ll stand by him,’ and so with many Oaths he told him, ‘he was an honest Fellow, and that he had formerly sail’d with him.’” Surely this was John Silver in the flesh.

Of the many vessels taken by England on the Guinea Coast, two or three, under new names, were fitted out as pirate ships; a few, a very few, were let go; several were burned,—at Cape Coast, where two English vessels had run in and anchored so close under the Castle’s guns as to prevent the possibility of capture by the pirates, England utilised one of his prizes as a fire ship in a vain attempt to burn the fugitives; and one, the *Cadogan* (whose master, Captain Skinner, as already related, was so brutally murdered), was handed over to her

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own mate, Howel Davis, a man who afterwards, as a pirate, like England made his name notorious, but who, unlike England, was able to keep his wild beast crew in some semblance of order.

Davis maintained that England on this occasion "mightily solicited" him to join the pirate crew, and that he, defying the Pirate captain, refused, saying that he "would sooner be shot to Death than sign the Pirates' Articles." On which England, pleased with Davis's boldness, sent him and his crew back on to the snow, with permission to continue their voyage. Perhaps Davis really did refuse; he had no lack of courage. But taking into account what one knows of his after life, one cannot help suspecting that his refusal might possibly arise not so much from superior virtue as from the feeling that England did not offer him terms sufficiently attractive. Possibly, too, he was disgusted at the sight of wanton bloodshed; or he may have been ambitious, and disinclined to serve under any man's command.

England, Davis says, before they parted company gave him a written paper, with orders not to open it until he should reach a certain latitude, and that at the peril of his life he must follow the instructions therein given. Davis accordingly at the appointed spot opened this document and read to the crew the contents. It proved to be something in the nature of a Deed of Gift of ship and cargo, and it ended with directions to proceed at once to Brazil, there to dispose of the latter for their own benefit.

Davis was not unwilling, but to his infinite dis-

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gust the crew would have nothing to say to any such arrangement; it was piracy pure and simple, they thought, leading in the end to the gallows' foot. For the times, it was a crew singularly virtuous, or cautious to an unwonted degree. But whatever may have been the cause, they insisted on heading for Barbadoes, to which island they knew that part of the cargo was consigned. At Barbadoes the information supplied by the crew as to the death of Skinner and the proposal made to them by Davis, led to the latter being committed to prison; but as no act of piracy had actually been committed, he was liberated in the course of a few months—in no wise, one may suppose, better reconciled to the Law by his confinement.

All chance of honest employment in Barbadoes, however, now being gone, Davis made his way to the island of Providence, in normal times then "a kind of Rendezvous of Pirates," meaning there to ship with some crew of Rovers. Disappointment awaited him; the pirates, taking advantage of the Act of Grace which had lately come from England, had all surrendered to Captain Woods Rogers.

Unemployment, however, from a piratical point of view, was in those days seldom of inconveniently long duration. Ere many weeks had passed, Davis had shipped on board a trading sloop laden with rich goods, and finding amongst her crew not a few of the pirates who, under the Act of Grace, had recently been pardoned, he had no difficulty in persuading them to join him in seizing the ship. At Martinique, therefore, they rose in the night, secured the master

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in his cabin, and soon had possession of the sloop. Her consort, which lay at anchor near at hand, they knew also to be full of ex-pirates, and very soon both vessels were in possession of the mutineers.

Here, then, were pirates sufficient to man with some strength one of the sloops, and nothing remained but to appoint a captain. Over a big brew of punch,—little was done in those days without a brew of punch,—the choice fell almost unanimously on Davis, who indeed had been the moving spirit in the whole affair. The appointment secured, Davis, knowing the value of a good beginning with such a crew, struck while the iron was hot, and drew up Articles to which the men readily enough agreed. Of these articles, one, indicative of Davis's character, and entirely at variance with generally accepted piratical usage, was to the effect that, on pain of death, whenever an enemy called for quarter it should be granted.

The question next arose, where first to try their fortune. Coxon's Hole was chosen, a secure haven in the East end of the island of Cuba, with an entrance so intricate and narrow that one vessel might readily prevent any hostile force from entering. Here they careened, and cleaned the sloop's bottom, determined at least to hold the advantage of being able to show a clean pair of heels if chased. Then setting forth, they, with a crew of no more than thirty-five men, took a 12-gun French vessel. Even as they boarded her, another sail hove in sight, which the master of the prize pronounced to be a Frenchman of 24 guns who had spoken him the previous day,—heavy odds against a crew of thirty-five, twelve

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of whom were now away in the prize. A man-of-war of 24 guns in those days would carry a crew of one hundred and sixty men; no doubt this Frenchman would have at least two or three times the number of men that were on board Davis's ship.

Davis, to give the devil his due, was not the man to be dismayed by odds. "That's the ship we need, and that's the ship we're going to take," said he, to his hesitating and uncertain crew. And such already was his ascendancy over the men, such their faith in him, that they made the attempt. "They wondered at his Impudence," one reads of the other ship—a giant opposed to a pigmy,—but partly by force, partly by supreme audacity and "bluff," Davis took the giant, and without loss to himself soon had her crew in irons under hatches. It was a great achievement,—one cannot help admiring the man at all times for his reckless gallantry. In other circumstances, in another Age, he might have been one of his country's Heroes.

This big prize, however, proved to be a very dull, lumbering sailer, so after taking out of her, and also out of the smaller prize, everything that could be of use to him, Davis handed back to the Frenchman the two vessels, and went on his way in the sloop originally seized at Martinique.

Here a prize and there a prize dropped into his hands, and from each came willing recruits to join him. Ere long the pirates mustered a crew of ruffians of all nations, desperate villains, most of them, who would stick at nothing, yet fearing and obeying their leader as a dangerous dog obeys and fears his master.



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But prizes grew scarce in West Indian waters; so they sailed for the Cape de Verdes, anchoring presently at St. Nicholas, where the Portuguese, taking the ship to be an English privateer, showed much civility to them. "Davis, making a good Appearance, was caressed by the Governor and the Inhabitants, and no Diversion was wanting which the Portuguese could shew, or their Money purchase." So charmed, indeed, were the pirates with this paradise of St. Nicholas, that in five weeks' time when the sloop again put to sea, several of the crew remained behind, having taken to themselves wives of the island,—a benefit that St. Nicholas might well have dispensed with. Are there descendants of these pirates there to this day, one wonders; and to what form were the English names converted in the Portuguese tongue?

The island of Bona Vista next had Davis's attention, but here the covert was drawn blank, no shipping was in port. In the next island visited, however, fortune favoured them; "they met with a great many Ships and Vessels in the Road, all of which they plundered, taking out of them whatever they wanted . . . also strengthened themselves with a great many fresh Hands, who most of them enter'd voluntarily." Indeed there were now crews sufficient to man two vessels, so one of the last captured prizes, fitted with 26 guns and re-named the *King James*, was pressed into the service.

Unbroken success and long impunity now tempted the pirates to water at St. Jago, and here the Governor, meeting Davis on shore, did not scruple to express

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doubts as to the honesty of his ship. In a word, he and his men were pirates, said his Excellency. Davis stormed, and brazened the thing out. He "scorned the Governor's words," said he. But nevertheless he got aboard his ship with all speed, vowing vengeance. That night, well-armed boats' crews stole quietly ashore and surprised—it was easy to surprise—the not very vigilant garrison. Captain Phillips' "Old Officer," troubled no more by the broken promises of men in high places, must long ere this have gone to his rest, or the feat might not have been so easy.

Without giving the alarm, Davis's men succeeded in entering the fort, where the garrison quickly giving way, ran into, and barricaded themselves in, the Governor's house, into which the pirates not being able to force an entry, threw "Granadoe Shells, which not only ruin'd all the Furniture, but kill'd several Men within." And so when it was day, the pirates, having dismounted the guns of the Fort and done all the mischief possible, with the loss of but three men rejoined their ships, not caring to face on land the wrath of an aroused populace.

Fort James on the Gambia was the next bait that tempted Davis. There was always there great store of money, said he to his crew; it was well worth running some risk.

"But the place is too strong; moreover, it is garrisoned by the English," argued his crew. "The thing is impossible; too hard a nut altogether." (Truly, it was, as Barbot says, "the next best

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Fortification to Cape Coast Castle of all that are to be found on either the North or South Coast of Guinea.”)

“Trust me, and I’ll get you in,” answered Davis. And without more ado they shaped a course for the Gambia, trusting confidently in their leader’s luck and courage.

Arrived within sight of the fort, all his men, except so many as were absolutely necessary to work the ship, were ordered to keep below out of sight, so that the garrison seeing a vessel come to the anchorage in lubberly fashion, handled by a numerically weak crew, might have no suspicion of treachery or imagine that she was anything except what her appearance indicated, an innocent trader. Dropping anchor as close to the fort as the water would allow, Davis, with the master and the surgeon rigged as merchants, and with a boat’s crew of six men in slovenly dress (all of whom had been instructed what to answer if questioned), was rowed clumsily ashore, where he was received by a file of soldiers and conducted to the Governor’s quarters.

He was from Liverpool, said Davis, laden with iron and plate, bound for the River Senegal to trade for gum and elephants’ teeth. He had been chased by two French men-of-war, and had very narrowly escaped. Rather than again run the risk of capture in an attempt to reach the Senegal, he was minded to make the best of a bad market and discharge in the Gambia.

“Well,” said the Governor, “iron and plate are wanted here, and I am willing to fill you with slaves

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to the full value of your cargo, if that will meet your views."

Yes; Davis thought that would suit nicely.

"Had he any European liquor on board?" then asked the Governor.

"A little, for their own use only," said Davis, "but a hamper was at the Governor's disposal."

Thereupon the unsuspecting Governor very politely asked them to stay and dine with him.

"But," said Davis, "I am commander of the ship, and I must go aboard again and see her securely moored, and to give some necessary orders. Those other gentlemen may stay if they choose, and I myself will be back in time for dinner; and I'll bring the case of liquor with me."

And off he set. But all the time during his visit, Davis had been making careful mental note of everything, where the sentries were posted, where was the guard-room, how the men on duty carelessly stood their muskets in a corner of the building, where, also, the small arms were kept in the hall opening off the Governor's quarters. Nothing escaped him.

"If you men don't get drunk meantime, it's a sure thing," said Davis, when he got on board his own vessel. "Keep sober, and send twenty hands ashore well armed, as soon as you see me strike the flag that's flying over the fort."

But an awkward circumstance here presented itself. A sloop, running in, had anchored close to the pirate ship, and any unusual bustle on board the latter, any appearance of a crew more numerous than her appearance as a trader might warrant, would

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certainly rouse suspicion and cause the sloop to warn the garrison.

“Go quietly aboard that sloop,” said Davis to some hands whom he could trust; “clap the master and crew in irons, and bring them here.”

Ashore again went Davis and his boat’s crew, each with a pair of pistols concealed under his clothing.

“Go into the guard-room, get into talk with the men, and if possible get between them and their muskets, and when I fire a pistol through the Governor’s window, jump up and secure all the arms. Smartly now,” whispered Davis as they secured the boat at the landing.

Dinner was not ready when Davis reached the quarters of the Governor, and the latter, poor man, bent on hospitality, was making a big bowl of punch wherewith to regale his guests. To him went Davis, by way of helping; and just then the coxswain of the pirate boat, masquerading as his captain’s servant, whispered, “All’s ready!”

“You are my prisoner!” cried Davis, clapping his pistol to the Governor’s breast. “Hold up your hands, and quickly; and make no noise, or you’re a dead man.”

The Governor, “being no ways prepar’d for such an Attack, promis’d to be very passive and do all they desir’d.” Poor man, what else was there for him to do on the spur of the moment? Now, having secured and loaded all arms in the room, Davis fired his pistol through the window, as already planned, his men sprang on the muskets of the soldiers, and in a trice the whole garrison was under lock and key,

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closely guarded. Fort James was taken, without drop of blood spilt on either side, without hurry, without confusion, by the exercise of little but supreme audacity.

Davis harangued the soldiers, we are told, and many of them without hesitation exchanged the uniform of King George I. for the, to them, more congenial life of a pirate. Many a gaol-bird helped to fill the ranks of our army in those days; whole batches of recruits were often but the scourgings of the streets of London. In this case, the men who would not join him Davis sent on board the sloop from which he had so lately removed the master and crew, and to prevent the necessity of keeping a guard over them, he simply took away from the sloop all boats and sails, so that they lay there in the river helpless and at his mercy.

The remainder of this day "was spent in a kind of Rejoicing, the Castle firing her Guns to salute the Ship, and the Ship paying the same Compliment to the Castle." One may assume that the timing of the salutes would not be very accurate, the number of guns not strictly in accordance with regulation; they merely blazed away a deal of powder, punctuating the salutes with bottles of rum as long as rum allowed the men to load and fire. However, the next day, we are told, they "minded their business," which was, of course, to collect the booty. Very considerable was its amount, but not so considerable as the pirates had reckoned on;—two thousand pounds in bar gold, and "a great many other rich Effects" they got, indeed, but most of the money in

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the fort, a large sum, unfortunately (or fortunately) had been sent away a few days before. What they valued they took on board ; what was of no immediate use to them they made a present of to the master and crew of the little sloop, to whom also they returned that vessel.

Then to work they set, blowing up the fortifications, dismounting the guns, wrecking the entire place so far as lay in their power. Unhappy Fort James! If it was not Pirates, it was the French, and if it was not the French it was pirates, who continually made hay there. The place was not weak, yet it fell continually with extraordinary facility, almost, like the walls of Jericho, at the blowing of a trumpet.

But it was not, as we shall presently see, the only fortified place that yielded to Davis.

Ere almost he had finished with the sacking of Fort James, while yet the fumes of its rum sang in his men's heads, there came sailing up the Gambia River on the flowing tide a ship showing French colours, that boldly bore down on them, evidently under the belief that here was a rich prize ready to hand. Davis, not to be caught napping, got up his anchor and made sail, and the enemy, seeing his decks crowded with men, and a formidable number of guns grinning through his ports, rather hung in the wind for a minute, hesitating, till, bolder councils prevailing, she suddenly fired a gun, ran up the black flag, and bore down to board. Thereupon Davis also fired a gun and hoisted similar colours. The rival pirate was a Frenchman of 14 guns and a crew

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of sixty-four, half-French, half-negroes, commanded by one La Bouse, who now effusively and with enthusiasm embraced Davis, who on his part agreed to sail in company down the coast with La Bouse.

Sierra Leone was the first port entered, and here "they spied a tall Ship at Anchor," which showed no uneasiness at the near approach of suspicious strangers, on whose decks men clustered like swarming bees, and which made no attempt to get away. She must be strong, concluded Davis, as, far in advance of La Bouse, he drew near to the still anchored vessel. And strong she was. As Davis ranged alongside, the stranger brought a spring upon her cable and fired a whole broadside into him, at the same time running up the black flag. Davis at once hoisted his own black colours, and, to show he was a friend, fired a gun to leeward. Birds of a feather were indeed now flocking together. This was a ship of 24 guns, commanded by the pirate Cocklyn, who had lain there like some foul spider imagining that Davis and La Bouse were two innocent flies blundering into his web.

No great harm had been done to Davis's ship by Cocklyn's broadside, no harm at least that the carpenter and his mates could not readily repair, and the three pirates agreed to join forces: for "Hawks pyke not out hawks' een." Davis was chosen as Commodore of the squadron, and the first enterprise entered on was characteristic of him,—no less than the reduction of Sierra Leone castle. He ever flew at big game.

At high water on the third day after meeting, the



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three captains, with a full crew in Cocklyn's brigantine, dropped anchor within musket-shot of the fort, the commander of which having a shrewd suspicion of the strange vessels' intentions, at once opened heavy fire. The brigantine replied as hotly, and for many hours the two hammered away, till the other pirate vessels coming up to take part in the fray, the garrison were overcome with panic and fled, leaving everything to the tender mercy of the pirates.

In this castle they remained seven weeks, meantime cleaning their ships, and taking now and again some unfortunate vessel that happened unsuspectingly to put in. Here, too, Cocklyn captured Snelgrave, the slaver already mentioned in a former chapter. "Cocklyn and his Crew," says Snelgrave, "were a Set of the basest and most cruel Villains that ever were." They had chosen Cocklyn to command them, Snelgrave learned, "on account of his Brutality and Ignorance; having resolv'd never again to have a Gentleman-like Commander, as they said Moody was." (Moody was a pirate captain, who, not caring to associate with Cocklyn and such as he, had some months before marooned him and his men, an action, however, which was of little benefit eventually to Moody, for the remainder of his crew presently marooned him and twelve others in an open boat, and they were never heard of more.) As to Davis, of whom also at this time Snelgrave saw not a little, he is described as "a most generous and humane Man," and elsewhere as "a generous Man, and kept his Crew consisting of near a hundred

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and fifty Men, in good order ; nor did he join with the others, to the Author's misfortune."

But before telling the tale of Snelgrave's captivity amongst the pirates, it is well perhaps to finish with Davis.

No more than seven weeks lasted this alliance between the three captains; then they quarrelled during a drinking bout on Davis's ship. Cocklyn and La Bouse became more brutal than Davis could tolerate.

"Hark ye," said he, starting up, "you Cocklyn and La Bouse. I find by strengthening you I have put a Rod into your Hands to whip myself. But I am still able to deal with you both. However, since we met in Love, so let us part, for I find that three of a trade can never agree long together."

And that was the end; they met no more, each sailing on a separate course, each, like some foul bird of prey, questing on his own account.

Davis held on down the coast, taking, plundering, and then letting go, several English and Scottish vessels. The most formidable foe that he fell in with was a large Dutch interloper of 30 guns and ninety men. Off Cape Three Points the two met and fought it out. The Hollander was the quicker to get in a first broadside, killing at the one discharge no less than nine of Davis's men; but Davis, not behind, replied as warmly. And so, from two bells in the afternoon watch, through all that evening, throughout the long dark sweltering tropic night, the thunder of their guns echoed, like summer lightning their flash lit the sky, and till nine next morning

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that stubborn battle raged. Then the Dutchmen gave way and struck their flag. Davis's greater tenacity and the superior discipline of his men told their tale, as they ever must tell where strength is anything like evenly balanced.

A welcome capture was this interloper, and Davis converted her to his own use under the name of the *Rover*, mounting in her 32 guns and 27 swivels. In every respect she was a vessel far superior to his own. In the *Rover*, one of his first captures was that of the ship *Princess*, whereof the second mate—as his ill fortune willed it—was a man afterwards very famous, or infamous,—Roberts the notorious pirate. Of whom more hereafter.

After this, running down the coast for Princes Isle, capture after capture fell to Davis, and one of them he handed over to his Dutch prisoners, for Davis was, as Snelgrave said, “a generous man,” far removed from that type of pirate who caused his prisoners to walk the plank. As a general thing, indeed, he got rid of captured ships by presenting them to those prisoners who declined to serve with him. Sometimes even he restored at once to its commander a captured vessel,—after having, it must be admitted, removed to his own ship everything of value in shape of money or merchandise. Such an instance was that Dutch vessel on board of which the Governor of Acra was taking all his effects and his fortune home to Holland. Money alone to the amount of £15,000 sterling was the haul on this occasion, besides much else that was of value. Thereafter the Dutchmen received their vessel back

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again, none the worse in hull or rigging, save for the one broadside which Davis gave her before she struck. And it is to be hoped that the Governor, poor man, esteemed himself lucky to escape sound in wind and limb, if considerably lighter in pocket.

But now Fortune wearied of Davis. His day was done; at Princes Isle came the end. Running in to the anchorage under English colours, Davis gave out that he was a King's ship in search of pirates, of whose presence on the coast he had information. The Portuguese saluted as the *Rover* ran in and anchored under the fort's guns, and Davis returned the compliment in real man-of-war style.

Then ashore went he, where the Governor with a guard of honour ceremoniously awaited him. Everything, of whatsoever kind, that he needed should be promptly supplied, promised the Governor. And "Thank your Excellency. The King of England will pay for whatever I take," answered Davis. And all went merry as a marriage bell. Even when a French vessel came to an anchor in the Road, and Davis, unable to resist the temptation, plundered her, alleging to the Portuguese Governor that she had had dealings with the pirates, and that in fact he had found on her "several Pirates' Goods" which he had confiscated "for the King's use," no suspicion was aroused; on the contrary, the Governor highly commended his vigilance and promptitude.

Days passed, till, having cleaned and overhauled his ship, Davis felt that he must now turn his attention to the island itself and its Treasure Chest. But where lay this Treasure Chest? To find that was

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the difficulty. So he hit on a stratagem. A dozen negro slaves were to be presented to the Governor as a small return for his civility and attention to the wants of this English man-of-war; then following on the presentation, the Governor, the chief men of the island, and some of the priests, should be invited to a great banquet on board the *Rover*. Once on board, it should go ill if they got off under a ransom of £40,000. A very pretty scheme no doubt, but one in which there was a flaw that proved fatal. A Portuguese negro lad on board the *Rover* had overheard the pirates discussing this plot—rum had loosened their tongues and dulled their ears and wits. He swam ashore during the night and gave information.

Now, the Governor of Princes Isle was a cunning man, in his own estimation a diplomatist of no mean order, haughty and proud. It hurt his sense of the fitness of things that impostors, common pirates, should plot to deceive and to kidnap *him*. “Nay! I know a trick worth two of that,” thought his Excellency. So he kept a still tongue. No word said he, but he smiled, when Davis, to do him, as it were, the greater honour, in person brought the invitation to his banquet. “Would the Governor go? Assuredly; with unbounded pleasure; the honour was great. Meantime would the English captain with his officers and boat’s crew before returning to their ship be pleased to partake of refreshment in the Governor’s poor abode?”

Alas for Davis! No suspicion crossed his mind. As they passed a clump of bushes on the way to

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Government House, at a given signal a volley of musketry dropped every man of the pirates save one, and that one, flying for his life, alone escaped on board. Davis fell, shot through the stomach, but struggling again to his feet, in great agony vainly tried to regain the beach. Poor Davis! Feebly he strove to hold himself erect and to stagger shoreward; but strength failed and he fell, and died, even as he died firing his pistols at those who only now dared to face him.

He was a great scoundrel, no doubt;—a gallows-bird. Yet he was a brave man and never a cruel one, and one cannot withhold from him a sneaking kind of regard. A gallant life wasted! Had his lines fallen differently, what might he not have done, fighting his Country's battles as an officer in the grandest Service the world has seen, the Royal Navy? He might have lived to fight, with Vernon, at Porto Bello, or with Anson have circumnavigated the Globe.

Dismay and rage were on the *Rover* that night, dismay and rage, and a consuming hunger for revenge. In their own way, his men, even the baser among them, loved Davis, and they thirsted for the blood of his murderers. But first a leader must be chosen.

Though he had joined the pirates with reluctance, and had been in all but six weeks on board, the choice fell on Roberts, who accepted the post not over graciously. "Since he had dipped his hands in muddy water, and must be a pirate, it was better to command than to serve," said he. No choice more likely to bring success could have been made. He

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was known to be a skilled seaman and navigator, he had proved himself to be a man whom nothing could daunt, he was not given to drink, and, as the Articles afterwards drawn up by him prove, he was, or wished to be, a disciplinarian. His was, in short, like Davis's, a good life thrown away.

Roberts's first act on assuming command was to send ashore a force sufficient to deal out punishment. Thirty pirates, led by one Kennedy, a North of Ireland man, a daring fellow, but save for brute courage without one redeeming quality, attacked the fort, from which the Portuguese fled without making any pretence of defending it. Thereupon the *Rover's* men marched in, rolled the guns down the cliff into the sea and set the place on fire. But this was not enough, and most of the crew voted for sacking and burning the town. Roberts, however, restrained them, showing how lean would be the advantage gained, and at what risk of being cut off, and instead suggested that the French ship lately taken should be lightened so as to draw very little water, and, mounted with 12 guns, should be run in close to the town, where she could securely and at leisure knock the place about the ears of the inhabitants. Having carried out this plan to their hearts' content, the pirates handed back the French sloop to her owners and withdrew from the bay, leaving behind them a mass of ruins on land, and a bonfire of Portuguese shipping on the water.

## CHAPTER XVI

PIRATES OF THE GUINEA COAST: ROBERTS,  
MASSEY, AND COCKLYN

SAIL was made on the *Rover*, and a course shaped to the southward, and finally for the coast of Brazil, where, keeping wholly out of sight of land, for over two months not a prize fell to them, not a sail showed white on the empty world of waters. Luck had fled with the death of Davis.

However, as the *Rover* ran in one day to make the land preparatory to taking a departure for the West Indies, off Los Todos Santos Bay gleamed the welcome topsails of no less than forty-two heavily laden Portuguese ships, a very feast of shipping for the pirates to gloat over. Every ship no doubt was armed, some heavily armed, and to leeward of them were two 70-gun ships-of-war, meant to act as convoy. But they were "only Portuguese," scornfully said the pirates, and Roberts never hesitated. Keeping his men carefully hidden, he ranged up on the weather side of the deepest-laden of the merchantmen, one straggling somewhat wide from the rest of the convoy, and ordered her master to come on board the pirate ship instantly and quietly, otherwise



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the Portuguese ship should be blown out of the water. Surprised and intimidated, the merchant skipper obeyed, and once on board—

“Now,” said Roberts, “point out to me the most richly laden vessel in your fleet. If you speak true, all shall go well with you; but if you hesitate, or deceive me, there ends your life.”

The master, yellow with fear, pointed to a large vessel at no great distance, a ship of 40 guns and at least a hundred and fifty men. Not an instant paused Roberts to calculate chances. Said he to his trembling prisoner, as soon as the *Rover* drew within hail of her bulky foe,

“Invite her master to come aboard here.”

“He would come presently,” was the answer. But from the immediate bustle and hurry that were apparent on board, it was quite evident that the “Portugal” smelt a rat, and that they so answered merely to gain time. Without waiting to give them that time, the *Rover* poured in a broadside and sheered alongside to board. The fight was brief, if on the Portuguese side bloody. In the rush of boarding, two only of the *Rover’s* men were killed, but the Portuguese fared ill at the hands of the pirates.

A pretty panic was there now in the convoy, guns firing on all sides, from every ship signals fluttering and constantly being changed, and the big men-of-war slowly bearing down towards Roberts, as he and his prize drew out from the crowd of shipping. The great 70-gunners, however, “made but sorry Haste” to the rescue; yet the prize sailed no

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faster than a hayrick, and however slow they came it was evidently but a matter of brief time till overwhelming force should snatch this rich morsel from the *Rover's* jaws. One of the ships-of-war was far in advance of her consort, and Roberts boldly played a trump card; he backed his main top-sail and waited for her.

But that did not suit the big ship; she would not venture to attack unsupported, and so she luffed up in the wind and also waited. That was what Roberts had calculated on; by the time the second man-of-war had got near enough to stiffen the resolution of the first, the prize was safe away, and the *Rover* then showed the big line-of-battle-ships her heels, without so much as having a shot fired at her. It was not exactly a glorious victory for the Portuguese.

Exceeding rich was this prize that the *Rover* had taken, and great was the jubilation over her capture. Sugar, skins, tobacco, four thousand gold moidores, jewels, gold chains, and, to crown all, a great diamond cross that was being sent home for the King of Portugal, formed the chief part of her cargo. To enjoy this booty the pirates put into the Surinam River (Dutch Guiana), at the appropriately named Devil's Island, where, we read, they "found the civillest Reception imaginable."

And here it was that events gave rise to the dispersal of the pirates, and to the eventual return of Roberts and a portion of his crew to their former haunts on the Guinea Coast. It chanced that the *Rover* was short of fresh provisions, and hearing

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from the master of a small sloop captured at the mouth of the Surinam River that a vessel laden with such stores as were needed was then due on the coast from Rhode Island, a sharp look-out was kept for her. Why indeed should they buy when they might so conveniently take !

In a day or two the look-out man reported a sail, without doubt the expected vessel, apparently making for the entrance. On the principle that if you want a thing well done, do it yourself, Roberts himself with an armed crew of forty men tumbled hastily on board the lately captured sloop, hoisted sail, and started to cut off the anticipated prize before she should enter the river. It was a job but of an hour or two ; by the afternoon they would be again on board the *Rover*. But the stranger steadily kept her course down the coast to the southward, and the sloop gained slowly, if at all ; nay, by nightfall the chase was hull down, and by morning all sign of her was gone. Worse still, wind and current were both against the sloop, and eight days' beating found her, with food and water both giving out, still ninety miles to leeward of Surinam, and without immediate prospect of being able to rejoin their ship.

As a last resource a boat was sent off to order the *Rover* to drop down for them. Dismal were the tidings the boat brought back after many days. Kennedy—he who had led the landing party after the death of Davis at Princes Isle—had been left in charge ; and Kennedy had played them false. An ill dog was this Irishman, originally a pickpocket, then a housebreaker ; reckless courage was the one

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quality that caused him to be tolerated by the pirates, who despised petty larceny or small crimes like burglary. But he had a following of his own on the *Rover*, and no sooner was the sloop out of sight that day when she left the river, than he had set about undermining Roberts's authority. To Kennedy, honour among thieves was a creed unknown. Here, said he, they had a good ship and a rich prize by her side; let them now clear out with both, for so much the greater would be each man's dividend if Roberts and his forty men were out of the division.

Little did Kennedy's treachery benefit him then or later. The traitors got clean away, it is true, for the time being at any rate, and some went one way, some another, carrying with them their plunder. The rich Portuguese prize, still half laden, was handed over to the master and crew of the sloop captured in Surinam River. From near Barbadoes a few of the absconding pirates took arbitrary passage on board a Virginian schooner, whose captain, a Quaker named Knott, later succeeded in bringing to the knowledge of Governor Spotswood of Virginia what manner of passenger he had been forced to carry, knowledge which speedily brought to the gallows four of the pirates. Kennedy and some of the others sailed for Ireland on board a Boston sloop then captured by them, though Kennedy, despised for his treachery even by those who had aided him, was permitted to join with them only after taking—to save his life—the most stringent oaths of fidelity. Those who remained on the *Rover* were never more heard of,—probably they landed at some convenient spot, some

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former haunt, for the ship was presently found drifting derelict among the islands, void of crew, but with still a few hapless slaves on board. Kennedy and those with him, who had shaped a course for the Irish coast,—it was in that green isle that they planned to scatter their wealth,—were so far out in their reckoning (one only amongst them had even a superficial knowledge of navigation), that the north-west coast of Scotland was the first land sighted. However, it was land, and there they left the sloop to look after herself, whilst they themselves, routing and roaring like wild bulls, to the terror of a quiet countryside, hastened townward, drawn by the loadstone of debauchery.

Not long did their “fling” last. As they neared Edinburgh, some while drunk and reeling along the roads were murdered for their money. Others, to the number of seventeen, on vague charges were laid by the heels in prison, and the proffered evidence of two brought a halter and the gallows to many. Kennedy, who had stolen over to Ireland, soon spent all his money, and destitute, made his way to London, where, lying in prison on charge of house-breaking, he was recognised by the mate of a vessel he had plundered, and was tried for piracy. To save his life, Kennedy turned King’s evidence, which availed him not at all, and to the sorrow of none, not even of his comrades, who indeed are said to have heartily approved the sentence, he ended his evil career on the scaffold. Of those against whom he had informed, one only was taken, and he—various extenuating circumstances being taken into

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account—received a pardon. But “Walter Kennedy, a notorious Offender, was executed the 19 of July 1721.”

Roberts, without provisions or water, and in no position to obtain either, was left, as we have seen, in a most unenviable situation, from which there was small chance of escape unless a prize should fortunately turn up. As it chanced, good fortune did attend him in that respect, and with immediate necessities relieved, the sloop bore up for the West Indies. Here prize after prize came to the pirates' net, and to prevent a repetition of treachery such as Kennedy's, Roberts drew up a stringent set of Articles for the better ruling of their affairs and for the better control and discipline of the crew. Every man had a vote; every one was entitled to an equal share of fresh provisions and liquor, to which he might help himself when he pleased, (a law which, however inevitable and excellent from a socialistic point of view, possibly might not lead to the easier control of individual members, nor to the greater well-being of the whole). Any man defrauding the company, to the extent even of one dollar, was to be marooned on some desolate isle or cape, provided only with a gun, some bullets, a bottle of water, and a bottle of powder. If a man stole from another member of the crew, he should also be set ashore, though not necessarily on an uninhabited spot, his nose and ears first being slit. No person was permitted to gamble for money with cards or dice. All lights must be out by eight o'clock, and any of the crew desiring to continue drinking after that hour must drink on deck. (This rule it was found impos-

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sible to enforce.) Deserting the ship, or deserting their quarters in action, was punishable with death; but in battle, also, the captain might with impunity shoot any man who refused to obey orders. Quarrels must be fought out on shore; no man might strike another on board ship. Such were some of the Articles. But perhaps, for a pirate ship, the most strange was Law XI., which provided that the ship's Musicians "should have Rest on the Sabbath Day." That pirates should cultivate music is almost as strange as it is to learn that they paid any form of respect to the first day of the week. Some recollection of boyhood's days, and the savour of a pious mother's upbringing, perhaps still clung to Roberts.

Many a hair's-breadth escape from defeat and capture had the pirates about this time, and notably they caught a Tartar and escaped with the skin of their teeth, when off Barbadoes they ran alongside one of two innocent-looking Bristol ships, which, as it happened, had been specially fitted out to deal with them.

Nevertheless, they increased in numbers, ever finding ready recruits. But Roberts's influence over them waned. He did not drink, (and in such a community sobriety brought a man under suspicion); and he kept, much and increasingly, to himself;—two offences hard to pardon. Probably for this reason, that they were getting out of hand, it came to pass that the mischief done became more wanton, the treatment of prisoners less humane. Thus, when with the Death's Head and Cross Bones flying, the

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pirates ran one day into a Newfoundland port, they burned there more than a score of vessels, and did incalculable mischief ashore, without excuse and without any possible benefit to themselves. Then, cruising on the Banks, they took many ships, sometimes sinking or burning wantonly, or throwing into the sea valuable merchandise they did not themselves need; sometimes, too, maltreating passengers. Utterly reckless and out of hand they had become, and they told one captain whose ship they had captured that "They would accept of no Act of Grace; that the King and Parliament might be d—d with their Acts of Grace for them. Neither would they go to Hope Point, to be hanged up a sun-drying, as Kidd's and Braddish's company was; but that if they should ever be overpowered, they would set fire to the powder with a pistol and all merrily go to Hell together."

It remained to be seen if they would carry out those easily made boasts; and on the Guinea Coast later the opportunity was given to show if they were real, or mere cheap bombast born of habitual alcoholic excess.

Roberts was then cruising in a fine frigate-built vessel captured at Sestos from the Royal African Company, the *Onslow*, re-christened by the pirates, in remembrance of another of their ships, the *Royal Fortune*, and fitted by them to carry 40 guns. Of the *Onslow's* crew, the majority readily joined the pirates, and even her passengers, a detachment of soldiers under orders for Cape Corso Castle, followed the example. These last, it may be said, were only



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traders,\* but dear to the hearts of ruffian sea robbers, who in all ages and races have affected the pomp and circumstance of the theatre, and who from ancient Sallee Rover down to present-day Chinese pirate have loved to strike terror to the hearts of their victims by use of ghastly or fear-imposing symbols.

On one other notable occasion Roberts's men flew those colours,—the last on which they ever fought under the ill-omened emblems.

At Whydah, Roberts, by an intercepted letter, learned how closely H.M.S. *Swallow* was dogging his course. But a few months now of beating up and down that coast, and then—the end. The *Royal Fortune* left Whydah on January 13th; the *Swallow* arrived four days later. In May, Chaloner Ogle in the *Swallow*, with his consort the *Weymouth*, was at Sierra Leone, and put to sea but a little time before Roberts happened to look in. There Roberts learned news which lulled the pirates into the carelessness of fancied security. The ships-of-war were foul from long cruising, and must clean. Moreover, before they finished cleaning at Princes Isle, an epidemic broke out on board which in three weeks' time carried off a hundred men, and left the ships' companies in a state too weak to handle them or to make sail smartly. It was all in favour of Roberts, and the pirates vapoured up and down the coast unmolested.

But there came a day when, near the dawning, the *Swallow*, off Cape Lopez, heard the report of a gun, and presently looking into the bay, spied three vessels at anchor, the largest flying King's colours and pendant. That this could be no King's ship was

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well known to the *Swallow's* people; therefore it must be some one, probably Roberts, for his own purposes masquerading as a ship of war.

Naturally, a trader putting in there, if she saw a King's ship lying at anchor, would, for the sake of security, moor as near to her as might be. Hence, when the *Swallow* made towards the strangers, no move was made on board the anchored ships. But when the *Swallow*, to avoid the Frenchman's Bank, a long and dangerous shoal, headed as if she might be trying to leave the bay in alarm, one of the smaller of the three strangers made instant sail, and gave chase. This confirmed the *Swallow* in her suspicions, so while feigning to clap on every rag of canvas that would draw, her commander yet so contrived to handle her that the pirate slowly but surely gained. Presently, but yet so far at sea that the sound of firing might not be heard in the bay, the pursuer had drawn near enough to fire her bow chasers; the black flag was run up, her sprit-sail yard swung amidships that nothing might prevent her running alongside to board the flying merchantman, her crew stood ready to jump, as they imagined, at the throats of terrified traders. Then in a twinkling all was changed. Suddenly the *Swallow* rounded to, up went her lower deck ports and a stinging broadside sent splinters flying about the pirates' ears and made the scuppers run blood. For two hours the action continued, till her main top-mast coming down by the run, and thirty of her men lying dead or wounded on her deck, the *Ranger*, of 32 guns and a hundred and three men, struck her colours. Skrine, her captain,

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had a leg carried off by a round shot, yet remained on deck and continued to fight his ship to the end. Her crew, it is said, "appeared gay and brisk, most of them with white Shirts, Watches, and Silk Vests"; but some of them, as the man-of-war's boats drew alongside, spoilt part of their finery by an abortive attempt to blow up the ship. Had there been powder enough, probably the attempt would have been successful; as it was, it but served to burn and disfigure those who tried it. Thus far at least they had justified their boasting. And some of the wounded men that night lay and raved in delirium that as soon as Roberts came they would be freed.

Badly mauled and sinking as was the *Ranger* at the end of the fight, so sure was the *Swallow's* captain that the *Royal Fortune* would await her consort's return, that he lay alongside for two days, repairing the damaged ship, before bearing up once more for Cape Lopez. That he was right in his expectation was at once evident when again the Cape was sighted, for there was the *Royal Fortune*, just rounding the point, running in with a prize newly taken. That was evening, and for that night at least nothing could be done. But in the early morning, as the *Swallow* came round the Cape her topsails were seen by Roberts's man, showing over the tree-clad point of land that shut in the bay. Yet no notice was taken by any of them, no preparation made. "It's a Frenchman," said one; "a Portuguese," said another; "the little *Ranger* coming back," thought many. But most cared no whit either way, for they

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had passed the night drinking in their new prize's rum, "Success to pirating."

However, there was one pirate who knew her only too well as she came full in view, who saw her with sinking heart, a deserter from the *Swallow*, a man named Armstrong. He must have been below, or fuddled with rum, that time when she decoyed the *Ranger* out of the bay, or the pirates would have known better than to lie where they were. Now at least there were none who did not know what they had to expect, but the more pot-valiant boasted of what they would do with this King's ship. As the *Swallow* raised her ports and hoisted her colours, Roberts slipped his cable and made sail, at the same time beating to quarters. But, "It's a bite," he said with a bitter oath.

With every sail drawing and her black flag fluttering aloft, the *Royal Fortune* tried to slip past the *Swallow* without immediately replying to the latter's broadside, designing when once out of the bay to run before the wind, that being, as Armstrong reported to Roberts, the point on which the frigate sailed worst. If disabled, the pirates would run their ship ashore, land as best they might, and trust to getting clear away in the bush; or, if the worst came to the worst, then there was nothing for it but to close with the *Swallow* and try to carry her by boarding.

But things went amiss. The men were drunk, orders were not promptly carried out; the frigate coming round smartly let fly a second broadside, and bad steering or a sudden shift of wind caused the pirate to be taken aback. Even yet Roberts might

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have made a good fight. But as he stood by the mizzen rigging, a gallant if theatrical figure, clad in "a rich crimson damask Waistcoat and Breeches, a red Feather in his Hat, a Gold Chain round his Neck with a Diamond Cross hanging to it, a Sword in his Hand, and two pair of Pistols hanging at the end of a Silk Sling flung over his Shoulders," a grape-shot took him in the throat. "He settled himself on the Tackles of a Gun; which one Stephenson, from the Helm, observing, ran to his Assistance, and not perceiving him wounded, swore at him, and bade him stand up and fight like a Man; but when he found his Mistake, and that his Captain was certainly dead, he gushed into Tears, and wished the next Shot might be his Portion."

That practically settled the matter; there was little fight left in the pirates after the fall of their leader, and when another broadside carried away their mainmast by the board, they deserted their quarters and surrendered, calling out for quarter. But before they struck, some of the men, not forgetful of an old promise to Roberts, threw his body overboard in all its finery.

As the frigate's boats came alongside the *Royal Fortune*, a few of the more reckless of the pirates tried to blow her up, according to their boast, but the attempt was foiled by some of themselves, and soon all the survivors were under hatches, the bulk of them on board the *Swallow*, but a few, chiefly the wounded, on their own ship.

Thus was Roberts's whole squadron wiped out, for the pirates without even attempting to make sail

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deserted the other consort which had remained with him, and panic-stricken fled ashore. The prisoners, something like one hundred and sixty of them, were a dangerous lot for the frigate in her weakened condition to convey round to Cape Coast. It was an anxious time for officers and men, and more than one plot to rise and murder the crew was nipped but just in time.

Notwithstanding the fact that all the prisoners were shackled, some of them contrived to get rid of their fetters, and it had gone hard with the numerically weak prize crew on the *Royal Fortune*, had not a pirate, perhaps more timid, or more diplomatic, than his fellows, given timely information of a plot hatched and near brought to maturity by the pirate surgeon.

Some of the prisoners remained quiet throughout, frightened no doubt; one hesitates to say they were repentant, though a few, to the infinite annoyance and disgust of their more dissolute comrades, read the Bible and prayed often. A man named Sutton, one of the most profane and reckless of the lot, utterly unmoved by prospect of his almost certain doom,—he was amongst those afterwards hanged,—it chanced was secured in the same irons with another prisoner who read and prayed without ceasing throughout the passage. “This man Sutton used to swear at, and ask him, ‘what he proposed by such Noise and Devotion?’

“‘Heaven,’ says the other, ‘I hope.’

“‘Heaven, you Fool!’ says Sutton, ‘did you ever hear of any Pirates going thither? Give me Hell, it’s

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a merrier place. I'll give Roberts a Salute of thirteen guns at my Entrance.' And when he found such ludicrous Expressions had no Effect on him, he made a formal Complaint, and requested that the Officer would either remove this Man, or take his Prayer Book away, as a common Disturber."<sup>1</sup>

With most, however, this recklessness and bravado did not survive the voyage. When they came to be under lock and key on land their tune changed, and the greater number joined twice a day in public prayers and the singing of Psalms. Poor wretches! There was heavy reckoning to pay. Of the hundred and sixty, seventy were condemned,—there was no evidence legally to convict the others,—and fifty-two were hanged "without the Gates of this Castle . . . within the Flood Marks," as the words of the sentence ran. Afterwards, according to the barbarous custom of the times, their bodies were hung in chains at various places along the coast, a grizzly spectacle. Mr. Joseph Allen, R.N., in the 1852 edition of *Battles of the British Navy*, says that "several of the gibbets until very lately remained standing."

Mention has already been made of Captain John Massey, whose reign as a corsair was singularly brief, unstained too by bloodshed or by other crime common to the vile brotherhood that served under the black flag. Massey seems indeed to have embarked on the life more in a fit of anger at real or fancied ill-treatment by the Royal African Company, than from any special attraction that such a career held for him.

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson's *History of the Pirates*.

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He was in fact the dupe of others. A gentleman and a soldier, entirely unused to a sea-faring life, Massey was as little fitted to be a Pirate as he was to be an Archbishop. Sent out from England in 1721 in command of a detachment of soldiers under orders to garrison Fort James in the Gambia, after its capture and destruction by Davis, he discovered there a state of affairs which roused all his professional prejudices, and hurt his natural pride as a man. Instead of finding himself treated with respect, and with some show of deference, as commander of the garrison of a rising settlement, he realised that in effect he was nothing more than a sort of upper servant of the merchants and factors of the Gambia. Moreover, the provisions and liquor supplied to his men by order of those merchants were not only bad in quality but insufficient in quantity. Massey remonstrated. He had not come to the Gambia to be a Guinea slave, said he. He alone was responsible for the welfare of the soldiers under his command, and he had promised them good treatment and good and sufficient food and drink. Things must be altered speedily, or he would "take suitable measures for the preservation of so many of his countrymen and companions." His remonstrances were but so much wasted breath. The merchants were probably making far too good a thing out of supplying the garrison stores to pay any heed. Massey consulted the new Governor, Colonel Whitney, and found him equally with himself simmering with indignation. Moreover, he had found himself treated with no greater deference or respect than was Massey; his position



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was just as little satisfactory. But the Governor was sick of a fever and in no condition to cope with the difficulty. What he could say, he did say; and perhaps, for Massey's good, he said more than he should have said, or Massey's just indignation put on his words a construction they were not meant to bear. Sick men do not always choose their words with discretion. At all events, Massey was encouraged to rebel, to take what he thought to be "suitable measures."

It so chanced—unhappily for Massey—that on the *Gambia Castle*, the vessel on which he and his men came from England, there was a certain George Lowther, her second mate, with whom during the voyage he had become very intimate. Lowther was a coarse but plausible man, a great favourite with the crew, though on bad terms with his captain, with whom he had quarrelled during the voyage, and whom indeed only the threatening attitude of the men had prevented from putting the second mate in irons. Thus both Lowther and Massey had a grievance, and as they nursed each other's wrath, gradually the former fanned the soldier's indignation to the striking point. Massey burned to take his men away from this vile hole. Well, why should not he and Lowther seize the ship and go home, suggested the latter. The crew, said he, would stick to him through thick and thin. The idea struck Massey as magnificent; more "suitable measures" could not possibly be devised, and he knew that where he led his men would follow without question.

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So the plot ripened. And one day when the captain was on shore, Lowther seized the ship, and sent to Massey a message that "Now was the time." Massey hastened to the barracks. "You men that are of a mind to go to England, now is your time," cried he. Naturally they were all of a mind to go to England if their commanding officer gave them the chance. The fort was seized, the guns dismounted, the store-house ransacked for provisions and wine for the voyage.

Then Massey found that the Governor, whatever his feelings might have been when the question of "measures" was originally discussed by them, was not with him in what had now been done, and would have none of it. But it was too late to draw back; to England they must go without Colonel Whitney. And so the soldiers soon found themselves on board the *Gambia Castle*, standing down the river towards the open sea, none the worse of the few shots fired at them by other ships, and lucky in getting off a mud-bank on to which the stream set them.

Once at sea, Lowther came out in his true colours. To take to piracy had been his intention all through, he owned. Whether he liked it or not, Massey had taken part in an act of piracy, and he had better make the best of it; there was no escape now, for to England he (Lowther) had no intention of going. Say what he might, do what he could, Massey was helpless. And, moreover, he did complicate matters sadly a few days later, by joining in the capture of a vessel. But she was French, and to harass the French under all circumstances was no doubt in his

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eyes a virtue. To harass the French, indeed, was now his one idea, and when the ship arrived in West Indian waters he entreated Lowther to give him thirty men and to let him go ashore to harry the French settlements. Lowther refused, and out of his refusal grew a quarrel so bitter that in the end, finding Massey hopeless as a Pirate, he put him, and ten of his soldiers who disliked ship life and piracy as much as did their leader, on board a captured sloop and left them to shift for themselves.

Massey headed at once for Jamaica and gave himself up to the Governor, Sir Nicholas Laws, telling him the entire tale, sparing himself in nothing, and owning that he certainly merited hanging. But, said he, "'twas to save so many of His Majesty's subjects from perishing ; and his design was to return to England, till Lowther conspiring with the greater part of the company went a-pirating with the ship."

The Governor was not greatly struck with the blackness of Massey's guilt, and allowed him to go free, allowed him even to help in the attempt to capture Lowther. But Massey was afflicted with a most morbid and inconvenient conscience ; his guilt preyed upon his mind, and he could not rest content with the Governor's pardon. He must needs go home, and accuse himself there ; nothing apparently would satisfy him but that he should be hanged as high as Haman.

So to England went Massey, even borrowing money from Sir Nicholas Laws to pay his passage. Arrived in London, with conscientious zeal this repentant sinner sat down and wrote to the

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Governor and Directors of the African Company a long and particular account of his misdeeds. "Rashness and Inadvertency, occasioned by his being ill used, contrary to the Promises that had been made him," was the one excuse he urged. For the rest, he owned that his crimes deserved death. "Yet," concluded this pitiful, pathetic letter, "if you have Generosity enough to forgive me, as I am still capable to do you Service as a Soldier, so I will be very ready to do it; but if you resolve to prosecute me, I beg only this Favour, that I may not be hang'd like a Dog, but suffer'd to die like a Soldier, as I have been bred from my Childhood: that is, that I may be shot."

Poor Massey! Did he think that a Board of Directors could be delivered of an offspring so angelic as Mercy; that on a question which touched their pockets they would return an answer savouring of leniency! Their reply was that he "should be fairly hang'd."

Why did the man not go away, even now! They had nothing except his own word on which to proceed against him, no evidence worth a jot from a legal point of view. There were no witnesses in England who could testify to anything, and if Massey chose to hold his tongue, how could they even prove that he had written to the Board that accusatory letter?

But the unhappy man on receipt of the Board's reply must needs go off to the Lord Chief Justice's Chambers, enquiring there, "if my Lord had yet granted a Warrant against Captain John Massey for piracy?" No such warrant had been applied for;

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even the Board of the African Company was in no hurry. There was yet time for this self-accused pirate to take himself off. If he would but have owned to himself that he had been a dupe and not a villain! But no man likes to write himself down an ass; even the victim of the Confidence Trick seldom confesses to himself how simple he has been.

Massey left his address at the Lord Chief Justice's Chambers, against the time when he should be wanted. It was a new experience for my Lord's clerks to have a pirate storming the very citadel of the Law, but they took down his address in writing, and a few days later the Runners found Massey at his lodgings, patiently waiting for them. Nothing could be proved at his trial; he went about for months on bail, till witnesses—the Captain of the *Gambia Castle* for one—had been brought from the Guinea Coast; and then, at last, they condemned him to death. Poor, simple Massey! He was not even shot, as he desired to be. He died the one death he dreaded, the death of a Dog. He was hanged at Execution Dock on 26th July 1723.

What, one may wonder, would have been the opinion held of Massey by such a man as Captain Cocklyn, his very antithesis, a man whom no qualms troubled, for whom nothing was too gross and brutal? In a former chapter it has been mentioned that brutality alone gained for Cocklyn "that bad eminence" of leader in a murderous band. The life and doings of the ordinary pirate of those days do not make savoury reading; they were drunken scoundrels for the most part, except when led by a man like Davis

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unrestrained by even a lingering sense of decency. The fiends in hell might have shrunk from presuming to vie with them in their brutal lusts ; at sight of their lighter amusements, the angels in heaven must have shuddered. Even the Red Indians of North America were not more fiendishly cruel in the tortures inflicted on their prisoners, than were those white men in the fashion in which they made merry at the expense of members of captured crews who refused to join the brotherhood.

If by chance the pirates were in sportive mood, their wretched captives were not made to walk the plank and so become food for sharks ; some of them, mayhap, would be run up in the bight of a rope to the main or mizzen top, and the rope belayed for a brief period, leaving the man dangling. Then suddenly—perhaps simultaneously in the case of two victims, in order that the pirates might bet on which would first touch the deck—the rope would be cast loose, and down in a heap would fall the unhappy wretches, if not breaking bones, at least otherwise painfully injuring themselves.

Or they would “sweat” a man, a favourite amusement. Sweating was performed in this way : A circle of lighted candles was placed round the mizzen mast between decks. Around this circle stood those pirates who, in jocular frame of mind, were about to take part in the game, each brute armed with a pen-knife, a pair of compasses, a steel fork, or other small and sharp-pointed instrument. Then the “patient” was introduced within the circle. As the pirates closed in nearer the unsuspecting victim, one, with,



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it might be the fork, would run the instrument deep in a fleshy part of the body ; the recoil would naturally place him within reach of a second stab, say, this time with the penknife. And so from reach of one pirate the poor wretch would shrink and jump, only to place himself within striking distance of another, until—while the brutes yelled with ever increasing riotous glee—the tortured victim fell, utterly spent. Then maybe they would give him what was called “his discharge,” which meant that every one present administered ten lashes with the “cat.” If he were unable to jump up and run for such shelter as might be found, so much the worse for him.

In all these pastimes, and more, Cocklyn and his crew indulged. Many of their misdeeds will not bear re-telling ; the mind wearies of the sameness of their brutality, shrinks from its grossness.

Yet Snelgrave's account of his capture and detention by Cocklyn contains a good deal that is of interest, and gives some idea of the senselessly improvident ways and objectless lives of the Pirates.

When Snelgrave, fresh from England in the *Lion* galley, made the land off Sierra Leone river on April the 1st, 1719, it chanced that the wind fell light and presently altogether left them, so that when the ship, now embayed, had ceased to drift inward on the flowing tide, as the sun went down they were forced to drop anchor in deep water near the shore. Far distant up the estuary, beneath the golden glory of sunset, the naked spars of a vessel lying at anchor traced themselves sharply against a background of vivid green, but save for this and a thin column of

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smoke rising sluggishly among the trees<sup>a</sup> on the nearest point of land, and hanging motionless over their tops, there was no sign of life. Little wisps and wreaths of mist stole over the water shoreward, and darkness, as is its way in tropical latitudes, came with a rush, closing round the ship, blotting out everything but the stars overhead. An evening still as the hush of death itself.

On such a night sound travels far. Thus it came to pass that as Snelgrave sat at supper the officer of the watch sent to him a message asking him to come on deck; he fancied he could hear a boat at some distance approaching the ship from direction of the vessel seen at anchor as they came in. The tide was on the turn when Snelgrave went on deck, but the *Lion* still lay with her head to seaward. Listening, he could distinctly make out the cheep and muffled thud of oars astern.

"Send twenty men aft here with muskets and cutlasses," ordered Snelgrave. Then, "Boat ahoy!" he hailed. "What boat's that?"

"The *Two Friends*, Captain Elliot, of Barbadoes," came an answering hail, after momentary hesitation.

"I mislike it," muttered Snelgrave to the officer who had sent for him. "Smartly, below there, with those muskets." Then again, to the approaching boat, "Where are you from?"

"From America."

And with the words came a volley of musketry singing past the ears of those standing on the quarter-deck.

"Fire on them through the steerage ports," cried

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Snelgrave to Jones his first Mate, who was below with the men. But never a musket cracked in response to his order. Jumping down below, himself, he found his people huddled together, staring stupidly at the Mate and at each other, and neither musket nor cutlass yet served out. "The Arms chest could not be found," some one said, lamely enough, by way of explanation. In any case, it was now too late, the attacking party was already on board firing pistols, (whereby one of Snelgrave's men was killed,) and throwing hand grenades down between decks.

Then some one sang out for quarter, whereon down came a man cursing and swearing and calling out, "Where's your Captain?"

"I am the person that was captain up to now," said Snelgrave.

"Then what the —— do you mean by telling your people to fire on us through the steerage ports?"

With that he clapped his pistol to Snelgrave's breast, and fired. But Snelgrave struck the weapon partly aside, and the bullet passed between his arm and his ribs without wounding him, whereupon the man brought him to his knees with a blow over the head from the pistol butt. Quickly recovering his feet, Snelgrave jumped for the quarter-deck, where another man, swearing no quarter should be given to a captain who tried to defend his ship, struck viciously at his head with a cutlass. Snelgrave ducked, and the weapon bit deep into the quarter-deck rail, breaking short off at the hilt. By great good fortune this man's firearms were all discharged, otherwise Snelgrave most certainly would have been shot. As

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it was, the brute tried to beat out his brains with the butt end of a pistol. It had gone ill with Snelgrave now had not some of his own men cried out : "Don't kill the Captain ! We never sailed with a better man." (For it was customary with the Pirates to spare the captain of a captured vessel against whom his crew had no ill-will ; at least they would seldom go to extremities unless his crew made complaint against him,—a tenure of life a little precarious, one would think.)

In celebration of their success, the pirates now began firing volleys of musketry ; and this led to things more serious. Cocklyn, who commanded the ship from which the pirates had come, hearing the continual rattle of musketry and imagining that fighting still went on, cut his cable, drifted down with the now ebbing tide and fired a broadside into the *Lion*.

"Vast firing there," called out one of the ruffians. "We've taken a fine prize with plenty of rum and fresh provisions aboard."

That brought Cocklyn himself in a trice, with a crowd of others, all intent on an orgie. Liquor flowed ; geese, turkeys, ducks, fowls were taken, and without being even plucked, except as regards the tail and wing feathers, were pitched into the ship's copper in the galley, accompanied by several Westphalia hams and a big sow, newly killed, from which they had not troubled to scrape the bristles, and the cook was ordered to boil them all together and serve up as quickly as possible,—a Gargantuan meal.

It was for Snelgrave the beginning of a life more strenuous than desirable.

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"What o'clock is it by your gold watch?" demanded one ruffian. And, however much against the grain, Snelgrave knew that he must hand over his excellent watch—there was nothing else to be done. The pirates kicked it about the deck like a football, till they tired of the game, when it was pitched into the common chest, to be sold at auction before the mast. Davis bought it later for £100, in spite of the ill-usage it had undergone.

After the rape of his watch, Snelgrave was taken from his own ship to that of the pirate, and there questioned closely as to the sailing qualities of the *Lion*, the result being that Cocklyn joyfully fitted her out for his own use. It was a bad time for Snelgrave, this first night on Cocklyn's vessel, and it had like to have been his last on earth had it not been for the intervention of one of the pirate crew, a man named Griffin, who, as it turned out, had been at school with Snelgrave. This man swore to protect his old schoolfellow, and indeed passed the hours till morning marching up and down with pistols and cutlass alongside the hammock where lay Snelgrave, sleepless owing to "their horrid oaths and blasphemies."

Towards 2 A.M. there returned to the ship, very drunk and quarrelsome, that man who had attempted to cut Snelgrave down on the quarter-deck of the *Lion*.

"Where's Snelgrave?" he bawled. "I'm going to slice his liver for offering to fire on us! Where's that — Snelgrave? I'll slice him!" And assuredly he had engaged in that delicate operation if Griffin with

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his cutlass had not driven the drunken brute off. Nor was this by any means the only attempt on Snelgrave's life made by the same man. On at least one other occasion the brute tried to shoot him. But here the would-be assassin came badly off; in the dark he fired at the wrong man, a mistake which cost him dear, for he was hunted round the ship with a naked cutlass till his condition was little better than if he had been "sweated."

The following day came the overhauling of Snelgrave's cargo. Overboard, into the sea, went everything, bales and cases, no matter how valuable, if they did not suit the needs of the pirates. Overboard went all Snelgrave's "private adventure," (captains were allowed to trade on their own account in those days); overboard, too, went his library,—“enough jaw work here to poison a ship's company,” swore one of the pirates. Soon nothing was left to him of all his own belongings.

Later, a good deal of his private property was restored at the intervention of the pirate Davis, and also, strangely enough, through the intercession of one Captain Henry Glynn, a private trader who lived on shore here, and who was afterwards Governor of Fort James in the Gambia. On curiously friendly terms with the pirates was this embryo Governor when Snelgrave met him at Sierra Leone. To hunt with the hounds and run with the hare was apparently in those days a feat not hard of accomplishment on the Guinea Coast.

After all, the good-will of Davis and Glynn availed Snelgrave little. His things, mostly tied up

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in bundles, were brought to him in "the great cabin," it is true, but presently in came a party of drunken pirates, who, stumbling over the bundles, in a fit of rage threw them overboard, leaving one only remaining. This also soon disappeared. A man—as chance ruled, it was Kennedy, he who afterwards played Roberts false—coming in, just drunk enough to be persistent, and answering all Snelgrave's mild expostulations by blows from the flat of his cutlass, took the bundle to examine its contents. A good new black suit and a hat and wig were what he found, and the pirate must needs put on the suit and go swaggering on deck in it. The result was that the other pirates, resenting his fine feathers, soused him with buckets of claret, and the suit being thus ruined after half an hour's wear was also thrown overboard.

All the liquor on Snelgrave's ship had been brought up on deck to be divided amongst the three pirate vessels then in the bay, and the casks not immediately removed to Davis's and La Bouse's ships were straightway up-ended and had their heads knocked out that cans and bowls might the more readily be dipped in when men wanted to drink. They did things in a large way, those toppers, and wild were the scenes and great the havoc that followed. Cocklyn bawled healths to the Pretender—King James the Third, they styled him; they drank confusion to the House of Hanover; they drank to everything and to everybody; and what liquor they could not pour down their own capacious throats, in sport they threw over each other. With

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what remained in the casks of claret they washed down the decks in the evening ; nothing was left by nightfall save a little French brandy. Everything was wasted, wine, cheeses, butter, fresh food of all kinds, thrown into the sea by those improvident scoundrels. It was a heart-break to Snelgrave, who moreover had the additional anxiety of not knowing the day or hour he himself might not be knocked on the head and sent after his goods, to feed the sharks.

The net result of Snelgrave's first day among the pirates was that he lost everything he possessed, save only the clothes he stood up in and a hat and wig. And the wig, it may be thought, in such a climate might be a luxury of doubtful value or utility. With a thermometer standing in the neighbourhood of 100° in the shade and an atmosphere humid as the steam off a heating cauldron, one can imagine that article to have been little less blighting in effect than all the Plagues that smote Pharaoh and his people. Of his "private adventure" sorry was the fate. His bales of fine holland were dragged up on deck, opened, and spread in heavy folds to serve as soft couches for those whose potations had been over deep, and the whole, beds and men, were presently soused with claret by the more facetious and less drunken of the pirates.

A box containing three second-hand richly-embroidered coats was seized by Cocklyn, and lots were drawn for choice of garment by Cocklyn, Davis, and La Bouse. Now it chanced that the first named was short of stature, almost dwarfish, and the



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Fates willed that to him fell the longest coat, so long that it covered his ankles and brushed the deck as the little man, in some doubt at first as to the effect, strutted about with a lurch in his gait.

"Change with me, Davis! Change with me, La Bouse!" he implored. "It don't (hiccup) seem to favour me."

But they refused, pointing out how striking was the effect, how gay the contrast of its scarlet cloth with the silver braid, and in the end the stunted little rascal swaggered off ashore in it, beyond measure vain of his appearance. Even a pirate of the most brutal type, one sunk below the level of the beasts that perish, steeped in crime as was Cocklyn, is still swayed by the pettiest vanity. Indeed those coats made trouble throughout the pirate squadron, for so envious were the men of the effect produced that they insisted on the garments being put into the common chest. It was no part of a pirate captain's privileges that he should wear fine clothes, from the use of which the men were debarred,—good, sound, socialistic doctrine, no doubt.

Snelgrave's time amongst those villains must have been even more hazardous than it actually was, had it not been for the presence and influence of Davis, that "generous and humane" pirate, his constant protector so long as the squadron kept together. To a less degree he was indebted to Griffin. It was through Davis indeed that he regained liberty; it was through him that a captured vessel (of no great value) was handed over to Snelgrave, with the battered remnants not only of his own cargo, but of

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those also of several other prizes, to the value of *some* thousands of pounds. The fore-mast pirates, indeed, desired,—at a time when Davis had fanned their weathercock sentiments momentarily to white heat in Snelgrave's favour,—to take him with them down the coast, handing to him all the proceeds of their villainies not immediately wanted by themselves. He might then sail, said they, for the West Indian island of St. Thomas,—a free port in the possession of Denmark,—there realise a fortune by their sale, and return home to snap his fingers at the merchants of London and Bristol. It needed all Davis's tact to smooth away the resentment felt by the pirates at the rejection by Snelgrave of their generous offer. They could not understand why their gift of cargoes plundered from captured vessels should not legally be Snelgrave's property.

It was, later, owing to Griffin's friendship that Snelgrave got clear away on shore at a time when the commoner and more brutal pirates, incensed against him for some trumpery cause, were vowing to cut him in pieces or to flog him.

Of his old crew, the majority remained faithful and accompanied Snelgrave on his homeward voyage after the departure of the pirates. Some (near a dozen) threw in their lot with the latter, among them Jones, the Mate, who came to Snelgrave with a cock-and-bull story of how he had a wife at home whom he could not love, to whom he felt he could not return; rather than continue to live with one so uncongenial, he had tardily decided that it was preferable to join Cocklyn and his rovers. The man

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was probably a sentimental humbug. As Snelgrave learned later from his men, Jones had divulged to them on the voyage out his scheme for turning pirate, and it was he who had hid the arms chest before the *Lion* was boarded at Sierra Leone.

Snelgrave's detention by the pirates lasted a full month, four weeks of turmoil and anxiety, weeks that cost him dear. On more than one occasion the vessel on which he was detained was set on fire through carelessness, or by one of the pirates when drunk, and it was each time with difficulty saved. Once a cask of rum was accidentally set alight, and exploded violently not far from the magazine; and once a fierce fire broke out almost in the magazine itself. It is a marvel that any pirate ship survived a single cruise.

Snelgrave was not altogether ruined in pocket, and he got command of another ship with but small delay after his return to Bristol. History is silent as to his subsequent career. Doubtless he visited the Guinea Coast again, traded in "black ivory," and risked the pirates. But Davis was gone, and Roberts; Cocklyn and La Bouse were no longer there to terrorise. Along the Coast dead pirates swung in the wind and the sun, creaking in their chains as the breeze wantoned with its grizzly playthings.

They were a curious mixture of evil and of good; much evil, relieved by perhaps an infinitely small leaven of good. But all were not brutes such as Cocklyn or Kennedy, La Bouse or Captain Teach, and many another. Roberts was not all bad, and Davis had many virtues. So had Griffin, who escaped

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later and made his way (honestly) to the West Indies, where he died of Yellow Fever.

A many of them erred through weakness; not all through vice. There were others besides Massey remorseful, others besides Griffin who longed to escape from the life and to begin anew. Yet as a whole one would neither feel pity for, nor exercise mercy towards, the Pirates. For with the same measure that they did mete withal it shall be measured to them again.

## CHAPTER XVII

### CONCLUSION

IF one were to embark on a work very far beyond the scope of this present volume, West Africa's history at the end thereof would still present a huge mass of romance and interest practically untouched, a mine the workings of which would yet be but surface scratchings. One would fain dwell on many an incident, many a fact or event, to which considerations of space now forbid more than brief allusion. There is much of moment still untouched in the history of each separate section of the Guinea Coast and its Hinterland.

It would, for example, have been not without interest to watch the development of Sierra Leone, from its early days of tolerably honest trade through the times when it was little better than a dépôt for slaves, or the headquarters of Pirates, down to its present status (at Freetown) of first-class fortified Imperial Coaling Station and trade centre.

It was here that in 1787 an abortive attempt was made to carry out Dr. Smeathman's philanthropic scheme of colonising parts of West Africa with liberated negro slaves, a scheme admirable in theory,

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but—at least in those days—hopeless of execution. “During the American War,” says Mr. Hugh<sup>o</sup> Murray in his *Discoveries and Travels in Africa*, “many negroes . . . had entered on board the British ships of war, or repaired to the British standard, where they had been formed into regiments of Rangers. At the termination of the war, in 1783, they were dispersed, with the white loyalists, among the Bahamas Islands and Nova Scotia, while many were conveyed to Great Britain, especially to London. There, indigent and idle, despised and forlorn, they were soon vitiated by intercourse with their profligate brethren, who, having contrived to convey themselves from the West Indies, infested the streets of London.” Probably no inconsiderable portion of those who “infested the streets of London” were black servants brought by their masters some time before from the West Indies, numbers of whom, in consequence of Lord Mansfield’s famous decision of 1772, were turned adrift on the streets.

To cope with this growing evil, a Committee was formed, which zealously tried to carry out Dr. Smeathman’s “Plan of a Settlement to be made near Sierra Leone on the Guinea Coast.” As a result, “above four hundred blacks, with about sixty whites, but who were chiefly women of abandoned character, debilitated by disease,” were shipped off in a Government transport to Sierra Leone, provided with all things deemed by the philanthropists necessary to the support of colonists. Of provisions, arms, implements of agriculture, there was a ship load, but the Committee, careful in the matter of spades and ploughs,

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had taken no precautions whatever to ensure that the colonists should be of tolerably good character. The sole qualification might almost seem to have been that the skins of the black men should be as shady as the characters of the white women. However reasonable it may have been to suppose that for persons of African descent the land most suitable must be that of their forefathers, it is difficult to assign any philanthropic reason for the despatch to that same land of a considerable female white population. To ship undesirables off to distant over-sea parts was the fad of the hour, no doubt. It will be remembered that in this same year 1787 took place the first shipment of convicts to Botany Bay in Australia, wanton pollution of a great virgin land. The idea was not new, of course. It is the same that Hanno the Carthaginian in his day was set to carry out.

The end of the Committee's philanthropic scheme was what from the beginning it was bound to be, a disastrous failure. The "unemployed" black of the latter end of the Eighteenth Century no more wanted to work than does his professional unemployed white brother of this present Twentieth Century. The voyage was little short of a prolonged debauch; on arrival at Sierra Leone, "indolence and depravity so generally prevailed that hardly a man could be induced to labour steadily in erecting the hut in which he was to be sheltered, or in unloading the provisions by which he was to be supported."

The expedition arrived on 9th May 1787. By 11th September of that year, out of a total of close

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on five hundred persons landed, only two hundred and seventy-six remained in the colony. Death and desertion, but chiefly the former, had in four months accounted for over two hundred human beings out of that small community. In such a climate, among such a people, it could not well have been otherwise.

In 1792 another attempt was made on better lines, when twelve hundred free blacks from Nova Scotia were brought over. After many vicissitudes, and after being raided in 1794 by a French squadron, —consisting chiefly of privateers who construed their principles of "*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*," into liberty to help themselves to everything that their black brethren possessed, with an equal right to burn after they had looted,—that, too, proved a failure, and in 1807 the colony was handed over to the Crown. It is interesting to note that the Maroons, (descendants of those negro slaves who fled to the mountains of Jamaica when that island was captured by England from Spain in 1655, and who for a hundred and forty years waged incessant warfare against us,) were in the year 1800 transported to Sierra Leone. They were, says Lucas, "a strong and healthy element," and it was chiefly due to their great fighting powers that the authorities of the colony were able to quell that dangerous rising which, owing to the imposition of a quit-rent, broke out among the Nova Scotian negroes who had been brought over in 1792. "Years after, when slave emancipation was an accomplished fact, the survivors of those Maroons returned once more to their old homes in Jamaica."

"The White Man's Grave," Sierra Leone has been



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called, and to the European it has ever been deadly; but in the two instances mentioned above it was also the black man's grave. Not even those of negro blood could with impunity live recklessly or carelessly in such a climate. Yet it is fair to say that not every white man has so sweepingly condemned it. By Zachary Macaulay (to whom in those early days the colony owed much), its able Governor in 1793-94, Sierra Leone was esteemed healthful, if not pleasant. Indeed, nothing is said to have more annoyed Macaulay than to hear it talked of as a climate necessarily hurtful to Europeans.

Meredith<sup>1</sup> too, writing of the Gold Coast in 1812, says of that part of West Africa that it "has the advantage of the West Indies, not only in soil and climate, but also in seasons. . . . The climate will be found as temperate and salubrious as the West Indies, and if it were cultivated it would probably surpass the West Indies in point of salubrity."

The truth one may suppose to be that, (whatever modern conditions and medical science may now have made it,) to a certain few, very few, constitutions in former days it was not directly harmful, but that to the vast majority of Europeans, in whatever fashion they might live, however careful they might be, the climate of West Africa was trying and even deadly. Miss Mary Kingsley compares it in the wet season to the "inside of a warm poultice," and she mentions how when she asked to be shown "the Settlement," they grimly took her to the Cemetery!

On the tale of the Gold Mines and the Gold Dust

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<sup>1</sup> Meredith's *Account of the Gold Coast*.

## CONCLUSION

of West Africa,—in times long past, its “Golden Trade,”—one would also willingly have dwelt. The source is not dry from which Carthage in the days of her magnificence drew part of her supply of that metal for which man in all ages has perilled soul as well as body. At the present day the flow is greater than it has ever been before. New methods have borne rich fruit. Though in 1901 the value of gold coming from the Gold Coast had dropped to the low level of £22,000, so rapid has been the recovery since that date that in 1907 the output was £1,163,516; whilst in 1908 the output was 281,257 oz. and the value £1,194,743. How widely different both in method and result from those days midway through the Seventeenth Century when Scottish Cavaliers, expatriated and enslaved, forsaken of God and man, toiled wearily under brazen sky to scrape the shining dust into the pockets of their masters, the merchants of Guinea.

Were space available, much might be said on the subject of present-day Missions and their work. Though probably success has not relatively been so great here as of late years it has been with the Missions of East Central Africa, yet one may hope that the time has gone by, or is rapidly going, when it might be truly said, as by Miss Kingsley, that “the mission attempt to elevate the African mass seems like unto cutting a path through a bit of African forest; you can cut a very nice tidy path there, and as long as you are there to keep it clear, it’s all a path need be, but leave it and it goes to bush.”

The shortcomings, too, must necessarily be great

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of any attempt to tell the story of West Africa which contains no more than passing reference to its explorers. Yet again space forbids that more than passing reference should be made. Of all Africa's explorers, there is none to whose name clings so great a share of romantic interest as to that of Mungo Park. Not only in his native land, the Scottish Border, is his memory yet proudly cherished, but wherever the English language is spoken, there still lives his fame, even after the lapse of more than a century. The first of Europeans to penetrate inland to the headwaters of the Niger, he perished on his second journey in an attempt to follow that river to its mouth, leaving scarcely a trace behind him. That he was drowned in his attempt to descend the Niger, is probable, but Mr. Bowdich mentions that in Ashanti he himself was informed by Moors that a white man, answering to the description of Park, was for two years held prisoner by a native king, at the end of which time he died of fever.<sup>1</sup> "For actual hardships undergone, for dangers faced, and difficulties overcome, together with an exhibition of the virtues which make a man great in the rude battle of life, Mungo Park stands without a rival."<sup>2</sup>

Until Park's day, the Niger formed one of the most perplexing of geographical problems, a problem on which scarce any two authorities could be found entirely to agree. It flowed into the Nile, said some; without doubt it joined the Congo, affirmed others, (and it was to prove or disprove this last

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<sup>1</sup> *Quarterly Review*, June 1818.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Thomson's *Life of Mungo Park*.

## CONCLUSION

theory that Park undertook the journey from which he never returned); it was an independent river emptying itself into some vast inland lake, argued a third group; the Senegal and the Gambia were themselves but two of the many mouths of the Niger, protested a fourth. All was uncertainty, and Park was the first to throw light on the darkness. Since his day, much has been done, but even yet there remains a portion of the Niger of which little is known.

If one desired to deal with the story of our troubles with the kingdom of Ashanti, of the many Ashanti invasions of Gold Coast territory, of our various punitive and other expeditions and missions to Kumasi, a volume would be required for that alone. Since the beginning of the Nineteenth Century the invasions have been many, our expeditions, great and small, not few. Great Britain—in the fashion that until recently was peculiar to her in matters of Colonial policy—did not know her own mind; one year she would be intent on giving up her West African colonies, retiring from positions which were merely an expense and a trouble; the following year something had happened which necessitated a farther forward move on her part. Then again she would revert to her policy of “scuttle,” or blow hot and cold almost in the same breath. Party Government no doubt was responsible for much of this, ignorance for the rest. Statesmen in those days possessed in small measure the gift of prescience; geographically their ignorance was unfathomable. Is it not on record that an ex-Cabinet Minister once told the

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wife of a distinguished Colonial Governor that all he knew of West African geography was that Africa had a hump which stuck out somewhere into the sea, and that he believed our West African Colonies were there? Perhaps the amount of this Statesman's geographical knowledge was a little greater than he admitted, but in truth what he said of "the hump" about sums up the geographical knowledge possessed in former days by the average inhabitant of Great Britain. And this lack of knowledge, combined with an invincible determination not to trust the man on the spot, has, joined to the vacillating policy of advance and retire, been fruitful of trouble in many lands.

We have seen the great Sierra Leone rising of 1898, and there has been an expedition to Benin, but our chief and most constant native troubles have been with the Ashantis. Many times have they raided us. In 1814 they took our fort of Winnebah, killing its commander, Mr. Meredith, a writer whose favourable opinion of the Gold Coast climate is quoted a few pages back. In 1816 they all but took Cape Coast Castle. In 1820 they invaded us; and again in 1826.

In 1817 we sent under Mr. Bowdich a mission to Kumasi; in 1824 Sir Charles M'Carthy led an expedition against the Ashantis, and was defeated by them and killed. In 1873-4 came the greatest of our native wars in that part of the world, the expedition led by Sir Garnet Wolseley, when Kumasi was taken and burnt, and much strange loot brought back.

It may be hoped that with the development of

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Railways in West Africa the day of these native wars is ended. Kumasi, the capital of Ashanti, is now in railway communication with the coast, and is indeed in point of time no more than sixteen days from London.

Sierra Leone possesses close on two hundred and thirty miles of Railway, and other parts of Guinea are not far behind,—a striking contrast to days not remote when travelling in West Africa was for the most part by narrow paths laboriously cut through dense forest. It is hard to realise that where in comparatively recent times pirate ships sheltered, and the bush echoed to the shouts of their ribald crews, now falls on the ear the shriek of railway whistle or the clank of windlass on some great steamship.

Rough times were the days of the Pirate and the Slaver, rough and cruel. Yet it is open to question if those days did not, on the average, produce a finer and more robust type of manhood than is commonly to be found in this Twentieth Century. Without question those days were coarse and full of brutality, but it is, unhappily, equally without question that we, in our day, are in sore danger of being handed over to the degenerating influence of emotional sentimentality. *Vox populi, vox dei*, shouts with increasing clamour our army of demagogues; and unfortunately for Britain the voice of the People is fast becoming totally opposed to wholesome discipline. Except to the upper classes, the rod as an instrument of education and upbringing is almost a thing of the past. The People are swayed by sentiment, not by reason; they have lost control of their children, and of them-

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selves ; and where is to be the end ? To what is the Nation heading ? We are rapidly losing steerage way, and are in danger of drifting on to the breakers of false sentiment. If the old breezy days were bad, at least they produced a breed of Men such as we do not now see ; if they were hard, there are worse things than hardness in life. Better surely a little of the roughness, even a spice of the brutality, of old West African days than that the Nation should slip farther down the fevered path of sentimentality.

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