

TWO YEARS IN EAST AFRICA



WITH
A JOURNEY TO
THE SOURCES OF THE NILE
—
WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

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THE BANKS OF THE WHITE NILE.

TWO YEARS IN
EAST AFRICA:

Adventures in Abyssinia and Aobia,

WITH

A JOURNEY TO THE SOURCES OF THE NILE.

BY ÉMILE JONVEAUX.

MAPS AND NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS.

"Moving accidents by flood and field."

SHAKSPEARE



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To the Reader.



AS Africa, dear reader, that wild and little-known region, that mysterious and terrible continent, never excited your curiosity? Defended by its burning deserts and its deadly climate, inhabited by savage tribes, it has long defied the efforts of the boldest explorers, and nothing more appropriately symbolizes it than the Sphinx erected by ancient Egypt at the mouth of the Nile, as if to guard its approaches.

Recently the veil which so long enshrouded it has been lifted up. Intrepid men of science have been the pioneers of the grand discoveries which have illustrated our century: Ferret and Galinier, Lefèvre, Burton, Lejean, Wilkinson, Young, Brugsch, have taught us the history, and made us acquainted with the habits, of the dwellers on the Upper Nile. The road was open; but it was

reserved to Speke, to Grant, to Sir Samuel Baker, and, above all, to the illustrious Livingstone, to extort from the Sacred River the secret of its birth,—a secret which had been sought in vain for upwards of three thousand years. All Europe has been excited by the narrative of their travels: will you then, reader, permit an humble guide to lead you into the heart of the savage regions which have been revealed to the world by these celebrated explorers? As we proceed, we shall be witnesses of a drama not less worthy of our interest than the discovery of the Nile-sources: we shall see a barbarian monarch bold enough to contend against all the forces of civilization, and when vanquished by them, succumbing nevertheless with a courage not unworthy of the heroes of antiquity. I refer, of course, to Theodore, late King of Abyssinia.

The Nile and its mysteries, Magdala and its bloody tragedy,—these are scenes which, in their simple yet sublime reality, are more truly interesting than the most striking fictions. We shall study the habits and customs of the peoples; we shall make acquaintance with the princes and chiefs who govern them; we shall be present at their feasts, their quarrels, their combats. If this itinerary please you, let us set out together, friendly reader. Already the whistle of the

locomotive is sounding; the steam-packets of the Mediterranean await us; we will say farewell to the European continent, and start in quest of new impressions.

[The Translator would add to the foregoing remarks, that in preparing the present edition he has carefully revised the details embodied in the French original, and has added many new and interesting particulars from authentic sources. He has also rewritten the chapter devoted to the capture of Magdala. He trusts that, in their present form, the romantic adventures of the hero of this exciting narrative will be acceptable to English readers.]

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THE NILE BASIN.

Southern Section.



THE NILE BASIN.

Northern Section.



TWO YEARS IN EAST AFRICA.

CHAPTER I.

NUBIA—THE CATARACTS OF THE NILE—ECONOMICAL MEANS OF PROCURING FOOD—THE DESERT—COLUMNS OF SAND—THE SIMOOM—MISADVENTURE OF OUR DRAGOMAN AND HIS CAMEL—AN UNDESERVED REPUTATION—ATBARA IN THE SEASON OF DROUGHT—WE MUST NOT JUDGE OF THE FRUIT BY THE BARK—AN IMPROMPTU CHASE—AN ARAB REPAST—SUDDEN RISE OF THE ATBARA.

May 18th, 1867.



HANKS to the well-appointed steam-packet of the Messageries Impériales, I have rapidly traversed the waters which separate Marseilles from Alexandria. I have left behind me the dead grandeur of Egypt, whose gigantic magnificence dwarfs the littleness of the present. I am now in Nubia, on the banks of the Nile, which I shall quit almost immediately for the purpose of plunging into the heart of the Desert.

My expedition has been carefully organized. A boat, equipped at my expense, carries me gently along the river. A numerous escort in-

sure my personal safety. My purse, I am happy to say, is brimful of piastres ; I carry the best rifles manufactured by the English gunsmiths, and a complete supply of ammunition ; to say nothing of cargoes of stuffs, copper bracelets, beads, and sham jewellery, which I have sent ahead of me, and which will be lying in store at Khartoum. These articles form the only medium of barter understood by the negro tribes distributed over the interior of Africa ; but I should have found it inconvenient to drag them in my train through countries where gold and silver are all-powerful.

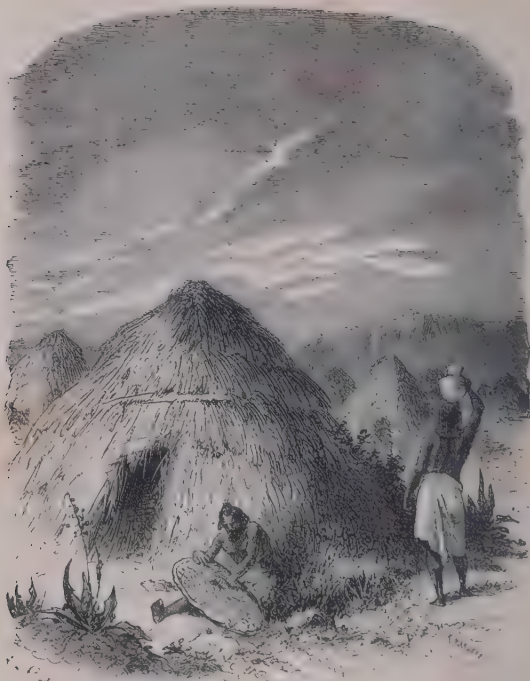
The leader of my escort is named Achmet ; he is an Egyptian, of the middle size, with a grave and intelligent countenance. Like all of his race, he is avaricious, and I have not secured his services except at a high rate of payment ; but he has the inestimable advantage over his countrymen of being incapable of deceit.

His brother Hakim acts as my dragoman or interpreter, and will be undoubtedly useful, for he has at his fingers' ends all the dialects of the countries I am about to traverse. Unfortunately, he is a finished model of poltroonery. His companions assert that at his birth some malignant spirit gave him the heart of a hare ; but this is not strong enough. The hare, poor wretch, can live upon little, and make her resting-place anywhere ; while Master Hakim trembles beforehand at the mere thought of the privations to

which he may possibly be exposed. Avarice, however, is stronger than fear, and has induced him to quit his three or four wives and his hut at Dongola; but he is never weary of cursing the evil star which threw him across the path of so adventurous a traveller.

The remainder of my little troop are simply mercenaries, neither better nor worse than others of their profession.

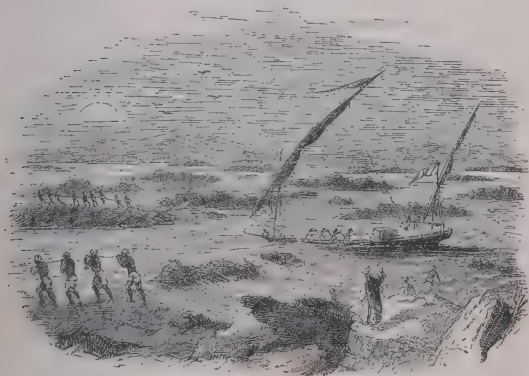
I have ascended the river as far as Korosko. Already the surrounding country has assumed a wild appearance, and narrower and narrower grows that belt of vegetation which lines either bank of the Nile. In the distance I can catch sight of immense plains of sand, burning like fields of fire, and here and there relieved by sparse clumps of palm-trees, whose magnificent foliage affords some small measure of protection to the Nubian villages. The natives—poor, half-naked barbarians—stare at me with “a wild surprise” as I pass by; the young girls, whose costume is very rudimentary, consisting only of a tunic, which barely descends to the knee, clap their hands and utter noisy exclamations; women, bowed with hard work, are engaged in cultivating the fields; gloomy-visaged men, seated at the door of their huts, fashion rude shields out of the hide of the hippopotamus. This handicraft is carried on outside for an excellent reason; because the bell-shaped cabins in-



NUBIAN HUTS.

habited by the Arabs of these regions have, like hives, which seem to have served as their models, no other opening available than the door. Such a style of architecture affords light enough for the eyes of bees, but not enough for the eyes of man.

A fair wind swells the sails of my boat, the rowers of which chant in a monotonous tone; the suffocating heat persuades me to rest and slumber. I stretch myself on the mats in my cabin, not without an uneasy thought that I must soon quit my pleasant shelter for the burning sands of the Nubian Desert. Korosko is situated below the second cataract of the Nile, and we have passed the first. These cataracts present a

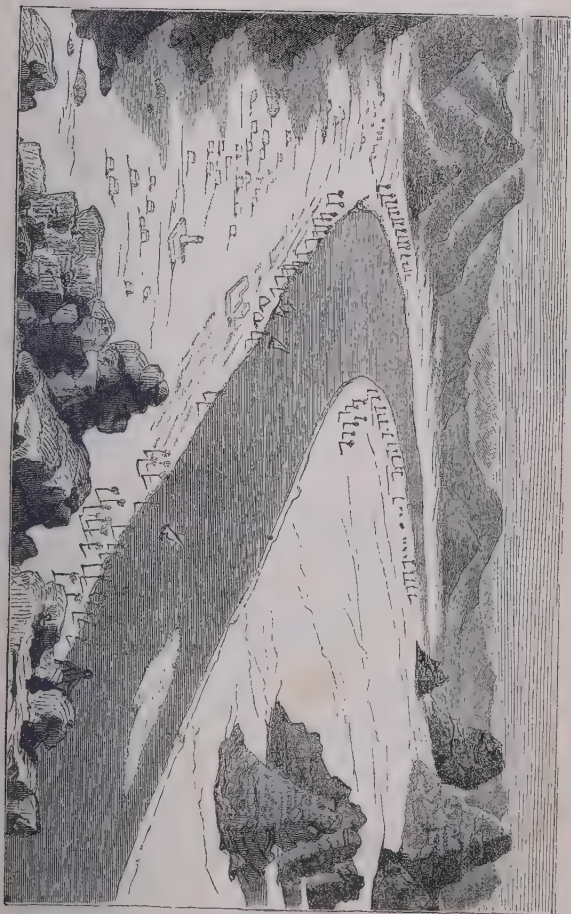


THE FIRST CATARACT OF THE NILE.

curious spectacle. A multitude of abrupt islets raise their black crests, polished like basalt, from the bosom of the river; they seem like an army of petrified giants, against whom the waters are madly contending, are delivering furious charges, while filling the air with their ceaseless violence.

May 22nd.—Korosko is a point of considerable importance. As the Nile here describes a bold sweep towards the west, travellers bound for the Upper Nile leave its banks behind them, and shorten their route by striking across the Desert. Judging from the situation of the town, one would be led to think it rich and busy; but no one acquainted with Egyptian maladministration would fall into such a delusion. If one were desirous of ruining a country, one could not possibly invent a more efficacious method. The taxes are overwhelming, and fetters of every kind paralyze industry; Korosko, accordingly, consists only of a small number of miserable huts, scattered hither and thither under the dusty palm-trees. Provisions are scarce and inferior. Woe to the too sagacious European who has hoped to expedite his progress by securing a firman from the khedivé! This exalted protection does but serve to expose its unhappy possessor to the general ill-will. Does the pasha order him to be supplied with beasts of burden, vegetables, cattle? Everything rapidly disappears, and is hurried away into the interior.

It must be owned, however, that the Turkish officers justify this precaution. It is not necessary for them to carry a well-filled purse in order to luxuriate in abundance in the midst of a desolate country. They have at their disposal a magic wand, with which they can procure every-



KOROSKO: IN NUBIA.

thing they want; this is the *courbatch*, a whip made of strips of hippopotamus-skin. A few blows applied to the shoulders of the refractory proprietor, who refuses to give up his cattle, immediately removes all difficulties. "Payment" is, in the eyes of the Turks, an act of amazing folly. An English tourist, who wished to recompense the natives for some camels with which they had furnished him, was covered with ridicule by the Egyptians. "You must be out of your mind," they said, "to throw away your money on such vermin."

For myself, who had no recommendation from the pasha, who was simply a stranger, an infidel, I found the hospitable traditions of their race still flourishing among the inhabitants of Upper Nubia. The poor people have little to give; but what they have, they give heartily. They furnished me with goats' milk, and cakes made of coarse flour; and mounted on my camel, I quitted the banks of the Nile to penetrate into the vast solitude of sand.

I had scarcely been journeying an hour before I felt myself overcome by an indefinable sentiment; I felt as if surrounded by immensity, and my soul was overwhelmed by mingled awe and admiration. As far as the eye could reach, it saw only a vast reddish sea, upheaved and swollen into burning waves by the simoom.

Here and there the monotony of the landscape was broken up by mountains of granite, the pyramidal summits of which undoubtedly suggested to the ancient Egyptians the idea of their massive monuments; but it is in vain you seek for a blade of moss or a solitary lichen; life is completely absent. The winds and the sun bring hither nothing but death.

Suddenly a strange and magnificent spectacle broke upon my gaze. Westward and northward rose from the bosom of the Desert a vast number of sand-columns of so prodigious an elevation, that they seemed to lose themselves in the blue of heaven. Some moved forward with a rapid gyratory motion; others traversed the vast solitude slowly: they seemed like fantastic monuments transported by an invisible arm.

At this sight, Achmet and some of my escort flung themselves prostrate in the dust, the names of Allah and Mohammed, and the verses of the Koran, rushing to their lips. As for the unfortunate Hakim, incapable of praying, he wrung his hands in despair, tore his hair, and uttered the most piercing cries.

And, in fact, the sand-pillars swept straight upon us. They were so numerous as to darken the sky. Many of them burst with a report like the discharge of artillery, scattering clouds of sand in all directions. It was useless to attempt to flee; the swiftest horse could not equal their rapidity!



SAND-COLUMNS.

"We are lost!" cried Hakim. "The Spirit of the Desert has plotted our destruction."

"Come," said I impatiently; "this is no time for tears and children's stories. Are there any means of escaping this great peril?"

Achmet studied the sky attentively.

"None are needed," said he, with an air of tranquillity. "Allah is great! Look at yonder

whirlwind of sand rushing towards the south : the wind has suddenly changed, and in a moment these columns will recede."

"Yes," answered Hakim; "but not until the demon who directs them has exterminated all our caravan. Everybody knows that these columns support the palace in which he dwells. Woe, woe to us unfortunates!"

He had scarcely finished speaking, when the pillars of sand, suddenly veering round, betook themselves to flight like a routed army. They were then between us and the sun, so that the rays of the latter, passing through them, transformed them into columns of fire. This fairy-like transformation threw Hakim into a fresh paroxysm of terror.

"Woe, woe to us unfortunates!" he repeated, turning pale. "The demon is furious; he is burning his palace; the whole desert will soon be in flames."

"He is calling upon Hell to swallow us up!" answered one of my followers, inoculated with the panic fears of Hakim.

Achmet shrugged his shoulders; but his brow grew gloomy.

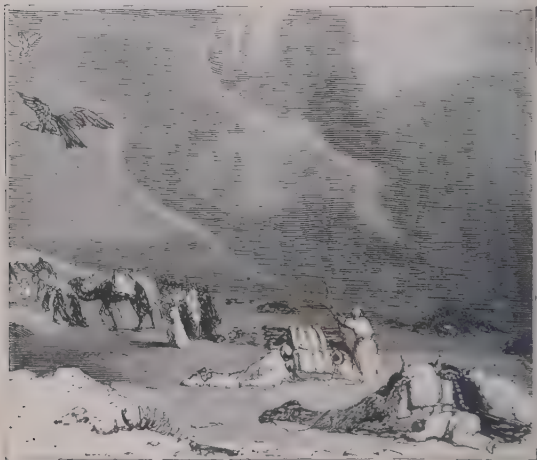
"These lurid, blood-red gleams," he explained, "make me fear the approach of the simoom."

The day passed, nevertheless, without further agitation; and on the following morning the sun rose, as was its wont, in a cloudless sky.

Soon, however, the south wind began to

blow ; its violent gusts were hot and heavy ; so oppressive became the air that we could not breathe without panting. Achmet, bending over his camel's head, and wrapped up in his bernouse, pushed forward, as if to escape being questioned. Darker and darker grew the horizon ; and a breath of fire, like that which issues from the mouth of a colossal furnace, gradually surrounded us.

"Fling yourselves on the ground !" cried Achmet.



THE SIMOOM.

We had barely time to follow his counsel before our camels, heaving a mournful cry, fell

upon their knees, stretched their long necks upon the ground, and endeavoured to bury their heads in the sand. We sheltered ourselves behind them as behind a wall. At the same moment, a purple cloud darted towards us with the velocity of lightning. A heat like that of red-hot iron seized us in its choking grasp. Minutes, which seemed to us ages, passed by. Our mouths glued to the sand, we were nearly suffocated. At length Achmet informed us that we might rise from our inconvenient position. The burning meteor had disappeared, leaving us greatly agitated by its passage.

Our beasts of burden, exhausted by thirst and fatigue, appeared to have suffered from the simoom much more than we had. Very fortunately, about midway on the road which rejoined the Nile, we found a well called Mourahd. It was not, alas ! one of those fresh oases in which travellers and camels equally delight ; and we were unable to fill our leathern bottles, already nearly empty. Its water was so bitter that we could not make up our minds to drink of it ; but our camels were less fastidious, and the poor beasts, which had been on the march for several days, stood in great need of quenching their thirst.

We next directed our course towards the abrupt rocks which on all sides surround Mourahd. After crossing these, we entered a

gorge about two hundred yards in breadth, which might well be called the "Valley of Bones," from the skeletons of camels strewn about its depths. These poor animals perish in great numbers before reaching the well: others arrive there, but in so exhausted a condition, that they soon succumb, in spite of the tardy succour. The abandoned carcasses lie upon the dusty soil; for there are neither flies nor insects to play the part of scavengers; the crows devour the flesh, and the dryness of the air converts the skin into a kind of shroud, as hard as wood. These mummies reveal to the gaze the outlines of the skeleton, and the very attitude of the animal at the moment it expired.

May 31st.—After seven days of dreary marching,—for the bones of camels are not the only bones the traveller meets with on his painful way, and Hakim never failed to fill our ears with the most melancholy stories,—we reached at length the little village of Abou-Hammed, where we again descended to the Nile and its ribbon of verdure. Be it understood that the word *verdure* is here employed in a relative sense, and that it requires all one's complaisance to bestow such a term on the dried-up bushes and powdery palm-trees. However, we rested ourselves under their shade with a very genuine delight, our ears beguiled by the murmur of the river against the rocks, which form in its bed a

succession of rapids. We had no longer any reason to feel afraid of thirst, for we quitted the banks of the Nile to follow up those of the Atbara.

The only town which lay upon our route until we reached the confluence of the two rivers is Berber, a heap of paltry brick houses, which would be unworthy of particular mention, were it not situated in the heart of an admirably fertile oasis. Thanks to a skilfully conducted irrigation, life and abundance prevail in this little corner of land. The Nubians, in cultivating it, seem to have been desirous of displaying to every eye the richness of the soil, and of showing, that if everywhere else the country is poor and unproductive, the cause is to be found in their lethargic neglect.

This luxury of vegetation, to which our camels were wholly unaccustomed, led, on our leaving Berber, to an irresistibly comic scene. Thoroughly rested and reinvigorated, Hakim marched proudly at the head of our little troop. Unfortunately, the mimosas and bushes which form on the bank of the river impenetrable jungles, preserved, at this point, an apparent freshness very enticing to our camels. The dragoman's steed, charmed by the sight of the green leaves, continually deviated from his route to snatch a few mouthfuls. Thereupon a very lively contest ensued between him and his rider;

kicks fell like hail upon the intractable animal, which replied with roars of revolt. Hakim was all the more interested in putting a check to this outbreak of gluttony, in that the mimosas are armed with threatening spines, curved like fish-hooks, and strong enough to rend into tatters the strongest garments. The branches in front of us interlaced, at a height of three to four feet, in an inextricable labyrinth. The camel could just manage to creep underneath them, but not so his rider. Hakim saw this; so he was determined that his beast should not diverge from the beaten track: on his side, the animal was not less determined to gratify his inclinations; and he in the long run proved successful. He pounced with the utmost rapidity on the object of his greediness, scarcely allowing time for his master to shelter his head with his raised arms. The moment afterwards Hakim was dashed against the thorns, which held him suspended, for a second, like fruit from a branch; then his garments gave way, and he fell heavily to the ground, uttering the most lamentable cries. His camel, overthrown by the violence of the shock, lay beside him; the two forming as pitiful-looking a group as you can imagine.

Misadventures of this kind are not uncommon. The camel, whose sobriety, gentleness, and patience are the theme of so many ill-informed writers on Natural History, does not

deserve, in truth, the flattering opinion entertained of him. On the contrary, among those who are really acquainted with the animal's habits, his gluttony and his stupidity are well known. He not only has no affection for his master, but never thinks of him. When once he has begun his march, he continues to advance with his awkward, automatic step, simply because he is too phlegmatic to indulge in any caprices. He will make no effort to throw you ; such a stratagem is quite beyond the range of his ideas ; he will march, and march, browsing here and there, without troubling himself the least about you. Only on one occasion does he recollect his master, and that is when the latter wishes to mount. Then he stretches towards him a long sinuous neck, opens an enormous mouth—ready to bite if he dared—and utters a furious low growl, as if to complain of a new and unexampled act of cruelty.

June 9th.—The Atbara, which empties its tribute into the Nile a few leagues below Berber, is, in the rainy season, a magnificent river, whose channel can scarcely contain its impetuous waters ; but at the period of the year when we arrived upon its banks, it is completely dry. The fine glittering sand of the river-bed reflected with so much splendour the rays of the sun, that our eyes were almost blinded. Arid plains stretched everywhere around ; a burning

light set the earth a-glow, and rendered distinctly visible, even to the furthest limits of the horizon, a landscape which borrows a certain magical character even from its very monotony. Along the river grew a great number of doum-trees—a kind of palm, the stem of which, instead



THE DOUM PALM.

of springing lightly and easily toward the sky, like that of the date, ramifies into tufted branches, affording a refreshing shade. We halted under a clump of these noble trees; and leaving our camels to browse in peace, we, prone upon the

sand, and in the enjoyment of the most luxurious sensations, gazed upon the charms of the radiant African scenery.

The hours passed away. At rare intervals the cry of a bird, or the distant roar of a hippopotamus, disturbed the profound silence of our solitude. What life, what activity, what strife, nevertheless, were concealed under this apparent calm! At my feet the termites hurried to and fro in quest of provender; which, when discovered, they carried away laboriously into their subterranean galleries, some of them bending under burdens three times larger than themselves. If a single worker could not manage it, others yoked themselves to him. I watched them turning aside from obstacles, climbing mountains made of pebbles—never discouraged even when the slipperiness of a stone capsized them in the midst of their attempt; and then the mishaps, the attacks of foes, the heavy hoof of the passing camel! What patience and energy these minute forms of life display! Surely they ought always to gain the reward of their arduous exertions.

But while I was watching them, a battalion of black ants treacherously drew near the habitation of the termites, to carry into execution a murderous *razzia*. The invading army spared nothing; and that world in miniature, an ant-hill, exhibited all the horrors of the sack and pillage of a city captured by assault.

In summer, the banks of the Atbara are the only *living* portion of these regions. Deep cavities have been hollowed out by the violence of the waters at those points where the river makes its sudden and abrupt bends. These reservoirs, which never dry up, and which are sometimes half a league* in length, afford a refuge to the most dissimilar species of animals. Enormous crocodiles, unwieldy hippopotami, turtles, and fishes of all kinds, live there in a more than brotherly intimacy. Undoubtedly many bloody dramas take place in the depths of these little lakes; but nothing troubles their peaceful surface.

Yielding to the influence of the shade and the languor, I began to dream; but appetite, keen and stimulating, soon roused me from my somnolence. I ordered a fire to be lighted. It was not long before the coffee boiled; and a couple of pintados, which we had shot in the morning, were soon in the act of being roasted. To complete this regal repast, a dessert was necessary; the douns which surrounded and sheltered us seemed to invite our ready hands to collect their dark-brown clusters. But, oh miserable deception! these fruits, so attractive to the eye, are of such an adamant texture that they resist the sharpest teeth;—one might as well gnaw at a log of wood! Achmet, who had seen me make the

* French league.

attempt, laughed in his sleeve at my discomfiture.

"Confusion! this unhappy country produces nothing."

"You see, at all events, that doums are not wanting."

"That is something to boast of, truly! I pity the inhabitants of the Atbara if they have no other resource."

"Allah is great. The fruit you see is the blessing of the Desert in a season of drought. We crush it between a couple of stones, and when it is reduced to powder boil it in milk. The pasha's table can offer no greater delicacy. The doum furnishes us also with provender for our cattle. The kernel of its fruit encloses a kind of almond, which, dried before the fire and then bruised, supplies the want of fodder."

"Let us pay all respect to the doum, then. I have spoken ill of it only through ignorance."

At the bottom of my heart, nevertheless, I could not help doubting the truth of Achmet's assurances. It seemed to me almost impossible that so leathery a fruit should ever become a savoury aliment. An opportunity, however, soon occurred of clearing up the matter. The pools scattered along the river bed were the only places where the birds and game could drink; a few shots provided us with a repast,

and the chase furnished us also with the means of exchanging with the Arabs we encountered. In this way we procured a mixture of doum-meal and goats' milk ready for cooking. To my great surprise the two ingredients, when boiled together, formed an excellent pottage; and thenceforth I was enabled to keep quite a liberal table.

My journey across Africa opened like a tourist's holiday excursion; and I should have been tempted to believe that our explorers had calumniated these remote regions, if the continual lamentations of Hakim had not prevented me from yielding to the agreeable delusion. The worthy fellow had already predicted, upwards of a score of times, that we should be devoured by wild beasts, killed or carried off into slavery by the negro tribes; that we should perish of hunger, thirst, fever, or fatigue. In vain did I represent to him that it was impossible we should die of all these deaths at once; he broke out into fits of anger the more violent and the more frequent as we receded further and further from civilized countries. I contented myself with laughing at his outbursts: he retired in a fury, plucking out his hair by handfuls!

June 20th.—If, thanks to our fowling-pieces, abundance reigned among my little company, such, unhappily, was not the case with the

natives. The place at which we had arrived, named Collodabad, served as a rendezvous for the Bischarin Arabs during the dry season. Great was the distress that prevailed in their encampment. Their cows yielded but little milk; the parched soil furnished neither roots nor fruits; and these pastoral tribes were unable to substitute the spoils of the chase for the produce of their herds. Cattle and men suffered extreme privations. To fill up their cup of bitterness, one of their children was carried off by a crocodile. The women ran hither and thither, shrieking and sobbing loudly; the men, with a sad, stern eye, contemplated the scene of desolation.

Touched by their misery, I sent to them by Hakim the game which I had killed during the day, namely, two couples of wild geese; but what was that among so many famished mouths? I had weapons, should I not endeavour to procure them a supply of food?

"These dogs of Bischarins," muttered Achmet, "are not worth the trouble you are bestowing upon them. It is true that hippopotami are very numerous here, and that it will not be difficult to kill one; but we should act more wisely if we kept it for our own use."

To attack a hippopotamus is a serious business for one who has never before aimed at higher game than a hare or a partridge. A moment's hesitation followed, I confess, on Achmet's words. However, nothing is so unwise in Nubia

as to show the slightest symptom of weakness. The consciousness or belief that Europeans are in some way or other infinitely their superiors kept obedient and respectful the men who acted as my escort: moral ascendancy was the best, in fact almost the only, guarantee of safety. Assuming, therefore, a calm and cheerful countenance, I prepared for an unexpected hunting expedition.

In silence we descended to the bed of the river: the thick bushes concealed us from the hippopotami, whose sonorous calls we could hear at a short distance from us; but, after a while, this shelter failed us. The unwieldy amphibia, whose shapeless bodies were lazily extended on the sand, caught sight of us, and immediately plunged into the water. They reappeared in a few moments, their growls seeming to threaten the imprudent adventurers who had presumed upon disturbing their retreat. A couple of barrels—for Achmet also carried a carbine—were discharged simultaneously. Lo! a general *sauve-qui-peut* took place in the muddy pool; the precipitation of the fugitives stirring up the water like a tremendous storm. A hippopotamus had been wounded. Mad with rage and pain, he leaped convulsively, raising columns of spray and foam around him, and opening to their full extent his enormous jaws. Again we fired upon him; the surface of the little lake was “incar-

nadined" with his blood, and the monster sank beneath the water. According to all appearance, he was mortally wounded; but how should we secure him?

The Arabs, from the shore, had observed all the incidents of the struggle. They uttered wild cries of joy when they saw us victorious; then they advanced into the pool, waist-deep, and at the risk of being devoured by the crocodiles. The hippopotamus lay at no great distance from the shore; he was hauled thither with stout ropes, and immediately a hideous scene commenced.

Three hundred Bischarins pressed around the animal with all the avidity of dogs at the quarry. Armed with long knives, they severed the limbs, and cut the flesh into strips, while the blood streamed down their hands, arms, and clothes. Disputes arose; for each wanted the largest share: some groped amongst the entrails in search of the fat; others endeavoured to snatch from the happy possessor of a dainty morsel a portion of his spoil. Women and children, assembling in crowds, soon swelled the tumult; at length the hippopotamus, cut up into a thousand pieces, was packed away on the camels, and brought into camp with triumphal songs.

Leaving the Arabs to indulge their appetite, I withdrew under a cluster of trees. Their chief soon made his appearance, with great demonstrations of gratitude, to invite me to join in the

banquet, at which his relations and friends would be assembled. So attractive an invitation could not be refused, and I hastened to the locality where the Bischarins had pitched their tents. A great animation reigned all around, the culinary preparations being of such importance as to require the presence of everybody. "Too many cooks," says the old proverb, "spoil the broth." But here the dishes were too simple to be spoiled: all the science of the Vatel of the Desert was confined to placing over a great fire an immense caldron, full of water, which no housewife's hand had ever washed. As soon as the water was hot, they threw into it the animal's limbs, which they left to boil in the froth and fat.

As the reader may suppose, these preparations occupied some time. Enormous lumps of flesh are not easily brought into an edible condition; and to beguile the time and dissipate my weariness, I addressed various questions to the chief:—

"Your tribe seems a considerable one. Does it extend far along the banks of the Atbara?"

"All the country formerly belonged to us; we could march for several days without quitting our own territories. As for our number, where is the man learned enough to count them?"

My friend the Bischarin not appearing very *strong* on the subject of statistics, I passed to another topic:—

"Since the Egyptians occupied Nubia, have they and your people frequently intermarried?"

"Allah be praised! Have you ever seen the gazelle mated with the hyena?"

"Yet you have adopted the religion of those Turks of whom you speak so ill?"

"It was written."

"You recognize the Egyptian Government? you pay it tribute?"

"Never! Its soldiers frequently plunder our tents when the drought compels us to seek the river banks; but when once we have regained the Desert, they may hunt a long time without overtaking us. And you strangers, do you pay a tax to the pasha?"

I could not help laughing.

"Neither to him, nor to any one."

"What! not even to the Padischah of Constantinople? The imans assert that the whole earth is subject to him."

"With all submission to your imans, the Padischah of Constantinople could not keep his seat on his throne without our help."

"Your country, then, must be very powerful. How many days would it take for a traveller to go from one end of it to the other?"

"Sixty days if he went on a camel's back; but we have fire-machines which accomplish the journey in a day and a half."

"Is it possible?"

At this moment the general agitation showed

that our repast was ready. The slices of hippopotamus had been flung without the slightest seasoning into a very large and very dirty wooden bowl.

On the chief's invitation I drew near, but not without a certain feeling of repugnance; so that I was easily anticipated by a crowd of guests. All seated themselves in silence round the savoury dish, waiting for the signal which should permit them to satisfy their voracity. Achmet and Hakim, who had placed themselves in the front row, fished out of the vessel a huge slice of half-cooked meat; but as the Bischarins, not making use of such superfluities, had neglected to provide them with a knife and fork, they were compelled to handle the meat with their fingers, and tear it into suitable morsels with their teeth. Thirty hands plunged immediately into the enormous mess; everybody pounced upon the still bleeding flesh. And in less than five minutes nothing was left but the bones.

"What! you have had nothing, my friend!" exclaimed the chief, perceiving, a little too late, that I had kept in the rear, without touching his abominable *cuisine*.

I own, however, it would have been discourteous in me to complain, since the Bischarins had offered me the best they had.

Night having come, I returned to my tent, my stomach somewhat empty, since I had par-

taken only of the smoke of the banquet. But there an agreeable surprise awaited me. Achmet, who had started in advance of me, had found time to prepare a most appetizing soup, made of hippopotamus steak and doum flour. I sat down gaily to my dainty dish, while my men lighted fires to keep at a distance the fierce beasts whose roar we could hear at intervals: they too, perhaps, had had to endure a prolonged fast, and the fragments of meat still remaining in the tents of our neighbours, the Arabs, excited their avidity.

I was on the point, at last, of retiring to rest, when a sound like that of distant thunder suddenly broke on my ears. Hoarse and solemn, the growl, or roar—I know not what to call it—continued without intermission. It was not the broken, irregular clang of thunder. What cause, then, could produce so singular a sound?

At this moment I became sensible of a great tumult among the Arabs: numerous voices mingled in a loud and boisterous medley; and the Bischarins rushed towards my tent exclaiming, "*El bahr! el bahr!*"—The river! the river!

The sound which I had taken for pealing thunder was the clash and din of the gathering waters. The swelling of the Atbara is not gradual, like that of our European rivers; it takes place suddenly, without any warning sign. From the commencement of my journey not a

drop of rain had fallen—on that very day the sky had been without a cloud; but the rains had begun on the Ethiopian table-lands. A multitude of brooks and torrents, precipitating themselves from the lofty mountains, were pouring their waters into the river near the Abyssinian frontiers.

A large number of Bischarins had encamped in the very bed of the Atbara, to enjoy a little more coolness. You may judge of their panic: men, women, children hastened to gain a place of safety. The darkness added to the disorder: everybody spoke without waiting for an answer, and the great voice of the river, prevailing over the shouts of the multitude, announced the immediate coming of the flood. Fortunately, after all this panic, we had only to regret the loss of one or two beasts of burden.

CHAPTER II.

SPRING IN NUBIA—AN UNEXPECTED RENCONTRE—A TRAGICAL ADVENTURE—THE BOGOS—THE STORY OF THE TWO LOVERS

June 21st.



ON the following day the rays of morning lighted up a splendid scene. Where, on the preceding evening, stretched the wide wastes of burning sands, now rolled a majestic river upwards of five hundred yards in breadth, and among its waters were joyously disporting the aquatic monsters but lately imprisoned in the narrow marsh-land. The heat being diminished, nature resumed that exuberance of life which is one of the peculiar characteristics of tropical vegetation. The sap circulated rapidly in the veins of the plants: in two days the trees, withered up by the simoom, were covered with buds and leaves; the mimosas began to afford some shade for the trembling gazelles; the birds built their nests; the air grew warm and heavy with abundant vapours. Spring, with all its promise, abruptly succeeded to the sterile season, which, spite of its fervid sun, we

may call the Nubian winter, for it strips the earth as cleanly as a rigorous frost.

We resumed our march, admiring this bright spectacle of rejuvenescence, which always and everywhere seems to delight the human heart, and to recruit our nerves and muscles. Hakim himself was conscious of the beneficial influence: it interrupted his Jeremiads, and something resembling a smile fluttered about his lips; but the muscles of his face were so little accustomed to this kind of exercise that the attempt terminated only in a most comical grimace.

"Yonder are the hills of Gozeradjup!" he exclaimed in a tone of triumph, pointing out to us on the horizon a bluish cloud.

"What is there in the hills of Gozeradjup to cause you so much joy, Signor Hakim?"

"What is there? Why this: they indicate the boundary of this horrible Desert. Look around! At our feet everything is fertile; but the moment we move inland from the Atbara we plunge into plains of sand, and the sight alone is sufficient," he added, "to make me tremble;" and he closed his eyes as if to shut out the gloomy spectacle. "But now we shall soon traverse an inhabited country: we are approaching Cassala, where one knows what it is to live. I spent two years there in company with a European. Ah me! what a good table we kept! what a joyous life we led! The tobacco, above

all, was delicious; I have never smoked with greater pleasure."

"In a word, Cassala is a complete Mohammedan paradise?"

"It is a fact that I should ask for nothing better in the other world," replied Hakim, with a touching modesty.

The hills of Gozeradjup consist of enormous blocks of granite piled one upon another; some stand erect, like gigantic warriors who climb the abrupt declivities of the mountain; others are prone on the ground, and affect a fantastic configuration. The plains stretching away southward are famous for their excellent pasturage; so thither the Arabs flock from all directions, guiding their numerous herds of goats, sheep, camels, and oxen. These tribes, however, are not exclusively pastoral, like the Bisharin; they combine with their peaceful occupation of rearing cattle the warrior qualities which render them formidable to the Egyptians themselves. The Hadendoas—for such is the name of these natives—have a haughty bearing and remarkably fine features: intelligence and resolution are imprinted on their faces. Clothed in a piece of stuff, one of the folds of which is after the fashion of a Scotch plaid, they return to the highlands with their herds in numerous groups.

They frequently encamped by our side during the night-halt. It was wonderful to see with

what rapidity they raised their tents and unloaded their camels: the women ran hither and thither, making ready the evening meal; the children played around the fires, which threw up columns of flame against the darkening sky. All at once a solemn silence succeeded to the noisy revel. A white-bearded old man, a fakir or priest, in a grave voice called around him the members of the tribe. All took their places near him, and, their faces turned towards the east, they recited with earnest devotion their evening prayers. In the soul of these poor Arabs there is a sincere religious sentiment, a remarkable elevation and nobility; but Mohammedanism chokes these innate virtues, and prevents them from bearing fruit.

June 25th.—We quitted the borders of the river, to travel in an easterly direction towards the town of Cassala. The country, level and bare of trees, is admirably fertile, and might be one of the richest cotton-growing districts in Africa, if its irrigation were conducted on scientific principles. For want of this, it is simply an immense plain covered with mimosas and impenetrable jungles. Here and there we fell in with a few cotton-plantations; but the natives have never conceived the idea of making it a staple product: they limit their cultivation to the exigencies of the local consumption, which is very restricted. However, we recognized here the

elements of a very genuine prosperity, and one cannot but regret that the Arabs of these regions should live in so much misery while they have under their hand such means of wealth.

The Hadendoas are compelled to abandon with the utmost rapidity the encampments which they have occupied during the dry season, because sudden inundations render uninhabitable, at that time of the year, a considerable portion of the region comprised between the Atbara and Cassala. However, the rains had hardly commenced, the river had not overflowed its banks, —nothing, apparently, explained the invasion of the waters. Achmet furnished me with a key to the enigma.

“Not far from this point,” he said, “a great river, called the Gach, loses itself in the ground, where it deposits a fertilizing mud. Had we passed sooner, these plains would have presented a very different appearance: a few hours ago what is now a marsh was a fertile plain dotted with Arab tents.”

The Gach rises among the mountains of Abyssinia, and would empty itself into the Atbara if its course were not arrested by the want of a sufficient slope. Consequently it is divided into a legion of streams, which are absorbed by the sands, and form the marshes that astonished me.

It was not long, in fact, before I saw, in the direction of Cassala, a great number of tiny

water-courses. These, as we advanced, increased in magnitude, drew nearer one another, and eventually united in one majestic river.

I learned from an aged Arab that in years of exceptional floods the Gach makes its way as far as the Atbara. But this is, really, a very rare phenomenon,—it does not occur oftener than once in a score of years; but the Hadendoa assured me that he knew the point of confluence of the two rivers, and offered to show it to me if I would go back with him a few leagues.

At this proposition Hakim uttered loud cries of despair.

“You have sworn,” he said, “that I shall perish in this accursed country. If you delay any longer my arrival at Cassala, you will carry there nothing but my corpse.”

That I might not have such a sin upon my conscience, I refused the good Arab’s proposal. Contrary to our expectation, the closer we approached the town which the dragoman had depicted to us as an abode of delight, the wilder and gloomier grew the aspect of the country: uncultivated plains, ruined houses, deserted suburbs, everywhere burst upon our astonished gaze.

“Has the plague visited these villages? I have not seen a living soul.”

Achmet shrugged his shoulders.

“It is a trick of these dogs of Arabs: rather than pay the government-tax they will flee into the Desert, and die there of hunger.”

"Not a very agreeable fate ! Surely your tax-collectors must be very rough, if the natives prefer such a prospect !"

Before he could reply, we saw emerging from the ruins—like a shadow in the midst of tombs—a child about twelve years old, thin, feeble, wan, and covered with rags. His face, more bronzed than that of an Arab, was shrunken with suffering. We halted under a clump of trees. He advanced with a timid air, and throwing himself on his knees, exclaimed,—

"Good stranger, have pity upon me ! I am starving !"

His attitude, his look, his voice were all so suppliant, that I felt myself moved with a profound compassion.

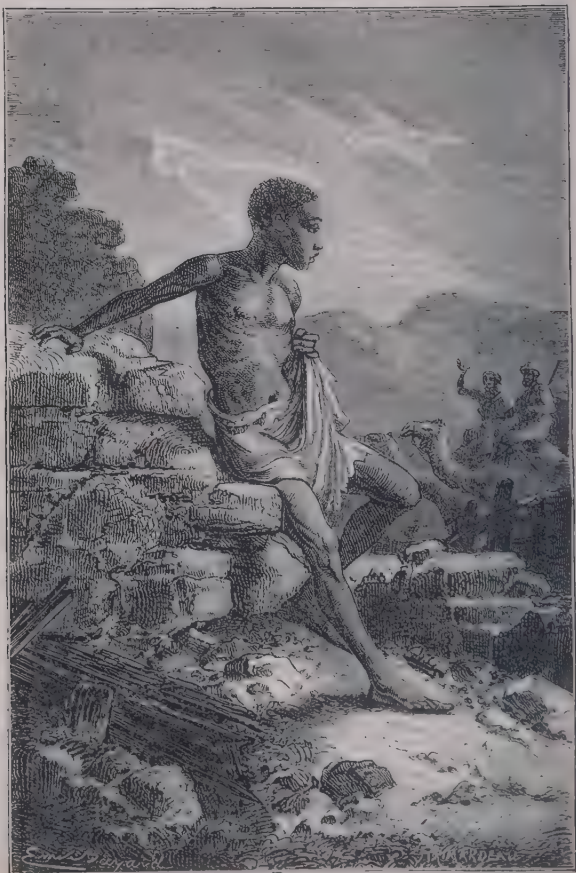
"Whence come you, poor child ? How is it that you are left alone in this deserted village ?"

"The Egyptian soldiers have killed my father because he defended his house, instead of escaping into the Desert like his neighbours."

The orphan seemed scarcely able to support himself ; this was not the time to trouble him with questions. I made him eat, and addressed to him some encouraging words. When he had grown more composed, I endeavoured to draw from him some further explanations.

"Why did the Egyptian soldiers want to seize on your father's house ?"

"They said my father had not paid his taxes. This was not true. They had already carried off



"LIKE A SHADOW IN THE MIDST OF TOMBS."

our finest goats, and half of our supply of doura. Yet this did not prevent them from returning last week, with their sabres and their guns. Ibrahim gave us warning on the evening before—”

“Ibrahim? who is he?”

“An Arab of Cassala. As soon as he had told us the evil news, all our neighbours prepared to fly into the Desert. My father attempted to detain them: he said it was a shame to abandon the village which they ought to defend. They would not listen, and he remained with some of his friends. My mother and I wept while assisting him to get ready his weapons. We begged my father to set out.

“‘Be not afraid,’ he replied. ‘Ibrahim says there are not more than fifteen of these infamous soldiers; we shall make an end of them.’—‘Yes,’ rejoined my mother; ‘but next week we shall have fifty upon us.’—‘But after this I will go in person and complain to the *mudir*, and make him do me justice.’

“My mother did not seem reassured; for myself, I ceased to tremble, since my father was not afraid.

“Next morning a great trampling of horses announced the arrival of the soldiers. Ibrahim was deceived: instead of fifteen, there were upwards of sixty!

“My father made me enter the house, and advanced to meet the enemy. I would fain have

gone with him : I cried, I stormed. All at once I saw my mother with a countenance so changed that I instantly became tranquil. We heard in the village the discharge of musketry ; but we could see nothing. Seized with a panic of terror, we took refuge in the darkest corner of our hut, just as a bullet traversed the wall : the door was battered in with the but-ends of muskets. My father, his face and clothes covered with blood, defended the entrance against eight or ten soldiers. Already a pistol was levelled at his forehead ; my mother rushed forward to seize the weapon, but one of those wicked men thrust his sword into her bosom. A moment afterwards my father fell by her side. Both were bleeding, and their faces were sad to see ! I embraced, I caressed them : they made no answer. Their fixed eyes did not seem to regard me."

Here the child paused, overcome by his painful recollections. He shed no tears ; but a dull, deep melancholy overspread his shrunken features.

"And how did *you* contrive to escape ?"

"I was too full of grief to think of escaping. I refused to leave my parents. One of the soldiers tore me away from them, bound me on his horse, and carried me off, intending, I suppose, to sell me into slavery ; but the next night, while he was asleep, I stealthily drew his sword and cut the cords which fettered my legs. Once free, I ran like the ostrich. Before daybreak I was

back in our ruined hut. Nearly every house in the village had been burned to the ground; I concealed myself as best I could."

"But you had nothing to eat?"

"I found a little doura which the Egyptians had forgotten to carry away. But yesterday I ate the last of it, and I was perishing of hunger when I met you. Now I am no longer afraid: you will not abandon me."

"Why are you so trustful? You know not who I am. Suppose I were going to give you up to the Egyptian soldiers?"

For a moment the child trembled with fear; then he recovered himself.

"Oh no, no!" he said, fixing upon me his great eyes, full of softness and delicacy. "You are a European, like the *abouna* Stella, of whom my mother used to speak."

"The *abouna* Stella, the missionary in the land of the Bogos?"

"Even so. My father and mother came from Keren."

"Then, perhaps, you are a Christian?"

"Yes."

"How are you named?"

"Ouelda Yesous."

Keenly interested, I induced the child to relate the remainder of his history, or, rather, that of his parents. His father, named Terso, belonged to the tribe of the Bogos, a people of Abyssinian origin, inhabiting the frontiers of Upper Nubia

or Taka, and who, in conformity with their ancestral traditions, continued to call themselves Christians, though their faith has undergone some singular modifications. These pretended disciples of the gospel had neither priests nor churches, until the will of Providence brought into their midst, about 1853, a young Piedmontese missionary, Father Giovanni Stella. By dint of charity, and patience, and devotion, the zealous apostle acquired a mighty influence over the semi-barbarous nations he had come to convert. Terso was one of his first neophytes; he was then deeply in love, and on the point of marrying a young girl distantly related to him.

Lemlem possessed the fine and delicate beauty of the young Abyssinian maiden; her features were softly pure; the brilliancy of her large dark eyes could not be surpassed, though it was subdued by the Florentine bronze hue of her skin. The marriage was to be celebrated in a few days. The families were preparing for the marriage festival, when joy all at once was changed into mourning.

The land of the Bogos had tempted the cupidity of the Egyptian beys. In 1854, Khosrew, mudir or governor of Cassala, pounced on the peaceable tribe with an army whose ranks he had recruited from all the robbers in the neighbourhood. The Bogos, completely surrounded and taken by surprise, were caught as in a net; their bravest combatants perished with their arms in their hands.

The town of Keren was given over to the flames ; four hundred prisoners, mostly women and children, were carried off by the robbers. Terso, left for dead on the battle-field, owed his safety almost to a miracle. As for Lemlem, she was dragged in the train of the savage conquerors.

It is impossible to describe the young man's despair when he learned the misfortune that had befallen his betrothed. Without listening to the representations of Father Stella, who promised to obtain him justice, he set out as soon as the condition of his wounds enabled him to stand upright. From information he had picked up among the Bogos who had escaped the disaster, he knew the name of Lemlem's captor. He was no other than Khosrew. Terso betook himself to Cassala, succeeded in making his way at night into the mudir's palace, and released his betrothed. At that time there was a Greek merchant in the town, the *mallem** Georgis, who, thanks to his immense fortune and his vast commercial relations, enjoyed an influence in Cassala nearly equal to that of the governor himself. Every traveller who has visited Cassala knows this noble old man, and preserves a pleasant remembrance of the admirable use he made of his wealth. It was to his house the two fugitives repaired in search of an asylum. For several months they remained concealed in the palace of the mallem, where they were secretly married by Father Stella.

* A title of honour.

The missionary had visited Cassala to solicit from Khosrew some compensation for the injuries he had inflicted on the unfortunate Bogos. The mudir refused: he declared that all the Christians of the country were rebels, and deserved an exemplary chastisement. Father Stella, however, was not discouraged by this check; he addressed himself to the English consul, who, failing to obtain any satisfaction from Khosrew, repaired to Alexandria. Here he was successful with the Egyptian Government. The hateful mudir of Cassala was disgraced; and instructions were given that the captives, three hundred and eighty in number, should be set at liberty. Terso and Lemlem had nothing more to fear; they remained in the country under the protection of the good mallem, and erected a small cotton plantation, which succeeded wonderfully; but which, as we have seen, provoked the cupidity of the tax-collectors.

CHAPTER III.

ENTRANCE INTO CASSALA—SHEPHERDS CHANGED INTO WOLVES—CAPTURE AND SACK OF THE TOWN—TWELVE FRENCHMEN AGAINST FIVE THOUSAND NATIVES—WE GO IN SEARCH OF A RESTING-PLACE—A DISTANT RELATIONSHIP—THE BASENS—AN ENTERTAINMENT GIVEN BY THE MONKEYS.

“ June 29th.



QUELDA has become my favourite; there is so much gentleness, so much natural rectitude, in the poor boy, that it is impossible not to love him. However, I do not dream of his accompanying me into the depths of Africa; he is too young to take part in so adventurous an expedition. I wish simply to recommend him to some European at Cassala, and to assure myself before my departure that he would thenceforth be safe from the cruel sufferings his family had undergone; but whenever I speak to him of his being separated from me, the child exhibits the most genuine despair.

“ ‘Do not abandon me!’ he cries; ‘I have already lost my father and my mother; what will become of me without *you*?’

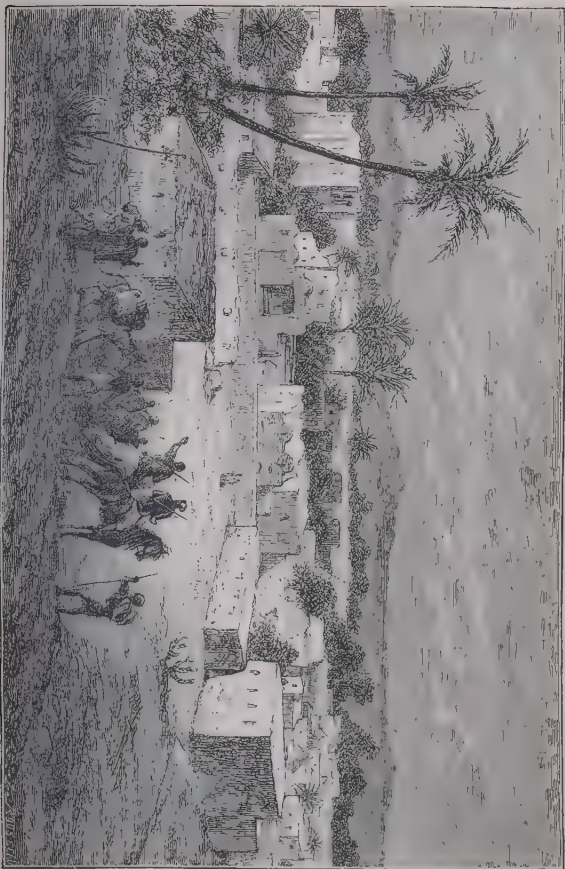
“ I cease to torment him, hoping that he will

eventually hear reason when I have found him a humane and generous protector."

Such is a faithful extract from my diary.

A day's march brought me to the capital of Upper Nubia. What a capital! Its eight thousand inhabitants are crowded together in paltry houses, built of sun-dried bricks. The narrow and badly laid-out streets offer the pedestrian but one alternative,—thick mud, or suffocating dust, according to the season. Rude fortifications, moats, half-ruined bastions, increase the gloominess of the town, and bear witness to the strategical intentions of its founders. At the outset, Cassala was intended simply to furnish a centre of operations for the subjugation of the frontier tribes; it is owing to its situation on the route of the caravans of the Soudan that it has now become a place of commercial importance. Still, however, it preserves its gloomy character, and breathes, as it were, the atmosphere of despotism. It is from this point that the Egyptian authorities levy upon the Arabs their ruinous taxes, equally fatal to agriculture and to industry. Not only camels, and oxen, and sheep, are subjected to extraordinary imposts; but the foolish greediness of the governors encumbers with a crushing tax the cultivated land. Hence the natives leave unploughed and unsown the vast plains which a very little labour would render productive. "It is better," they

VIEW OF THE CITY OF CASSALA.



say, "to abandon the land to God who made it, than to till it to enrich our enemies."

But enormous as are the legal taxes, they are greatly exaggerated by the exactions of the soldiers and collectors. All wish to have their share of the booty, and pillage the country without mercy. A rich plantation, a prosperous farm, infallibly become the object of their covetousness. The inhabitants take to flight at their approach; the women, children, herds, are securely concealed in inaccessible retreats; but the crops, ripe for the harvest, are abandoned to the plunderers, who, in their blind rage, destroy in a day the resources of a year.

At the time we entered within its walls, Cassala presented a more than ordinarily morose aspect. Two years before, a succession of terrible events had drenched it in blood, and it preserved the traces of the havoc it had undergone. Let us pause a moment while I describe the causes which led to so sad a result.

Four to five thousand negro troops had been marched upon the Nubian frontiers, with the intention of seizing a favourable opportunity to march against Abyssinia; for Egypt has never disguised its project of subjugating that ancient state. Nevertheless, the difficulty of the roads, and the fear of a disaster, delayed the departure of the army; the soldiers, without any other means of support than could be obtained by

pillage, broke out into rebellion against their generals. On the 5th of July 1865 the rebels marched upon Cassala. The moment they entered the city, their ranks were increased by the wild population of the suburbs, and even by a portion of the garrison, which was principally composed of blacks. The mudir shut himself up in the brick edifice which served him as a palace, abandoning the citizens to the fury of the insurgents. The latter forced their way into the shops and houses, seized upon every article of value, massacred the traders who were rash enough to defend their property, and even the inoffensive passers-by whom they chanced to encounter, in their lust of blood. The city was panic-stricken by the acts of awful cruelty which they committed; the Egyptian officers concealed themselves to escape the vengeance of the maddened soldiery. Those who were discovered perished miserably: their dead bodies were hacked in pieces; and the mob quarrelled over the bleeding fragments.

Intoxicated with carnage, the soldiers dashed headlong towards the mudir's palace, but were arrested in their onset by an unexpected obstacle. On their way they had to pass the residence of Panaïoti Kotzika, a nephew of the mallem Georgis, that benevolent Greek merchant who saved Terso and Lemlem. There were gathered together a dozen Frenchmen, who had followed the Comte du Bisson into Upper Nubia

to found an agricultural colony. The enterprise had failed, and the surviving adventurers were enjoying the generous hospitality of the rich merchant of Cassala. On seeing the approach of the rebels, this handful of resolute men opened upon them a well-directed fire, which sowed death in their ranks. "Dogs of infidels!" cried the furious negroes; "woe to those of you who fall into our hands!" The rapid volleys continued; the soldiers made a disorderly retreat into the town, to return in a short period with large reinforcements for a fresh attack upon the house. Repulsed with loss, they finally abandoned all hope of seizing upon a post so courageously defended, and went elsewhere to seek an easier prey.

For two months Cassala remained in the hands of the insurgents. The mudir, saved by the gallantry of the French, had fled for refuge, with all his suite, to the house of Kotzika, which seemed to him safer than his own; a crowd of citizens had also sought there an asylum. These poor wretches, huddled in the courts, the gardens, the offices, had no other resource than the generosity of the Greek merchant; but it did not fail them. Crises of this kind, says the eminent traveller Lejean, from whose mouth we learned these details, have this much of good, that they permit Europeans to display those precious qualities of coolness, energy, and humanity,

which assure the Frank so great a moral ascendancy among the Orientals.

At length three thousand regular troops were despatched to Cassala by the Governor of the Soudan; and the rebels, whose ammunition had begun to fail them, saw themselves compelled to lay down their arms. Then were reproduced the barbarous scenes which had desolated the city; only, this time, it was the Egyptians who filled the office of murderers and executioners. The pasha gave orders that all the negroes should be massacred without pity; and in the evening the streets were encumbered with two thousand corpses. The houses of the rebels were given up to pillage; their wives and children sold as slaves. This is called in the Soudan *doing justice!*

While I traversed the dusty lanes of Cassala, the sun had set in a cloud of purple,—deep dark night came down upon the city; and yet I had not found any house which inspired me with confidence sufficient to ask for shelter in it. I had learned from Ouelda that the good malleme Georgis was dead; and to his nephew Panaïoti Kotzika I had no letter of recommendation. In this embarrassment the dragoman remembered that a kinsman of his had formerly lived at Cassala.

“If he be here still,” he cried, “Ali will only be too happy to receive us! He is such a brave

lad! It is twelve years ago since I first saw him, and we have never met since; but I am sure he will do what he can to accommodate us."

One of the weaknesses of the honest Hakim was his incessant vaunting of his family. Hence the assurance he gave me did not inspire a very firm confidence.

"If he be a distant relation, with whom you have no longer any connection, perhaps he will not display all the eagerness you suppose."

"A distant relation! No, no. He is the son of the uncle of the brother of the cousin of my aunt. You cannot be much nearer akin than *that!*"

His reply elicited a burst of laughter.

"What!" he exclaimed, with an air of indignation, "do not you Northern people recognize the ties of blood?"

"Certainly we do not extend them so far. But enough; I am willing to believe that this near kinsman is wholly devoted to you. Take me quickly to his residence; it is high time we found a resting-place."

But the task did not prove an easy one. Hakim pushed his inquiries in every direction, without discovering his "cousin." Some said he had entered the mudir's service; others, that he had quitted Cassala, which, they added, was no great loss; others, again, that he was engaged with some bandits to form the escort of a Khar-toum slave-merchant. These sarcasms irritated

Hakim. But for my interference, he would have had a quick revenge on those who dared to speak so evilly of the son of the uncle of the brother of the cousin of his aunt; but not desirous of signalizing my entrance into the town by a quarrel, I imposed silence upon him. Thereupon he discharged his wrath at one of the baggage-porters: the unfortunate man was overwhelmed with insults, and received several blows of the courbatch, which he hardly deserved. Then Hakim turned upon himself. He plucked a few of the scanty locks which still remained on his denuded forehead; and gradually his irritation subsided.

As yet, however, we had found no accommodation; and we were compelled to quit the town, and erect our tents near the ramparts, under a clump of wild fig-trees. This resolution provoked Hakim into an explosion of such comical despair, that I should have laughed heartily had I not myself been sorely disappointed. I sat down sadly to partake of my everlasting doura soup; but I had scarcely begun to eat, before I was interrupted by lugubrious howlings. They proceeded from the hyenas which prowled around our encampment.

“What means this? Has not Achmet kindled the watch-fires?”

“From the entrance of the tent you may see their flames. But you must not allow yourself to be disturbed by these cries. At Cassala

people grow accustomed to them. Were it not for the hyenas and the vultures, the pestilence would soon swoop down upon the country; for all dead animals are left on the public highways, or flung outside the gates of the town. The butchers do not give themselves the trouble even to bury or destroy the entrails of their sheep and oxen; they let them lie in the front of their shops; and by the following morning all has disappeared."

"Then the work of the scavenger is intrusted to the hyenas; the arrangement is economical. You omitted this little detail, Hakim, in the description of your terrestrial paradise."

"I no longer recognize Cassala," replied the dragoman, with a gloomy countenance. "I never thought of sleeping in the open air, and eating doura outside its gates. Allah help us! What may we expect for the remainder of our journey, when even here we are not better treated? I am already several pounds lighter; I am sure that before two months—"

A loud and protracted cry of distress interrupted Hakim. We rose immediately, though it was no human voice which caused our emotion. The first feeling of agitation over, we recognized the lamentable appeal of one of our asses. Ouelda, who had gone to ascertain the cause of the uproar, discovered the poor animal in the grasp of a hyena. Armed with cudgels, we hastened to the spot; but the cunning brute

did not wait for our arrival: he took to his heels with all his might, leaving behind him his intended victim, which, petrified with terror, continued to bray in the most plaintive fashion.

July 1st.—The arrival of a Frenchman was an event on the frontiers of Upper Nubia, and all Cassala was soon acquainted with my presence. Just as I was about to recommence my peregrinations in the town, a stranger of European appearance approached my tent. He had been sent by Kotzika, and came to tell me that his master placed his house at my disposal. Never did traveller dying of thirst in the Desert hear with greater joy of the existence of a neighbouring well. Hakim shed tears of tender rapture! We hastened our preparations for departure, and were soon on the road to Kotzika's residence.

The nephew of the mallein Georgis occupied a splendid house, surrounded by magnificent gardens. I was received with the most cordial hospitality; and in the evening, after an ample repast, retired to rest on a *bed*—a luxury which I had not enjoyed since my departure from Cairo. Cassala was the last place where I could hope to enjoy the comforts of civilized life before plunging into savage regions. On the following morning, refreshed by sleep, I betook myself to the market-place to purchase an ass, intended to replace the animal wounded by the hyena. The

sun, which began to rise above the horizon, forced me to seek shelter in a café. The *locale* consisted of a very dull and dirty chamber, at the door of which were arranged, under a gallery protected against the heat of the day, several rude seats, *angareps*, or litters, and banks of earth. There the frequenters of the establishment, seated, or crouching, or recumbent, drank and smoked. Some officials, wearing turbans, played at dominoes; a few soldiers and *virtuosos* were gathered round an Armenian merchant and his wares.

A native, bony, angular, fierce of countenance, and in greasy garments, took his seat at my side. He was an *hadji*,—that is, a pilgrim who had accomplished the journey to Mecca; and everybody, therefore, bent before him with all the signs of the most intense respect. Nevertheless, so far as I was concerned, this sacred personage inspired me with an aversion which I could not conceal. He perceived it, and had the good manners to rise and go elsewhere. I heaved a sigh of relief: but, alas! I had rejoiced too soon. My unwelcome neighbour had hardly removed before I felt all over my body the most unendurable itching, and discovered—*horribile dictu!*—several hideous parasites preparing to install themselves on my person. In a panic of disgust I hurried away from the filthy place,—

“ Vowing, though somewhat late, indeed,
It ne’er should see me more ! ” *

* “ Jurant, mais un peu tard, qu’on ne m’y prendrait plus.”

The victim of so cruel a suffering, I had no longer the slightest desire to continue my promenade. I returned to my temporary residence, and abandoned myself to the most minute corporeal investigation !

For some days my excursions were directed to the east and south of the town, where rose a picturesque range of granite mountains ; these resembling colossal sphinxes ; those, feudal fortresses flanked by towers and bastions. The most remarkable is the Jebel Cassala, a splendid mass of rocks, rearing its dome-shaped peaks to an elevation of three thousand five hundred feet above the sea-level. A forest of doums, circling, like a crown of verdure, the head of this king of the clouds, surrounds the smooth, inaccessible summits. At the foot of the mountain the Gach rolls noisily its mighty flood of foaming waters, swollen by all the torrents of the lowlands. This river is known in Abyssinia as the Mareb ; it attains its maximum breadth under the walls of Cassala, one of whose bastions it washes, and probably will some day carry away. It appears at this point to be about sixty yards across.

The declivities of the Jebel Cassala offer the most admirable observatories for studying the topography of the country. At a height of only two or three yards my gaze comprehended an immense panorama. The mountains of Mokran and Sabterat, in the glow of an Eastern sun, sharply defined against the sky their broken

and irregular outlines; palm-trees, and cotton-fields, and corn-lands encroached on the tawny area of the Desert; while, towards the south, the wild and rugged country of the Basens bounds the horizon.

This tribe, one of the most warlike on the Abyssinian frontiers, interested me keenly; for I had to traverse a part of their territory. I sought for information respecting them from an Egyptian whom Panaioti Kotzika had placed at my service.

"The Basens," he said, "are the most wicked people in the world. They live wholly on plunder, and think of nothing but the injury they can do their neighbours."

"It is, perhaps, a sentiment of patriotism which animates them against Egypt. Your government is not much loved in this country.

"Oh, the Abyssinians and the Arabs are no better treated than we are. All is game that comes to the net of the Basens. They not only attack and despoil the caravans, but make descents upon the peaceful villages: these, in truth, are positive butcheries. The inhabitants may plead for quarter, but they never obtain it; even women and children are massacred. When the bandits are weary of killing, they return to their mountains, gorged with blood and loaded with booty."

"Everybody ought to declare war against such

beasts of prey. How is it they have not been exterminated?"

"Several regiments have been despatched to punish them; but look yonder! Do you see those gorges, those defiles, those inaccessible rocks? The mountains of the Basens are a more impregnable fortress than Cassala. What can be done against people so defended by nature?"

"What you say is not reässuring. Now, your hand on your heart, do you not exaggerate a little?"

"Since you are about to visit the country, you can correct my information," replied the Egyptian.

Not the less I remained persuaded that the hatred cherished against the Basens was partly to be attributed to the regrets of disappointed ambition; for their mountains command the plateau of Gondar, and the inhabitants are acquainted with all the roads leading to the heart of the Abyssinian Empire.

As noon approached, the heat grew suffocating. I directed my steps towards a group of mimosas, palms, and other tall trees, which promised a little freshness. Reclining in their shade, I could see through the embowering foliage a pond frequented by geese and ducks; snipes skimmed the waters with rapid wing; herons, storks, and marabouts stalked about the banks. Many, fantastically posed on one of their long legs, stood

motionless, their long neck half bended back, as if they were meditating some weighty problem. A host of other birds, with varied plumage, animated the neighbouring bushes and the surface of the marsh. Women went down to the water, carrying large jars balanced on their heads. I could hear their merry prattle; but the feathered tenants of the little lake seemed accustomed to their visits. They did not fly away, nor even interrupt their cries and warbling.

One after another, the water-carriers retired; not without throwing upon me a curious and inquiring glance. Two or three went out of their way in order to have an opportunity of examining me more closely. After all, there was nothing surprising in the conduct of these daughters of Eve. Figure to yourself an inhabitant of Upper Nubia, dressed in her national costume, her head ornamented with the long wooden needle which serves as a comb,—let us figure to ourselves, I say, the arrival of this honest woman in one of our quiet rural towns. What a commotion it would cause amongst the gossips, ay, and even among grave and dignified individuals! I fear very much that, in point of indiscretion, we should far exceed the poor Africans.

The last Nubian woman had just disappeared, when a hairy, timid, and stealthy muzzle softly emerged from the shelter of a thick bush; it belonged to an ape of a very pretty species. Re-

assured by the silence, he drew near the pond, and uttered a kind of summons: immediately three, then twelve, then fifteen, then a score of his companions bounded towards the spot, giving themselves up to the most comical evolutions. This one twisted his tail round the body of a neighbour, which, suddenly arrested, lost his footing on the sand, and plunged head foremost into the water; that one snatched away a kind of nut from his fellow, and looking defiantly into his face and chuckling, began to crack it and devour its contents. Further off I could see a mother ape administering correction to her unruly progeny; others tumbled heels over head, or scrambled up the trees, and balanced themselves among their boughs. The coquettish females among them approached the water, and contemplated their charms with visible satisfaction; while the graybeards of the quadrumanous tribe regarded with a grave and protecting air the sports of the foolish youth.

The better to enjoy a spectacle so amusing, I rose and advanced towards the morass with a silent step; but, unfortunately, my presence was betrayed by the crackling of some withered leaves on which I accidentally trod. I heard immediately a loud noise like that of dogs barking. The apes raised their heads, looked around them, and then began to run towards the mountain. Like all the social or gregarious species, these animals place one of their number as

sentinel while the others are drinking, or in search of food, or enjoying their capricious pastimes. This vigilant guardian had caught sight of me, and had uttered the warning-cry which had led to the hasty dispersion of the whole company.

The day following I took my leave of Cassala, and of the hospitable abode where I had received so cordial and so generous a welcome. Panaïoti Kotzika promised to take charge of my little orphan, Oueda Yesous; but when I made known to the child my intended departure, and my design to leave him behind me, he flung himself on his knees, and in the most pathetic manner besought permission to accompany me.

"There is no one—no one—but you who loves me!" he cried; "abandon me, and I shall die of grief."

"You are much more likely to die if you go with me: you will be called upon to endure hunger, and thirst, and fatigue. Remain here until my return; I shall not be absent more than a twelve-month; as I pass homeward, I will take Cassala in my route to fetch you."

But Oueda would not listen; he clung to my clothes; he wept; he assured me he was better able to support privations than I was. In fine, he managed so well that he did not stay at Cassala!

CHAPTER IV.

RETURN TO THE ATBARA—THE TSETSE FLY—A FANTASIA—A NOVEL
MARRIAGE CEREMONY—A PERILOUS JOURNEY—KING LEOPARD AND
ISMAIL-PASHA.

July 8th.



THREE days' marching brought us back to the Atbara, which I resolved on crossing with all possible speed, the eastern bank being furrowed with torrents which render it impracticable in the rainy season. The river-valley had greatly changed its aspect since I quitted it. Clothed in prolific vegetation, it presented a smiling image of abundance; the smallest brooks were transformed into powerful rivers, life everywhere overflowed, and the reinvigorated country-side laughed in the sun, whose burning arrows it no longer dreaded. The ground in this locality is not smooth and level, as in the neighbourhood of Gozeradjup. It presents a succession of high lands and narrow ravines; the valley, excessively deep, is several miles broad, and this immense excavation has evidently been effected by aqueous action.

How long a period has it taken the combined

agency of the rains and the currents to work out this colossal trench? Ages have been witnesses of the labour of the prodigious pioneer, whose toil has also formed the Delta of Lower Egypt. The deluging rains which annually inundate the table-lands of the Atbara can be carried away only by subterranean infiltration; the valley receives, therefore, not only the currents which descend from the mountains, but the rich tribute of a crowd of invisible rills, which make a passage for themselves through the lower strata of the soil, gradually disintegrating them, and carrying off the result in a fertilizing mud, which they bear down to the river. Considerable land-slips, due to this slow, continuous action, occur daily in the rainy season: torrents of mud descend into the valley, whose friable slopes are dissolved and swept away by the waters. In this way the Atbara is loaded with a thick fertilizing mud, which it pours into the Nile. Faithful to the mission imposed upon it by Nature, it accomplishes, from age to age, its beneficent task. The Arabs name it the *Bahr el aswad*, or Black River; and it is, in truth, the black nursing mother of Egypt, since every year it bestows upon the land the precious food which sustains its life. The periodical floods of the Nile, the fertilizing soil which it deposits on its borders,—all this is the work of the Atbara.

Not without difficulty we crossed the river.

We then advanced through the midst of verdurous plains, for the most part left uncultivated, and covered only with thick clusters of mimosas; but if our eyes were gratified by the contemplation of the renascent vegetation, the uninterrupted rain considerably embarrassed our progress. The soaked and slippery soil gave way under the hoofs of our camels. Damp breeds fever; and more than once, in spite of my thick clothing, I felt a premonitory shiver running through my veins.

Nor was this all. Achmet warned me that we should soon have to dread a peril of quite a different kind, the *tsetse* fly or *serout*. This singular fly, not at all dangerous to man, but deadly to the domestic animals, is scarcely larger than a wasp; and, like the wasp, has its



THE TSETSÉ FLY.

body covered with yellowish stripes. Its proboscis or dart sinks into the skin: the insect swells, and, if it be not disturbed, will fly away only when gorged with blood. The wound produces a very slight irritation; but in the case of the ox, horse, or camel, the evil speedily assumes a character of great gravity. At the end of a few days an abundant secretion flows from the eyes and muzzle of the poor wounded beast; the skin trembles and shivers; the lower part of

the under-jaw begins to swell; the animal can no longer eat, and soon perishes of complete exhaus-



"THE ANIMAL SOON PERISHES OF COMPLETE EXHAUSTION."

tion. The goat alone is impervious to the sting of the tsetse; and hence it forms the staple of the pastoral wealth of the peoples of inner Africa.

It is during the rainy season that these terrible insects carry on their ravages. To escape them, the Arabs at that time of the year retire from the regions which they infest. All the nomadic tribes move hastily towards the north, most of them reuniting in the Desert of Gozeradjup, which, barren and uninhabitable during the hot season, is at this time of the year covered with a close fresh turf, and furnishes cattle with an excellent pasturage. At each step I encountered long files of Arabs, enveloped in their white bernouses, and carrying at their wrists, with the placid dignity of their race, the lance and buckler; next came the women and children, mounted on camels, whose gay-coloured saddles were enamelled with shells; thousands of goats and sheep, and beasts of burden loaded with furniture and utensils of fantastic fashion, added to the animation of the scene.

As they passed by me, the nomads uttered the grave "*Salam aleïkoun!*" —Peace be with you! All regarded me with an air of astonishment; one of them even, more communicative than the others, asked me why I was moving southwards in the very fulness of the rainy season. I began to think of Cassala and the comfortable house of Kotzika with some regret; but I could not make up my mind to retrace my steps.

The man who paused to give me this warning belonged to the tribe of the Debaynas, whose sheikh marched at the head of the little band. Soon I saw the caravan halt. An Arab mounted on a magnificent dromedary hastened to meet me. From the respect with which every person treated him, I saw that he must be the chief.

"I learn," he said, "that you are a stranger, come from a great distance. The weather is rough, and we owe our assistance to the traveller. Come to our encampment, which lies about one hour's journey from this place. You shall there be received as a beloved son who returns, after a long absence, to his father's residence. A guest is a gift from Allah."

I gratefully accepted the sheikh's proposal. The moisture had penetrated to my very bones; many of my men were ill; poor Ouelda especially was shivering with fever.

But what horsemen are those, that, like a whirlwind, advance to meet us? Their swift steeds seem to devour space; they move in single file, holding in their right hand a naked sword, which they brandish and wave round their heads. Suddenly they tighten their reins, and pull up their horses, which, covered with foam, rear erect upon their hind-legs. I soon discovered that, far from having any hostile intentions, these sons of the Desert had come to do me honour by the performance of a brilliant *fantasia*. They joined the escort, and

we marched into camp amidst the acclamations of the crowd. The women uttered their shrillest cries, the drums beat, and the men rushed upon one another, waving their swords in the ardour of a mimic battle.

Through all this picturesque disorder I was conducted to the chief's tent. A rich collation was immediately served up; then, with Oriental courtesy, I was pressed to spend the rainy season among his tribe.

"I should like it," I replied; "but I have a long journey to make, and time is very precious to me. Following the example of several Western travellers, I am desirous of exploring Eastern Africa, then of rejoining the Nile, and following the great river up to its sources."

"Allah protect me! No one but a Frank would dream of such projects. Are you not aware, then, that malignant demons inhabit those distant regions? But, before reaching them, you will meet your death among the ferocious negroes who inhabit the banks of the sacred river."

"Others have gone thither, and returned in safety. I am resolved to undertake the adventure, and it is for this reason I hasten my departure."

"You do not know the unhealthiness of the country at this season. The incessant rains convert it into a marsh, which exhales the deadliest fever. To this malady add the ravages caused

by the flies: they will not leave you a single beast of burden fit for duty. What will you do in the face of so many obstacles?"

"It is the conquered peril which gives the charm to the enterprise."

Perceiving that his hospitable efforts were useless, the sheikh confined himself to a request that I would remain with him at least a few days, and be present at the marriage of one of his nephews.

Ceremonies of this kind are not rare in the household of the sheikh of the Debaynas: his family counts almost innumerable offshoots. His children and grandchildren have multiplied like plants of the Desert in the season of the rains. He himself, although he had already several wives, had just taken advantage of the liberty, or license, given by the Mohammedan law, to take to himself a new one; a circumstance which had greatly increased his prestige in the eyes of his tribe: for in the East the wealth of a man is computed by the number of his wives, as among us it is calculated by the number of his carriages and horses. The reason is simple: to have a wife, you must buy her from her family, and sometimes you pay for her a goodly sum.

July 16th.—At length the day fixed for the marriage of Adelan, my host's nephew, has

arrived. The betrothal-presents, which were fixed as the price of the bride, have been received by her father; the friends of the bride and bridegroom have assembled to grace the marriage-festival. Discharges of fire-arms shake the air; all the guns and pistols which the tribe possesses have been brought into requisition for this day of revelry. A banquet *à la* Pantagruel* is prepared; but before they take their places at it the guests halt in front of the sheikh's tent, and we become witnesses of a singular scene. The parents of the betrothed, each holding in the right hand a courbatch, or stick, surround the intended husband, who eyes them with a provoking air; the women, clothed in long trailing tunics, assemble in groups. In the very front rank we notice the curious heads of some very young girls; a simple *rahat*—a robe made of a brown or red *frange*—surrounds their supple figure. The more coquettish among them have added some long ribbons, ornamented with pearls, which descend to the ankle! They do not leave off this costume, and assume the floating robe of the matrons, until after marriage; however, neither they nor their mothers have their faces veiled, like Turkish and Egyptian women.

Words of defiance have been exchanged between the young man and the parents of the betrothed. A score of arms are raised against

* A famous glutton, the hero of Rabelais' immortal work.

Adelan, who, without any weapons and alone, exposes himself to repeated blows on the chest. A murmur of emotion runs through the crowd of spectators, but no one moves to his assistance. He must undergo the ordeal stoically, as a proof of his capacity of endurance, and of his worthiness of the maid whom he loves. In vain the courbatch wounds and bruises his limbs; the joy of triumph glitters in his eye; his head is raised more and more haughtily; and his lips, far from permitting a complaint to escape them, demand that no feeling of friendship shall stay the arms of the executioners. Frantic acclamations burst from the spectators; the women especially abandon themselves to an enthusiasm which is almost delirious. The drums beat, the guitars thrum, and songs are improvised in honour of this new chevalier of marriage.

I retire, nevertheless, with a feeling of sadness. This custom of the Debaynas—this spectacle of a young man patiently undergoing a barbarous torture—seems to me a striking symbol of the character of the Arab race. How much energy, how much strength of soul, these Orientals expend in passive endurance of the evils of life, instead of combating them by incessant efforts! While, faithful to the precious maxim, “Help thyself, and God will help thee,” the Christian obeys God’s will and seeks his gracious assistance, by striving valiantly against misfortune; the Arab, overwhelmed by the

burden of a fatalistic religion, never dreams of wrestling with destiny. "It was written," he murmurs, and he bows his head, and covers himself with his bernouse.

We enter the "banquet-hall"! Sheep, goats, huge joints of beef, doura cakes—nothing daunts the formidable appetite of the guests. Conversation grows animated; Oriental gravity gives place to noisy mirth. Everybody has assumed his most splendid attire, and the feast is prolonged far into the night.

The confluence of the Atbara and the Settite, at which interesting point I arrived the day before yesterday, is one of the most remarkable localities in Abyssinia, or ancient Ethiopia. On the western side, the river-valley presents a succession of table-lands, ravines, and land-slips, descending in picturesque confusion to the very margin of the river. The eastern side, on the contrary, is of great elevation; precipitous rocks are piled up into a huge and lofty promontory, which separates the basins of the two rivers. There the Abyssinian territory commences; but as far as the eye can reach it sees only immense solitudes. Everywhere the land seems fertile: what scourge, then, has driven man afar from these rich regions?

Ouelda explains it. Since the conquest of the Upper Nile by Mehemet Ali, the Turks have

wrought incessant havoc in the neighbouring provinces. Their murderous razzias have compelled the inhabitants to fall back towards the mountains, the highlands of Abyssinia, leaving desolate and deserted the plains washed by the Atbara.

July 18th.—The small town of Thomat, one of the principal stations of the Debaynas, rises at the mouth of the Settite. I secured a boat to cross the Atbara, for I did not wish to continue my ascent of the river. My intention was to direct my course eastward towards the mountains of Abyssinia. I should not attempt to traverse them, for, if I did so, I should be within the sway of the formidable Theodore, and this audacity might cost me dear; but I wished, at all events, to visit the neighbouring provinces, and to gather from the lips of some of the vassals of the despotic Négus as much information as I could in reference to him and to his dominions. On my route I should fall in with the Omrams—those daring hunters so flatteringly described by Bruce and by Baker—a tribe which had keenly excited my curiosity.

At day-break I gave orders to my men to begin the transport of our baggage; but the boat of bamboos and goat-skin which had been placed at my disposal, made by unskilful hands, was far from satisfying the rules of nautical art. It floated capriciously upon the waters, staggered

like a drunken man, sank to the very gunwale righted itself again, but at every stroke of the oars threatened to capsize, in spite of the efforts of the men who swam on either side, and preserved the equilibrium as well as they could of the oscillating machine. Thanks to their assistance, we accomplished the passage of the river without accident, and all of us, except Hakim, had assembled on the other bank. Our dragoman could not make up his mind to risk his valuable life in so dangerous a craft. A thousand gloomy images rose upon his imagination: he recalled the tragical adventures which had so often terminated the career of the European explorers—and their guides. This latter point particularly touched him. To add to his dismay, two or three crocodiles at this moment raised their heads above the waves! Hakim bitterly repented that he had tarried until the last; perhaps he had charitably hoped that one of us might be drowned, and that the mishap would relieve him from the necessity he dreaded. According to his custom in great crises, he began to tear his scanty locks, much to the amusement of the Arabs. Supported by one of our escort, he seated himself in the middle of the boat, clinging to each side with clenched hands. The little boat was half way across the stream when the dragoman remembered that, in his panic, he had forgotten his "effects." He started up suddenly, and in doing so shook the frail skiff.

My man fell into the Atbara. A cry of terror escaped me ; but the Arabs intrusted with the management of the boat plunged in after him, and quickly brought to the surface the unfortunate Hakim, who struggled like a madman, and shrieked in the most lamentable manner.

This troublesome experience over, we kept along the windings of the Settite, frequently falling in with some wretched Arab villages. Sometimes, however, this resource failed us. Achmet then hurried our march so as to reach before nightfall some empty hut whose occupants had migrated northwards. We dried as best we could our well-soaked garments ; for every day, a little after noon, a violent storm broke over our heads, and torrents of rain transformed the soil into a sea of mud, in the midst of which we painfully dragged ourselves along.

The morning was usually devoted to the chase. The season being unfavourable, the nimble animals we pursued most frequently escaped us ; but sometimes a well-aimed shot furnished us with a piece of excellent venison. Herds of giraffes, and gazelles, and antelopes were hidden among the dense jungles formed by the *nabbouks*—beautiful trees, the luxuriant verdure of which blended admirably with that of the not less luxuriant prairies. The fruit, about the size of a small apple, is much appreciated by game of all kinds. Here and there, too, in all the glory of their budding foliage, flowered the magnificent

posies of the *héglík* ; a plant which attains sometimes a stature of thirty feet.

Assuredly, were it not ravaged by perpetual war, this country would be one of the most fertile in Eastern Africa ; but while Nature displays there all her riches, men change the beautiful and tranquil scene into one of desolation. The Atbara, it must be remembered, forms on the east the boundary-line between Abyssinia and Egypt. When I was there the river-floods had spread between the two countries an impassable barrier ; but in a few months this would disappear, and hostilities would be resumed with fresh bitterness. The bold chief of the mountain districts, Oued-Nimr, had swooped down in the spring on the plains around Thomat, to exact tribute in the name of King Theodore. He fell on a troop of Arabs—the allies of Egypt—slew a great number of them, and carried off their herds of cattle and flocks of sheep. As soon as the dry season allowed him to take the field, he would undoubtedly renew his attacks.

This Nimr, whose incursions incessantly disturb Egypt, and prevent the Pasha from extending his conquests, is the son of a chief who has illustrated his name by an act of savage energy.

Mek-Nimr, or “King Leopard,” possessed in 1822 the rich territory of Chendy, situated westward of the Nile, between Berber and Khartoum. It was the time when the Turco-Egyptian

army, under the command of Ismaïl, one of the sons of Mehemet Ali, was completing the conquest of the Taka. Everything yielded to the prestige of his arms: the Nubian tribes, vanquished in every encounter, one after the other submitted to his yoke. The Egyptian leader, intoxicated by his success, harassed the country with the insolence of a conqueror who believes himself superior to the strokes of fortune. Master of Upper Nubia, he penetrated into the Soudan, and invaded the territories of Mek-Nimr, on whom he imposed a heavy tribute. The Leopard King was unable to resist an army twenty times more numerous than his own, and feigned to submit with a good grace to the law of the strongest.

"You must send me," said Ismaïl, "a thousand of your young maidens, a thousand oxen, a thousand camels, a thousand goats, a thousand sheep, a thousand sacks of barley, and a thousand measures of forage."

"Your arithmetic is admirably simple," said Mek-Nimr, prostrating himself; "it admits only of the number *one thousand*."

A few days afterwards, the requisitions of the Pasha were despatched to the camp. The beasts arrived in long files; the hay and straw were accumulated in immense masses round the Egyptian head-quarters. Ismaïl rejoiced at the prompt execution of his orders, and the eager submission of Mek-Nimr did not excite his mis-

trust. Was it not natural that all should bend before the conqueror? But in the middle of the night, when the Egyptian army was plunged in profound slumber, columns of flame suddenly arose towards the reddened skies. The Pasha, startled from his sleep, rushed to the entrance of his tent: he found it surrounded by a circle of fire! All issue was closed. The Arabs had brought this immense quantity of forage only to feed the conflagration, and bury their enemy in his triumph. Profiting by the panic and confusion which ensued, they fell upon the disorderly array and slew great numbers of the Egyptian soldiers. On the following day they retired, carrying with them the dead bodies of Ismaïl, his wives, and his officers.

After this act of terrible vengeance, Mek-Nimr, fearing the reprisals of the Egyptians, withdrew into the town of Sofi, which was then flourishing and populous. But, as we know, it was quickly captured.

The Turco-Egyptian army rallied. It had around it only an inoffensive population, left without protection by the retreat of Mek-Nimr; but it was necessary to immolate victims in memory of Ismaïl. Many hundreds of men, women, and children were driven into an enclosure formed by a wall of maize-straw. The soldiers set fire to the rampart, and the poor wretches perished even as the unfortunate Pasha had perished.

The inhabitants who had escaped death by a speedy flight sought an asylum at Sofi, under the wing of their ancient chief. The Turkish army followed close upon them. Mek-Nimr, combating alone, in the midst of beaten and discouraged populations, was unable to resist the preponderant power of Egypt; he found himself compelled to pass the Atbara, and demand the protection of Abyssinia.

So bold and indefatigable an enemy of the Turks was gladly welcomed by Theodore, who always made personal hatreds serve his political ends. He made him the guardian of his frontiers, the buckler to protect the heart of his empire. A vast territory was given in feoff to Mek-Nimr, with Maigogoa for his capital. Some years afterwards he died, leaving his son Oued-Nimr to inherit his courage and his mortal antipathy to the Egyptians. He, faithful to the fraternal traditions, directed ceaseless raids into the lands acknowledging the rule of the Egyptian Pasha. In vain did the Cairene Government order its lieutenants to repress and prevent these daring outrages. The riverine Arabs of the Atbara, the Djalins, the Omrams, though apparently submitting to the Turkish authorities, preserved a secret sympathy for the Leopard King. They gave him timely notice of the movements of the enemy; and when the daring chief was on the point of being surrounded, they facilitated his retreat to the mountains.

CHAPTER V.

AN AGITATED NIGHT—THE OMRAMS—A NEW NIMROD—THE VILLAGE
OF THÉRAT—ROBINSON CRUSOE'S HUT—THE RAINY SEASON.

July 25th.



ADDENED by the desolation of these beautiful provinces, we continued on the 25th to follow up the Settite, though the rain did not permit us to make any considerable progress. In the evening the tempest raged more furiously than ever, flash after flash of lightning shot across the sky, the thunder roared, and the wind shook my tent with so much violence that I feared every moment it would be brought to the ground.

I lay down, however, and wrapped myself up in all the warmest coverings I could find. Ouelda, who stretched himself at my feet, soon slept a profound slumber; and I felt my own eyelids growing heavy, in spite of the damp which clung closer and yet closer to me. All at once something cold flowed over my face: the sides of the tent, incapable of longer resistance to the violence of the wind, had given admission

to the water, which poured in upon me as from a gutter. In vain I changed my place; the deluge followed me everywhere. The mats laid upon the ground floated as in a pond. Oueda awoke; but, with the mischievousness of his age, only laughed at my tribulation.

"We have done a fine thing in coming here," he exclaimed. "If, in the rainy season, every night turn out like this, we shall not do so badly!"

"Silence! This is no time or place for jesting! With one's feet in a bath, and one's head under a cataract, one can't stay here. I am much inclined to set off, and arouse the people of the village."

At this moment we became sensible of a great clamour arising close at hand. We rushed outside, braving the rain,—which, by the way, was quite as heavy within,—and sought the cause of the unaccustomed uproar. Hakim's tent had disappeared, carried away by a gust of wind; it had turned inside out like an umbrella, and was transported upwards of a hundred yards. I discovered it at length, after much groping in the darkness; but I could find no trace of its proprietor.

"Hakim! Hakim! where are you?"

A stifled groan seemed to issue from underneath the ground; the covering of the tent shook and moved, and the dragoman emerged from his prison like a frog from the bosom of a morass.

"I am a dead man," he cried. "All my limbs are broken!"

And thus speaking, he rubbed his arms and legs, and shook his head and shoulders with a thousand contortions.

"Come, come, Hakim, you are joking. A man does not die because he has been packed up in a roll of canvas. And, besides, had you broken any of your limbs, you could not indulge in so many gesticulations."

The first faint beams of morning began to show themselves, and the storm subsided. I took the dragoman into my own tent, and endeavoured to snatch a little repose.

July 26th.—It was evident that the season for travelling was over. Though with much regret, I came to the resolution to halt at Thérat, a small town inhabited by the Omrams. Since we had to take up winter quarters, I resolved at least to enjoy the pleasure of residing among those Nimrods of the Desert. The "braves" of the tribe should relate to me their perilous hunting adventures, until I could be an eye-witness of some of them; and their stories would assist me to endure the monotony of my enforced delay.

The Omrams inhabit the region lying between Cassala, the river Settite, and the country of the Basen. Shepherds as well as hunters, they are equally renowned for the management

and breeding of cattle, their headlong courage, and the excellence of their weapons. Their bucklers, made of the hide of giraffe or rhinoceros, vary in shape and size: some, about four feet long, are oval, and strengthened by a strong wooden traverse; others are circular, and bulge out in the centre. Inside they are lined with a thick coat of leather, and the edges are bound with a band of crocodile-skin. Their sword is long, straight, and two-edged, with a hilt shaped like a cross; a usage borrowed from the European knights, who, at the epoch of the Crusades, invaded the East. The Omrams set a high value on the possession of a good blade of steel; the father, dying, bequeaths it to his son as the best part of his heritage. The sheath is made of soft wood coated with leather: an Arab would never consent to thrust his sword into a case of metal, because it would blunt the edge. His first care, when he halts, is to draw forth the faithful blade, to whet it on his buckler, and then test it, like a razor, on the hairs of his sinewy arm.

I approached an Omram who, standing at the door of his hut, was engaged in this occupation.

"With that weapon," said I, "you would not fear to attack the elephant?"

The Arab raised his head.

"You know something of the chase? You have joined in it? Yet you are not of this country."

"No; but I have heard men extol the skill and intrepidity of the Omrams. I could even name to you some of your boldest *aggadjirs* (hunters). Is Rodur Chérif living still?"

"Truly he is; he is my brother. Where have you met him?"

"A European traveller, Sir Samuel Baker, once spent some months in your country. On his return, he spoke of your family; it is his narrative which inspired me with a desire to visit your tribe, that I might be an eye-witness of your stirring encounters with the wild animals of the Desert."

The features of the Arab lightened up under the influence of enthusiasm and pride; a fierce fire kindled in his eyes, which reminded me, for the moment, of those of a bird of prey.

"Yes," he exclaimed, "it is a noble pleasure, and in every way worthy of a man, to pursue to the depths of their lairs the mighty elephants, to excite their wrath, to make a jest of their powerless strength, and, finally, to subdue those giants of the forests, and stretch them at his feet."

"But, in the midst of a troop of these animals, you run great risk of your life. Why not choose the time when the elephant is isolated from his mates?"

"This we do when there are but two of us, and we are not mounted on horseback; we even essay to surprise the formidable animal during his

sleep; but *that* is not true hunting. Oh, it is a fine spectacle to see us, mounted upon steeds as swift as the wind, following up the trail of the elephants which have come down at night to the bank of the river to drink. When, after a ride of six or seven leagues, we have overtaken them, we select the male furnished with the strongest tusks. We harass him with our cries, with our attacks, until, in a frenzy of rage, he turns upon us. He finds us ready! One of us dashes in front of him at full gallop, and near enough to cheat the animal into a belief that he can seize his assailant with his trunk. Woe to our comrade if he miscalculates the distance, or if his horse makes a false step! We intrust this perilous rôle only to our most active and experienced hunter! While he engages the attention of the enemy, which pants after him in fierce pursuit, another of our band stealthily, and unseen, approaches, and, seizing his sword with both hands, he ham-strings the elephant at a single blow. The severed limb can no longer sustain the unwieldy colossus, and the pain intoxicates him with rage. He roars; he yearns to avenge himself; but a second blow renders all movement impossible; he sinks to the ground, and pours out his life with his blood."

"In so hurried a gallop it must be difficult to know the exact articulation of the animal's limb. If the sword did not hit the precise point, the elephant might throw himself on the hunter?"

“Undoubtedly ; and in this way many of us perish. My brother Rodur, of whom you were speaking, had a narrow escape. As his courage was well known, to him, in one of our hunting expeditions, had been allotted the part of pursuing the elephant. Man and beast were scarcely separated by the length of an arm ; suddenly Rodur’s horse stumbled against the prostrate trunk of a tree. The furious animal threw himself on the steed and on the horseman, trampling them under his feet. He was on the point of seizing Rodur with his formidable proboscis. I arrived just in time to save my brother ; but his arm was crushed,—the flesh hung down from the broken bone, which fell off in fragments. It was a long time before it healed, and now his arm is a shapeless limb, a mass of shrunken muscles which it is horrible to see. And yet he is able with his hand to guide his horse’s bridle.”

Deeply moved and full of admiration, I thought, while I was listening to the Omram, that I was present at a scene of the heroic ages. I extended my hand to the Arab, and warmly expressed my sympathy.

We had still a journey of five or six leagues to make before we arrived at Thérat. My new friend, who was named Taher Chérif, rode on ahead to announce my arrival. The sun was shining, but the masses of leaden clouds hurrying up from all points of the horizon foretold a

storm as violent as that of the preceding day. I ordered my men to quicken their march; but the road was much obstructed by thick bushes intermingled with *hégliks*; elephants alone could easily clear a passage through this paradise of hunters. At intervals an opening in the jungle revealed to us the chains of low, naked hills which stretched away to the north-east. We had quitted the banks of the Settite for three hours, when a bend of the road all at once opened up to us a magnificent view of wide plains of *doura*. We were near *Thérat*; but we ran some risk of passing the village without seeing it, so small were its huts, and so thick was the jungle around it.

The inhabitants expected us; a movement was made at our approach. The sheikh *Owat*, *Taher*, and some other *Omrams*, advanced to receive me. In their midst stood a man of low stature, with all the gravity of a true Arab. His left arm, withered, shrunk, and shapeless, terminated in a something hideous, resembling, not a human hand, but a vulture's claw. It was *Rodur Chérif*, the celebrated hunter, the pride of his tribe.

As the day was declining, and the rain falling heavily, I was conducted, after the customary compliments, to the hut which had been prepared for me.

The residence thus placed at my disposal by

the hospitality of the Omrams, was nothing less than princely; it consisted, according to the invariable usage of the architects of this primitive country, of a single circular chamber, with a door opening on the east side. I hesitated at first to install myself in this abode; I feared lest it should be peopled with inconvenient guests,—and this proved no empty alarm. I had scarcely entered before thousands of ants made an irruption upon my baggage, and I felt myself assailed by parasites of all descriptions. In the twinkling of an eye these frightful insects covered my skin, clinging like leeches, until killed as they clung. Decidedly, cleanliness is not a predominant virtue of the Omrams. My hut belonged, I found, to Rodur Chérif, and he had offered it to me with so much good-will, that I had been unable to shape a refusal.

A fortunate diversion interrupted my melancholy reflection. The sheikh sent me a crane roasted in fat of elephant; a delicious dish, which reconciled me to Arab cooking.

July 27th.—I had flattered myself that I should meet at Thérat with a German, whom I had heard spoken of by travellers who had visited the Atbara before us. This brave man was simply a mason, whom some Austrian missionaries had carried with them to Khartoum; gradually he had acquired a partiality for the wild African life, and, having become a skilful as well

as daring hunter, was looked upon in the country as a very important personage. I had looked forward with joy to grasping the hand of a European. I had promised myself that I would persuade old Florian to accompany me to the sources of the Nile; but, on arriving at Thérat, I learned that he had been killed by a lion. His house, which the natives regarded as something marvellous, now serves as the sheikh's palace; and proud is he in his ownership of a house built with stone and furnished with a couple of windows.

To tell the truth, this palace was but an ordinary affair; yet, if it had been offered to me, I should have been only too glad to install myself in it. Compelled to remain in Rodur Chérif's hut, I bore my ill-fortune as bravely as possible, and occupied myself without delay in rendering it habitable. A lighted torch, swept to and fro over the ground, destroyed the vermin which had taken possession of it. After several times repeating this preliminary operation, I ordered my men to lay down a thin coat of the finest sand. The walls of the hut were carefully washed, but still retained an appearance disagreeable to the eye. I concealed them with some improvised hangings.

My furniture was of the most rudimentary description. *Angareps* served for beds; a long table, made of bamboo wood, occupied the centre of the apartment; another and smaller one was

placed near the door,—that is, in the only place where there was room for it. It supported my books, my papers, my maps, my compass,—in a word, all my appurtenances of study. My men also manufactured some chairs; and, in fine, I arranged as advantageously as possible my travelling-bags, some utensils, some toilette conveniences, and a dozen carbines. Around my establishment extended a plot of grass; I traced out some walks, and planted it with trees. To be brief: after about a week's work, I found myself so comfortably established, that Robinson Crusoe himself would have envied my abode. The management of the garden I intrusted to Ouelda. As for myself, seconded by Achmet and Hakim, I undertook to keep my little colony supplied with provisions.

My Eden, however, had its share of terrestrial miseries. Meat was seldom to be obtained in the village; for the cattle had been sent northward to shelter them from the dangers of the season. The goats remained, for, as I have said, the flies do not attack them; but they yielded a very unsatisfactory supply of milk. The fever raged violently; every inhabitant suffered from it more or less severely. To this scourge was added a host of cutaneous affections; among others an epidemic of *furuncles*, which might well pass for a genuine “plague of Egypt.”

The Omrams were unacquainted with any remedies for the numerous diseases caused by the

unhealthy climate. They would not even seek them, believing it was a pernicious heresy to think that certain plants or certain drugs had the power of preserving life or restoring health, —a power belonging to the Supreme Being alone. "It is not the sword which kills," says one of their proverbs, "but destiny;" in other words, the will of Allah. In these words lies comprehended the whole Arab philosophy.

CHAPTER VI.

MY DEPARTURE FROM THÉ RAT—THE TORTURE OF THE THORNS—A PICTURESQUE CAVALCADE—HUNTING THE ELEPHANT—THE AFFECTION OF ANIMALS.

October 15th.



FOR three months I was detained at Thé rat by rain and fever; I was not able even to leave the village on a short excursion. The surrounding plains were transformed into a marsh, in the midst of which any person, imprudent enough to venture, would have sunk up to his knees. My sole amusement was the contemplation of the tumultuous rivers, the land-slips produced by the action of the waters, the clouds charged with lightnings, or coloured by a fugitive ray of the sun. An utter weariness was consequently added to my physical sufferings; and more than once I regretted the hot season, when, free as the antelope of the Desert, I wandered at my will, asking but the shadow of a tree during the day, and sleeping at night under the starry pavilion of the sky.

At length October came to terminate the

deluge which kept me prisoner. The rivers subsided in their beds; the soil regained a certain degree of consistency; and I was able to venture on a short excursion in quest of game.

On my return, my game-bag filled with a good supply of partridges and pintados, I found Taher Chérif in my hut.

"If you would like to join in our hunting expeditions," said he, "you will soon have an excellent opportunity. The son of our sheikh, with some of our bravest aggadjirs, intends repairing to a quarter where a large number of elephants has been discovered. My brother and I are of the company. Will you go with us?"

"With all my heart. When do you set out?"

"In a week."

"Very good; I shall be ready."

October 29th.—It was on the 29th day of the month that I set out from Thérat with my companions, the Omrams, to ride some twenty leagues, and beard the elephants in their retreat. Taher, Rodur, and the sheikh's son treated me with respectful deference; for I had several times killed, before their eyes, wild ducks, and snipes, and other birds, while on the wing. These exploits had procured me the reputation of a crack shot, the Omrams being wholly unable to rival me in the use of the fowling-piece. The richest among them possessed a good stock of fire-arms; but they were old flint-

muskets, very inconvenient to use. My rifles excited the wonder of the Arabs. In their enthusiasm for European genius, they abandoned themselves to the most fanciful conjectures, and never doubted but that we could seal up death as surely in a microscopical tube as in our largest and strongest cannons. Thus, a bunch of keys one day fell from my pocket. They were picked up by one of Taher's companions, who, examining them, and perceiving that they were perforated, said,—

“Are not these pistols? Are they loaded? The Franks invent astonishing things!”

The last traces of the rainy season had nearly disappeared. The air no longer exhaled unwholesome miasmas; but to fever, and mud, and pestilential flies, succeeded another species of torture. Tall bushes covered the soil; and each tuft of grass, each bush, was armed with the most formidable spines, which a malignant genius, apparently, had assembled together on purpose to put my patience to the test. Lances, swords, daggers, knives, needles, hooks, and forks alternately rent our garments, and so embedded themselves, that we might well fancy ourselves invested in a porcupine's skin, with the bristles turned inward. Happily, the increasing dryness of the soil soon delivered us from this torture. We burned the grasses, and pushed forward into the heart of a splendid country.

Beyond Thérat, the banks of the Settite are broken up by a multitude of hills and ravines covered with mimosas, and of rocks which sometimes reach an elevation of two to three hundred feet, with their sharp, pyramidal peaks. The river, too, describes a thousand capricious curves and bends; which, it is true, enhance the charms of the landscape, but so prolong and extend the road, that, to avoid them, we were compelled to gain the high plains by scarped acclivities of very difficult access.

This ride "o'er hills and dales" excited the enthusiasm of the Omrams. As soon as these men are mounted on horseback, they undergo a sudden transformation: the grave, taciturn Mohammedan, gives place to the wild hunter. Striking the air with their naked swords, they leap and bound along the rocks, gallop over clefts and bushes, ride headlong up the steepest hills; they are intoxicated by the motion, the din, and the light. Steed and rider seem to form but a single creature, which has the speed of the swallow and the subtlety of the serpent. All on a sudden the Omram will leap to the ground, while his horse dashes at full gallop over rock and brushwood; but the nimble cavalier overtakes him, and grasping his mane, swings himself into the saddle.

After riding a few miles, we found that the landscape assumed another aspect. The Arab encampments, so numerous at the outset of our

journey that they kept the game at a distance, and rendered hunting impossible, gradually grew rarer, and eventually disappeared. A level plain extended from the Settite to the foot of a chain of hills. The soil, enriched by the inundations of the river, nourishes thick jungles and luxuriant herbage, which attract great numbers of wild animals.

November 6th.—We pitched our tents on a small island, which formed a verdant oasis in the middle of the dried-up bed of the Settite. The locality was well chosen; for the elephants came down in troops to drink in the ponds which marked the river's course. Traces of them were visible in all directions; but the more recent it was difficult to distinguish, as they all left nearly the same impression on the hardened soil. After a long search, we heard at last the sonorous cry of these animals. One of them advanced without seeing us; for we had hastened to conceal ourselves behind a hillock of sand, so as not to betray our presence. Having reached the river, he tranquilly satisfied his thirst; then plunged his head into the water, shook his trunk and ears, and scattered around him bright columns of spray.

"Leave him to me," said I to the Omrams; "he is admirably posted. I will send a bullet right into his skull."

Hearing my voice, the animal turned round.

I crept upon him in the rear, but not a tree or bush grew upon the sand for shelter. Perceiving me, he hesitated for a moment, and then fled towards the forest which skirted the plain at no great distance. I fired. A ball struck him on the head, another on the shoulder. I thought he would fall. To our extreme surprise, these wounds had no other effect than to accelerate his course. He was on the point of disappearing among the trees, when three Omrams, swift-footed as grayhounds, cut off his retreat, sword in hand.

The aggadjirs were nearly naked; for it was of the highest importance that, in dealing with their vigilant enemy, they should not run the risk of being entangled by their garments in any bush. They had leaped from their horses to throw themselves in front of the elephant. The animal appeared to comprehend their tactics. With incredible agility, he prevented them from gliding behind him. Turning upon himself as upon a pivot, he attacked them in succession, roaring furiously, and raising immense clouds of dust. I had never before witnessed a spectacle so admirable or so rashly dangerous. The depth of the sand, into which the hunters sank to their knees, rendered their situation still more perilous. They only escaped a terrible death by marvellous skill. While the elephant flung himself upon one, the two others took him in the flank, and so compelled him to quit his intended victim,

and put himself on the defensive. At last, the sheikh's son dealt him a blow with his sword, but he aimed too high; and being just then on the very threshold of the forest, the young man received a heavy blow from a bough which the elephant had bent back, and which, in regaining its normal position, struck the hardy hunter to the ground. Happily, his formidable adversary, harassed by the other aggadjirs, thought only of profiting by his victory to escape into the wood. Guided by the blood which flowed from his wounds, the Omrams pursued him. A quarter of an hour later, they found him lying dead in a thicket.

Meanwhile, Rodur and Taher had not remained inactive. They descried in the distance a dozen elephants preparing to cross the Settite, and gain, on its further bank, the shelter of the almost impenetrable jungles; and they succeeded in separating from the herd one of the finest males. They passed and repassed in front of him, singing aloud, in a wild, monotonous chant,—

“We are thy foes, thy foes.

We killed thy father, thy grandfather, and thy brothers;
Now we will kill thee.

Thou art but a cowardly jackal,

If thou fleest instead of facing us!”

It is the belief of the Omrams that the elephant really understands these words, and certainly, on this occasion, appearances seemed to justify their

conviction. The animal halted, motionless as a statue; his eyes were fixed anxiously upon the hunters, and seemed to measure the danger. All at once he dashed upon Rodur with the impetuosity of an avalanche.

Swift as the lightning, the Arab had already wheeled about and mounted on his steed; his face turned behind him to watch every movement of the elephant, he *devoured space*, so to speak, suffering no obstacle to arrest his course. One moment I thought he was on the point of being overtaken. I uttered a cry of terror; but, with a few vigorous strides, his horse put six or seven yards between him and the elephant's extended trunk. Like falcons, Taher and another Omram had started in the track of the elephant, which, mad with rage, saw nothing except the prey which he pursued. Taher leaped from his horse, and flung his reins to his companion. He drew his sword; for an instant the bright steel flashed in the sunlight, then an ominous sound was heard,—the keen blade had cut through bone and tendon!

The animal was brought to a stand. Rodur sprang to the ground, threw a handful of dust in the eyes of the elephant, which attempted to rush upon him, but his wound obstructed the movement. The tendon was entirely separated; he could not advance a step. Taher returned to the charge, brandishing his sword in both hands. A second blow cut the artery of the

other leg; the giant fell, and, pouring out his life-blood, died.

The other elephants had dispersed in the forest or in the jungles. Two only remained within our reach—a female and her cub. Rodur proposed to leave them alone, as their tusks were of no great value; but the son of the sheikh, rendered furious by the bruises he had received, would not listen to him. He struck his spurs into his horse's flanks, and resolutely dashed in front of the female. Unfortunately, he had miscalculated the distance. With one blow from her formidable trunk, the elephant brought the horse to the ground; and while its rider saved himself with great difficulty, she crushed the poor beast under her heavy hoofs, and then tore it limb from limb. In the *mélée*, I had been unable to make use of my rifle, for fear of wounding the very man whose life I wished to save. Moreover, the ill success of my first shots did not encourage me to make a second attempt. The best-aimed ball never kills the African elephant instantaneously. He has time to turn, and his assailant might consequently pass a *very bad quarter of an hour*, until the sword of an Omram crippled the unwieldy colossus, and rendered him incapable of mischief.

The female, wounded by the aggadjirs, groaned with pain, and torrents of blood flowed from her heart. Then occurred an incident which awakened the liveliest emotion. The young elephant

had fled, and no person had thought of pursuing him; but on hearing his mother's cries, he emerged from the wood, and flung himself between her and the hunters! It was most touching to see the poor creature's efforts, at the risk of his own life, to save her who could no longer protect him or herself. I cried to the hunters not to injure him; but it was too late. Taher, having been slightly wounded in the leg, had already dealt him a mortal blow; several other Omrams also struck him, and he fell by the side of his mother, which he had so courageously sought to succour. Moved by compassion, I could not help saying to Taher,—

"That was an act of very useless cruelty. I do not understand how a brave hunter like you could kill a poor beast which did but obey the best instincts of nature."

"Do you think I did it for pleasure? I would have given my share of the game that the poor animal should not have thrown himself in front of my lance! You know I was unwilling to attack either him or his mother; but furious as he was just then, he would have broken with his trunk, though he was not bigger than an ass, the leg of one of our people, if he had succeeded in reaching him."

"I confess you are right. Yet, notwithstanding, I am sorry for my little elephant."

"Men and beasts have their fate," Taher replied, philosophically. "It was written."

CHAPTER VII

HAKIM ADVISES US NOT TO THROW OURSELVES INTO THE LEOPARD'S JAWS—WAR BETWEEN ENGLAND AND KING THEODORE—SHALL WE GO FORWARD? SHALL WE RETURN?—A PARTISAN CHIEF—IN-OPPORTUNE ARRIVAL OF AN ABYSSINIAN MESSENGER—MY ESCORT SHOWS MORE PRUDENCE THAN COURAGE—I AM MADE PRISONER.

"November 20th.



SUCCESSION of hunting expeditions has signalized the intrepidity of the aggadjirs. For a fortnight they have waged continual war against the ani-

mals of the Desert—elephants, rhinoceroses, buf-faloes, antelopes, have successively fallen before spear and knife. My rifles have amply justified their renown. Thanks to their excellence, I have brought down more than one piece of game which had escaped the address of the Arabs. Loaded with ivory and dried meat, the aggadjirs resolved upon returning to Thérat. I, on my part, am anxious to pay to the formidable Oued-Nimr my projected visit. I separate myself, therefore, not without regret, from my hunting-companions, and resume the route to the mountains."

The foregoing is an extract from my diary.

After parting from the friendly Omrams, I entered the territories of the Basens, a negro tribe, whose ferocity the inhabitants of Cassala had painted in the darkest colours; but, accompanied by a numerous escort, I thought I had no reason to fear the attacks of these fugitives. The guide Achmet and the vigilant little Oueda discovered some of them, at times, lying in ambush among the coppice. Their tales froze with terror the unfortunate Hakim; he would not move a step except in the midst of eight to ten cavaliers armed to the teeth. However, our defensive preparations, and especially our guns, inspired the natives with a salutary fear, for they did not venture on any attack.

"It is not worth while," said I, laughing, "to come into a land of such ill fame and not meet with a single adventure!"

"Do not speak so quickly!" answered Achmet, gravely; "you may, perhaps, live to repent of your thoughtless words."

"To invoke misfortune, as if it did not always come soon enough!" murmured Hakim, in a tone of lamentation; "is it not tempting the devil, to thrust ourselves into the jaws of the lion?"

"Of the leopard, you mean to say; for such is the title in which Oued-Nimr rejoices."

The country of the Basens occupies the slope of the great Abyssinian table-land. The in-

numerable water-courses descending from the heights develop everywhere a most luxuriant vegetation; the sombre foliage of the tamarisks seems to render the ravines of greater depth, and the majestic baobab plunges its knotty roots into the clefts of rocks which apparently could not nourish a blade of grass. The sand in which I had so recently seen the waters of the Settite disappear gave place to a rocky channel, in which the river rolled rapidly and joyously. Herds of hippopotami disported in its waters, or lay on its banks idly basking in the sun, and following with an indolent eye the awkward attempts of their young at swimming.

The Settite does not receive, as far as the Abyssinian mountains, any northern tributary. More favoured in the south, it collects the waters of the Royan, a beautiful river, shut in among rugged rocks, but overleaping every obstacle, and dashing forward in impetuous cascades. No grander spectacle can be conceived than that of its junction with the Settite during the rainy season. The two currents, pent up by high walls of granite and basalt, precipitate their furious floods into a vast circular basin, and create a most formidable whirlpool. Woe to him who should attempt to approach it! He would meet with certain death. When we arrived in its vicinity the summer heats prevailed, and the two rivers were nearly dry; but at the point of confluence the raging waters had

excavated a kind of chasm, deeper by fifty feet than any other part of the river. All around the gulf rose gigantic rocks, covered with palm-trees; on the left hand lay an island, or, rather, a mass of granite, at the foot of which the Settite debouched from the basin through a deep and narrow canal.

At no great distance from this spot was situated a village, which, last year, was the headquarters of Oued-Nimr; but while we had been travelling by slow stages through the country of the Omrams, the Egyptian troops had invaded the territory of the Abyssinian prince, who had been compelled to abandon to the enemy a portion of his domains.

It was not, then, a very favourable moment for soliciting an interview with the celebrated partisan. When I crossed the Atbara I had, indeed, made known to him my intention of paying him my respects, and I had received a most encouraging reply; but, in the course of four months, numerous events had taken place, among which the Egyptian incursions were not the least in importance.

When I quitted Europe a rupture between England and King Theodore was on the point of taking place. Various causes, of some duration and of intricate character, had led to this result. The vain and haughty Abyssinian chief viewed with a jealous eye the cordial relations existing between England and the Egyptian Government,

his declared enemy ; moreover, he endured, with ill-concealed impatience and dislike, the evangelizing work of the Protestant missionaries. He delighted in humbling them in the eyes of his subjects,—in requiring of them things diametrically opposed to the feelings and wishes of a gospel ministry : he employed them in founding cannon, he compelled them to distil spirits. As for the Roman Catholic missionaries, he had long ago expelled them from the country.

“ I know the tactics of your European governments,” he replied to M. Lejean, the French consul, when he remonstrated with him on the subject : “ at first they send missionaries ; then consuls to support the missionaries ; and, finally, battalions to support the consuls. I am not an Indian rajah, to be cheated after this fashion ; I would rather meet your battalions at the outset.”

The diplomatic agent owed to a speedy retreat his liberty and life. Less fortunate, or less prudent, Mr. Cameron, the English consul, remained at his post.

Some time afterwards, certain perquisitions which were made at the houses of the Protestant missionaries led to the seizure of a large number of private notes and letters, in which the King was by no means flattered. The idea of being represented in Europe in so unfavourable a light threw him into an excess of rage ; for he was specially anxious about the good opinion of the Western nations. He immediately flung into

chains the officials and servants of the mission; and thenceforth regarding the English as his enemies, he extended his severity to Mr. Cameron himself, who was imprisoned, and guarded day and night, in a hut adjoining the royal headquarters. Mr. Rassam, whom the British Government despatched to negotiate for the consul's liberation, was likewise detained as a prisoner. Theodore was not ignorant of the probable consequences of this violation of the law of nations.

"Let the English come if they will," he said; "I am not a woman, to be afraid lest they should beat me."

Such was the state of affairs in the spring of 1867. From that date I had heard no news—despatches do not travel quickly in the Desert—neither Egyptians nor Arabs had been able to give me any information. Oued-Nimr might not be better informed; nevertheless, before repairing to the residence of the vassal of Theodore, I held counsel with myself:—

"It is not yet too late to retreat," said Prudence. "The son of the Leopard King probably sees in every European an enemy of his nation, and may take it into his head, if not to enclose me in a circle of fire like Ismaïl Pasha, at least to hold me captive like Consul Cameron." "Bah!" replied Curiosity, "the situations have no resemblance. Why should Oued-Nimr wish to injure an inoffensive stranger, who has had no contention or quarrel with him, and who, rely-

ing on his good faith, voluntarily places himself in his hands? Even supposing that a bitter feud is raging between England and Theodore, I belong to a powerful neutral nation which has had nothing to do with the quarrel. Moreover, the Abyssinians are not barbarians: they are Christians; they cherish sentiments of justice.”

November 28th.—Reassured by these reflections, I resolved on attempting the adventure, and plunged into a fertile valley, whose clefts or chasms revealed—to the west, the lofty tableland of Bourkotan; to the east, the summit of the Allatakoura, which rises seven thousand feet above the plain. At night-fall we pitched our tents in the shadow of a magnificent clump of tamarisk-trees; then I began to smoke a chibouk in sweet tranquillity, and to meditate upon my country, and the friends who were eagerly expecting my return. Suddenly Hakim, pale as death, darted towards me, crying, in an altered voice,—

“The Abyssinians! Fly, fly! Let us hide ourselves!”

“Away with the coward! On the contrary, let us show our faces: these people will tell us where we may meet their chief.”

Issuing immediately from my tent, I caught sight of a man who, mounted on a white dromedary, was passing the trees that sheltered us, at a distance of about one hundred paces. He was

followed by a file of cavaliers, and all were descending towards the river. I counted six and twenty. Their swords and bucklers hung from their horses' flanks; on the crupper they carried bags of provisions. In front of them they drove a flock of sheep and goats. No doubt, I thought, I have under my eyes a troop of the marauders charged to supply the camp of Oued-Nimr.

None of the adventurers had seen us, none had even turned their head in our direction; for, in so wild a scene, they did not expect to fall in with any strangers. They trembled with surprise when I shouted out, "*Salam aleïkoun !*" —Peace be with you! An instinctive movement induced them to clap their hands to their swords. I rode forward, explained who I was, and, to assure them of my pacific intentions, invited their chief to take a cup of coffee, while the remainder of the troop rested in the shade of the encampment. The Abyssinian hesitated, but the gift of a pound or two of tobacco soon conquered his indecision. A few minutes afterwards, seated together under the tamarisk-trees, we were the best friends in the world.

It turned out that my new acquaintances belonged to the band of Oued-Nimr. On the following day I took with them the road to the camp of their celebrated chief, where we arrived in the morning.

Two men were sent in advance to announce



OUED-NIMER'S ENCAMPMENT.

our coming. The chief displayed in my honour as much pomp as the small resources of a fugitive permitted. A bed, spread under a tree, served him for throne; fierce-visaged warriors, their garments in tatters, formed his guard; in the back-ground stood horses ready saddled and bridled, for it was necessary that the troop should be in an equal state of preparation for flight or combat; in the distance rose the dark chain of the Ethiopian Mountains, an impregnable citadel, where guerillas are always sure of finding an asylum.

“Having penetrated into Eastern Africa,” said I to Oued-Nimr, “to examine all that it has of the noble and the sublime, I was unwilling to pass near the frontiers of Abyssinia without visiting the celebrated warrior who has succeeded in preserving his independence in the face of all the military might of Egypt.”

A bitter smile contracted the lips of Oued-Nimr.

“Egypt, perhaps, is not the most formidable enemy of our liberties. The echoes of yonder mountains have resounded with sinister alarms: they have told us that our Négus Theodore may soon have to contend for them against the Frank. Dost thou not know it?”

At this abrupt apostrophe I confess I felt alarmed. However, I replied with apparent composure,—

“I have heard that some lamentable differences

have arisen between England and the King of Abyssinia, but I am willing to believe they will soon disappear. Moreover, I am not an English subject; I do not occupy myself with politics; and I belong to a nation which has always manifested towards your country a sincere sympathy."

"What art thou, then?"

"Simply a French traveller."

The sombre visage of the chieftain grew less dark.

"Since thou art a man of peace and science, thou art welcome," he replied coldly. "It is impossible for me to receive you more appropriately; my life is as agitated and as uncertain as that of the lion of the wilderness."

The conversation, thus turned upon less hazardous topics, was prolonged for upwards of an hour. Oued-Nimr had been informed of all my movements from the day I had quitted the Atbara. He suspected me of being a spy, and the slightest act of indiscretion on my part would have been fatal. But as with all his vigilance he could discover no sign of treachery, he had given orders that I should not be attacked. Thus it was to his protection that I, without knowing it, had owed my security.

In return for these good offices I informed the chief that I had ascertained the existence of gold in the sands of several streams.

"Gold! what should I do with it?" he cried; "it is with lead that we must kill our enemies!"

“ You speak bravely. Well, permit me to offer you some presents worthy of so gallant a chieftain and renowned a warrior. See, these revolvers were manufactured by the most famous makers : I add to them a supply of powder and ball.”

Oued-Nimr examined the weapons curiously, and made me explain their mechanism. At this moment I noticed a singular stir among the Abyssinians. One of them approached the chief, and spoke a few words in a low voice. Almost immediately, a man covered with dust and sweat made his appearance. Oued-Nimr addressed to him a few short questions in a language which I did not understand ; probably in Amharic, which is the dialect of Gondar. At each of the messenger's replies a fury, which he vainly sought to control, was depicted on the countenance of the redoubtable partisan ; he threw at me the most ferocious glances, and I began to think I should have good cause to repent of having ventured into the leopard's den.

However, supposing that he *did* attack me, and looking at things in the worst possible light, I had an escort of twenty men provided with excellent muskets ; I myself was no bad marksman ; surely I could extricate myself from the talons of a band of adventurers, armed with rusty matchlocks. I could shoot down ten before they even touched me, and profit by the consequent disorder to effect a retreat.

This reflection, swift as lightning, had scarcely flashed across my mind, before I looked round for Achmet and Hakim, to give them a signal to get my people ready. The cravens had disappeared! Oueda, with his features convulsed, and his hair in disorder, darted towards me.

"Master, Hakim has told your men that you are going to be killed. Instead of coming to your defence, the cowards have fled, and carried with them your arms!"

I sprang forward to pursue the deserters; but was arrested by Oued-Nimr's threatening voice:—

"Seize yonder Frank; put him in irons; and if he attempts to escape, shoot him!"

The soldier to whom this order was given prepared to obtain the assistance of the troop of marauders posted outside.

"What means this?" cried the chief; "two hundred men to arrest one?"

"But," replied the Abyssinian, trembling, "do you not see he has something shining about him? Perhaps it is a formidable machine which may kill us all."

The article in question was a small eye-glass, which I was accustomed to carry about me.

"Triple fool! will you not say next that a Frank can kill you with a frown? Call in two men, and arrest him."

I did not attempt any resistance, knowing that to do so would but expose me to severer treatment.

I contented myself with asking, in the calmest tone I could assume, the motive of Oued-Nimr's sudden anger, and of the unjustifiable proceeding of which I was the victim.

"Will you, can you deny," he shouted, "that you are a spy sent out by our enemies to reconnoitre our forces in this part of the kingdom? The English army disembarks at Zoulla, just at the very moment you cross the frontiers of Abyssinia!"

These words fell upon me like a thunderbolt. For several years, while her agents had lingered in captivity, Great Britain had recoiled from the difficulties and expense of a campaign in so remote a region. To what fatality was it owing that she had resolved upon action exactly when the commencement of hostilities would involve me in such serious peril?

I attempted, however, to justify myself; but Oued-Nimr immediately interrupted me:

"I have received orders from King Theodore. Your explanations are useless; every suspected stranger will be arrested."

Before Oued-Nimr's soldiers could seize me, Oueda threw himself in front of them, holding a revolver, and threatening to shoot the first person who approached me. I snatched the weapon from his hands; the least act of violence would, I knew, be the signal for my destruction.

"My poor lad, be not so rash! Rather en-

deavour to escape while there is yet time, and no one is thinking of you."

"I leave you! never!"

Meanwhile, the Abyssinians had brought a couple of iron chains, to which heavy manacles were attached. One was passed round my right wrist, and a man, armed with a great stone, proceeded to rivet it. The physical suffering was not great; yet this operation seemed to me the most painful it was possible for any man to undergo. Each blow resounded in my brain like a funeral knell.

Adieu, I thought, to the sweet delights of freedom! to bold and unchecked excursions into the heart of a splendid country! Adieu to movement and activity! A rigorous captivity awaited me,—to terminate, perhaps, in a cruel death!

When the fetters were rivetted to my wrist, the other end of the chain was attached to a stalwart Abyssinian, charged to answer for my safe custody with his head. Then I was led back to my tent, where a score of armed men were drawn up on guard.

CHAPTER VIII.

MAGDALA—AN EASY MARCH—GIGANTIC WORKS EXECUTED BY THEODORE—INTERVIEW WITH THE NÉGUS—CATASTROPHE OF THE BACHILO—OUR JAILER—A COMPASSIONATE ABYSSINIAN—THE EMBLEMS OF THE VIRGIN—THE RELIGION OF ABYSSINIA—THE VALUE WHICH THE EGYPTIANS SET UPON A BISHOP.

February 9th, 1868.



MAGDALA, that Abyssinian fortress of fatal memory, is planted on an isolated basaltic mountain, situated at an elevation of nine thousand feet above the sea. It measures about one mile and a half in length, and three-quarters of a mile in breadth; and this mass of rock stretches southward in the direction of the great table-land of Tanta; northward it is connected with the ridge known by the name of Salamgi. Two deep ravines, Menjura and Kulkula, bound the region of Magdala on the east and west; these stretch down to the Bachilo, a muddy (*bourbeux*) torrent flowing at the base of the vast plateau of Talanta, situated to the north-west of the Ethiopian fortress. Magdala, therefore, forms but a small portion of a magnificent mountain-system.

It is impossible to convey to the mind of one who has not seen it any adequate idea of the grandeur of this scenery. Immense basaltic colonnades, of a reddish black, rising upon wooded declivities, as upon a base, present a peculiarly impressive aspect, and awaken in the soul a profound and even a religious emotion of awe and admiration. Man feels himself annihilated, as it were, before these gigantic works of Nature; he understands his littleness, and bends in reverence before them.

Such were the impressions I felt when, escorted by a body of Abyssinians despatched to reinforce the army of Theodore, I arrived to swell the number of the prisoners of Magdala. We had traversed successively numerous chains of high mountains, to gain a point near the sources of the Settite; thence we had followed up the plateau of Wadela and Talanta, and crossed the Bachilo. The road, abrupt and rocky, sometimes crossed wild, wooded ravines, sometimes wound up savage gorges; at various places it was obstructed by immense masses of crags; but the mountain-sides were clothed with junipers and wild roses, jasmines and gigantic thistles. In the plains we fell in with the beautiful *Methonica superba*, which the Abyssinians poetically designate *Mariam t'oua* (or the Mary-cup); its flowers appear like so many jets of flame in the midst of the sombre bushes. Everywhere the brilliant tropical flora revealed its splendours,

covering the very abysses with a mantle of verdure.

The choking, stifling heat of the plains of the Atbara, gave place to a healthy and invigorating air; for Abyssinia, owing to the elevation of its table-lands, escapes the torrid temperature, which is one of the scourges of Africa.

How I should have enjoyed the imposing beauty of this landscape, had not my mind been occupied with bitter thoughts! My captivity, rigorous enough in Oued-Nimr's camp, was about, I knew, to be marked by a still greater severity. The son of the Leopard King, hunted by the Egyptian troops, compelled incessantly to fly from one place to another, had been unwilling to endure any longer the responsibility of guarding prisoners of my importance. A discussion had taken place on the propriety of killing me; but, happily, Oued-Nimr and his counsellors feared to excite the indignation of Theodore by exceeding their instructions. During the deliberation, the Négus had sent to Oued-Nimr for a reinforcement; and the latter profited by the opportunity to get rid of me, and send me into Abyssinia under a strong escort.

My custodians, eager to join the royal army at the camp of Bit-Hor, advanced by forced marches, without disturbing themselves in the least at the difficulty I felt in following in their steps. It is but just, however, to admit that they did

not practise any cruelty upon me. They left Oueda free to follow me; and the child, with an indefatigable devotion, was ingenious in rendering me every service which might mitigate the hardships of my situation. Thanks to him, I wanted neither for doura flour nor water, nor even meat. His intelligent eyes, constantly turned upon me, anticipated all my wants. In my wretchedness it was no slight consolation to receive the evidences of this poor orphan's attachment,—the affectionate lad who repaid with so much usury the small service I had rendered him.

About the beginning of February we had crossed the plateau of Wadela, situated to the north of Talanta, from which it is separated only by the ravine of Djita. On the flanks of this gorge,—three thousand two hundred feet deep,—were encamped the troops of Theodore, who, early in the preceding October, had quitted Debra-Tabor and the neighbourhood of the Lake Tsana to direct his march towards the fortress of Magdala, where the English prisoners were confined.

This citadel, situated in the centre of the Abyssinian empire, in the province of Amhara, thus became the goal of two hostile armies. To reach it, that of Theodore had set out from the west, that of Sir Robert Napier (now Lord Napier of Magdala) from the north-east; but,

contrary to what might have been expected, it was the native prince who encountered on his route the greatest obstacles and the keenest resistance. The condition of Abyssinia, then as now, might and may be compared to that of mediæval Europe. The country is divided into numerous fiefs, whose owners are scarcely inferior in power to the King himself. Theodore attempted the hazardous enterprise of reducing to obedience the great Abyssinian vassals; his reign was one continuous struggle against the rebellious feudatories whom he had converted into bitter enemies. The discontented nobles, the chiefs of Tigré, the Amhara, and Wadela, favoured the English invasion; while Theodore, surrounded by hostile bands, could rely only on his own bravery, his genius, and the fidelity of his adherents. It must be added that the enmity he had excited was in no small degree due to his excessive haughtiness and his outbursts of ferocity.

The works which he had executed to connect Debra-Tabor with his new camp at Bit-Hor, on the western declivity of the Djita ravine, would alone suffice to perpetuate the renown of this wild Abyssinian King, who, in spite of his cruelty and despotism, was the most remarkable man produced by Africa in modern times. He caused to be transported into the heart of the mountains cannons of prodigious weight. For this purpose, he constructed a road—a

master-piece of boldness !—which enabled him to cross the lofty pinnacles and the deep ravines, and to bring up to Bit-Hor his massive artillery.

Here his difficulties increased. Both to the right and the left of the dried-up torrent of the Djita rise the acclivities of the high table-lands of Wadela and Talanta, sculptured perpendicularly into columns of basalt. Yet this formidable obstacle did not daunt Theodore. He resolved to carry over it his military road, which he designed to prolong to Magdala. Its configuration was admirably conceived: on an average, it measured thirty to forty feet in width, and it was supported in some places by solid buttresses of masonry, in others by embankments (*terrassements*), protected by stout timber stays interlaced with branches. More than once he had to resort to mining to detach huge blocks of rock,—a work executed under the superintendence of the German ex-missionaries, whom the Négus had transformed into engineers, and whom he kept near his person; but the engineer-in-chief, the soul of this colossal enterprise, was Theodore.

The road was far advanced when I arrived at the royal camp. A prodigious activity prevailed in the ravine of Djita and on the table-land of Talanta. The Abyssinian soldiers, converted into pioneers, laboured with wonderful ardour and discipline; everywhere was felt the pres-

ence of a chief who knew how to make himself obeyed. My custodians inquired for the royal tent.

"The King's tent," replied a negro with a fine intelligent face, who was, as I learned afterwards, Waldo Gaba, the favourite servant of Theodore, "the King's tent is where a danger is to be braved, an obstacle conquered. But look, here comes the Négus."

Turning my head quickly, I caught sight of a man standing near a rock, and engaged in placing the charge of powder destined to blast an enormous block of stone. Informed of my presence by a European, M. Waldemeier, who was standing beside him, he drew himself up, and in an attitude full of nobleness, waited for our approach.

The Négus Theodore, King of the kings of Ethiopia, had none of the insignia of sovereign majesty. Clothed very simply, he handled the pickaxe and the hammer like the lowest of his workmen, with the view of encouraging them by his example. He was in all things the man of energy, the fierce hero, of whom M. Lejean, who knew him intimately enough to call him his "terrible friend," has traced so life-like a portrait.

He was about fifty years of age; of medium stature, with muscular limbs, a swarthy complexion, and features of remarkable beauty.



KING THEODORE.

His hair fell back upon his shoulders in thick tresses. His lofty, prominent forehead, was furrowed in the middle by a deep wrinkle,—the trace, undoubtedly, of years of toil and anxiety; his nose was aquiline; his lips were thin and firmly closed, indicative of resolution. No sign of cruelty could be discovered, except in the lightning flash of his glance. While observing the flame which escaped from it, I remembered, with an involuntary feeling of disquietude, that my fate was in the hands of this redoubtable prince.

He questioned the Abyssinians who had brought me; then, fixing upon me his black and penetrating eyes, he demanded what motives had led me into his territories. A smile of incredulity greeted my reply. “

“In Europe you would be shot,” he said, in a tone of great bitterness; “but the barbarian Theodore, that man who is painted as a wild beast, will content himself with holding you as a prisoner.—Let him be removed to Magdala,” he added, addressing a *ras*, or colonel, who was awaiting his instructions.

This sentence appeared to me scarcely preferable to a sentence of death. I felt assured that the European prisoners shut up in his fortress would be pitilessly slaughtered were Theodore conquered, for he would avenge his defeat upon them; and this defeat appeared to me a certainty, since he had not only to contend against

a host of internal enemies, but against a brave and powerful English army, furnished with all the formidable engines of modern military science.

We silently resumed our route along the plateau of Talanta. A few hours later we halted for the night on the bank of the Bachilo. The torrent, completely dried up, presented to the eye the appearance of a deep ravine, enclosed between two colossal walls of basalt; but during the rainy season it hurls forward a wild and foamy flood, which brooks no obstacles. Its inundation, as sudden as that of the Atbara, frequently occasions terrible disasters. I heard my custodian describe a catastrophe of this kind, to which Theodore himself had nearly fallen a victim, a few years previously.

He had encamped with his troops in the narrow valley of the Bachilo. To obtain a little fresh air, and collect some fodder and fuel, a large number of the soldiery had pitched their tents in the dry bed of the torrent. All at once a hoarse, terrible sound, like the roll of thunder, was heard in the distance. The soldiers could not mistake it: there had been heavy rains, probably, in the highlands, and what they heard was the roar of the waters ready to pounce upon them. They seized their spears and bucklers, and saddled their horses, while the women in all haste gathered together the baggage. Then they hurried towards the rocks, endeavouring to find

a passage. Unfortunately the roads were mere tracks or by-paths, fit only for the nimble feet of goats. The fugitives, rendered frantic by the imminence of their peril, blocked up the narrow issue, and fell over one another in an indescribable disorder. The foaming waves swooped down like a formidable avalanche, rolling enormous masses of rock—sweeping away the largest trees as if they had been blades of grass, and battalions of men like ants. Helpless spectators of the disaster, those of the soldiers who had contrived to gain the heights uttered a shriek of alarm as the torrent rushed past them, carrying away, pell-mell, men, women, children, horses, mules, and camels. A few hours later the flood cast upon its banks a thousand carcasses.

We had still to travel several leagues through a mountainous region, where trachyte and basalt rose in precipitous peaks; and it was not until midday that we gained the little plateau of Salamgi, situated at the foot of Magdala. The ascent to the citadel consisted of a very narrow and almost precipitous stony path, dominated on the right hand by enormous masses of rock. The road terminated in front of a great arched gate, called *Koket-Bir*. On each side, the approach was defended by a strong palisade. When we had traversed this first passage, we climbed a second ascent as steep as the first, leading to another

gate. As it closed upon us, I felt an indescribable tightening of the heart. I seemed to hear a mournful voice murmur in my ear the words which Dante has inscribed on the threshold of his *Inferno*—

“All hope abandon, ye who enter here.”

The fortress of Magdala was, in reality, a town, for it possessed a palace, a church, and a population of 3000 to 4000 souls, besides a garrison of 1200 men and 600 to 700 prisoners. I found myself mixed up, not only with English and German captives, but also with state criminals, thieves, and murderers. Happily, these were confined in a special building, while each European in his little hut enjoyed a comparative degree of liberty, if such a term may fitly be applied to the situation of men detained in a fortress, and with chains to their feet like galley-slaves.

After a sleepless night, spent in the gloomiest reflections, the jailer specially intrusted with the care of my person entered. He had by no means the repulsive countenance generally attributed to persons of his profession: his features indicated rudeness, but not malignity. Age had bowed his form and whitened his hair. Undoubtedly he had been the eye-witness of much suffering. Had the constant spectacle of human misery produced in him indifference, or compassion? I vainly sought to read an answer to

this question in Hailo's face. I attempted to put several queries to him in Abyssinian, of which I had picked up a few words in my journey with Oued-Nimr's people. The jailer replied by monosyllables, which conveyed but little information. He deposited in a corner of the hut my pittance for the day—a very meagre allowance for a man exhausted with fatigue: then he prepared to leave me.

I stopped him to show him my ankles, swollen by the long march, and cruelly bruised by the new fetters with which they had been loaded on the previous evening.

A fugitive gleam of pity softened his glance; but he soon conquered the impression.

"This," said he, "is a matter for the chief jailer; I can take nothing upon myself."

I had been separated from my faithful Ouelda. What had become of him? Would they keep him in the fortress? I was unable to learn. Fancy, then, how extreme was my delight when, a few moments after the jailer's departure, he rushed into my hut, exclaiming,—

"Here I am, master! I will not leave you again; they have permitted me to stay with you."

I clasped the child in my arms; and the first outburst of emotion over, I asked him how he had managed to rejoin me.

On his entering Magdala, the guards had easily

detected, by the little orphan's bronze complexion, that he was of Abyssinian birth, and his youth had greatly excited their interest. They had closely questioned him; then, until they could come to some decision respecting his disposal, had sent him to Hailo's house. The jailer had a daughter—the charming Melkamia. The child had soon gained her favour; had told her of his misfortunes, and of his attachment towards me. The young Abyssinian had encouraged him with tender words; and turning towards her father, she said,—

“Can we do nothing for this poor Frank?”

“Nothing at all. He allowed himself to be caught; so much the worse for him.”

“Do not speak so, my father. Everybody knows that you are not so bad as you would make yourself appear.”

Here Oueda had thrown himself on his knees at the jailer's feet, beseeching him, at all events, to obtain permission that he might wait upon me.

“Well, we shall see.”

Hailo obtained, in truth, the melancholy favour which the child desired; and Oueda, happier than if he had gained a victory, had immediately hastened to my hut.

“You cannot remain here,” I said to him. “At your age you are in need of air and liberty; you will fall ill in this citadel. Since this jailer is a kindly-hearted man, I will ask him if it is not possible to send you back to your father's

country, where you must still have some relations living."

"I know of none; you are my whole family."

The door of the hut opened anew. A young and very beautiful woman, with eyes of velvety black which one finds in Abyssinia only, appeared on the threshold with a vessel in her hand. It was Melkamia, the jailer's daughter.

"I bring you some *tedj*," she said to me. "There is no drink more agreeable or more invigorating. Here are also some pieces of meat; they will do you good."

While she was speaking, she spread out on the mat which served me for a table a dozen small slices of raw beef, as thin as the blade of a knife, and about the length of my finger. I regarded with surprise this singular apology for a beefsteak, asking myself in what way I should cook it, since I had neither fuel nor a stove.

"Why do you not eat?" continued Melkamia. "Are you not hungry?"

"Eat raw flesh!"

The young girl began to laugh.

"Oh yes. Mr. Cameron said the same thing; and he made us cut up the meat in slices ten times as thick, which were just allowed to see the fire. Then when the blood and gravy began to drip, he ate the beef, though it reddened his knife and fork. For myself, I would rather have bitten the flesh of the animal before it was killed."

Melkamia was not altogether wrong. The thin slices which she wished me to taste had at least this advantage, that they did not stream with blood like the roast beef so highly recommended by physicians to beautiful Parisians of delicate constitution. They do not leave even a reddish mark upon the fingers; and eventually I confessed that, after all, the Abyssinian custom is not more savage than our own. Melkamia assured me that Frenchmen visiting Abyssinia soon grew partial to this *régime*. To encourage me to follow their example, she seized one of the slices of meat, and began to eat it; laughing all the while, and displaying two rows of dainty little teeth, as white as pearls.

We continued our conversation.

Melkamia showed a strong desire to hear me speak of Europe. She uttered cries of surprise and admiration at the sight of three or four books which had not been taken from me, and which were full of engravings. One of these represented St. Peter's Cathedral at Rome.

"You are a Christian like Mr. Cameron," she said. "Is it not so?"

"No; he is a Protestant, I am a Catholic."

"Oh, so much the better!"

And the young girl drew from her bosom a small medal, suspended by a ribbon of blue silk, and presented it to me with an air of interrogation.

"Yes, yes," said I, regarding with softened

eyes the pious emblem which reminded me both of my country and of my childhood's memories; "*Denghel Mariam!*"—the Virgin Mary.

Nothing equals the passionate devotion of the Abyssinians towards the Virgin. Her name is constantly on their lips; they love to carry all kinds of scapularies, medals, and chaplets; they celebrate numerous *fêtes* in her honour, and prepare for the Feast of the Assumption by a fast of a fortnight's duration. The Protestant missionaries naturally have come into collision with this sentiment, so deeply rooted in the national heart. It is one of the principal causes of their want of success in Abyssinia, where not only have they never made a single proselyte, but have become, it must be confessed, an object of aversion almost as profound as the Mohammedans—those enemies against whom the Ethiopians have gallantly maintained a struggle of six centuries' duration.

This heroic resistance on the part of a people who, alone in all the East, have succeeded in preserving their faith and their independence in the face of the armed propagandism of Mohammed, testifies to an incontestable nobility of mind and vital energy of character. The Abyssinians embraced with ardour the Christian religion when it was first preached to them; and in this remote land, in the heart of the African mountains, may still be found the dogma of the Eucharist, the practice of confession, and a strict



AN ABYSSINIAN PRIEST.

observance of fasting and the sacraments. Unfortunately, Ethiopia has long been in a situation which has exercised an unfavourable influence upon her. Islamism, extending its conquests, has encircled it in every direction. Separated from the great Christian family founded by Christ's

apostles, it has languished sadly, instead of bearing the fruits of progress and civilization.

It has attempted, nevertheless, to effect a union with the Christian world. For this purpose it adopted the custom of selecting its supreme pontiff among the whites, and of inviting the Patriarch of Alexandria to nominate him. It was then that the Jacobite error detached from the Roman Church the Egyptians who had not submitted to the yoke of Mohammedanism. The leader of the innovators profited by the isolation of the Abyssinians to send them an "heretical bishop." Everybody knows into what a state of degradation at the present day the Alexandrian Church has fallen. The Abyssinians do not share all its errors; but they continue to seek, in the ranks of its apostate clergy, their abouna, or spiritual chief. By accepting for their primate a man ignorant and corrupted, the nation condemned itself to sterility. Nevertheless, with that tenacity so characteristic of the East, it preserved its ancient dogmas, its ancient traditions. Its submission to the abouna was completely external, and Abyssinia remained a field quite ready to receive the seeds of Roman Catholicism.

The Romish missions, founded about a quarter of a century ago, led to conversions so numerous that the Abyssinian prelates grew alarmed. The abouna had recourse to Theodore, and succeeded in persuading him that all national spirit would

be completely destroyed among the Ethiopians if they adopted the religion of the European countries. The Négus, though he did not esteem him, followed his counsel—he expelled from his dominions the Romish missionaries. Abyssinia continued to be given up to an ignorant priesthood, directed by a contemptible pontiff.

If the private conduct of the abouna is ordinarily unedifying, the manner in which he is appointed is not calculated to raise him in the eyes of the people. The Patriarch of Alexandria sells him to the Abyssinians for a sum of about 7000 *talariis*, or £1500. So, that they may not too often incur so heavy an expense, the primary qualifications which they require in a prelate are that he should be young and healthy. On arriving in Abyssinia, he is the object of lively demonstrations of respect, and at the same time of a very rigid surveillance. It is even said that Theodore more than once threw the abouna into chains, when he had caused some conflicts between the spiritual and the temporal power. On such occasions the pontiff, after being conducted to his place of confinement, is served on their knees by people who kiss his feet, but who do not on that account guard him with the less vigilance.

The reader will understand that, with such spiritual guides, the Abyssinians may well be involved in a vague and shadowy creed, mixed

up with numerous superstitions. In their interments, for example, before killing the cows intended for the funeral banquet, they cause the priest to bless the knife, if it has been polluted by the contact of the blood of other animals. In their processions they always begin by starting on the right; and they appoint four stations corresponding to the four cardinal points, to the end that if God does not hear them on one side, he may on the other. The moment they are seized with illness, they have recourse to diviners and sorcerers. In the rustling of the leaves of a forest, in the pealing of the thunder, they think they recognize the voice of a good or a bad genius.

One of their most fantastic ideas consists in imagining that certain aliments possess the property of rendering them Mohammedans in spite of themselves. In a year of famine a missionary met with a woman carrying her child in her arms.

“Has that child been baptized?” he asked.

“Alas, no! He cannot receive baptism; he is a Mohammedan, like myself.”

“You? I thought you were a Christian.”

“I was so; but, pressed by hunger, I ate some grasshoppers.”

CHAPTER IX.

AN ALARMING VISIT—SHALL WE BE SHOT?—THE ARTILLERY OF THEODORE — REVIEW OF THE ABYSSINIAN TROOPS—THE STORM—HISTORY OF THE NÉGUS—THE DEMON OF THE LAKE TSANA—CONQUEST OF THE AMHARA AND TIGRÉ—THEODORE THINKS OF BECOMING A CATHOLIC—BATTLE OF DERESKIA—CAPTURE OF ANKOBAR—AN EXCESS OF PRIDE—REVOLT AND DEATH OF NEGOUSIA—A BATTLE OF MANY LEGENDS.

March 29th.

AÏLO came to inform me that in two hours I must be ready to follow him outside Magdala. My jailer's countenance seemed more anxious than ordinarily; his rough voice betrayed an ominous degree of agitation.

"What has happened? what is the matter?" I asked, with some inquietude.

"The Négus is upon the Salamgi, and has asked for the European prisoners."

This news excited in me, I confess, a certain emotion. Haïlo having retired to escape further questioning, I sent Ouelda to gather information.

It was not long before the child returned. He told me that Theodore had completed his Herculean labours: his road was ended; he had

transported his artillery to the gates of Magdala. As for the fate which he reserved for *us*, conjecture varied greatly. He would display *us*, said some, in his triumphal procession, to raise the spirits of his soldiery; he intended, said others, to terrify the country and brave the vengeance of England by ordering our execution. This latter supposition seemed to us the more probable; for the province was filled with rebels, and the British army was approaching the tableland of Wadela. At all events, it was certain that our fate depended solely on the good pleasure of Theodore—that we could do nothing but obey his orders.

At the appointed hour Hailo relieved me of my chains, and conducted me to the inner gate of the fortress. There I was rejoined by my companions in misfortune—Mr. Cameron, Mr. Rassam, M. Bourgaud, a French armourer, and about twenty other Europeans. The heavy hinges of Koket-Bir grated to give us egress, but not for our deliverance. A numerous escort surrounded us. We were about to appear before the Négus.

Six thousand men were ranged in order of battle on the crest of the Salangi. A scarlet tent was pitched in the centre of the little plateau—the insignia which in Abyssinia indicates the royal presence. We advanced up the avenue of soldiers until we stood in front of

ABYSSINIAN HORSEMEN AND FOOT-SOLDIERS.



Theodore. The Négus, clothed in a superb *kinkob* (a silk tunic embroidered with gold) and a *lendl* (a jacket of lion-skin) awaited us at the entrance of his tent. With one hand he rested upon his lance, the other played negligently with the but-end of a pistol. Several officers, attired in sumptuous and brilliantly-coloured uniforms, were ranged around him. Among them I remarked a man of ripe old age, with a gray beard, whose features were lit up with benevolence and loyalty: he was named Gebria, and was esteemed one of the most devoted adherents of Theodore.

Meanwhile Mr. Cameron and Mr. Rassam, who marched at the head of our little band, had arrived before the Négus. He welcomed them with a smile, and I was astonished at the fascinating aspect his countenance could assume. This man, so terrible in his excesses of rage, possessed, when he chose to exercise it, an irresistible charm. He began to talk with the two Englishmen. I could not hear their conversation; for, having no official title, I remained in the rearmost rank. I could observe only the faces; and to see that singular group, one would have said it consisted, not of prisoners in the presence of a man whose single word could doom them to death, but of friends engaged in familiar gossip. The eyes of the three interlocutors were frequently directed towards the pieces of artillery posted at a short distance from the

royal tent; then the King's gaze, burning and restless, would fix itself on the two Europeans. He evidently sought to estimate, from the impression produced upon them by the display of his forces, his chances in the imminent battle. It was on this account he had sent for us, and we had had no cause to tremble for our lives.

The cannon with which the Négus supposed himself able to crush the small but well-appointed British army which was slowly but surely pressing towards Magdala were very unwieldy: one, a gigantic piece of great range, had been christened *Sebastopol*; another was named *Theodoros*, after its royal godfather. Unfortunately for the Négus, though happily for the cause of humanity and civilization, one could easily see that this massive artillery, ill adapted for manœuvring, could not follow the movements of an attacking force, and that its effect would be almost *nil*. How could he contend with such ill-devised weapons against the admirable arms of the English, at once so powerful and so mobile?

The opinion of Mr. Rassam and Mr. Cameron was visible on their countenance, and did not escape the eye of Theodore. A shadow, swift as lightning, swept over his forehead; his troops perceived it; immediately he recovered himself, and resumed a smiling and assured air.

The different corps of his army then began to defile. It is important to remember that the



WEAPONS OF THE ABYSSINIANS.

Abyssinian troops were composed of three classes :—

1. The *horsemen*, armed with a sabre and a couple of spears, which they used as javelins. At a distance of fifteen yards they always hit

their object, and inflicted a mortal wound. They were mounted upon horses full of mettle, which they trained to execute the most remarkable feats, under the guidance only of their knees.

2. The *sharp-shooters*, famous for their cold and impassible bravery. They carried muskets of tolerably good quality; but their powder was defective—each soldier being left to manufacture his own.

3. The *foot-soldiers*, equipped with darts and curved sabres, shaped like scythes. They were noted for the impetuosity of their attack.

The troops, when in the field, were accompanied by a numerous body of servants, who carried the tents and war-engines; or, more correctly speaking, loaded and attended to the baggage-mules. The luxury of beasts of burden was reserved for the officers alone: the common soldiers intrusted the transport of their provisions to the women, who always followed the army, and frequently displayed towards their masters the most touching affection. These poor creatures, while on the march, were bowed under heavy burdens. When nightfall came, and the army halted, they had to grind the corn, light the fires, make the bread, and attend to the cooking. In spite of constant fatigue, in spite of the brutal treatment they too frequently received, they maintained, I was assured, a continual gaiety. On the day I am now writing about they wore their festal garments, and



ABYSSINIAN WOMAN POUNDING GRAIN.

feminine coquetry animated their smiles and glances.

Just as the last file of soldiers passed before their royal commander, the sky, which for an hour or more had been lowering with clouds, assumed a dull leaden hue. The obscurity was soon furrowed by the lightnings, which flashed their ominous lustre over the whole plateau of Salamgi; the black basalt walls of the neighbouring mountains were a gloomy and romantic

appearance; the thunder-peals reverberated again and yet again in their deep, dark ravines. Large drops of rain preluded the deluge which, at this season of the year, always descends upon the earth as day advances. Theodore, unshaken by the wild fury of the elements, finished reviewing his troops without seeming to perceive the violence of the storm. Happy he, had he never been called upon to face other tempest than that! But the hour had come when the chieftain, reputed invincible in Abyssinia, was to be thunder-stricken by the power of the West. Another week, and the English would stand, calm and unconquerable, before the gates of Magdala. The Négus might have been able to protract the campaign if he had carried on a guerilla war, though his ultimate defeat, even then, was a matter of certainty; but, surrounded as he was by rebels, and by the enemies whom his cruelties had provoked, he was forced to risk one decisive blow.

The rain was falling in torrents when we returned to the fortress. Pretty Melkamia, who perhaps had never expected to see us again, uttered an exclamation of joy when she caught sight of us. I began to look upon my captivity as much less perilous than at first I had thought it. Theodore had almost won me to his side by the charm of his bearing and his manners. Certainly he seemed one of Nature's kings, and

not a monster athirst for blood. Such a man, I said to Melkamia, was incapable of massacring defenceless prisoners.

Melkamia shook her head.

"No," said she, "you have nothing to fear—so long as he keeps his temper."

"And does he frequently lose it?"

"Not when things go according to his wishes."

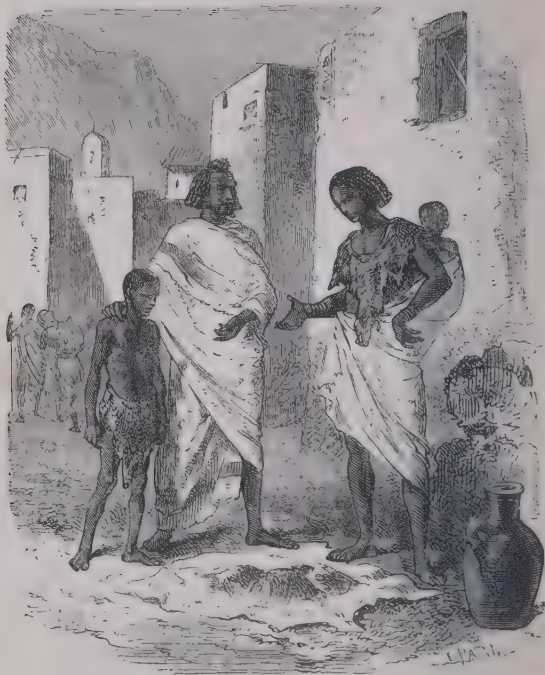
The young girl's answers made me reflect. It was not the first time I had heard allusions to the Négus's capricious disposition. Interested as I was in the peculiarities of his character, I had interrogated my fellow-prisoners, I had questioned the Abyssinians themselves: some had painted for me a gloomy picture of his fanaticism and violence; others had enthusiastically boasted of his glory. I endeavoured anew to gain the information which would enable me to reconcile these contradictory reports, and the result of the evidence I obtained may, I think, be fairly summed up as follows:—

Theodore was simply a freebooting or guerilla leader, who, by his audacity, his ability, and his skill in turning opportunities to account, had raised himself to the kingly rank. He was born about 1818, in the mountainous province of Kouara, which was then governed by his father, "Duke" Haïlo-Mariam. As for his mother, the Négus had spread abroad the report that she came of the rightful imperial family,

which of late had nominally reigned at Gondar, in very similar circumstances to the indolent and incompetent Kings of the Merovingian dynasty of France. These princes had no influence, no authority in the country. Shut up in the interior of their palace, they played no political part, and demitted to others the responsibility of governing the kingdom; yet their person remained sacred, because a kind of legendary reverence attached to them. According to an ancient tradition, they were descended from Solomon, through Ménilek, daughter of the beautiful Makada, the Ethiopian Queen of whom we read in Scripture. The reader will understand that Theodore had sought to legitimize his usurpation by attributing to his mother this glorious origin, as one of the offshoots of the illustrious imperial race.

However this may be, Theodore, or rather Kassa, (for such was then his name—he did not assume until a later period the name by which he will be known in history,) lost his father while still a youth, and was deprived of his inheritance by greedy kinsmen, who, to get rid of him, sent him to a convent near Lake Tsana. Haïlo-Mariam's widow was reduced to sell kousso* in the streets of Gondar. She died in a few years, after dragging out a wretched existence in poverty, want, and abandonment.

* A kind of purgative, very efficacious as a remedy against tænia, or tape-worm—a very common disease in Abyssinia.



THE MOTHER OF THEODORE SELLING KOUSSO IN THE
STREETS OF GONDAR.

Meantime Kassa had arrived at manhood. Owing to the prevailing civil discords, he effected his escape from the monastery in which he had been confined, collected a company of adventurers, and speedily rendered himself formidable.

A very popular legend shows that, even in his youth, he was animated by a presentiment of future greatness.

One day when he had encamped with a squadron of horse in a plain bordering on Lake Tsana, he separated from his men, advanced alone towards the shore, and pronounced some magic words. Immediately a thick cloud rose from the limpid surface, a throne appeared upon the waters, and a crowned phantom addressed the young Kassa in a cavernous voice :—

“Thou hast called me: knowest thou who I am?”

“Thou art the Prince of Shadows, and thou knowest the future. Shall I reign?”

“Thou wilt experience,” replied the spirit, “a life of agitation and many rude disappointments.”

“This I do not ask thee. Shall I reign?”

“Yes,” answered the demon; and he disappeared.

Kassa, with a thoughtful brow, returned to his men, who from afar had been witnesses of the singular scene.

But there were qualities in the son of Haïlo-Mariam better adapted to secure success than any number of magical incantations: an indomitable courage, an energetic will, a blind faith in the future. A proud and ambitious princess, Menenah, mother of Ras-Ali, the chief of Godjam and Dembea, of which Gondar is the capital, was

the first who attempted to stay the impetuous career of the young adventurer, whose daring design it was to found a united empire on the ruins of the ancient feudalism. The day preceding the battle, Kassa assembled his principal officers at a banquet; then, when his guests, excited by the fumes of the *tedj*, were boasting of their courage and the capacity of their young leader, he stopped them with a gesture. "It is not becoming," he said, "for Christians to praise themselves."

Then flinging himself upon the ground, he exclaimed:—

"Be thou pleased, O Lord, to show thy mercy to a poor sinner like me. All power and glory are thine alone, for ever and ever."

This religious fervour, which was due to his monastic education, degenerated in time into a gloomy fanaticism; but then it was pure and free from violence.

Their leader's mystical enthusiasm inspired the soldiery. Menenah, beaten, was compelled to accept the terms of peace imposed upon her by her conqueror, and gave him in marriage her grand-daughter, the beautiful Tzoubedga. The young princess's father, Ras-Ali, had fled, resigning both power and position.

This first success was but the prelude to the triumphs which raised Kassa to the supreme rank. Soon extending his sway over all Central

Abyssinia, he invaded the province of Tigré, where the aged Oubieh, a chief well known from his friendly relations with several European travellers, had assumed the title of Négus. With him resided the abouna, whose presence suffices to consecrate the political supremacy of the prince fortunate enough to make himself master of his person. This prelate, chosen, as we have seen, by the Church of Alexandria, inspired a general and well-deserved contempt. Haughty, violent, greedy, he employed his time in usury, commerce, and political intrigues. He encouraged the slave-trade, carried away the sacred vessels from the churches, and despatched them to Egypt. His ignorance was proverbial; his vices were known to everybody.

For a moment Kassa thought of recognizing as head of the Abyssinian Church a much venerated Italian missionary, M. de Jacobis; but the abouna, apprised of his intention, and feeling more confident in the fortune of the young captain than in that of Oubieh, secretly promised Kassa that he should be nominated Négus by the inhabitants of Gondar, if he would pledge himself to expel the Catholics. Kassa, in the ardour of his ambition, and seeing that these formed but a small minority, consented, and a bitter persecution immediately commenced in Abyssinia.

Evil actions are nearly always political errors.

Theodore did not perceive that in acting as he did he condemned the nation to a fatal isolation. He had already been denounced by the Turks, and now he broke with the Christian powers of the West. There remained for him no other resource than to immure himself among his mountains. Such a system, however, is not practicable now-a-days, not even in Africa. We live in an age when all barriers fall before the irresistible march of civilization. This great truth Abyssinia was doomed to understand.

A few days afterwards, the *abouna* kept his word: the secret convention, or assembly of the *Debteras* (literates), proclaimed the son of Haïlo King of the kings of Ethiopia.

Thus cruelly betrayed, Oubieh had recourse to arms. On the 5th of February 1855, a bloody battle was fought at Dereskia, in which Oubieh was defeated and taken prisoner. Master of a formidable army, which was passionately attached to him, Kassa was thenceforward all-powerful. But he did not appear at first to study the welfare of his kingdom: he concealed his projects of reform under the mask of a profound admiration for the past; he declared himself the legitimate heir of the ancient *néguses*; and with a view to show the spirit which would animate his reign, he selected a name which a tradition universally spread throughout Abyssinia surrounded with prestige. According to

the popular belief, a prince called Theodore was destined to reëstablish the Ethiopian Empire in its ancient grandeur, destroy Islamism, and restore Jerusalem to the Christians. The new King bethought himself of this prophecy, declared himself the chosen of Providence, and, strong in the support of a people full of enthusiasm, threatened with the divine anger whosoever should dare to withstand his designs.

Thanks to his firm and skilful initiative, the happiest changes were effected. The guerilla bands were dissolved; the country enjoyed the security to which it had so long been a stranger; abundance and peace took the place of scarcity and pillage; and roads, constructed or repaired by the soldiers, linked together the principal towns of Abyssinia.

It may be supposed that no person ventured to disobey him.

Moral reforms did not the less attract his attention. He repressed the abuses of justice, redressed the wrongs under which the poor had suffered, and corrected the vicious legislation which prevailed in reference to marriage. The Abyssinian law recognized two kinds of union; one civil, the other religious. The latter was held indissoluble; but then it was too frequently dispensed with, and contracting parties contented themselves with pronouncing their vows before the magistrate of the town or village—a

ceremony which enabled them to divorce themselves at will. Consequently, the most complete anarchy reigned in families, as in the State; the children lost the habits of obedience and affection; parents, their self-respect. One of the first acts of Theodore was to suppress these scandalous civil marriages, which the slightest caprice might break.

This work of internal reorganization did not prevent him from pursuing his conquests. Abyssinia had long been partitioned into three great divisions, the Amhara, the Tigré, the Shoa, which, placed under the independent authority of distinct masters, had each become a veritable kingdom, subdivided in its turn into several provinces. The Amhara and the Tigré recognized Theodore; but the Shoa still refused to submit to him. The Négus invaded it with a large army, and entered victorious its capital, the flourishing city of Ankobar, the wealthiest and most commercial of the Abyssinian cities. His empire, therefore, extended from one end to the other of the Abyssinian plateau; the conquered factions knelt silent before him; his ambition seemed to overcome every obstacle; already he turned his gaze towards Egypt and Jerusalem. But the intoxication of power and glory is dangerous to the heart of man. Having reached the pinnacle of fortune, Theodore turned giddy.

"I have made a compact with God," said he

one day to a deputation of clergy: "he has promised not to descend upon earth and strike me; I have promised not to ascend to heaven and combat him."

Punishment soon followed upon this insane pride. In a country so completely divided as had but lately been the new Abyssinian Empire, it was impossible but that a secret ferment of disorder should sooner or later be the cause of troubles and rebellions. Under the guidance of an adventurous chief named Negousieh, the Tigré was the first to raise the standard of revolt. A portion of the provinces of the Amhara, the Beghemder, and the Godjam, imitated its example. Furious at a resistance which he had not foreseen, the imperious Theodore endeavoured to put down the revolt by oppression and violence. The number of the discontented increased; bitter and incessant struggles soured the gloomy and fanatical character of the Négus. He had lost his wife, the graceful and gracious Tzoubedga, whom he had passionately loved, and whose influence, it was said, had subdued that haughty spirit, had inspired it with moderation, justice, and humanity. Her death had been an irreparable misfortune for the Négus.

Desirous of strengthening his power, he married Toronècha, daughter of the Oubieh whom he had vanquished at Dereskia in 1855. This second union did not turn out happily. The new Queen was as haughty and intractable as

Tzoubedga had been gentle and submissive; she despised Theodore as a *parvenu*, and could not pardon him for having dethroned her father. After living for some years on very bad terms, they were compelled to separate. These domestic trials, added to the irritation caused by revolts constantly breaking out and with difficulty repressed, awoke the savagery that lay dormant in the soul of the Négus. Not only did he lead a very irregular life, but, powerless to check the torrent of anarchy, he ceased to regard himself as set apart for a work of mercy, but rather as the instrument of divine justice on a rebellious people. All the standards of the imperial army bore this inscription: "Theodore, the scourge of the wicked."

Then commenced those bloody executions, those cruel and arbitrary acts, which changed into a hateful terrorism a reign begun under such brilliant auspices. The revolt of Negousieh cost the Négus six years of obstinate conflict, in which France had declared in favour of the insurgent chief, who had declared himself protector of the Roman Catholics. No succour was sent to him; but Theodore, nevertheless, cherished a deep animosity against the French Government.

As for Negousieh, he had made a skilful and generous attempt to reinvigorate the religious faith of the Abyssinians, and put the country in communication with Europe. But his situation

was widely different from that of Theodore, when, six years before, the same problem had been set before him. The ambitious Kassa had had to encounter only chiefs of little power and reputation, and at enmity among themselves. In the face of Negousieh, on the contrary, rose a solid and organized power, in the hands of a man of genius. The prince of the Tigré, moreover, was far from possessing the military talents and political intelligence of Theodore. In a less stormy age, he might have rendered eminent services to his country; for he was wise and thoughtful, and animated by the most upright intentions. In a period of strife he could not but succumb; and so, after a hard-fought battle, he was delivered into the hands of the Négus, who gave orders that his right hand and left foot should be struck off. At the end of a few days the unfortunate prince died. This barbarous punishment is much in vogue in Abyssinia: formerly it was restricted by law to bandits and thieves. But in these later times, the fury of the civil wars has rendered mutilations much more frequent.

This rebellion stifled, new enemies arose. The Shoa, which regretted its ancient chiefs, attempted to reëstablish them. The Négus was not fortunate in the expedition which he undertook to subjugate it; he experienced severe reverses, and lost his prestige in the eyes even of

his old friends. Three or four insurrections broke out simultaneously in the north, the principal being headed by a noble of high rank in the environs of Adoua. He succeeded in defying all the efforts of Theodore, and greatly facilitated the march of the English through the Tigré. Another Abyssinian chief, Gobasieh, rendered himself master of nearly all the eastern provinces, and organized a league against Theodore among the small feudatories of the Amhara. The Négus could not advance a step without encountering enemies, though, in truth, very few of them ventured to oppose him in a pitched battle. Their tactics consisted in retiring before him, and taking refuge in their strongholds situated among inaccessible mountains, while privation, and bad weather, and rapid marches decimated his troops. And thus an army which numbered between 30,000 and 40,000 men was reduced to 6,000.

In spite of this rapid diminution, Theodore still inspired a fascination of terror, arising in part from his past victories, in part from the superstitious belief of the Abyssinians that he was protected by the demon of Lake Tsana. The rebel chiefs used every effort to dissipate the delusion. Not succeeding in this, they opposed fable to fable. They caused it to be related in the Amhara and the Tigré that the Spirit of the Shadows had appeared to the Négus, and announced to him his approaching

fall. Theodore had demanded a few years only, to work out the grand designs he meditated—to reëstablish order in the country, to found a prosperous empire, and to recover Jerusalem from the infidels. But the demon had said to him: “Impossible! thy hour has come; thou hast drunk too deeply of Abyssinian blood. Thou wilt perish, and for three years the English will reign over Ethiopia. After this time of trial, an equitable and powerful Négus will drive out the strangers; he will raise the grandeur of the nation, whose sway shall extend over the whole earth.”

These splendid prophecies flattered the pride of the people; and the demon, assuredly, could not have uttered any words better adapted to favour both the insurgents and their friends. Each of the rebel nobles presented himself to his partisans as the providential Négus promised to the country. Meantime the British army advanced; a few days, I thought to myself, and I shall be free, or—shot!

April 5th.—According to the reports which daily reached Magdala, the feudatories of the rebel Gobasieh showed a strong desire to assist the English troops. On the 1st of April, the inhabitants of Wadela and Talanta sent into the camp of Sir Robert Napier fourteen thousand pounds of meal, thirty thousand pounds of flour,

and ten thousand pounds of barley. Cattle and fodder were supplied in equal abundance; the independent princes neglected nothing which could insure the success of an expedition directed against their common enemy, that terrible Theodore, whose military genius had made them tremble, and whom they felt themselves powerless to overcome.

While the English army rejoiced in an abundant supply of provisions, the stores in the fortress rapidly diminished. The opportunities of revictualling it were few and uncertain. The Négus, therefore, resolved to reduce the number of mouths to be fed. Magdala contained many non-political prisoners, the least guilty of whom had at least a burglary or a murder on his conscience. Three hundred of these honest people were set at liberty by the King's orders: he preferred to release these wretches rather than captives who might hasten to swell the ranks of his enemies. I experienced a strong emotion on seeing the hideous band of brigands defile before my hut. These fierce-visaged men, whose very features told of crime and wickedness, were at liberty to quit Magdala; while I, whom an unfortunate chance alone had involved in difficulty, remained exposed to the most menacing eventualities.

The gates of Koket-Bir were closed; about two hundred malefactors were still imprisoned

in the fortress: probably they were the most vicious of the band, whom some scruple of conscience prevented Theodore from letting loose on his country. However, since the preceding day, he had given them neither bread nor water. They thought the Négus intended to let them die of starvation. Accordingly, they broke out into imprecations, demanding food with loud and long-continued shouts, and threatening even their jailers.

This disorder was the prelude to a frightful scene.

"I am still master," cried Theodore, with a terrible oath; "they shall not thus dare my authority."

The prisoners were thereupon dragged from their cells; they were stripped of their clothing; and then, under the eyes of the Négus, were flung pell-mell down the precipice of Salamgi! A battalion was drawn up on the edge of the plateau, and ordered to fire upon the human heap below, until not one of the unfortunates gave signs of life.

"Let their bodies remain unburied, as an example to those who would fain imitate their rebellious spirit," added the King.

From the heights of Magdala I witnessed the terrible drama. I returned to my hut overcome with horror: for so swift a justice bears a close resemblance to a butchery; and Theo-

dore, presiding in person at the summary execution he had ordained, appeared to me no longer a courageous sovereign, but a sanguinary despot.

The Abyssinians were not of my opinion. In a country long ravaged by civil war, bloodshed becomes frequent, and one learns to look upon it with indifference.

"It is a long time since we purged Magdala in this fashion," said to me the jailer Haïlo. "Our rations will cease to be so scanty."

"Bah!" replied another of the jailers, a robust young man of twenty; "this is Holy Week, and it is no great hardship to be obliged to fast a little."

CHAPTER X.

FRIENDLY RECEPTION OF INVADERS—SUMMARY JUSTICE—TERROR OF THE EUROPEAN PRISONERS—ARRIVAL OF THE ENGLISH TROOPS—AN EVIL OMEN—THE BATTLE AND THE DEFEAT—AN INEXORABLE CONQUEROR—LETTER FROM THEODORE TO SIR ROBERT NAPIER—THE NÉGUS ATTEMPTS TO COMMIT SUICIDE—HIS LAST INTERVIEW WITH HIS QUEEN—WE ARE SET AT LIBERTY—EASTER DAY IN THE ENGLISH CAMP.

April 9th (Holy Thursday).



ON this day the entire population of the fortress was thrown into violent agitation by the arrival of important news. The English army could be seen on the plateau of Talanta! From the place where I was stationed, however, it seemed but a confused mass; from the crest of the Salamgi, Theodore, with his telescope, could precisely estimate the strength of the expeditionary force.

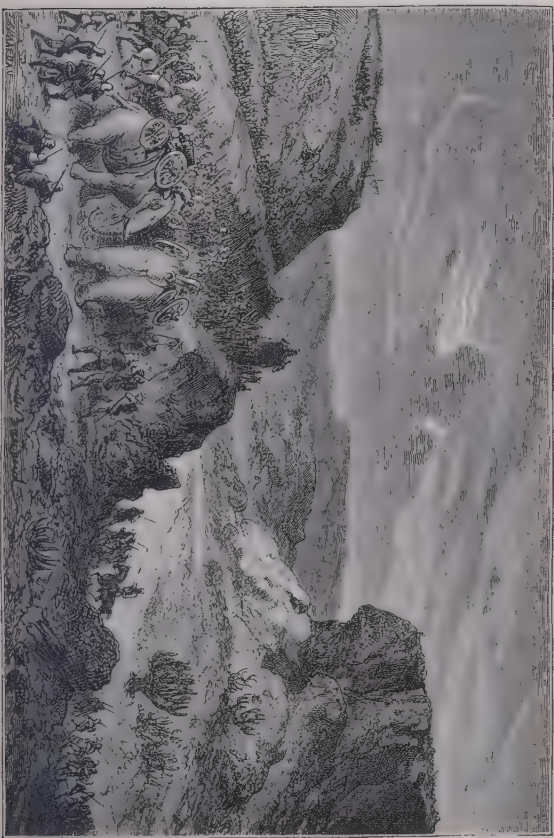
He saw it first uncoil itself in long lines of infantry,—three or four regiments of the best troops of Bombay, all men capable of enduring fatigue, and veterans in war; these were accompanied by several hundreds of sappers and miners, armed with the massive axe which they had found so useful in clearing a passage for the

army through forest and jungle. Next followed the engineers and the pioneers of the Punjab, young men of Herculean strength, and of unrivalled skill in the construction of roads. The naval brigade, with its twelve guns, formed the principal force of artillery; four Armstrong guns, mounted on the backs of elephants, had also been brought over the almost inaccessible mountains; a couple of mortars (*obusiers?*), and two small batteries of steel guns, completed the equipment.

The cavalry mustered about four hundred men,—a very small number compared with that of Abyssinia; but it was only necessary to observe the precision of the movements executed by these picked troopers to understand the superiority which their perfect discipline would give them in the hour of action.

Theodore remained a long time contemplating the European army; seemingly he could not remove his eyes from a spectacle so interesting, and, to him, so significant. After a while, shutting up his telescope, he stood immovable, lost in a whirl of painful thoughts. His fixed and anxious gaze indicated a profound moral suffering. They had come, then, those distant enemies! There they were, before him, with their formidable engines; and he would oppose to them—what? a preponderant mass of soldiers, but how unfitted to cope with the trained veterans on yonder plateau! and thousands of weapons,

ARRIVAL OF THE ENGLISH TROOPS BEFORE MAGDALA



but how inferior to the arms invented by English science and wrought by English mechanism!

With a violent effort he roused himself from his gloomy preoccupation, and turned towards his soldiers, who stood confounded and aghast.

"What, then!" he exclaimed, "are you women, that you are so easily cowed? You have braved death in a thousand combats, and have always returned victorious. Follow me to one more field: we *must* triumph, for we shall defend the honour of our country. Our cause is holy."

Enthusiastic acclamations responded to the spirited words of the Négus.

"Death to the strangers!" howled the Abyssinians; "let us show these cowardly invaders that we do not fear them."

Next day, Holy Friday, I rose before dawn. All Magdala was already astir, but not to accomplish the pious exercises of the day, which above all others is held so sacred in the hearts of Christians. Only the women were at liberty to pray: the men, occupied by very different thoughts, remembered the Saviour on the cross only as the God of battles. From six o'clock in the morning the British army had been in motion. Theodore, who incessantly observed his enemies, and surrounded them with spies, had quickly received information that a detachment, led by the English *fittorari* (commander of the advanced guard) had moved into the ravine of the Bachilo

with a convoy of loaded mules. He immediately planted six cannons on the height of Fala, situated about a league from the Salamgi, and dominating over the whole surrounding country. The Négus was unwilling to hazard a decisive battle, but hoped to increase the confidence of his men by a brilliant skirmish.

The transport of the pieces of ordnance had occupied a considerable time, and it was after noonday before the Abyssinians had posted them. Theodore had so skilfully masked his march that it had not been detected by the English. They crossed the Bachilo, and traversed the plain of Arogi. The King gave orders to begin firing; he himself directed the volleys, assisting the German workers with his counsels; but the inexperienced artillerists were unacquainted with the strength of their guns. A double charge was introduced into a cannon of great calibre, the one which the Négus had christened with his name: it burst with a formidable crash, which struck with terror the superstitious Abyssinians.

"It is an evil augury!" they cried, regarding one another with an air of consternation.

Theodore raised their courage. With a mocking gesture, he pointed out to them the *coiffure à large visière*, and with floating ends, which, according to the custom of the Indian soldiery, protected the face and neck of the English troops.

"Look at these slaves!" he shouted; "they are afraid of the sun and the rain. They are not warriors, they are women. Charge them like lions, and seize upon all the treasures they are carrying with them."

The soldiers responded with savage cries. Under the guidance of the *fittorari* Gebria, the bravest of the Abyssinian lieutenants, they rushed to the attack.

Meantime, the intelligence conveyed to Theodore by his spies was only partly true. It was true that a colonel of the advanced guard, with a squadron of troopers, had advanced into the plain to reconnoitre. The baggage had followed; but, at a short distance in the rear, came the pioneers of the Punjab, the sappers of Madras and Bombay, the naval brigade and its admirable battery. These troops, numbering in all about two thousand men, were not thrown forward by Sir Robert Napier to engage the enemy, but simply to pitch a camp in the neighbourhood of Arogi, and there to await the main body of the army, which was still posted in the valley of the Bachilo.

The Négus then discovered that the English brigade was larger than he had thought, and that he must prepare for a combat instead of a skirmish. He paused, undecided.

"What ought I to do?" he exclaimed, turning towards his officers, and then towards the German Waldemeier. "It would be better, perhaps,

to recall my troops, and act upon the defensive within the walls of Magdala."

But the time had gone by. The Abyssinians had rushed impetuously from the plateau of Fala to the ridge of the same name, and then upon the declivities which overlooked the plain. They uttered loud shouts of defiance; their swift Galla horses galloped among the abrupt rocks as over a level soil. Theodore did not despair of victory: he continued to direct the batteries, while his soldiers, armed with double-barrelled guns, crossed every obstacle with the agility of the chamois, and flung themselves upon the English. They were received by a steady, close, and well-directed fire from the pioneers of the Punjab, while the cannons poured forth a storm of crashing shot.

Another Abyssinian division debouched into the plain of Arogi; but the naval brigade, which hastily formed in array on the neighbouring heights, the hills of Aficho, discharged some rockets upon this detachment, and flung it into disorder. The terrible Snider rifles opened a fire against which few troops could stand; they slew their tens and scores before the sluggish Ethiopian musket had wounded a single Englishman. The Abyssinians returned to the charge with indomitable courage, but were swept down like corn before the reaper's sickle.

A storm arose, which crowded confusion on confusion. The crash of the thunder, mingled

with the detonations of the artillery, and the sharp reports of the Snider rifle, filled the mountains with an awful clang. The Abyssinians, completely beaten, fell back towards the ridge of Fala, closely pursued by the English, who still kept up their deadly musketry, and lighted the darkness of the tempest-clouds with flashing rockets. One of these projectiles fell at the feet of Theodore.

"Would to Heaven," he said in a melancholy tone, "it had smitten off my head!"

His unerring eye had measured the extent of the disaster: the losses he had undergone that day were irreparable. He ordered his artillery to cease their useless fire, and withdrew upon the Salamgi. There, in the midst of the darkness and the thunder-peals, he endeavoured to re-organize his demoralized forces. It was a sorry sight—the beaten, cowed, dispirited battalions that slowly gathered round him! The Négus was anxious to ascertain the gaps which death had made in the ranks of his warriors; perchance it might have spared his dearest companions. He called upon the *jittorari* Gebria, who had led the advanced guard; Gebria made no reply. He called Balambras Biru, and Gebria Meten; again there was silence. Despair seized upon his soul; he fell prostrate upon the ground, and remained for a long time absorbed in a gloomy reverie, retaining at his side only his faithful servant, Waldo Gaba.

Within the walls of Magdala no one slept. At midnight messengers from the King came in search of Mr. Rassam, and another Englishman, Mr. Flad. What did Theodore want of them? Had he allowed himself to yield to the natural fury of his temper? Was he a prey to one of his frequent excesses of rage? But if so, why did he not summon all of us into his presence? or, rather, why did he not order our execution to take place at Magdala?

Two hours passed in the midst of a most painful uncertainty. I listened eagerly to the slightest sound, but everywhere the most deep silence prevailed. The interview which I had regarded with such vivid apprehensions seemed to be of a pacific nature.

At last the two Englishmen reappeared. Far from having indulged in any outburst of anger, the haughty Négus, humbled by his evil fortune, had bent low, as it were, before his prisoners; had confessed to them that the losses of the preceding day had placed him at the mercy of the English: he asked them to effect a reconciliation between him and their compatriots; adding that, in case of refusal, no alternative remained to him but a voluntary death or an asylum in a convent.

On the following morning Theodore sent three flags of truce to the English camp. For this important mission he selected an Abyssinian

chief named Dedjatch Alami, and two of the prisoners of Magdala, Mr. Flad and Lieutenant Prideaux. Our release depended on the success of their negotiations. You may fancy, therefore, reader, how fervent was our aspiration that they might return with a favourable answer! The courage and even the misfortunes of the Négus entitled him to some degree of respect; and to us, not knowing the policy of the English Government, it seemed that Sir Robert Napier might well be generous after the victory he had gained. We took no account of the anger which England naturally felt at the unjust imprisonment of her children, and of her determination to prove that she had both the will and the power to punish those who offended her. We forgot, moreover, that the signal punishment of Theodore was essential to the maintenance of her influence and prestige in the East.

Noon arrived. I had heard no news.

"The prisoners have acquired a liking for liberty," said Hailo, shaking his head; "they will not return."

"What? abandon their companions? For Englishmen that is impossible!"

At this moment Oueda, panting for breath, ran up to me.

"They are with the Négus, master," he exclaimed. "I hid myself among the soldiers, and I saw them pass. But, from their countenances, I augur nothing good."

A few minutes longer, and we were made acquainted with the terms of Sir Robert Napier's reply. He insisted that the King should immediately release every European, should give up Magdala, and surrender himself at discretion, under a promise of honourable treatment. As he listened to these conditions the dusky face of Theodore turned almost pale: indignation and fury blazed in his dark eyes; he broke out into violent imprecations against the barbarian conquerors, these Europeans "without heart or bowels." After a while his wrath subsided, he summoned his *duftera* (or secretary), and dictated the following letter:—

"In name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, one God in his Trinity and in his Unity, Kassa, whose confidence is Christ, speaks thus:—

"O Ethiopian people! will you always fly then before the enemy, unless I, by the power of God, advance with you, step by step, to sustain and encourage you?

"My followers, who loved me, have been seized with fear, and in spite of my orders, have fled before the murderous weapons of the enemy. When you conquered them, I was not among the fugitives.

"Yesterday widowed many wives, left many daughters without protection, and old men without children. God has given you the power; do not abandon those unfortunates.

"I had intended, with God's permission, to conquer the whole world. This single object seemed to me worthy of the ambition of a great soul. From the day of my birth until now, no one has been sufficiently strong to lay his hand upon me. When my soldiers began to grow feeble in battle, I reënimated them, and brought back victory to my standards. Yesterday, the darkness prevented me. You passed the night in joy; may God never again prepare for you so bitter a morrow! I had hoped, after subjugating my rebellious vassals, to have led my army to Jerusalem, and driven out the Turks. Now the future is all dark before me. A warrior who has nursed strong men in his arms like children, can never suffer his enemies to make sport of his misfortune."

The Négus had given orders for Lieutenant Prideaux and Mr. Flad to wait upon him. Both stood outside his tent, exposed to the rays of the burning sun. Theodore, torn with an agitation which convulsed every feature, handed to them his letter, and instructed them to convey it to the English general.

"Set out," he added, "without losing a minute."

"Suffer me first to drink a glass of water," said Lieutenant Prideaux; "heat and fatigue have rendered me keenly athirst."

"No, no," shouted the King; "you will have time to drink in the English camp."

After the departure of the two messengers, Theodore quitted his tent. He seated himself on a neighbouring rock, and remained a long time silent; his arms resting on his knees, and his eyes fixed upon vacancy. At length a sigh escaped from his contracted lips; he made a sign to the Abyssinians who surrounded him to retire some paces: he recited a prayer, and bowed three times his forehead to the ground: then he asked for water, and drank a little. Snatching a pistol from his girdle, he turned its muzzle towards his mouth! The soldiers threw themselves upon him; some held his arms, others seized him round the waist. The trigger snapped, however, and the ball just grazed his ear. They sought to tear the weapon from his grasp; he resisted, he struggled, he rolled in the dust. Gifted with prodigious strength, he flung off the hands which endeavoured to restrain him. The eyes of his servants were filled with tears.

"What have we done," they cried, "that you should abandon us? What would become of us if you were not here?"

The King, moved by their supplications, promised to give up all thoughts of suicide. He asked for his principal officers, and he showed a desire to be reconciled to his wife, whom he had not seen for many years.

Nevertheless, the haughty Toronècha resided in Magdala with her son, the young prince

Alumayahu, aged seven ; but she lived in strict seclusion. I had caught sight of her twice or thrice, when she was on her way from her palace to the church : she was small of stature, very pretty, and with a very "distinguished" air. Those who were acquainted with her informed me that she possessed a remarkable store of information, and an extreme vivacity of intelligence.

The time had come for wife and husband to forget their reciprocal wrongs. Toronècha, her face shrouded in a long thick veil, issued from Magdala, and repaired to the tent of Theodore. What passed during that last and agonizing interview ? No one knows. Undoubtedly the Négus, foreseeing for his wife and son a gloomy future, would give her pathetic and salutary counsels, and acquaint her with his last wishes ; for even if he resigned himself to live, existence under such conditions as would alone be his, would seem to so ambitious and haughty a spirit a veritable death, or worse than death itself.

I confess I could not but be moved by the misfortunes of the King. Whatever his past crimes, the conduct of Theodore, since my arrival at Magdala, had been fair and honourable, and he had treated his European captives with moderation and gentleness. True, neither they nor I ought to have been prisoners at all, but

this I almost forgot under the spell of his personal influence.

My reflections were interrupted by the entrance of Haïlo. "You are free," he said; "the Négus has ordered all the prisoners to be released."

"Has he, then, made peace with the English?"

"No. The Négus has spoken; we obey."

And without uttering another word, my laconic jailer relieved me from my chains. Ouelda assisted him, shedding tears of joy: when the operation was at an end, he danced around me, clapped his hands, laughed, kissed my clothes;—the poor child had lost his senses. As for myself, far happier than my dignity allowed it to appear, I thanked God for so fortunate a termination of my captivity.

Haïlo was well informed. No arrangement had been concluded between Theodore and the commander of the English army. The Négus had just had a long interview with Mr. Rassam, at the end of which he had come to the resolution to dismiss all his captives, without exceptions and without conditions, leaving to his enemies the due acknowledgment of his generosity,—a generosity, however, which, after all, was politic, and dictated by interested motives. He had shown no such generosity while he remained ignorant of the true character of the British nation, and the formidable resources of

the great power whose wrath he had provoked. Standing on an elevated point near Magdala, with his arms folded across his breast, he watched us defile before him. Not one of us had been detained; we counted ourselves, and found the number complete. First came Mr. Rassam, Mr. Cameron, Mr. Flad, Lieutenant Prideaux, and the other Englishmen; then Herr Waldemeier and his Germans, who had so often experienced the liberality of Theodore; and, lastly, a few Frenchmen, including the armourer Bourgaud. The wives and children of the prisoners remained within the fortress; but none of my companions felt the slightest anxiety about them, and this confidence appeared to me the best eulogium which could be passed upon the Négus. He had promised to send them into the English camp on the following day.

The English army received us with the most enthusiastic demonstrations. The soldiers pressed around us, and hurraed in our honour; while we, on our side, were not slow to exhibit the delight with which we once more gazed upon European faces. When they meet in another continent, all the Westerns are compatriots. And but for them, moreover,—but for their gallantry and perseverance,—I should still have been languishing in captivity at Magdala.

We were conducted to the tent of the general-in-chief. An animated conversation took place



ARRIVAL OF THE PRISONERS IN THE ENGLISH CAMP.

between him, Mr. Rassam, and Mr. Cameron. They spoke in a low voice, and my ears, not very familiar with the English language, with difficulty caught a few words. The name of Theodore was frequently repeated; so that I conjectured his fate was being decided. I thought that Mr. Rassam seemed to plead in his behalf; but, to judge from the stern expression of Sir Robert Napier's countenance, he pleaded without effect.

The following day was Easter. Had we still cherished among us the fervent enthusiasm of the Middle Ages, this day might have opened the soul to thoughts of mercy; but generals, in the nineteenth century, are influenced by other motives. Theodore, however, attempted to appeal to the compassionate sentiments of his conquerors. Early in the day I witnessed the arrival in the camp of the wives and children of the prisoners, with their baggage and their tents. The Négus retained no hostages; never was abandonment more complete. Moreover, he sent to the commander of the British army, as a Paschal present, one thousand cows and five thousand sheep, which he had received, three or four days previously, from some neighbouring villages. A letter accompanied the gift: it was conceived in the noblest terms, and, at the same time, in the language best adapted to touch the feelings of the conqueror:—

“ In name of the Father, the Son, and the

Holy Ghost, one God, the King of kings, Theodore :

“ May this letter reach the hands of the well-beloved servant of the great Queen of England ! I write to you without being able to call you by your name, for our relations date only from yesterday. I regret that I rose against you, instead of seeking your friendship. Together we might have accomplished great things.

“ When I saw your mode of fighting, and the discipline of your army, when my people refused to execute my orders and to return to the battle-field, then I was consumed with grief to think that I had been unable to make my soldiers obey me, although I had punished them, and some even with death. While the fire of jealousy burned within me, Satan came, and whispered in my ear the guilty thought of attempting my own life. I reflected, however, that God would be angry with me, if I left my army without a protector. Then it was that I sent to you a message, to ask you to take care of those whom I was on the point of abandoning. Afterwards, I loaded my pistol, put it in my mouth, and let go the trigger ; but it missed fire. My people rushed upon me, and snatched away the weapon, which then only was discharged.

“ God having signified to me in this way that I was not to die, I sent Mr. Rassam to you the same evening, to the end that your heart might

be moved. To-day is the Feast of Easter; permit me to offer you some cows. I have not answered the letter in which, yesterday, you acquainted me with your terms of peace, because I thought then that we should meet together in heaven only, and not upon earth. I have also let the night pass by without sending to the battle-field in quest of the body of my friend, the *fittorari* Gebria: I thought that, after my death, he and I should be laid in the same grave. Since I am still living, grant me permission to bury him.

“You have demanded the restoration of all the Europeans, even of Herr Waldemeier, whom I love like the most cherished brother. But I have acted as you desired. Henceforth all wrath is at an end between us; you are my friend, and it is my friend whom I ask not to deprive me of my workmen, for I appreciate more than ever the mechanical arts.”

Sir Robert Napier, through his ignorance of Abyssinian customs, left the letter unanswered. The cows and sheep remained outside the encampment, exposed to the heat of the sun, and without any person to take care of them, for the general had forbidden it. The poor beasts, in want of water, uttered the most piteous cries. It is certainly to be regretted that Lord Napier, when he had decided to refuse them, did not send them back to Magdala. Theodore, seeing

them crowded around the out-posts, naturally thought his present accepted, and looked for an amicable settlement.

The day passed, however, and no messenger was despatched to recognize the submission of the Négus. Was not this an act of extreme rigour? The unfortunate prince, whatever his crimes and errors, had shown a strong anxiety to propitiate the English commander-in-chief: conquered, and reduced to despair, he had supplicated mercy; which, I think, Napier would willingly have accorded, had he not been hampered by his engagements with his native allies. We can easily understand that the princes of the Tigré, the Amhara, and Godjam would look forward with dread to the vengeance of the Négus, if he were left at liberty to resume his designs of conquest. Yet, in the interests of England, it might have been better had he been allowed to consolidate a strong and independent kingdom. His deposition or death simply opened a way to the encroachment of Egypt, by throwing Abyssinia into a state of complete disorganization and anarchy. The Anglo-Indian Empire would be safer, perhaps, with Abyssinia independent, and an ally, than with Abyssinia in the power of the Egyptian Khedivé. But such views of policy cannot be fitly discussed in these pages.

It was understood in the camp that the assault of the fortress would take place on the

following day. No one doubted of victory ; but owing to its natural strength, and the desperate character of Theodore, the most sanguine did not anticipate but that the victory would be heavily purchased.

CHAPTER XI.

A BATTLE-FIELD AFTER THE ACTION—PAINFUL EXPECTANCY OF THEODORE — DISPERSION OF THE ARMY—THE SIXTEEN HEROES OF MAGDALA—PATHETIC PRAYER OF THE CHILDREN OF RAS ENGEDDA —THE ASSAULT—CAPTURE OF THE FORTRESS—WHERE IS THE ENEMY?—LAST MOMENTS AND DEATH OF THEODORE.

April 13th.

FTER the battle of Friday, the English troops had moved forward to the heights of Aficho, near the plateau of Fala; and it was there we had joined the camp. On every side a painful spectacle presented itself. Before me, mute and sombre, rose the fortress of Magdala, which thenceforth one might regard as the tomb of Theodore. At my feet, the battle-field of Arogi revealed all its horrors. One-half of the Abyssinian army had been put *hors de combat*. The wounded had been removed, but a thousand dead bodies remained unsepulchred. The odour of the carcases had attracted the vultures; we saw them swooping down upon their prey from all points of the horizon, and preparing to dispute the

horrible banquet with the *marabouts*, the hyenas, and the jackals.

It was Easter Monday.

Early in the morning, some fugitives, who had escaped from Magdala, arrived with intelligence that the Négus had fled, accompanied by a few of his trustiest adherents. Many of the English were not sorry to hear the tidings; yet it was difficult to believe that he could succeed in traversing in safety the revolted provinces which surrounded Magdala.

These reports of the Négus's flight originated in the circumstance that his troops had dispersed to their own homes, and that their chiefs had insisted on his surrendering himself. The heights adjacent to Magdala were covered with an immense crowd, who, however, did not seem animated with any hostile intention. The soldiers had laid down their arms; spears and muskets, collected in small piles, were guarded by sentinels; the women collected the baggage, and already long trains of mules and asses were defiling along the mountain-paths. Sir Robert Napier immediately ordered his troops to occupy the heights of Fala. This was done without any attempt at resistance being made. A detachment of cavalry advanced upon the plateau of Salamgi, where Theodore had pitched his camp the day before. The tents, abandoned in hot haste, had not even been removed; guns and ammunition lay upon the ground: every-

thing, in a word, presented the spectacle of a complete rout.

As the English were endeavouring to ascertain the cause of an evacuation so sudden, ten or twelve Abyssinian chiefs, richly appavelled, appeared on the ridge of the mountain. They galloped to and fro, perhaps to observe the movements of their enemy, and fired a few shots. A storm of bullets was rained upon them in return, and compelled them to flee with all possible speed into the fortress, whose gates they closed.

A native, named Madrakal, then approached the European officers. This man, formerly carried to Paris by the traveller Lefebvre, had spent several years in Europe, where he had acquired a tincture of the sciences and usages of the West. Proud of his new knowledge, he returned to Abyssinia, thinking he had only to demand, and obtain, the highest employments. Disappointed in his ambition, he had nevertheless continued to follow the fortunes of Theodore—who, at intervals, gratified him with a present—and that of the Europeans, to whom he acted as interpreter, and even, on occasions, as translator.

Interrogated by one of the English generals, Madrakal affirmed that the Négus had just retired within Magdala. He had never dreamed of flight, as many of his soldiers had assured him; he knew too well that he was completely surrounded, and that any attempt of this kind

must infallibly have led to his capture. On the preceding day, he had spent whole hours alone, seated upon a rock, from which, with his telescope, he had frequently watched the British camp. How full of bitterness, anxiety, and regret must have been his reflections! There his fate was being weighed in the balance, and every moment as it passed away diminished the feeble hope he had suffered himself to cherish. Evening came; he then knew that all was lost. He had released his prisoners, and sent presents, without receiving any message, written or verbal, pacific or hostile; a contemptuous silence had alone greeted his submission.

Theodore spent the night under a tent made of *chamas*. He held a protracted council with those of his officers who had survived the disaster of Arogi; then, at the dawn of the day, he assembled his troops, and announced his resolution to defend himself to the last extremity.

"Those of you," he added, "who fear the European bullets, are free to depart. As for those who prefer a glorious death to a dishonourable life, the moment has come for them to gather round me. At least, let us teach our enemies how an Abyssinian can die!"

These fiery words were followed by a gloomy silence. Almost immediately his soldiers disbanded, and scattered themselves in groups upon the mountains. Not a word did Theodore

utter—not a gesture did he make to retain them. When the army had dispersed, only sixteen men remained with the Négus; and here are their names, according to Madrakal. They were enemies, but we can honour and appreciate their fidelity to a fallen master:—

1. Ras Engedda, the King's principal adviser. He was quite a young man, who had been educated, by order of Theodore, at Tohenkar, the most renowned of the Abyssinian colleges.

2. Ras Engedda's brother.

3. Ras Tugga, commander of the artillery.

4. Engedda Warka, artillerist, son of a Bengalese Jew in the Négus's service.

5. Bitawudut Bakal.

6. Ras Baraka, of the province of Godjam.

7. Bacha Engedda, artillerist.

8. Ras Bessowa.

9. Bitawudut Demach, of the province of Kouara, a man of low extraction, whose fortune had been made by Theodore.

10. Salafa Kantiba.

11. Bitawudut Hasani, chief of the sharpshooters.

12. Bitawudut Bari, the royal treasurer, a noble Abyssinian of very illustrious lineage.

13. Dedjatch Abuya.

14. Agafari Machecha, constructor of works.

15. Amanayi, the King's squire, who carried and loaded the royal muskets.

16. The negro Waldo Gaba, Theodore's ser-

vant. For a long time he had been in the employment of M. Barroni, the consul of Massaouah. For the five years that he had been attached to the person of the King, he had never quitted him.

These devoted adherents of the King were, it is said, seized with a violent indignation when his messengers related the conditions imposed by Sir Robert Napier. Two of them, Ras Engeddä and Bitawudut Bakal, judging that there was nothing to be expected from the clemency of the conquerors, had proposed to massacre all the European prisoners, and to bury themselves under the ruins of Magdala. Had it not been for the humanity or hopes of Theodore, none of us would have lived to repeat the tale.

In spite of the information furnished by Madrakal, the English general could not but conclude that the fortress *must* and *did* hold a powerful band of defenders, capable of offering a vigorous resistance. Theodore, he argued, would certainly have kept around him the *élite* of his army; to dismiss a body or two of soldiers was an old military stratagem. And therefore he ordered the gunners to bring as many guns as possible to bear upon Magdala. The two steel batteries were planted on the Salamgi, at a distance of 1500 yards; the naval brigade brought into line its heavy cannon; and the two

mortars, as well as the colossal Armstrong guns, directed their menacing jaws towards the citadel.

The bombardment began at two o'clock in the afternoon. The steel batteries hurled a storm of bullets against the ramparts; the remainder of the artillery poured their projectiles inside the fortress. A bomb-shell fell on the *akabiet*, or treasury; two others on the palace, where they killed several domestics, and wounded a woman and three children.

Meantime a pathetic scene took place on the plateau of Salamgi. The English staff-officers had fallen in with three lads of twelve to fourteen years of age, whom the defenders of Magdala had sent out of the fortress, probably to the end that they might escape the horrors of the assault. They were the sons of Ras Engedda, the Négus's minister. Seized with terror at the recollection of the perils to which their father was exposed, they besought the English, with many tears, to cease firing. The officers replied to them with encouraging words, and released themselves from their grasp. Then the poor children addressed themselves to the soldiers, clinging to their clothes, and promising them *tedj* if they would not fire upon the citadel. Alas! it was impossible to comply with their prayer, and that day they became orphans!

Soon the lurid gleams of conflagration mingled with the clouds of smoke which enveloped Mag-

dala. A deep darkness overspread the land, and rendered more terrible the bursting of shells and the peal of the artillery. The time was approaching when the periodical storms of spring would increase disorder, and facilitate the work of destruction. Of this the English general was aware, and he chose that moment to commence the assault. While the cannons belched forth death—while heaven flung its thunderbolts on the mountain-peaks—an English column, composed of the 33rd regiment and a small body of engineers, sprang towards the Koket-Bir. The palisade protecting the approaches was not defended; but a lively fire was kept up from the gate, in the vicinity of which Theodore and his little band of warriors had posted themselves. The long red line, armed with the Snider rifle, rapidly ascended the steep acclivity leading to the Koket-Bir. Having reached the gate, they made a fruitless attempt to burst it open. So well was it protected by its position, that the bullets flew to right and left, above and below, but scarcely ever touched it; it was strongly barricaded, moreover, by a pile of stones. The English soon perceived that they should waste much precious time in attempting to force it, for they had neglected to provide themselves with axes and bags of gunpowder. A few men gallantly scaled the palisade, and opened the gate to their companions. In this preliminary skirmish, about twenty were wounded.

The first enclosure was now in the power of the English. But where was the enemy? The bodies of four chiefs, richly clad, lay upon one another near the entrance; all around, not a person was to be seen. Undoubtedly, the Abyssinians had taken refuge behind the second gate. However, they had ceased to fire, and seemed to have abandoned all intention of resistance. Without striking a blow, the assailants penetrated into the interior; and, ten minutes afterwards, the glorious flag of Great Britain floated from the highest point of the fortress-walls. Magdala was taken!

The Abyssinian Madrakal had spoken truly. Sixteen defenders alone had remained to contend with the English army and its formidable artillery. Five or six of these heroic warriors lay dead near the second palisade. The native political prisoners, shut up within the fortress, had taken advantage of the disorder caused by the conflagration to recover their liberty. They appeared in front of the English soldiery, brandishing their irons, and uttering wild cries of joy. One of them struck his foot against a corpse enveloped in a white *chama*. He stooped and examined it.

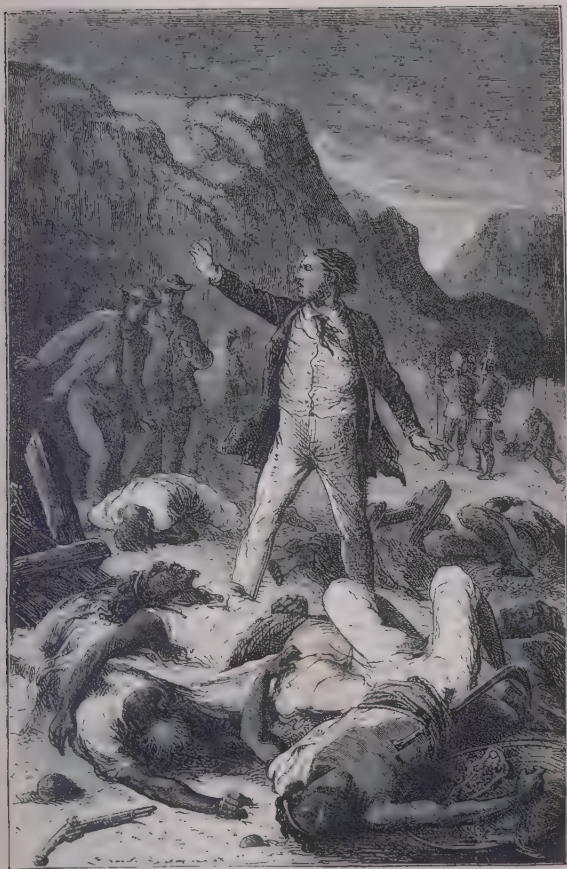
"Theodore!" he exclaimed; and an expression of terror passed over his countenance, as if the dead Négus could still blast him with his glance.

The exclamation of the prisoner brought to

the spot a number of English soldiers, anxious to see the man whom they had come from so great a distance to chastise. The body was extremely thin; Theodore, for several days, having abstained from food, and supported himself on *tedj* and a little arrack. The wound which had proved mortal had not disfigured him. His features preserved their haughty and energetic expression; his eye, fixed with the stare of death, seemed to regard the great mysteries of the Hereafter with fear and anguish. General Napier gave orders that the body should be placed upon a litter, and removed into one of the huts which had served as a residence for the European prisoners. On the following day it would be interred with appropriate ceremony.

Silence and sadness reigned among the victors. They were disappointed by the very facility of their conquest, and would have rejoiced more fully in their triumph had it been impeded by greater obstacles. Yet, as they were ignorant of the actual condition of affairs in Magdala, the conduct of so small a body of men in rushing up a tremendous ascent to storm a strong and almost inaccessible fortress, was worthy of the renown of the British army.

Waldo Gaba, the faithful servant of the Négus, was not found by the side of his master. From inquiries which I made, I ascertained, however, that he had remained with him until his death.



DEATH OF KING THEODORE.

He was discovered behind a block of basalt, waiting for a favourable moment to make his escape. He was immediately carried to head-quarters, where Sir Robert Napier interrogated him in reference to the tragedy which had been played out at Magdala.

We surrounded him the moment he was dismissed from the general's presence. Each of us was anxious to hear the history of the last moments of Theodore, and to know how the final catastrophe was accomplished.

NARRATIVE OF WALDO GABA.

"This morning my master had a strong presentiment that he should not live to see the close of the day which had just begun. About nine o'clock he summoned me, and pointing to the sun, which was surrounded by a black ring,— 'Observe,' said he, 'that is an omen of mourning and blood.' He spoke again when a regiment of English cavalry appeared on the Salangi. Dedjatch Abuya, who was standing by him, exclaimed that he would like to see the Europeans more closely, and to kill at least a few of them. As the King made no reply, he sprang upon his horse, and dashed off at a gallop in the direction of the English troops. My master remained erect and immovable. All at once his eyes sparkled; his face glowed, as at the approach of battle. I had not seen him so full of vivacity since the day when he compelled the rebel Go-

basieh to fly to the mountains. He asked for his carbine and his favourite horse. I threw myself at his feet: Amanayi and Ras Engedda besought him not to expose himself uselessly. 'I cannot do better,' he replied, 'than die yonder.'

"Six chiefs leaped upon their steeds at the same time as the King, and all galloped furiously towards the English army. Sometimes they swept past the front of the troops, with the rapidity of lightning; sometimes they whirled round in a circle, firing off their carbines, or brandishing their spears in defiance of the enemy."

[I was a witness, I said, interrupting him, of that noble but impotent exhibition of a courage which nothing could subdue. So Theodore was at the head of that chivalrous band? I was too far off to distinguish his features.]

"You should have been able to recognize him by the skill with which he managed his charger and handled his rifle. He was the best horseman and the most skilful shot in all Abyssinia. How often have I accompanied him in those rapid, impetuous rides, which he loved so well! None of his officers could keep up with him. I think I see him now, crossing mountains and valleys with the rapidity of an arrow, sweeping before us like a whirlwind, and then returning to jest at our sluggishness;—air and movement

intoxicated him. Alas! he will never again mount his favourite steed!

“Meantime, the English pressed steadily forward: the Négus and his chiefs were compelled to retire within the fortress, the gates of which they barricaded. Nothing more remained for them but to await their death. My master had attired himself in his richest vestments, as if for a festival; he seated himself on a rock between the first and second palisade. For long hours he watched the movements of the English soldiery. A shell falling close beside him struck down Ras Engedda; another carried off the head of Bitawudut. The Négus thought his royal garb had been recognized, and drew the firing towards the spot where he was seated. He cared nothing for any injury to himself, but was unwilling to expose his faithful servants unnecessarily. He removed his gold-embroidered tunic, and put on another of batiste, over which he flung a white chama; then he continued to watch the cannons with his telescope, lowering his head each time that he caught sight of the jet of flame or puff of white smoke. At intervals his companions fell, but the bullets seemed afraid to strike himself.

“As soon as the assault began, he descended towards the Koket-Bir to fire upon his enemies. It was as if he had thrown a pebble into a torrent for the purpose of staying its thunderous course; but he would not yield without a heroic

effort at defence. There were but ten of us, including the King. I loaded the muskets, and handed them to him; he fired through the loopholes made in the gate. All this time the bullets rained around us: Ras Engedda's brother received one in his chest; Amanayi was also killed; and the other officers were more or less severely wounded. Soon the English soldiers climbed the palisade: we were forced to retire to the second gate, leaving behind us the dead bodies of our companions. The Négus was the last to enter the fortress. Further resistance was impossible: he threw down his weapon, and stood upright, with his arms extended, as if to offer a target to his assailants; but again, Death passed him by.

"The English continued their calm and measured advance. My master withdrew towards the huts which occupy the middle of the town. There he dismissed those of his officers who, in spite of their wounds, had had the strength to follow him. 'You may save yourselves in the confusion,' he said; 'take advantage of it: you have gallantly done your duty, and may God reward you for it!'

"We remained alone—the King and I. 'All is finished,' continued the Négus, turning towards me;—'I will not fall alive into their power.'

"He had seized a pistol. Before I could stay his hand, he placed the barrel in his mouth, and I held in my arms—a corpse!"

Waldo Gaba was silent; tears poured down his face. As for myself, strongly moved both with horror and pity, I returned towards the Salamgi, reflecting on the sad but not undeserved end of a man who, with much violence of disposition and cruelty of heart, blended a certain nobleness of sentiment. Moreover, when a leader of men lies dead before us, we forget his evil deeds to recall his good ones; and at such a moment none could remember the Abyssinian prince's usurpation, ferocity, and lust of blood: we thought rather of his undoubted courage, his superior intellect, and his faculty of influencing those with whom he came in contact.

And it may, perhaps, be admitted that though the punishment of Theodore was well merited, though its infliction was a duty from which the English Government could hardly escape, yet, at the outset, some mistakes of policy were committed; and those mistakes were perpetuated, we fear, in driving him to extremities. For his death left Abyssinia in a state of disorganization and anarchy. Among the chiefs who have aspired to succeed him, no one seems to possess the ability necessary to insure the pacification of the country, or the military genius to subdue the antagonism of hostile or disaffected tribes.

CHAPTER XII.

DEBRA-TABOR—THE DEMON OF THE REB—THE CAPITAL OF A FALLEN EMPIRE—THE QUARTER OCCUPIED BY THE STUDENTS AND CLERGY—THE PALACE OF THE PUPPET-KINGS—CURIOUS ANACHRONISMS IN ABYSSINIAN PAINTINGS—LAKE TANA—A PERILOUS VOYAGE—METEMMA — SOME NEGROES ACQUAINTED WITH THE VALUE OF TIME.

April 18th.



AFTER the capture of the fortress, the English troops gladly abandoned the barren rocks of Magdala to retrace their course to the sea-shore, where they were ordered to embark without delay; for England, satisfied with having shown her power, had no intention of holding as her own the territory she had conquered. The greater portion of the army returned to Hindustan; while Sir Robert Napier made haste to London, to give an account of his expedition. He carried with him the son of Theodore, the young Alumayahu, and some of the Abyssinian nobles: also, as trophies of his victory, the jewels of the Négus, his crown, and royal mantle.

I might have returned with him to Europe, but the Nile attracted me. My stores of cotton

stuffs and glass beads had long ago arrived at Khartoum; and, accordingly, I took my leave of my deliverers, to bend my steps towards Gondar, whence I might regain the Soudan.

Vegetation was in all the nascent vigour communicated by the early rains of spring; brilliant flowers everywhere brightened the cool greensward of the meadows and the open glades of the leafy woods. On the soil but recently trodden by the hosts of Theodore spread a mantle of such dazzling lilies that it might not inaptly have been called a field of snow. These lilies were the *Amaryllis vittata*, whose shining corollas exhibit on each petal a dark deep violet-coloured nervure, which brings out, by the effect of contrast, the immaculate whiteness of the flower. In due course I reached the plain of Foguera, a fertile territory which nourishes the nomadic shepherds called *Zellanes*. To the south rises the Debra-Tabor chain; and, about a league distant, may be seen the peak of *Amora Guedel* (or the Vulture's Rock). This is an isolated, sombre, inaccessible summit, the haunt of the birds of prey to which it owes its name. To the west is situated the pretty town of Ifague, one of the most considerable markets of Abyssinia.

A wild and broken gorge led to the hill which Theodore had so long occupied as his headquarters. He preferred Debra-Tabor to Gondar, which he contemptuously termed a town of

debteras and *asmaris*,—of shopkeepers and traffickers: you may well believe that, on their side, the peaceful inhabitants of the Abyssinian capital had little sympathy with the relentless and bellicose King. When I visited the place, a dead silence prevailed, instead of the stir and animation of a camp. The soil, beaten down by the tramp of soldiers and horses, produced only a little rank herbage. The five or six hundred houses of the town of Debra-Tabor also wore an aspect of gloom and desolation; many were entirely deserted, their occupants having followed to Magdala the fortune of Theodore.

At the foot of the hill extended a pleasant country, sown with villages, churches, and tilled fields. Formerly, it was the home of peace and abundance; but now, as the result of civil war and political anarchy, the population suffered all the miseries of poverty.

On the evening of the same day I crossed the Reb, a small picturesque stream flowing in the shadow of acacia-trees. At that season of the year its channel enclosed merely a thread, so to speak, of muddy water; but the Abyssinians who accompanied me asserted that in the depths of the rainy season this paltry current was transformed into a rapid river, whose width exceeded two hundred yards, and which it was very dangerous to attempt to swim across. They added, also, crossing themselves with an air of

terror, that a spirit there inhabits the foaming waters; and that, in the recesses of his humid retreat, he sets snares for the voyager imprudent enough to venture himself on the treacherous tide. A seven-arched bridge, however, spans the Reb, and may well preserve the natives from any trespass on the demon's domain. Unfortunately, it is fully two centuries old, and as it has never been repaired, the alluvial deposits every year sink it deeper and deeper, so that, during the months of July and August, it is covered with several feet of water.

Delayed by the storms of spring, we advanced only by short stages. Lake Tana, the pride of all Abyssinians, and the admiration of all travellers, extends to the very limits of the horizon the silvery mirror of its waters. It was with great regret I quitted the shores of this miniature sea,—enshrined as it was in a splendid landscape,—and arrived at Gondar early in May.

The capital of the Ethiopian Empire is stripped of its pristine glory. Its houses, separated by wide areas of ruins and refuse, give it the appearance of five or six large villages, rather than of a single city; its desolate palaces have fallen into ruins; its very churches cry out in vain for the most necessary repairs.

The jailer Hailo had given me a letter for one of his kinsmen who inhabited Gondar. Thanks to this honest fellow, I found myself installed in

a house whose owner had been absent for several months. However, I did not intend to make a long sojourn in the city, for I wished to reach Khartoum before the rainy season closed the road against me. It begins, it is true, much sooner



A WOMAN OF GONDAR.

in Abyssinia than in the Soudan. We experienced in Abyssinia a deluge-like tempest nearly every day, while the most extreme drought still prevailed on the banks of the Atbara; nevertheless it was indispensable that I should reach the Nile towards the middle of June.

I was lodged near the *Etcheghé biet*, in the most comfortable and best-built quarter of the town. My neighbours were a crowd of monks, priests, and debteras; for it is the focus (unfortunately very poor) whence science radiates over the rest of Abyssinia. The streets, filled with priests and students, presented a striking resemblance, I fancy, to those which, in mediæval times, surrounded our European schools. From my residence I could catch sight of the house of the *etcheghé*, or general-superior of the monastic orders. This dignitary enjoys a great religious influence in the country; not unfrequently his decisions are more respected than those of the abounas, whose far from exemplary conduct has greatly weakened their prestige.

Masses of ruins, and wide open spaces, isolate, one from another, the different quarters of the town. They mark the points to which busy and populous streets formerly extended, and bear witness to the rapid decay induced by the discords which have ravaged this unhappy country. The powerful hand of Theodore might have raised up Gondar; but he had never pardoned the inhabitants their unreasoning hostility, and the Abyssinian capital did not share in the benefits which flowed from his firm and prudent administration at the outset of his reign. The *Négus-Ghimp*, or Imperial Palace, that majestic edifice so warmly admired by Bruce and Lefèvre, has fallen into a state of deplorable degradation.

Large portions of it threaten to topple down; others have disappeared, destroyed by Menenah, the haughty princess who had attempted to strive against the fortune of Theodore. This act of Vandalism was inspired, it is said, by the rage she experienced on seeing her power escaping from her hands.

"Since we shall leave nothing behind us to perpetuate our memory," she said, "why preserve the memorial of the greatness of others?"

Despite all it has undergone, the Négus-Ghimp still wears an imposing aspect. I regarded with a compassionate eye its proud turrets, its bastions, its battlements, and I found myself carried back in thought to the time when it sheltered a powerful dynasty, which extended its sway over the whole of Eastern Africa, from the White Nile to the sea. What had become of that great Christian monarchy, whose extension might, perhaps, have prevented the negro race from degenerating into barbarism? The Négus-Ghimp has no longer even the custody of the phantom royalty which was so long confined within its walls; the descendants of Solomon and of Ménilek, the mock Kings, the powerless, shadowy princes, who reigned nominally at Gondar, have quitted the palace of their ancestors. The last offshoot of the royal race was sent by Theodore to Magdala; where, however, he was treated with all the respect due to his illustrious origin. After the capture of that fortress he fell into the hands

of the English [who allowed him, while he lived, a pension for his support]

The Imperial Palace is not the only edifice whose gray dull walls relate to the present generation the glory of the past. Opposite to it rises a mediæval castle, which is also deserted; this is the *Ras-Ghimp*, the ancient residence of the *ras*, or lieutenant of the kingdom. Towards the end of last century the office was suppressed, and the title of *ras* appropriated to military dignitaries. No one now inhabits the palace, which is rapidly falling into ruins.

With regret I tore myself from these abandoned monuments, and directed my steps towards a church: there I once more met with *life*. The Abyssinians are accustomed to erect their temples in the midst of sacred woods, which surround them with mystery and silence. I traversed thick groves of juniper, whose slender arrowy spire springs towards heaven like a symbol of prayer, and reached the church of Baatha, one of the most important in Gondar. The piety of the natives never leaves the holy place without a worshipper or two. I respected the devotion of those whom I found kneeling before an image of the Virgin; so I stepped with as stealthy and subdued a tread as possible, while I examined curiously the paintings blazoned on the walls.

The European travellers who have preceded me at Gondar have placed on record widely different

opinions respecting the merits of these works. The most impartial criticism seems to me to be that of M. Guillaume Lejean, who, during a prolonged



AN ABYSSINIAN CHURCH.

residence, studied with rare discrimination and impartiality Abyssinia under all its aspects,—religion, morals, politics, arts, and literature.

The pictures to which I refer seem to me to justify the verdict pronounced by that eminent explorer,—namely, that in spite of numerous defects, they possess undeniable merits. In them we recognize the influence of the Byzantine school: it is conspicuous in the hieratic rigidity of the personages represented, who are designed in accordance with certain fixed rules that allow no room for individual fancy. The Virgin, for example, has always her right hand closed, excepting the fore and middle fingers, which are outstretched as a sign of protection. The attitude of the Saviour, the saints, the angels, never varies. The peculiar genius of the Abyssinians, however, finds a means of expressing itself through all this traditional formalism, and all these mechanical processes. Their compositions are often fierce, terrible, petrified; but they are inspired with a true and profound sentiment.

The satirical fancy of many European travellers has found ample material in the anachronisms which swarm in the Abyssinian paintings. Here, for example, on a canvas representing the Hebrews put to flight by Pharaoh, an artist has naïvely planted, in front of Suez, half-a-dozen cannon, whose projectiles greatly harass the holy people in their march. Another painter, in depicting one of David's victories over the Philistines, introduces a little sharp-shooter, kneeling on the ground with the view of taking good aim at the prophet-king. Almost everywhere, the

details of Abyssinian life are mixed up with the traditions of Holy Scripture. The apostles, when travelling, are attired like the great Ethiopian nobles; they ride upon richly caparisoned mules, each carrying a lance in his hand, and followed by a crowd of retainers. In a church situated in the environs of Gondar is shown a fresco painting of the marriage at Cana, in which the various personages are grouped with great artistic feeling. The drawing is correct; the countenances are full of expression; but, unfortunately, all the dishes on the table are after the Abyssinian bill of fare. Nothing is wanting: neither cakes of *tef*, nor the sharp thin knives with which the *brondo*, or raw meat, is cut up, nor the *gombos* of honeyed water resting on their thick mats

But, after all, have we any just title to laugh at these infantine simplicities? Our greatest masters, whose genius has created modern art, have they never incurred the same reproach as the painters of Gondar? At Paris, in the grand saloon of the Louvre, may be seen a picture in which jesters clad in satin pourpoints, and young wives attired according to the latest Italian fashion of the Renaissance, form a strange contrast with the austere simplicity of Christ and His disciples; or, not to go back to so remote an antiquity, did not our grandfathers see, at the end of the last century, the Son of God exposed to the adoration of the faithful in dress coat, silk

stockings, and knee-breeches? Does not Holland possess a curious picture representing Abraham preparing to sacrifice his son, not by thrusting a knife into his heart, but by shooting at him? It is only of late years that there has sprung up among us the archæological Puritanism which demands a minute fidelity to details. Undoubtedly, it confers an impressive air of truth on the productions of art, and is in conformity both with good taste and reason. But as we have not bethought ourselves of it until after the lapse of many centuries, we have no right to quarrel with the poor people of Gondar, because they have not yet approached our standard.

Ouelda accompanied me in all my wanderings. He never grew weary, like our European friends, of the splendour of the Abyssinian churches. Each one he visited threw him into a fresh transport of enthusiasm.

"Would you not like," said I, "to remain in a country which possesses so many beautiful temples? I will introduce you to a Catholic missionary on the frontier, and you shall be educated by him."

The child looked at me with a rebellious mouth. He was perfectly well aware that the proposed separation would be as painful to me as to himself.

"You have frequently told me that the churches of France are infinitely handsomer than these.

Is it really your wish to take me no further with you?"

"But I am not going to return to Europe yet; I am plunging into the heart of Africa."

"The road will be a little longer, that is all. *To-morrow* we shall leave Gondar, master, shall we not? I will run to get our baggage ready."

May 10th.—We set out early in the morning, directing our course eastward to the town of Tchelga; the last place of any importance before the traveller reaches the frontier. Shortly before noon we halted at Djenda, a large village more agreeably situated than Gondar. Its houses seemed better built; they were separated from one another by gardens enclosed with living hedges,—hedges all bright with flowers, and shaded by tall trees. I noticed this pretty arrangement in most of the Ethiopian towns.

Tchelga is a very busy town; it has a daily market which attracts a considerable concourse from the neighbouring villages. Thither the country people repair to sell or purchase musk, gold, cattle, and provisions of every kind. But on the occasion of my visit I had no time to occupy myself with its traffic. The day was rapidly declining, and for two hours we had been exposed to heavy rain. With all possible speed we journeyed through the little wood of aloe-trees which encircles Tchelga, animated by one idea,—that of finding an asylum where we

might rest and refresh ourselves. The Abyssinians who accompanied me secured a convenient house for the modest sum of a *sel*, or twenty-five centimes. I sent them out to purchase provisions, and, my hunger appeased, I fell into a profound sleep, the result of the great fatigue I had undergone.

At an hour and a half's journey from the town rises Mount Vali-Dabba. I visited it on the following morning, for the purpose of obtaining a last look at Lake Tana. From the elevation I attained I embraced nearly the whole extent of its luminous surface, which, as it reflected the azure heaven, shone like a sapphire shaded with opal. Twenty rivers pour into it their tribute: the principal, the Abaï, whose waters fertilize the province of Shoa, loses itself afar in the azure mists of the horizon. The shores of the lake are broken up into deep gulfs, where flourish the banana, the citron, and the pomegranate; bright towns and smiling fields are glassed in the limpid wave; the mountains of Ferka, Tisbha, and Kobkoubieh, present, on the east, the vaporous outline of their summits; and graceful Eden-isles, where churches and monasteries lie half-hidden among masses of verdure, felicitously interrupt the majestic lines of the landscape. The whole forms a picture of magical beauty.

While contemplating this magnificent panorama, I had forgotten the flight of time. Suddenly a violent wind arose; the sun concealed

his golden orb behind thick clouds ;—the daily storm was on the point of bursting forth. The peaceful waters of the Tana were upheaved in furious billows ; even with the help of my telescope, the mountainous island of Dek seemed but a black spot surrounded by a flood of snow-white foam. Any boat venturing out upon the lake must infallibly have perished. The first drops of rain fell upon my face ; I must make all haste to regain the town, but the storm would travel still faster. Oueda proposed we should take shelter in a peasant's hut which we could see at a short distance ; but we should have had to remain until the following morning, since these deluges last all night.

In the immediate vicinity of Tchelga begin the forests of the *Kolla* ; low, hot, unhealthy lands, which surround the Abyssinian plateau, and protect it from hostile incursions not less efficiently than its defiles and rugged mountains. We had to traverse this almost desert region ; which man prudently abandons, for the most part, to the wild beasts.

After resting two days at Tchelga, we penetrated into the heart of the mountain-chain which lies between it and the Kolla. The roads were difficult ; masses of rock, which we climbed with great difficulty, every moment obstructed our progress. At length we reached the middle of an almost impenetrable wood, which literally

bristled with thorny trees. The country still wears the same aspect as when it was first explored by the traveller Bruce : it is withered by a suffocating heat, though the sun's rays cannot pierce the foliage of the dense forests. Here and there an occasional glade, or clearing, relieves the monotony of the way, or a torrent rushes down impetuously from the neighbouring heights.

Three days—which seemed to us three years!—brought us to Voehné, the Abyssinian village lying nearest to the frontier. Then we descended one of those table-lands, or bastions, so numerous in Abyssinia, whose rapid declivities put our muscles to a severe test. A few hours later we found ourselves on the banks of the Gandova, a deep and rapid river, the passage of which is always dangerous ; it would, indeed, be impracticable in the rainy season, if its waters were not divided into two channels by an island called Kaokib. As this place is much frequented by the caravans from Sennaar, we found there a boat, which assisted us in crossing the river. I say “a boat ;” but, more correctly speaking, it was a raft, made of bundles of straw firmly bound together, and capable of carrying seven or eight persons. In the fore-part stands the boatman, equipped with a single pole, which serves him as an oar ; for the Abyssinians, slaves of routine, in spite of their quick intelligence, have been unable to conceive the idea of a paddle, such as the savages on the banks of the Nile have so long made use of.

Our boat, however, had one advantage, it did not leak; on the other hand, it was easily cap-sized. Two of my servants fell into the water; fortunately, the natives have the good sense to remedy the imperfections of their barks by learning to swim, and hence the shipwrecked reached the shore before we did. In fact, the mode they had involuntarily adopted proved the best; the pole with which our boatman pretended to steer his raft did not prevent us from being carried away by the current of the Gandova. The brave man, however, did not allow himself to be daunted. He clung with the energy of despair to the rope which is stretched across the river; the sweat stood in thick beads upon his forehead. Vain were his efforts! We drifted fully three to four hundred yards, and occupied upwards of an hour in returning to our point of departure, after which we made a fresh start, and accomplished our voyage in safety.

The Gandova is skirted by forests. As we advanced, the shadow grew deeper and deeper, the thickets became more inextricable, and gigantic tamarisks raised their dark-green crests to a prodigious altitude. A sweet yet pungent aroma escaped from them; for it was their flowering-time, and clusters of blue blossoms depended from every bough.

On the third day, a little before noon, we perceived the Atbara, to which we had impercep-

tibly been drawing near. This river rises not far from Tchelga, which, indeed, it seems to leave regretfully, for it describes a capricious spiral around the mountains that overshadow the town. Throughout our march we had been separated from it only by the thick masses of the forest; but where we had now arrived the woods gave place to the fertile plains of Gallabat. The Atbara abruptly changed its direction; it had hitherto flowed from east to west, thenceforth it ran from south to north. At a short distance from its banks rose a large village, surrounded by tilled fields.

"At last we see Metemma!" cried Mikaël, an Abyssinian servant whom I had engaged at Gondar; "I thought these forests would never end!"

"A fine subject for rejoicing, truly," murmured our guide, "to be in the Gallabat!"

"And why not?" I said to him; "is it not a trading country, where we are sure of wanting nothing?"

"Yes; but the inhabitants are the greatest rogues in the world. Imagine to yourself negroes—greedy, vicious, cruel: besides, they are Mohammedans—which is saying everything!"

"Bah!" rejoined Mikaël, "the devil is not so ugly as you make him! The people of Metemma are fond of money, but they are also fond of work; and if they endeavour to enrich themselves, it is not by robbing their neighbours.

Some years ago I accompanied in this country a European traveller, whose servants were all Arabs and *Takrouris*,—the latter being the name, as you know, which is given to the inhabitants of the Gallabat. It was very curious to see their different manners and customs. While with grave *nonchalance* the Arabs laid themselves down in the shadow of a *deleb* to sleep and smoke, the negroes fluttered to and fro, collecting the cotton which grew along the roads; with the branch of a tree they improvised a spindle, and then they spun, and spun, all the day long."

"Even while on the march?"

"In truth, they did; and one of them nearly broke his neck by stumbling over a stone while absorbed in his occupation. When the cotton failed, the *Takrouris* made sandals of buffalo-skin, whips, collars, bracelets, a host of little curiosities, and not badly either! On arriving at Metemma, they had such a store of merchandise that it formed a camel's load. On the following day our master summoned them. No one answered; the rogues had disappeared, and guess whither they had gone?"

"Undoubtedly, to dispose of their wares to some merchant in the town."

"To sell them at a fourth of their value? No, no. They were all stationed in the market-place, where they sold their own goods."

"An excellent idea! They were industrious

people, I grant you ; but I fancy your master did not engage them that they might carry on a little trade for their private advantage. While they were manufacturing and selling their wares what would become of their duties as servants ?”

“Ah, yes,” replied Mikaël, laughing, “their own interests first, and those of other people afterwards.”

While thus conversing, we arrived at Metemma. Well-cultivated fields and beautiful cotton plantations bore witness to the laborious habits of the people. The houses were clean, the town full of busy citizens ; a group of idlers was scarcely to be met with, and when any such were seen, we recognized at a glance that they were strangers—Abyssinians or Arabs, for the most part.

We made our way through the crowd which obstructed the market-place. At one place the wares of Manchester were displayed, lively-coloured cottons and woollen stuffs ; at another, swords, files, and razors ; at a third, coffee, wax, honey, peltry ; a short distance further, and we came to the enclosures of asses, mules, and camels, in which the Gallabat does a considerable commerce. But the articles which attracted the greatest number of purchasers were spices, red pepper, and perfumes. In the stalls appropriated for the sale of these articles we observed a magnificent stock of butter kneaded into hard

balls, which were sold at five *paras*, or three centimes each. These balls were about as large as a good-sized apple, such being the quantity judged absolutely necessary for greasing the hair.

My Abyssinians pointed out to me the residence of a German established in the town, on whose hospitality I might rely. He welcomed me as if I had been a fellow-countryman, and installed me in his house, though it was not of very large dimensions; and he had just provided accommodation for two Badenese despatched by the Protestant Society of St. Crichosna.

The members of this remarkable association carry no arms but the sword of the Divine Word. Before becoming missionaries they are simple workmen; their knowledge, therefore, is limited. On the other hand, each can work at a trade, the usefulness of which, more appreciable in the eyes of savages, compensates for the insufficiency of their "book-learning." It was among these devoted servants of God that Theodore discovered the men whom he forced to cast cannon and manufacture brandy. My two pious comrades were, respectively, a blacksmith and a carpenter. In language, quaintly garnished with scriptural quotations, they informed me that they had come to Abyssinia, not so much to convert the natives, who were too strongly wed to their traditional belief, as the Jews.

"Since you confine your zeal within such narrow limits, there was no need, it seems to me, to come so far: Jews are plentiful in Germany."

"What timid, cowardly advice would you give me! Why, would you have me unfaithful to my apostolic mission? But if the salt of the earth loses its savour, how shall it be salted? No, no, I wished my light to shine forth before this people of Abyssinia; I know they will not listen to me, that they will not hear my voice, but what matters it? The Word of God will have been proclaimed abroad. I shall shake the dust off my feet upon this land, and remember the saying of my Master: 'In the day of judgment Sodom and Gomorrah shall be less severely treated than this infidel country.' Moreover, ought we to suffer the difficulties of the evangelical ministry to stay us? Would St. Paul have allowed himself to be checked by such obstacles?  He exposed his life in travelling: 'In peril on the rivers, in peril from robbers, in peril from the heathen, in peril in the midst of towns, in peril in the midst of deserts.' We are new St. Pauls, and we walk in his footsteps." 

Overpowered by this flood of eloquence, I ceased to argue with the apostolic blacksmith, and confined myself to asking him whether he had learned the language of the people in whose midst "his light was to shine forth." I could scarcely repress a smile when he answered, with an air of admirable assurance, that he had no

time to devote to its study, but that no knowledge of it was necessary, for he was provided with a considerable number of Bibles in the native tongue.

Said I to myself, "This is surely a wonderful man!"

Amusements being rare in the Gallabat, it occurred to me that I might pay a visit to the sheikh, on the pretence that I wanted some information in reference to the route I ought to follow. Having arrived at his residence, I saw a handsome negro of about sixty years of age, with muscular limbs and regular features. He had not the sunken forehead, the flat nose, the projecting jaw-bones, which form the ordinary type of his race. Physically as well as morally, the Takrouris are incontestably superior to the black tribes of the rest of Africa. Having granted this much, I am compelled to say that they are not remarkable for hospitality. I found the aged Jemma surrounded by three or four servants, all busily engaged in sweeping the court. Through one open door I caught sight of several women, some sewing diligently a piece of cotton, others repairing the family habiliments. The sheikh caused the customary refreshments to be set before me, but did not cease from his occupation.

"Work before everything, you understand?" said he, simply, by way of excuse.

I understood so well that I backed out as quickly as possible, regretting that I had troubled so industrious a personage. After all, neither his assistance nor his advice was so necessary to me that I could not do without it.

The Takrouris originally belonged to Darfour; but long ago they abandoned their sterile fatherland to found in the plains of the Atbara a kind of republic, governed by a chief, semi-hereditary, semi-elective. Colonizing negroes! This is an uncommon experiment, which it would be difficult to meet with in any other country. Listen, reader, to the circumstances in which it originated:—

The inhabitants of Darfour, being zealous Mohanmedans, assiduously performed the orthodox pilgrimage to Mecca. On their return, after traversing the melancholy plains of Nubia, they were accustomed to rest from their fatigues in a region of luxuriant pastures, abounding in a splendid vegetation. This “land of Eden” they quitted regretfully, when the time came for them to seek once more their own ungrateful soil. Eventually, it occurred to some wise heads among them that if it was good to rest there *en passant*, it would be better to abide there altogether! The little colony increased in number annually: towns were built and fields cultivated; and to secure the peaceable enjoyment of the wealth they had created, they consented to recognize the sove-

reignty of the Kings of Gondar. In the hands of people so industrious as the Takrouris the country would have attained a remarkable commercial prosperity, had it not been devastated by incessant warfare. Cotton succeeded admirably; and notwithstanding the insecure condition of the plains, alternately ravished by the Abyssinians and the Turks, the Gallabat must be included among the richest agricultural centres of Europe.

For the last three years Metemma had not acknowledged the supremacy of the Négus: Egypt had taken advantage of the troubles of Ethiopia to stretch out its hand and seize a long-coveted prey. Will the Egyptian Government understand how to develop the resources of the Gallabat? It is to be feared such will not be the case. Mohammedan officials are everywhere the same: in Africa, as in Europe, they ruin the provinces intrusted to their charge, and excite hatred against the Government which employs them. And yet, if they would encourage the natural industry of the Takrouris; if, by wise concessions of lands, they stimulated agricultural pursuits, the magnificent plains which spread between the Nile and the mountains of Abyssinia would become one of the most prosperous cotton-growing districts in the world.

CHAPTER XIII.

KHARTOUM—EXCESSIVE INTEREST TAKEN BY THE GOVERNOR IN MY SAFETY—I DISCOVER ITS MOTIVE—TREATMENT OF THE NEGROES IN THE SOUDAN—GONDOKORO—A MUTINY—FOR GREAT EVILS, PROMPT REMEDIES.

September 29th.



AFTER a short residence at Metemma, I traversed the Gallabat from east to west: then, gaining the river Rahad, I descended it for nearly its entire length, and directed my course towards Khartoum by the Blue Nile.

It was fully time I arrived there. My purse, replenished in Abyssinia by an officer of the English army, was again exhausted; and the rainy season rendered my journey very troublesome. But at Khartoum I found at my agent's a supply of money, and the cargo of wares I had sent forward when I started on my expedition. These resources enabled me to hire a tolerable house: and I had, moreover, the satisfaction of finding myself in the heart of an agreeable European society; for upwards of thirty French, German, and Italian merchants had planted here their establishments.

The Governor of the Soudan, Mouça-Pasha, left me abundant leisure to taste all the advantages of my position. During the three months of my sojourn at Khartoum, I found it impossible to obtain from him the authorization necessary for my continuing my journey. He invented a thousand excuses to delay my departure; and even, under the pretence of feeling an interest in my safety, which was compromised by my rash designs, he sought—the good soul!—to persuade me to return to Europe by the shortest route. But it was not long before I fathomed his motive. He did not care to encourage an expedition into the districts whence the slaves were obtained for the Khartoum markets, for fear too strong a light should be thrown on the iniquities of the abominable traffic, and the Western Powers be induced to employ effectual means to put a stop to it. I durst not offend this powerful personage, and compelled myself to keep patient.

Khartoum, situated at the confluence of the White and the Blue Nile, is the seat of Egyptian Government in the Soudan. It has a population of about 30,000, which does not prevent it from being one of the paltriest capitals you can imagine. With the exception of a few houses occupied by Europeans, it consists entirely of little clay cabins, crowded along squalid and unwholesome streets. Nor does the surrounding

country present a more agreeable spectacle: the Soudan is governed by military force, or, rather, it is abandoned to an army which, receiving no pay, breaks loose from every bond of discipline, and mercilessly plunders the inhabitants. "No grass ever grows where the Turk has set his foot," says an Arab proverb. This mournful and pregnant saying is only too fully realized; and the governor is the first to set an example of violence and extortion. The country, ruined by excessive taxation, has sunk into the lowest depths of misery; hence its occupation offers but few, and these trivial, advantages to Egypt,—a meagre compensation for the embarrassment and cost occasioned by holding so remote a province. It seems at the first glance that it is simply folly to retain so unprofitable a possession; and Khartoum, in fact, would soon cease to exist, if the slave trade did not attract to it a crowd of strangers, without religion and without law,—Syrians, Copts, Turks, Arabs, Egyptians; a foul, degraded assemblage, to whom every sentiment of humanity or honour is completely foreign.

The Turkish officers pretend, it is true, a hostility to the traffic. The presence of the consuls sent to Khartoum by France, Austria, and England, compels them to put some kind of restriction upon the abominable speculations of the traffickers. The expeditions which set out for the interior have, to all appearance, no other

object than the ivory commerce. To avoid awakening the suspicions of the Western nations, the slave-merchants are careful to get rid of their living cargo before arriving at Khartoum. The captured negroes are secretly directed towards Sennaar or the Red Sea. The European consuls are not ignorant of this fact, but cannot obtain sufficient proofs

Mouça-Pasha is himself the most avaricious negro-merchant and slave-trader in the country. Under the pretext of carrying out the regulations imposed by Europe, he sends to the White Nile and the Abyssinian frontiers armed bands, secretly instructed to make the most pitiless razzias. Hundreds of slaves yearly are carried to Egypt to be sold for his private profit; and the troops receive no other pay. In a word, the Government of Khartoum, despite the hypocritical deference which it affects towards the West, authorizes by its example, and covers with its protection, the most odious acts. Only in the spring preceding my visit to the Nile, upwards of two hundred boats ascended the immortal river, while everybody in Soudan knows that the trade in ivory could not possibly engage more than fifteen or twenty. And it is to this shameful commerce Khartoum owes its importance; and it is this which explains the inhospitable reception accorded to every traveller who ventures into a country converted by the Egyptians into a theatre of crime and suffering.

Thanks to the energetic support of the French consul, I finally succeeded in overcoming the repugnance of Mouça-Pasha. Already I had purchased a couple of boats for the ascent of the river, and was engaged in reassembling my escort; for I had about me at that time no other attendants than Oueda and my Abyssinian servant, Mikaël. But if you would travel safely among the wild tribes of Africa you need to be accompanied by an imposing force. I wanted honest, trustworthy, and devoted men; but where was I to find them in Khartoum? The slave-trade attracts thither a crowd of corrupt adventurers, who would elsewhere meet with their deserts at the gallows, and who, thanks to the slave-merchants, are able to utilize advantageously their instincts of robbery and murder. It was among these honest people that I had to recruit for companions with whom to confront perils of every kind. The prospect was not reassuring; but I relied upon my energy to maintain discipline among the brutal band.

I laid it down as a primary condition, that the people in my pay should abstain from exercising any violence against the natives whose territories we might traverse. This opening clause was sufficient to clear a wide space around me. In vain I offered high wages;—they could make more by plunder! No one showed any haste to engage in my service. By dint of perseverance, however, I contrived at last to assemble an escort

of thirty men; but what men! Their fierce visage, their rude manners, their sidelong stealthy glance, all revealed the truth, that their lives had been spent in brigandage.

"Well," muttered Mikael, between his teeth, "this is the prettiest collection of rascals I have ever seen."

"Master," said Oueda, as soon as they had quitted my presence, "do you really intend to take these villains with you?"

"Be quiet, child; I shall take my precautions."

And I proceeded to inscribe in the records of the French consulate, and the Turkish authorities, the names of the cut-throats I had just enlisted. After this, I signified to them that they would undergo an exemplary punishment if any misfortune happened to me.

Our departure was fixed for the 5th of October. On the day before, the beasts of burden were embarked, the provisions, the trinketry, and the cotton stuffs. At sunrise, propelled by a favourable wind, we quitted Khartoum, to direct our course towards the goal of so many efforts,—the sources of the Nile. A numerous crowd collected on the shore,—the idlers of the town, the kinsmen and comrades of the men who accompanied me. All these, according to the Arab custom, saluted us with noisy shouts and expressions of good-will; but the sailors, proud of an opportunity to display their skill, plied the oars lustily. The noise

of voices gradually grew fainter; and before long Khartoum appeared no more than a gray patch on the background of a verdant landscape.

Nothing equals the monotony of the navigation of the White Nile. Forests of mimosas clothe its banks; these trees, rejoicing in an abundant foliage, present at a distance a sufficiently picturesque appearance; seen close at hand, the thick wood changes into a melancholy swamp, where stagnant waters reek about the rotten trunks, and dense masses of aquatic plants form floating islands, some of which lie entangled among the trees, while others are slowly carried down by the sluggish current of the river. Beyond, a sterile sandy soil extends, sprinkled, so to speak, with a few poor hamlets, inhabited by savages completely naked, dying of hunger, and bony as skeletons. The hoarse growl of a hippopotamus crouching among the reeds, the sharp buzzing of swarms of mosquitoes, are the only sounds which break the deadly silence of the swamp. To add to the fatigue and almost unendurable weariness of the voyage, the Nile, in these melancholy regions, describes interminable meanderings; and the tall weeds which obstruct its channel render its navigation very difficult. It is not astonishing, therefore, that the natives abandoned the exploration of the river, when they entered these gloomy deserts. They might well suppose them to be haunted by evil spirits, who would exact a fatal

vengeance on the head of every presumptuous intruder.

November 1st.—A month passed by, and we encountered nothing but unwholesome marshes, inhabited by hideous and half-famished negroes. At length we reached the Austrian station of Sainte-Croix.

Some devoted priests had there established a mission. Among the ruins of a presbytery and a church we discovered some vestiges of a garden and of a grove of citron trees; but these attempts at civilization, seeds sown by the way-side, had proved altogether fruitless.

"Europeans are all the same," remarked Isur, the *vakil* or chief of my escort; "they imagine they can humanize savages! As if such creatures were capable of intelligence! One may tame a jackal; but one must expect nothing from a negro."

"Undoubtedly," I replied, in an ironical tone; "he is good only to be sold at the slave-market. But is it true that the missionaries have completely failed?"

"Had they succeeded they would not have quitted their station. I have heard it said that they collected round them some thirty families: the children learned to read, to write, and ever so much besides. We expected to find the natives more tractable, and more disposed to commerce; for such is the ordinary effect of

civilization. Basta! We arrive in the country; and they are no better than ferocious beasts! Instead of entering into our little speculations, they received us with spears and arrows. Can you imagine such brutes? You will understand that so inhospitable a greeting warmed our ears; so we loaded our guns, fired upon the *canaille*, and reduced their huts to ashes. Next day we found a few of the rebels lurking among the ruins; we carried them before our chief, who ordered them to be bound hand and foot, and transported to a rock near the old church. The Nile flows underneath: we threw them one after another into its waves. They must have fattened the crocodiles. From that time, the natives have shown themselves as gentle as lambs. And this is the way to deal with them if you would make them obey you."

This barbarous action, related with so much cynicism, filled me with horror. I could understand why the pious efforts of our Western missionaries have proved of so little profit. In the slave-trade lies the great obstacle to the advancement and humanization of the negro; it is the foul ulcer which kindles in the heart of the African population a profound hatred to the whites. So long as this scourge weighs upon unhappy Africa, so long will the black race remain hostile to European civilization.

A few days later, the melancholy marshes,

the sight of which had so long wearied me, gave place to a fertile region, covered with numerous villages; a mountain-peak, the first we had seen since leaving Khartoum, traced against the horizon its azure outlines. We were approaching Gondokoro.

This town, which is situated on the very border of the Savage World, is but a collection of miserable huts, inhabited for three or four months in the year by ivory-merchants. At the time of our arrival a dead silence prevailed; not more than two or three boats lay at anchor; a Circassian, named Kourchid, and a few men, were the sole inhabitants of the deserted town, and were engaged in collecting ivory and slaves from the surrounding country. The traders share among themselves all the district lying to the south of Gondokoro, on either bank of the Nile, just as allied kings divide between them their conquered provinces. Thus, such and such a territory is apportioned to the Italian Debono, another to Mohammed Her, a third to Kourchid, and a fourth to Chenouda. No ivory-merchant ever attempts to encroach on the domains of his rivals; he knows that by doing so he would provoke the most implacable reprisals.

Had I been but a few months earlier, Gondokoro would have presented a very different spectacle. It was then a scene of the greatest animation; for it is in spring that the traders assemble: some, to wait for their human mer-

chandise; others, to complete their needful equipment, and advance towards the interior. A throng of boats then filled the harbour: upwards of a hundred Arabs, ready to start for their respective stations, whiled away their leisure by smoking, drinking, and quarrelling: these men, continually intoxicated, found a highly congenial amusement in firing off their muskets in all directions,—an amiable pastime which annually resulted in numerous accidents.

Far from regretting the solitude which surrounded me, I congratulated myself that my men were exempt from the dangerous influence of the counsels of their compatriots. My principal anxiety at this time was the bad condition of my beasts of burden. Asses and camels perished under the attack of a very singular enemy: a bird about as large as a thrush, with a red bill and grayish plumage, which, armed with powerful talons, clung to the poor animals, and fed upon their flesh.

One morning, on returning to my tent, and wondering in what way or by what means I should transport the immense baggage which was actually indispensable, I found Ouelda very pale, and deeply moved. He looked carefully around to see that no listener was near; then, in a mysterious tone of voice, he said,—

“Master, do not trust your escort; these men are robbers, bent upon your destruction. They say you have been sent from Europe as a spy,

and that if you are allowed to go forward, the commerce of the White Nile will be ruined. They add that everybody at Khartoum, from the Governor Mouça-Pasha downwards, will thank them for obstructing your voyage. To force you to abandon it, they intend to desert, and carry off your arms and property. Afterwards they will join the company of a slave-trader called Debono, and leave you here alone."

"Are you sure of what you are saying? Perhaps you have not properly understood them; think again, for it is a serious business."

"Bring the vakil here, and you shall see if he will dare to contradict me."

Isur, when interrogated, at first denied the accusation; but, with an energy which I was far from expecting in a youth of his age, Ouelda, with a self-reliant air, a loud voice, and an eye glittering with wrath, declared that he knew everything, and repeated the details of the projected treason.

The vakil hesitated, and grew troubled.

"My men complain," he replied hesitatingly; "for two days they have had no meat. They say that if you prevent them from helping themselves to the cattle of the natives, you condemn them to die of hunger."

"Very good; assemble them."

While the vakil was obeying my command, I loaded my revolvers, and prepared to assert my authority over the rebels. Ouelda and Mikael,

who were also armed, stationed themselves behind me.

"I learn," said I to the mutineers, "that some among you intend to betray me. They have forgotten, perhaps, to what they will expose themselves. Let them know, then, that I have my eye upon them. The first who revolts shall be shot down like a dog. Now, prepare for our departure; we leave Gondokoro this evening."

"Impossible," replied one of the Arabs, who appeared to have been appointed spokesman. "We do not know the country, and since yesterday we have had no meat. We want cattle first; and next, a guide."

"The guide I have already. As for the cattle, we will buy them on our route."

"We have resolved to make an expedition against the neighbouring village; we must and will have some oxen this very day."

"I forbid all robbery."

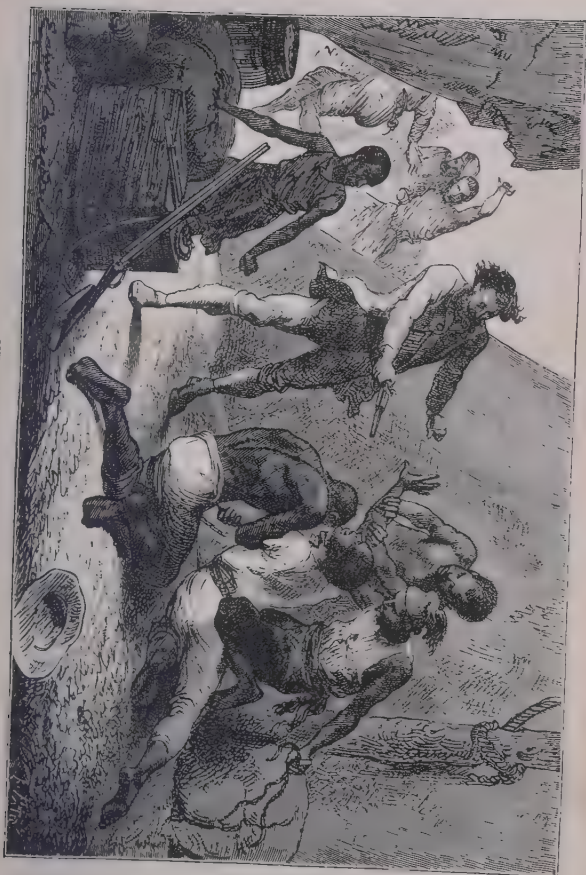
"We shall not ask your permission."

At this insolent answer my indignation rose,—

"Bind that fool, and give him twenty lashes with a whip. Obey me, vakil, or I blow your brains out."

I directed the barrels of my revolver at the mutineers. Isur, and a few of the men, seized upon the orator, who overwhelmed them with insults, and reproached them, with a thousand imprecations, for their cowardice in deserting a comrade.

MUTINY OF THE ESCORT.



Thus, for the time, the rebellion was subdued. Kourchid, the Circassian slave-dealer who resided at Gondokoro, offered me, in the most obliging fashion, his assistance and advice.

"You will experience great difficulty," he said to me, "in moving southward with so small and so undisciplined an escort. The natives look upon every stranger as an enemy: thirty men always ready to desert are not a sufficient protection. Make a detour to the east: by so doing you will avoid the territory of Debono, where your Arabs have secret communications, and in the country of the Obbos you will rejoin my wakil Ibrahim, in whose company you can proceed to the great lake region."

I felt a lively repugnance towards allying myself with a troop of slave-dealers: I also felt some doubt as to Kourchid's sincerity. Might he not, like his fellow-traders at Khartoum, have reason to fear the curious gaze of a European? Yet the country I was about to traverse being occupied by the ivory-merchants, I had to settle how I should contrive to traverse their respective districts. In this perplexity, Kourchid's proposition was a piece of good fortune which I could not afford to treat with indifference.

The revolt of my men determined me to quit Gondokoro at an earlier date than I had first intended, and I made haste to overcome their resistance.

Just as the last camel was receiving his load, Ouelda plucked me softly by the coat, and made a sign that he wanted to speak to me apart. Then he informed me that my men had by no means renounced their criminal designs: they had submitted in appearance, and would follow me inland, but would endeavour to divert our course so as to bring us into Debono's territory. They knew that there they could depend on employment in a band which contained many of their friends, and would no longer hesitate to put me to death.

In such circumstances I felt that my wisest course was to appear unconscious and composed, since I could do nothing but keep on my guard, and carefully watch the compass to prevent any deviation from my route.

CHAPTER XIV.

VALUE OF CATTLE IN AFRICA—NO OXEN, NO WIVES—THE DANDIES OF THE ELLYRIA—OPPORTUNE INTERVENTION OF A DRUNKARD—I REJOIN THE TRADERS—A NEGRO PHILOSOPHER—SCENES IN SLAVE-LIFE.

November 10th.



THE banks of the Nile, so level and so swampy as far as Gondokoro, present, after the traveller quits that town, a succession of mountain-chains and deep valleys, in which a luxuriant vegetation displays its wealth: tamarisks, ebony-trees, and acacia mingle with jujube-trees and rose-laurels. The hamlets of the natives, surrounded by hedges of euphorbias, are sometimes planted on the heights, sometimes buried in the heart of the leafy forests.

Of the inhabitants of these parts cattle form the principal source of wealth. Certain tribes can breed only goats; others, enjoying a healthier climate, breed sheep and oxen. Among the latter are the Baris, whose flocks and herds may be seen on the pastures lying at the foot of the Bélénia Mountains. As gold and silver, and splen-

did palaces, and sumptuous furniture are here unknown, self-love and cupidity are concentrated on the possession of a few cows. Without this



THE EUPHORBIA TREE.

precious treasure, one is not the object of any consideration; one exercises no influence in the tribe; one can neither speak in the public as-

semblies nor even take a wife,—for one must have cattle to purchase the latter treasure. A young girl costs from ten to fifteen cows, according to her rank and beauty. Their herds represent, so far as the natives are concerned, all the good things of life; and hence they surround them with a number of precautions. They assemble them during the night in vast enclosures, called *kraals*, which are situated in the centre of the villages. The streets, or rather the lanes of the village, are purposely rendered so narrow that, in case of a surprise, no enemy can drive the flocks through such difficult *gullies*. It is only the central street which possesses any width; and the cattle pass and repass along it daily in going to, or returning from, their pasturage. With what care this avenue is guarded! At the least alarm, at the slightest signal which announces an approaching danger, all the natives rush to defend it: the villages, in a word, seem constructed, not for the safety of the inhabitants, but for that of the cattle. A Bari clings to his herds more affectionately than to his wife and children.

The fertile country, or flower-garden, which we had been traversing since our departure from Gondokoro, was succeeded, after a certain time, by impenetrable jungles, abrupt hills, and deep ravines. My men threatened to revolt; they would fain follow the Nile, and move south-

ward. I remained firm, and continued to follow up an easterly course.

Two days' difficult marching brought us to



GATE OF A VILLAGE IN EAST AFRICA.

a smiling valley. As we passed, the natives emerged from their abodes in swarms. They had never seen a white man; had never seen

asses or camels ; I had, therefore, the honour of dividing the attention of the savages with my beasts. By a very great chance, one of them knew the Arab tongue. He approached me, and we engaged in conversation :—

“ Who are you ? Whence come you ? ”

“ I am a European,—a Frenchman,—and I come to see your country.”

A universal burst of laughter greeted this response, which was translated into the native language by the improvised interpreter.

“ To see our country ! ” exclaimed the others ; “ make a long voyage to look at trees and mountains ! What a falsehood ! ”

“ What are you carrying in those large bags ? ” resumed our interrogator ; “ elephants’ tusks, undoubtedly ? ”

“ No ; they are pearls and bracelets. I will give some of them to you if you will act as my guide into the country of the Obbos, where I shall meet an Arab called Ibrahim.”

“ There, I was sure you lied ! Ibrahim is an ivory-merchant, and you too,—I see it. The child beside you is a slave.”

“ A slave ! I ! ” cried Ouelda ; “ because my skin is black ? No, no, I am not a slave. I am a Christian ; and my master does not trade in human flesh. You can’t have a grain of common sense in your head to speak as you are doing.”

Ouelda’s indignation produced the best effect

among the natives. They looked at me with an air in which curiosity mingled with sympathy, repeating to one another that I was not a slave-merchant. Some collars of glass beads and a bit or two of red cloth completely gained their confidence, and the native who had played the part of interpreter consented to act as guide.

It was fortunate that the inhabitants were in this peaceable disposition; for it would have been easy to annihilate our little caravan with stones, as we dragged our waggons through the dangerous defiles of the mountains of Ellyria. This chain has an elevation of from two to three thousand feet; blocks of a grayish granite barred the road; torrents, dried up at the time of my journey, but turbid and impetuous during the rainy season, have everywhere furrowed and excavated the soil; bushes and thick clustering trees issued from every fissure. In vain does the traveller attempt to cut away the obstructive branches; their wood, hard as stone, resists the efforts of the axe.

At length, a bend in the road opened up to us a vast panorama of forests and plains stretching eastward as far as the mountain chain of the Latoukas and the Madis. On the slopes of the mountains rose villages defended by palisades of euphorbia trees, and protected still more surely by the masses of rock, which, in the distance, look like fortresses.

No well-defined difference separates, at least to unpractised eyes, the natives of the different



NEGRO CHIEF AND HIS WARRIORS, EAST AFRICA.

tribes; it would have been impossible for me to have distinguished them one from another, if

the guide had not informed me that we had quitted the territory of the Baris to enter into that of the Ellyrias. All are equally naked; they have a sunken forehead, lips of great thickness and undue prominence; their features indicate the predominance of brutal instincts. They give themselves an indescribably ferocious aspect by their equipment of bows made of bamboo stems, and arrows barbed with infernal art, and impregnated with a deadly poison.

One would suppose that among these repulsive savages coquetry would be impossible; but vanity is so vivacious in the heart of man, that, even here, it contrives to find the means of display. Yes, among the Ellyrias and the Baris there are fops and dandies! You may recognize them by the care with which they anoint their bodies with grease and red ochre, adorn their wrists and ankles with copper rings, and their neck with glass beads of many colours. Naturally enough, the women exhibit a still greater greed of ornament. To give piquancy to their physiognomy, the belles of the tribe pluck out their four front-teeth, and pierce the upper lip in order to insert a fragment of crystal. Thanks to these manifold cares, it must be confessed that they approximate very closely to the ideal of ugliness.

The condition of the women is not so bad among the idolatrous negroes as among the Mohammedans. They are not exclusively charged

with all the labour of cultivating the land, for the men, notwithstanding the idleness so dear to Africans, lend them a considerable amount of assistance. They reserve their activity, however, for the dance; a partiality common to all black people, from one end of the continent to the other. On fine starry nights you may see them skipping and jumping to the sound of a kind of drum, which they call *nogara*.

Meantime, my beasts of burden, which had sickened at Gondokoro, had grown worn and spent with fatigue. I had lost two camels, and several of my asses were reduced to a pitiable condition of leanness. I decided on making a halt in a broad valley, clothed with wild fig-trees, and watered by a brook.

There was nothing hopeful or comforting in my situation: the natives, incessantly exposed to the violence of the slave-dealers, looked upon every stranger as an enemy; the slightest incident might bring me into collision with them. On the other hand, I could place no confidence in the fidelity of my men: I had even every reason to fear lest they should turn against me, in the event of a conflict taking place. However, I was obliged to remain in this dangerous country; for rest was absolutely indispensable to my beasts of burden, and I had no bearers to carry my baggage.

I had scarcely finished the disposition of my little camp, before I found myself surrounded by

a hundred Ellyrias: they prowled around the boxes, endeavouring to ascertain their contents; and one of them, in his indiscreet curiosity, contrived to make a hole in the cover of a parcel of glass trinkets. As his eyes shone with greedy delight, I hastened to extinguish the source of so dangerous an admiration. The bag was stitched up again; and my men received orders to station themselves, with their guns loaded, in front of the baggage. The crowd retired to a distance, but soon opened wide its ranks to allow of the passage of a man with short and deformed limbs, and a fierce physiognomy. He proved to be the chief. I proceeded to offer him a pair of copper bracelets, and a couple of glaring red and yellow handkerchiefs, depicting the most sanguinary combats imaginable! I thought he would have been overcome with pleased surprise: not the least in the world! He regarded my presents with a disdainful glance, and then set to work to ferret among my packages. I felt seriously inclined to give this impertinent negro a lesson in good manners, but prudence withheld me.

Suddenly his nostrils dilated.

"This smells good," he exclaimed, pointing with his finger to a case full of spirits intended for my people.

Glad to have discovered an object that was likely to ingratiate me in his favour, I handed to him a bottle of brandy. He seized it greedily, and having emptied it with wonderful rapidity,

licked his lips with his tongue. The flask he held with a firm grasp ; he looked at it with eyes of love. His coarse features assumed so singular an expression of jubilation, mingled with regret, that it was with the greatest difficulty I stifled a burst of laughter. I longed to teach him the song which Molière puts in the mouth of Sganarelle :—

“ Ah ! bouteille, ma mie,
Pourquoi vous videz-vous ?
Mon sort ferait bien des jaloux
Si vous étiez toujours remplie.”

[Ah, my beloved bottle, why do you get empty ? How many would be jealous of my good fortune, if you were always full !]

The brandy raised my prestige in the eyes of the chief. I gave him a few flasks of the liquor which he seemed to prize so highly ; an act of generosity that provoked an explosion of gratitude by which I profited to ask him for the services of forty baggage-bearers.

The savage, like Caliban to Stephano, in Shakspeare's *Tempest*, could refuse nothing to a man who possessed such precious liquors. An arrangement was soon concluded. I was able, therefore, to resume my journey. My joy was excessive, and I gave the signal for departure. However, instead of making the necessary preparations, my men remained tranquil, resting on the barrels of their muskets. Mikaël, Ouclda, and a few women had to undertake the task of loading the beasts of burden. The vakil Isur

beat his drum anew, but not one of the men stirred a step. I advanced towards them,—

“Throw down your guns, varlets, and load the camels.”

“We shall not obey you: you may set out if it seems good to you, but none of us intend to follow.”

The mutineer had scarcely concluded his speech when a vigorous blow from the butt-end of my revolver laid him, unconscious, on the ground. The native bearers, who had gathered round me, applauded, with loud shouts of laughter, this act of justice. The chief, his legs trembling, and his eyes bleared with the numerous libations in which my liberality had enabled him to indulge, drew near, and in a thick voice stuttered:—

“You are my friend. Say but a word, and the poisoned arrows of my people shall avenge you on these rebels.”

The threat of the savage completely disconcerted my people. I thought the moment favourable for a display of clemency.

“You see how easy it would be for me to punish you; but I would much rather forgive you. Let each man return to his duty.”

The men who, but a moment before, had showed themselves so intractable, now set to work immediately to place on the backs of the camels and asses the packages too heavy or too trouble-

some to be carried by the native porters. Isur then explained to me the cause of the mutiny which had been so fortunately put down. One of the companies of the slave-trader Debono was only two days' march in our rear; the Arabs had learned this fact, and thought the occasion favourable for carrying out their project of revolt.

As we advanced further and further from Ellyria, so did we find the difficulties of our march increase. A chain of steep mountains separated us from the country of the Obbos. The road wound its way among masses of rocks so near to one another that they barely left space enough for the passage of a beast of burden. The camels were constantly stumbling into chasms: the more prudent asses refused to advance; we were forced to encourage and stimulate them with loud shouts, and blows on the hind quarters, and tugs at their long ears,—an exercise which greatly amused Ouelda, but which lost much of its charm when repeated for several hours.

A mile or so further, and a small platform, or table-land, presented itself. We advanced towards it, sweating, panting, and overcome with fatigue; but, to our extreme disappointment, discovered that its limited area was occupied. A company of ivory-merchants had taken possession of it. Some of the Arabs were stationed as sentinels; others lay extended in the shadow of

the tamarisk trees. As soon as they caught sight of us, they started up with a surprised air, ran to their weapons, and assembled round a red standard ornamented with the crescent, which floated in the middle of the sombre verdure. Who *were* these traders? Have I,—said I to myself,—have I, without knowing it, marched into the very centre of Debono's band? With a heart full of anxiety, but a calm and composed countenance, I waved the white flag of truce. Some men then quitted the group of adventurers, and hastened to meet me.

I scrutinized with an unquiet eye the individual who led them. His exterior, assuredly, was not prepossessing. His thin aquiline nose, his pointed chin, his prominent cheek-bones, were unmistakable signs of cunning; his projecting forehead overhung two large black eyes, which glittered with an evil light. Nevertheless his first words were reëssuring and full of encouragement to me; for I found he was Ibrahim, the vakil of Kourchid-Aga.

While I was explaining to him the motives which had induced me to visit Africa, he regarded me with a disdainful and suspicious air.

"Yes," he replied; "others have been before you, and we have had the weakness to act as their guides. Allah knows what will be the result for us! I cannot understand the curiosity which induces Europeans to be always meddling in matters with which they have no concern."

Evidently he suspected me of being a spy, instructed to inquire into the treatment the unfortunate negroes were receiving. Happily, Kourchid had furnished me with a letter which had a salutary effect on his vakil's temper. An almost imperceptible shrug of the shoulders alone betrayed the displeasure he felt at his master's instructions. He repressed this indication of dissatisfaction, however, and turned towards me with a smile,—

“I was in the wrong not to accord you a better reception. So many adventurers traverse the country that one never knows with whom one is dealing. Pitch your tents by the side of ours, and rely upon us. We will lead you to the great lakes. Moreover,” said he, casting at me a sidelong glance, “honest merchants like us, who carry on an honourable commerce, have no reason to fear observation.”

Delighted with the peaceable issue of an encounter which I had regarded with so much apprehension, I presented Ibrahim with a costly gift, and assured him of a liberal recompense if he conducted me safe and sound to the goal of my pilgrimage. I had left at Khartoum, in the hands of a friend, I told him, wherewithal to reward those who served me faithfully.

November 18th.—After skirting the base of Mount Assul, which rears its summit of granite

to an elevation of four thousand feet, we reached, on the 18th of November, a village, whose chief, in the preceding year, had formed an alliance with Ibrahim. His tribe was at war with a neighbouring people; the trader offered him the assistance of his fire-arms to combat his enemies. Escorted by their partisans, both chief and trader, under cover of night, made their way towards the village destined for destruction. The defenceless inhabitants were sleeping soundly. They set fire to their huts, and massacred them without mercy. The women and the children were made prisoners, and the provisions, cattle, and ivory divided among the victors. Of course, Ibrahim reserved to himself the lion's part—all that he had to care about was procuring slaves and booty; but his credulous ally did not the less believe that he had rendered him a signal service. He received the traders with open arms, without thinking that in another year it might be *his* turn to play the part of victim.

The negro prince, informed by the vakil of the presence of a white man, came with a company of his warriors to receive me. By his side marched two of the natives, one of whom led a beautiful cow, while the other carried a gourd full of *pombé*, the fermented drink of the country. The chief presented me with the cow as a token of his good will; then, taking the jar from the hands of his *aide-de-camp*, he sprinkled my tent, and scattered a few drops of the liquor over the

ground. This ceremonial ended, he excused himself in a few kindly words for not being better able to discharge the duties of hospitality. He placed at my disposal several huts situated at the entrance of the village, and assured me that I had nothing to fear from his people.

I hastened to respond to his courtesy with a present of a piece of cotton stuff, and a collar of large pearls, in imitation of opals. Never was royal gift received with livelier joy. The chief, forgetting his dignity, clapped his hands, and laughed like a child. A kaleidoscope converted his rapture into positive deliriousness. With his eye fixed on the brilliant images visible at the bottom of the instrument, he forgot the whole world. In silent ecstacy he spent fully a quarter of an hour, then he roused himself from his contemplations.

"How delighted my wives will be," he exclaimed, "to see these beautiful things!"

And in his impatience to display to them his new treasures, he rushed headlong from my tent, followed at full trot by the natives armed with spears who formed his escort.

On the following day, Ibrahim informed me that he was obliged to go to some distance to purchase ivory, but that during his absence, which would be about a week, he would leave me in the charge of the chief, whose amicable dispositions were not to be mistrusted. Of

course I understood that the vakil meditated a razzia in the neighbouring country, but that he did not judge it advisable to take me into his confidence. Pretending, therefore, to believe in the sincerity of his words, I hastened to turn to advantage the delay which his expedition imposed upon me.

My Arabs burned to join the slave-hunters. The plunder of a village would supply us with provisions, and our fare was but meagre, owing to the obstinacy of the natives in refusing to sell their cattle. No symptom of rebellion, however, manifested itself. My escort grew accustomed to the yoke of discipline. Two or three of the most disorderly had deserted; the remainder treated me with a strange combination of fear and respect. In the eyes of the Arabs, as in those of the natives, I appeared a being endowed with supernatural powers; and it is only in this way that they are able to explain the superiority which education, and science, and art bestow upon Europeans. I asked nothing better, meanwhile, than to enjoy the reputation of a sorcerer; it was an admirable means of compelling the obedience of the rude, wild men who surrounded me.

To beguile the impatience into which Ibrahim's departure had thrown me, I conversed with the natives. I was present at the public deliberations held on a grassy plot, shaded by a few trees, in the front of the village. In these,

the affairs of the tribe were discussed, and war and peace decided. Everybody was at liberty to take a part in them, and to speak when he felt inclined; but formal discussion was permitted only to the chief and the notables—in other words, to those who owned the largest herds of cattle. I heard them speak of projects of attack and invasion. “We have powerful allies,” said one of the orators. “With their aid, we are sure of victory. Now is the time for us to avenge ourselves on our enemies, and enrich ourselves with their spoils.”

I recognized in these words the fatal effects of the counsels of Ibrahim. It is thus that the natives themselves encourage the scourge which devastates their country.

The religion of the tribes of the White Nile is made up of a vague belief, and of coarse superstitions, which seem rather a vestige of ancient traditions than a genuine *cultus*. The natives, indeed, for the most part, seem to have forgotten the meaning of the practices which they still observe. Some, for example, retain the singular custom of exhuming the dead after they have lain in the earth for a month; all celebrate with great rejoicings the rise of the new moon; but if you ask them what these usages signify—“We do not know,” they reply. “We do this and that because our fathers did it.”

We are led, therefore, to conjecture that the religious ceremonies observed among these

people are the memorials of an ancient worship destroyed by the invasion of barbarism.

At the present day, the natives have nearly



A NATIVE OF THE WHITE NILE.

lost all notion of moral laws—all idea of a future life; and we must expect to see them fall still lower, if a prompt remedy be not applied to the evil which is corrupting them—

the accursed slave-trade. Yet, even among these degraded beings, we find sometimes a groundwork of intelligence and rectitude, which indicates that they are not irremediably degenerate—that they are capable of receiving and comprehending the great truths which give life to the soul. I was struck by the frequent gleams of intelligence which escaped them, and by their occasional exhibitions of judgment and discernment. But it was in vain I attempted to inspire them with a yearning after a less degraded moral state. I spoke to the chief of the arts and sciences of Europe. He listened with great interest. Then, after a few moments of reflection, he replied,—

“Of what advantage would these be to us? We are happier than you, because we have fewer wants, and those we have are easily satisfied. Our cattle suffice for our food; our women look after the cares of the household; war and the chase are our principal occupations, and they are the most worthy of us.”

“And the gentle pleasures of civilized life, and the security which surrounds it—do you count these as nothing?”

“Are there never *any* disputes among you, then, nor any wars?” observed the chief, looking at me with a glance of shrewd amusement.

My African philosopher, like all philosophers, was obstinate in his opinions; but from the lively and pungent way in which he defended

them, the reader will see that he was endowed with natural faculties which, if developed by education, would have raised him to a level with the most gifted races.

We afterwards touched upon religious questions. He professed the most complete materialism, believing in the existence neither of the soul, nor of virtue, nor of the Divine Justice. The reasoning to which he had recourse—reasoning with a close resemblance to that of our Western rationalists—reminded me of the well-known saying,—“It is impossible to prove with more wit that one is only a beast.” How much it is to be regretted that such precious aptitudes should be rendered barren by the fatal influence of savage life, and by the still more pernicious action of a civilization represented only by slave-traders!

November 26th.—Ibrahim had concluded his obscure transactions. He brought back no slaves,—perhaps he was afraid to exhibit them in my presence,—but he had a considerable quantity of ivory and cattle. Abundance reigned in his camp; for he obtained from the natives all kinds of provisions in exchange for a bull or a cow. As for me, who had nothing but glass beads to offer, I was reduced to a severe abstemiousness. For several weeks I had tasted but once of butcher meat. It is true I found some compensation in game, and I waged an impla-

cable war against cranes, and wild geese, and antelopes.

One day, when the chase had carried me further than ordinary, fatigue compelled me to rest a while on the border of a thick wood. All at once I heard a succession of shrieks at no great distance from my resting-place. I started up in surprise, for I did not expect to meet with any human being in a solitude so profound. A young negress rushed out of the leafy growth. Notwithstanding the swiftness with which she ran, I saw on her naked shoulders broad bloody stripes. She was pursued by four or five Arabs, armed with guns.

"Halt!" cried one of them, "or I will kill you!" Already his finger was on the trigger. I threw myself before him.

"What has this woman done to deserve such treatment?"

The man, who was one of Ibrahim's lieutenants, turned his head, and recognized me.

"You here! *Bismillah!* I did not expect to meet *you*."

Then, wheeling round, he added, with an air of calmness:—

"This negress is mine. I have taken her for my wife; and, according to the custom of the country, have paid for her a dowry of ten cows."

"It is not true!" cried the young girl, who, on seeing me take her part, had stationed herself by my side. "The slave-traders have plundered

our village, burned our houses, and carried me away prisoner, along with twenty other women. My father escaped. Yesterday morning he returned, bringing a quantity of ivory for my ransom; but the Turks drove him away with blows. They have cruelly beaten me also, and now—”

“I trust,” interrupted the Arab, “you do not believe a word of these lies.”

I felt in a position of considerable embarrassment. For the young negress I cherished a lively compassion. Her tears, an accent of truth in her words, my knowledge of the habits of the slave-traders, — all assured me that she was attempting no deception; but Ibrahim barely endured my presence, and carefully concealed from me his hateful traffic in slaves. If he learned that I was acquainted with it, he would assuredly regard me with the most intense hatred; for he looked upon me as a spy. Now my safety too much depended on his good-will, for me to wound him so openly.

“It is possible she may be your wife,” said I to the Arab; “but if she does not love you, why keep her? Rather let her return to her father, and I will compensate you for the loss.”

The rogue, well content with the mode of escape which I offered him, hastened to accept it. A few piastres settled the business; and, afraid lest after my departure the young negress should be again seized by her enemies, I sent her back to her father under Mikaël's escort.

In spite of the precautions I had taken to dissemble my real sentiments, this incident, as I had feared, greatly increased Ibrahim's coldness towards me. The wakil, it was evident, understood that I was not duped by his stratagems, and he was seized with a fit of sullen, silent wrath. To terminate as quickly as possible so unpleasant a condition of affairs, I pressed him to continue his journey; but, in conjunction with the chief, he had planned an expedition still more profitable than his former razzia, and he demanded a second adjournment. Wearied by these interminable delays, I proposed to Ibrahim that he should give me twenty-five or thirty men to complete my escort. They would accompany me as far as Unyoro, the country of the great lakes. Once within its borders, I would place myself under the protection of Prince Kamrasi, and leave the traders to return to their chief.

Ibrahim was only too glad to rid himself of my unwelcome companionship. He had under his orders fully three hundred Arabs, and, therefore, without weakening himself too much, could easily spare the few whose services I required. I promised to pay them double wages,—on the condition, however, that they abstained from pillage. That same evening I made my preparations for setting out, congratulating myself that I had succeeded in separating my cause from that of a band of robbers.

CHAPTER XV.

THE KODJOURS, OR RAIN-MAKERS—A CHIEF WHO IS UNHAPPY THROUGH AN EXCESS OF DOMESTIC HAPPINESS—HOW THE OBBOS DEAL WITH FEVER—CHOREGRAPHIC EXERCISES OF KATCHIBA—TWO AUGURS WHO CAN LOOK AT ONE ANOTHER WITHOUT LAUGHING—NEW ATROCITIES OF THE SLAVE-DEALERS—OUELDA FALLS SICK—THE ALBERT-NYANZA.

December 3rd.



THE country of the Obbos, whither I had directed my steps after taking leave of Ibrahim, is one of the most mountainous and barren of the districts of Central Africa. Bounded on the east by the lofty chain of the Madis, it presents a succession of dense forests and abrupt hills; upon which are situated, like the eyries of eagles, the villages of the natives. The inhabitants have no other domestic animals than goats; for in Obbo the rainy season endures through nine or ten months out of the twelve, and engenders myriads of those murderous flies, the terrible tsetsés, which effectually prevent the rearing of large cattle. On the other hand, the vegetation is magnificent, and the soil spontaneously produces excellent fruits.

The chief of the tribe, when I visited them, was a *kodjour*—that is, a *jongleur*, or musician—with a peculiarly original physiognomy. He asserted that he possessed the power of inflicting or removing curses, of preventing or procuring rain. These supernatural attributes increased his authority; but then they also increased his responsibility. Woe to him if a protracted drought or a too great abundance of water endangered the harvest! More than once the *kodjours* have been cut in pieces by savages who had asked in vain for a ray of sunshine. The aged Katchiba,—for such was the name of the chief of the Obbos,—steered his way through rock and shoal with curious skill. He never demanded beforehand any subsidies from his people; but when the rain had been too abundant, as is often the case,—the country being one of the most humid in the known or unknown world,—the cunning old man assembled his subjects.

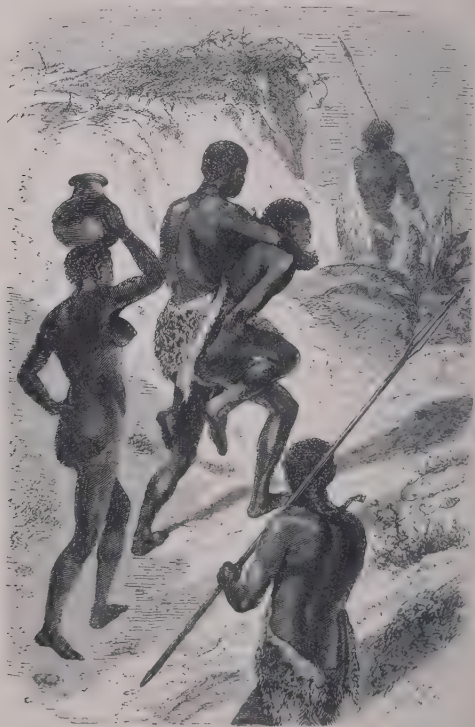
“You yourselves,” he would say, “are the cause of the evil which is upon you; you yourselves compel me to inflict this punishment. You gave me neither goats nor doura.”

The savages, in shame and confusion, would hasten to collect their finest cattle and their best flour: presents would pour into Katchiba's residence. Then the old man went forth, and observed the sky attentively: if he saw any signs indicative of a return of fair weather, he allowed himself to unbend; if, on the contrary,

the rain appeared likely to continue, he found the avarice of his people too guilty to admit of a speedy pardon.

Owing to his unquestionable capacity, the chief had acquired a great influence over the tribe. To conciliate his favour, the Obbos were not content with offering him a tithe of their flocks, they also made him a present of the most beautiful of their daughters; and as these gifts were being continually repeated, Katchiba's habitation became too small to contain his numerous wives. The excess of his conjugal happiness, moreover, rendered him the most unfortunate of men; for incessant quarrels disturbed the harmony of his household. Jealous of his affection, the ladies of the harem fought, and scratched, and tore one another's hair. You heard nothing but disputes, complaints, sobs, shrieks, and sighs. Imagine the embarrassment of the chief! Of a peaceable and joyous disposition, he loved no other sounds than those of merry festivals. Often he ordered general rejoicings to be held, and in these he always played a very active part. The sound of the flute and horn electrified him like a young girl, and, to the great admiration of his people, he executed the most marvellous gymnastics; but how could he devote his attention to the dance in the midst of intestine discords, which converted his house into an actual *Inferno*? To induce a better understanding among his wives,

he beat them; but this means failed. Meantime it was evident to everybody that Katchiba grew



KATCHIBA'S MODE OF TRAVELLING.

very thin. At last a bright idea flashed upon his mind: he established in every hamlet

domestic branch-establishments—an ingenious arrangement; for it separated the angry rivals, and, besides, afforded the chief the satisfaction of finding everywhere, when he made a progress through his dominions, a wife and children eager to receive him!

I thought that Katchiba would come to meet me, for he had been represented as very favourably inclined towards the white men. And, indeed, as I advanced, I heard the sound of the nogaras; but instead of the gay old man, it was his eldest son, who addressed to me the usual compliments.

Many changes had occurred, I found, in the last twelvemonths: Obbo was no longer a land of song, and dance, and revel. A gloomy desolation brooded over it. A neighbouring tribe—the Madis—exasperated by the cruelties of the slave-hunters, had avenged themselves upon Katchiba, their ally. The principal villages had been ravaged with fire and sword; to the havoc of war succeeded that of famine: deluges of rain had destroyed the crops; the goats, ill fed, gave but a poor supply of milk. The misery of the people was extreme; and, to crown their misfortunes, the old chief was seized with fever. I asked to be led to his hut; for I had a good supply of quinine, and wished to cure him if I could.

His son shook his head with a dubious air.

“We have employed all our talismans, but

without any good result: you will succeed no better. To-day, in obedience to his orders, I caused the magic whistle to be sounded; afterwards I cut a branch from a tree, and filling my mouth with water, I spat upon its leaves, as my father had enjoined. This charm is ordinarily infallible; it is enough to agitate the branch over the head of the patient to afford him relief. However, to-night his sufferings have been terrible."

A door, about eighteen inches high, admitted me into the hut of the chief of the Obbos. To pass inside, I was forced to crawl on my hands and knees. The interior I found so dark, that, at first, I could distinguish nothing around me. A pungent stifling odour irritated my throat: it was a compound of sweat, and fever, and smoke—the whole seasoned by the equivocal perfumes rising from numerous pots of *mérissa*, the native beer. In a few minutes—my eyes having grown accustomed to the obscurity—I distinguished a bony form, reduced almost to a skeleton, stretched upon a mat.

"You come at a melancholy moment," said Katchiba, in a feeble voice. "The white men are good; but the Egyptians bring misfortune with them."

"Take courage: I have a powder with me which will restore you to health."

The eyes of the invalid brightened. He extended towards me his skinny hands.

ILLNESS OF KATCHIRA.



Plaque - P. 005. 567

"Where is it? Give it to me. The white men are great magicians; their talismans are more powerful than ours."

I had prepared a dose of quinine. I handed it to Katchiba's son.

"Must he swallow the paper also?" asked the young man, doubtfully.

"No, no; the powder is enough."

"What! without any invocation, without any magic words!"

I endeavoured to explain to him that it had nothing to do with sorcery or supernatural power; but that God, the Father of all mankind, had given to certain plants the beneficent power of healing. The astonished savage opened his eyes with a look of wonder: he could understand the nature of charms and incantations; but his intelligence remained almost entirely closed to the reception of the great thought of a Sovereign Creator of the world. Have we not here a suitable theme for reflection? The most degraded peoples—those, in a word, which are lowest in the social scale—are precisely those also which entertain the lowest religious notions. The Divine Idea is necessary to the moral life of man; is the principle and source of civilization and progress.

December 8th.—A few days' careful treatment effected a very sensible change for the better in the condition of the chief. The season, more-

over, was favourable; for it was the beginning of the two months which form all the dry season of Obbo. While in Ellyria everything was burned up by the sun, Nature here adorned herself with an incredible splendour. In the forests, gigantic trees grew intermingled with bushes of such thickness that the strongest animals, the elephant and the rhinoceros, alone could effect a passage. In the plains, magnificent wild-flowers raised their corollas among the grass to a height of ten or twelve feet; different species of fruits, apples, plums, a kind of bright yellow grape, ripened spontaneously all along the pathways. Why must the wickedness of man involve so beautiful a country in gloom and sadness? Several villages had been reduced to ashes, others decimated; a continual war raged between the Madis and the Obbos; and the traders failed not to profit by the discord between the two tribes to complete their ruin.

Meantime Katchiba seemed utterly unable to express, as he would have wished, his gratitude towards me. Every time I returned to my encampment I found a present from the good old man; sometimes a bag of flour, sometimes a couple of fine hens; more frequently, a large bowl of mérisa. He would fain have added a few goats, but his flock was not numerous, and his subjects, when required to furnish me with some, had resolutely refused. In spite of the largesses of the chief, my table, therefore, was

but scantily provided. I had little or no meat, and the chase could not supply the deficiency; for the larger game took refuge in the midst of impenetrable jungles. I counted on making no long stay in this land of famine; and was resolved not to wait for the arrival of the slave-traders to continue my expedition. It was my intention to take advantage, at all events, of the dry season, and my beasts of burden would have no cause to dread the attacks of the tsetsés.

The sounds of flutes and horns echoed joyously from one end to the other of the village. To celebrate his cure, and thank his physician, the chief resolved to give a fête. What a happy carelessness these savages exhibit! Surrounded by all the misfortunes and ills of life, continually in dread of war and all its horrors, they profit by the briefest interval of calm to enjoy themselves. Is not our anxious prevision less sensible than their want of reflection?

A hundred men assembled in a circle round my tent: each of them held in his hand a small drum, and, accompanying himself on this sonorous instrument, chanted a warlike refrain of very picturesque effect. Katchiba, supported by one of his sons, took his place in the centre of the noisy group. As he was still too weak to stand upright, he seated himself on a kind of cushion composed of three or four goat-skins; and from this throne of honour, like a skilful leader of an orchestra, he directed the chorus.

The song being finished, he gave the signal for dancing: a drum placed upon his knees enabled him to indicate the various figures, while his feet, impatient of their enforced repose, moved to and fro in spite of himself. His eyes never quitted the performers, who whirled round and round with a thousand fantastic gestures: his countenance shone with pleasure. At last, he could control himself no longer. Just as the exercise was terminating in a general round, he rose abruptly, and sprang into the middle of the dancers. For some minutes he mingled in the vertiginous maze; but his strength failed him. Exhausted and breathless, he fell into the arms of one of the savages. His wives hastened around him the moment he opened his eyes.

"Give me a cup of *mérissa*!" said the blithe old man.

At sunset Katchiba paid me another visit; a visit of adieu this time, for I had resolved to set out before dawn. The good chief, who had taken me into his affections, was much disturbed by my distant expedition, and brought me several talismans to protect me against ferocious beasts and all other evils.

"I can give you none against the fever," he added, modestly; "you know better than I do the charms with which to fight against it."

I began to laugh. It was evident that, willy nilly, I must pass as a necromancer!

"Since we are brothers in magic," said I, "I

am desirous of leaving with you a present which will assist you in the exercise of your art. Here is an instrument which has a good understanding with the clouds, and announces beforehand rainy or fine weather."

With these words I handed to him a barometer, and proceeded to explain its use.

"True!" replied Katchiba, enraptured; "this is admirable! Then it suffices to put it in this or that position to obtain the kind of weather one wishes for?"

"Oh no, no! It is able to *foretell*, that is all; and, moreover, if you do not wish it to deceive you, you must be careful not to touch it."

This explanation subdued the enthusiasm of the old chief.

"In that case, I am more powerful," he answered, with an air of importance; "for I can command the thunder and the lightning."

However, he reflected that it was a precious advantage, when one gives one's self out as a rain-maker, to know the moment when rain will fall. He took the barometer, therefore, "which would recall to him," he said, "the memory of his white friend."

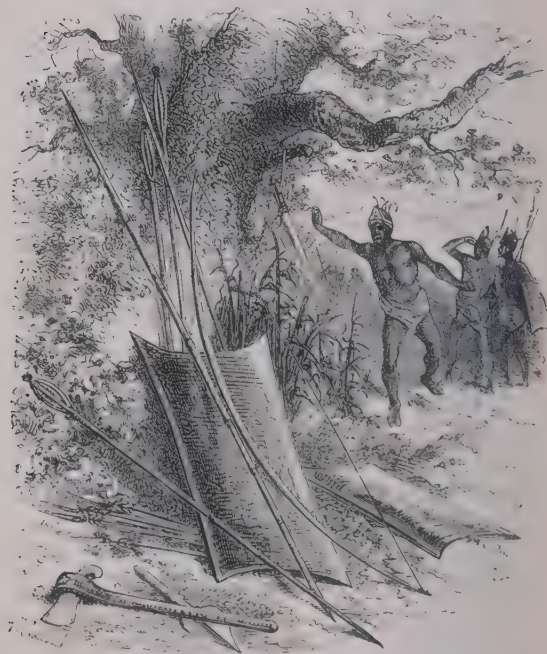
December 15th.—To the south of Obbo extends the rich and populous country of the Faradjoke; its abundant pastures nourish innumerable flocks. Mounted majestically on a steady-footed ox, I rapidly traversed this splen-

did territory; then I entered the fertile prairies of Shoa.

The first travellers who visited these regions speak eulogistically of the hospitality of the inhabitants: men and women, they tell us, vied with each other in pressing upon the strangers goats and game, and beer, and butter, and flour; but, at that time, the atrocities of the ivory-trade had not wounded the heart of the natives. The infamous traders, introduced into the country by the English explorers, to whom they acted as guides, have sown, everywhere, discord and death.

It was in vain I sought for the smiling villages which formerly studded the mountain-slopes. I met with empty huts only; their inhabitants fled at my approach. If, at intervals, I succeeded in persuading one that I was not an enemy but a friend, I heard recitals which made me shudder. The two rival companies of Debono and Kourchid had encountered each other in this unfortunate territory; they had involved the natives in their quarrels, and engaged in combats the violence of which was attested by ravaged villages and fields uncultivated. The negro who gave me these details had seen his father bound to a tree, and left to feed wild beasts. His mother and sister, carried away into slavery, had attempted their escape. Already they had swam across the river Asoua, when the young girl's leg was broken by a musket-shot. The

mother made an effort to carry her on her shoulders; but the precious burden delaying her flight, the hunters speedily recaptured their



BOWS AND ARROWS.

prey. Then took place a scene of incredible cruelty. The old negress was murdered before her daughter's eyes, and the latter was then

bound to a horse, and compelled to carry her mother's bleeding head into the encampment, that this dreadful example might terrify the other prisoners.

After marching for several days across the wide and swampy plains which lie in the neighbourhood of Shoa, we traversed a beautiful forest, and arrived in sight of the Victoria-Nile; in other words, of that portion of the river lying between the two great lakes, the existence of which was first ascertained by Speke and Grant. Nature seems to have accumulated here her most imposing beauties. Immense forests cover both banks of the river with their majestic arches; the Nile, roaring in the depth of its channel, sometimes leaps and bounds from rock to rock, sometimes surrounds with its arms an island richly ornamented by bananas and wild date-palms. Numerous villages crown the escarpments which border the river, and which rise to a height of nearly five hundred feet above its level.

The calm evening air brought to me distinctly the sound of several cascades; these were the Falls of Karuma, distant about half a league. Though sadly weary, I urged onwards my steed, and was soon repaid for all I had undergone. The spectacle before me elicited an involuntary cry of admiration. In a space of about one thousand yards three cataracts succeeded one another, and the red fires of the sunset lighted

them up as if by an unearthly conflagration. The waters of the Nile, escaping through channels excavated in the rock, fall in sheets of foam, from a height of six to eight feet, on an enormous mass of granite, where the natives have had the daring to erect a hut,—in commemoration, perhaps, of some great event. Afar off are seen the steep banks of the Nile, covered with the luxuriant vegetation of the papyrus.

I had gained the frontier of Unyoro, which is here defined by the course of the mighty river. I sent Mikaël with some Arabs to ask King Kamrasi's permission to enter his territory. I felt assured that he would provide me with an escort, so that I might, according to promise, dismiss Ibrahim's retainers; but the capital of Unyoro is distant five days' journey from Karuma. Not to lose precious time, I decided, while waiting for my messenger's return, to follow the north bank of the Nile as far as its embouchure in the Luta-Nzigé or Albert-Nyanza. A town named Magungo is situated at this point; and it was there that I appointed Mikaël to meet me. In the interval, I intended to explore the great lake, to see with my own eyes one of the two reservoirs of the Nile. Furnished with the necessary authorization, I should then cross Unyoro, and direct my steps towards the remotest source of the Egyptian river, the Victoria-Nyanza.

Between the Falls of Karuma and the town of Magungo, the Nile describes to the west a bold curve, broken by a succession of rapids which render navigation impracticable. I had no occasion, on my own account, to regret this arrangement of Nature, since I was unable to procure a boat. The country is wild, solitary, interspersed with swamps and forests. The natives, it is said, are very ferocious; but of this I had no opportunity of judging, for every village I passed through was deserted. The whole region had been blasted by the ivory-merchants with fire and sword. These bands of robbers, unable to work more evil here, had pushed forward some thirty leagues to the north.

To add to the melancholy which the spectacle of this unhappy country naturally excited, sickness broke out among my people. Ouelda was taken ill with fever; he daily grew weaker, and his condition inspired me with the most serious disquietude.

At length the guide announced that I was about to see the waters of the river fall from heaven, with a loud roar. It was thus he designated the uppermost of the cataracts of the Nile, which Sir Samuel Baker named the *Murchison Falls*, in honour of the late distinguished president of the Royal Geographical Society. On each bank gigantic rocks arose, clothed with a profuse vegetation; masses of basalt were

picturesquely intermingled with clumps of verdure; the river, pent up within its bed of stone, and compelled to follow a narrow passage in the midst of the lofty peaks which dominated it, seemed to shudder at every obstacle, and then, with a terrible roar, leap from a height of one hundred and twenty feet. The snowy whiteness of the cataract, contrasted with the sombre background of the precipitous rocks, and elegant palm-trees, and wild bananas, added to the splendid picture a quite peculiar charm.

On the following day the scene completely changed. The Nile, at first so narrow and rapid, gradually broadened; it presented the appearance of a great lake, which seemed to have no outlet: aquatic plants entwined with one another above the sleepy wave; and morbid miasmas, of which all of us felt the influence, exhaled from this singular kind of morass. My energies were so completely spent, that the movements of my steed caused me an intense fatigue. In the evening I plodded wearily, wearily, towards a village where I intended to pass the night. The country was shrouded in a profound obscurity; my men preserved a mournful silence. I was slowly pacing through the swamp which bordered the river, when I heard a low moan beside me. Turning round in a sudden anxiety, I recognized Onelda's voice. The child had fainted, and had not Mikael supported him, would have fallen.



THE MURCHISON FALLS.

They carried him to the nearest hut. He soon recovered consciousness ; but his eyes shone with the delirium of fever. I bestowed upon him every care which my limited medical knowledge suggested, and, towards morning, had the satisfaction of seeing him enjoy a sleep of some hours' duration.

At daybreak we resumed our march. Oueda was much better, and a piece of good news completely restored my confidence. We were near the Luta-Nzigé ; we could catch sight of it from the heights which, at the distance of a league, closed up the horizon.

Full of joy and impatience, I bade the guide conduct me thither. The road was steep ; but the recompense which awaited me gave me new energy. I was about to contemplate those colossal reservoirs of the Nile which so many travellers had sought for at the peril of their life ! Having reached the summit of the ascent, I cast all around my thirsty glances. The immense lake spread before me like a sea of silver : to the south, it was impossible to discover its limits ; to the west, a bluish chain arose from the very margin of the waters to an elevation of four thousand feet. Near me the Nile, a broad channel of sluggish waters, lost itself in the Albert-Nyanza, to issue again, full of power and life, at the northern extremity of the lake. From the point where I was stationed, I could see it rolling majestically towards the country of the Madis, towards Gondokoro and Khartoum.

THE ALBERT-NYANZA.



There lives not the man who is completely insensible to the majestic aspects of Nature; my Arabs even, coarse and rude as they were, seemed seized with an involuntary admiration. For myself, with my eyes fixed on the Albert-Nyanza, I could understand the enthusiasm of Baker when he first discovered the mighty lake, and I recalled with emotion his words: "I had hoped, prayed, struggled among difficulties of every kind; I had braved disease, hunger, and fatigue, to reach this hidden source. When success seemed impossible, I had resolved to perish rather than abandon my project. Now I had reached the goal, and I could say, My task is accomplished!"

The Albert-Nyanza, of a level much below the neighbouring country, surrounded with abrupt rocks, bounded to the west and south-west by the Blue Mountains, forms an immense cistern, necessarily absorbing all the water-courses of the district; on the east, it receives the rivers which flow from the western slope of the Mfumbiro, a mountain-chain situated in the Karagua, to the south of the States of Kamrasi. It cannot be doubted that numerous affluents come from the west also, to pour their tribute into the lake. And more, the Victoria-Nile brings to it the mighty flood of the vast internal sea in which it is supposed to rise. All the waters of Eastern Africa, therefore, converge towards the same

artery—towards the powerful river which, fed by springs so abundant, carries life and fertility over a trajet of seven to eight hundred leagues.

The sky being perfectly pure, I could easily distinguish the western shore of the lake. My guide told me that, in years past, the boats of the country could easily pass from one shore to the other; but the Albert-Nyanza broadened considerably towards the south, and the frail native skiffs became incapable of hazarding the voyage; it was therefore *here* that commerce gradually concentrated itself. The town of Mungungo, situated on the southern side of the embouchure of the Nile, is the seat of an important traffic between Kamrasi and the rich and populous country of Malegga, lying to the west of the lake. Of this country marvellous things are told. They so inflamed my imagination, that I was almost tempted to extend my explorations; but I prudently reflected that, sick and weak as I was, rest was necessary to me. And I also remembered that, in all probability, the eulogiums I heard rested on a very small substratum of fact. The towns of Malegga might well be more beautiful than the villages of Obbo, and yet not attain to the lowest level of the villages of Europe. On the eastern side, the Albert-Nyanza is bounded by Unyoro, Uganda, Utumbi, and Karagua; it then turns abruptly to the west, and bathes various countries, in reference to which I could gain no information. The same

mystery envelops it on the north-west: one of its points penetrates into regions beyond the Nile, and is prolonged to an unknown distance. A vast field, therefore, is open to those explorations in which the illustrious Livingstone proved himself so successful a pioneer.

Owing to the elevation of the coast, the air is tolerably salubrious. We should have quickly recovered from our fatigue, if we could have procured a sufficient supply of provisions; but the vicinity, being completely deserted, offered us no resource. Ouelda was still very weak; he could scarcely hold himself upright. Yet, with a wan smile, he assured me he was perfectly recovered.

CHAPTER XVI.

NEGOTIATIONS FOR PERMISSION TO ENTER UNYORO—THE PROPITIATORY
KID—AN ANTI-SCOTCH HOSPITALITY—KAMRASI—THE SMITHY—
A ROYAL MENDICANT—UGANDA INHABITED BY FEROCIOUS MON-
STERS WHICH DEVOUR MEN.

December 29th.



THE breadth of the Nile alone separates me from Magungo, where I could obtain an abundance of provisions. I ordered two of my Arabs to swim across it, and inquire for a boat. Immediately a host of natives armed with spears started up, as if by enchantment, on the opposite shore. A man in a canoe paddled towards me.

"What has brought you into this country? What common interest can there be between you and the Unyoros?"

"I bring presents for your *Kamma* (king), and only to him shall I explain the reason of my journey."

"Then send to inquire if he will be willing to receive you."

"I have not failed to do so; but my messenger has probably wandered from the road. I shall now go in person to obtain an answer."

“Kamrasi is a great prince; one is not admitted without ceremony into his presence. Wait until your messenger returns; we cannot permit you to enter our territory without the king’s authorization.”

I attempted to overcome the resistance of the natives by liberal presents, but all my efforts proved useless. Not one of them would consent even to afford me the slightest information in relation to their country.

“We are too young to know anything,” said the old men, with a smile.

“We are forbidden to speak,” cried the children, with an air of terror.

In this way two weeks passed by. My situation was very critical. How could I continue my journey if the King of Unyoro refused to allow me to cross his territories? Our provisions were exhausted, game failed, and the natives would not supply our wants. I found myself compelled to diminish the rations, at the risk of exciting a mutinous spirit among my men. The natives whom I had engaged as bearers deserted one after the other, and by so doing greatly added to my embarrassment; for I had but a small number of beasts of burden. The Unyoros had ceased even to speak to me: they allowed me, on a raft of reeds bound tightly together, to push my reconnaissance along the Victoria-Nile; but they maintained a vigilant watch on the bank of the river.

I could tarry no longer. Mikaël, I thought, must be dead, or be detained a prisoner. My sole resource was to force the passage, and avenge my faithful servant, if the king had doomed him to death. I had sixty resolute Arabs, eager for fighting. My guns were excellent; perhaps I might succeed in intimidating the natives.

Before deciding on the adoption of this extreme measure, the success of which, after all, was problematical, I made one more attempt at diplomacy. I approached the southern bank of the river, and, addressing myself to the Unyoros, I said:—

“I do not believe that Kamrasi is a great king. He is only a barbarous prince, a miserable poltroon, since, instead of receiving my messenger graciously, he treacherously detains him, and is frightened by a handful of men.”

The natives refusing to reply, I sought for arguments better fitted to convince them.

“I came as a friend. I brought rich presents for your Kamma; but I shall reserve them for others. As for him, my powder and bullets shall make him repent of his conduct; for I am determined to pass, whether he will or will not.”

This menace prevailed over the dumbness of the Unyoros. They seemed exceedingly troubled, gesticulated and conversed together in great haste. At length an old man, who was undoubtedly the chief of Magungo, implored me

to exercise a little more patience ; he assured me that Kamrasi would give me satisfaction ; for the great Kamma loved the whites, and never injured any strangers who came into his territories.

“ Ah, well, be it so. I wish your king to see that my intentions are pacific. I will remain here until the eighth sun shall have risen : if the Kamma shall not by that time have sent a proper answer to my demand, on his own head be the evils that will follow ! ”

And to give greater force to my arguments, I showed the old chief my rifles.

“ How many enemies can one of your warriors kill with his lance in a combat ? ”

“ Our braves frequently strike down five or six.”

“ These arms will carry death to a great distance, and they never miss their mark. With these, each one of us can easily kill twelve men in a minute ! ”

While the Unyoro, with a terror not free from respect, examined the marvellous engine, I drew from a chest some stuffs embroidered with gold, and some necklaces of glass beads of unusual size and brilliancy ; and I told him that all these articles would belong to the Kamma, if he treated me worthily. To be brief : the negro retired, dazzled and fascinated.

Before the allotted period expired, I remarked

an extraordinary stir on the opposite shore: a boat was launched, and rowed with all haste towards my encampment. My gratification was great when I perceived that the rower was Mikael. He brought me a formal invitation from Kamrasi: moreover, the king promised graciously to furnish me with provisions and an escort. He insisted, however, upon one condition: I was not to take with me more than twenty men. This restriction did not surprise me; for I had heard of the mistrustful character of Prince Unyoro, and the misfortunes which had followed close upon the passage of Speke and Grant through his dominions might be considered to justify his prudence. After the departure of the great English explorers, to whose courage and intelligence geographical science is so largely indebted, the slave-traders pretended to revisit the country at *their* desire; and sheltering themselves under their names, were guilty of the foulest acts of cruelty and treason. They plundered numerous villages, and carried off into slavery a crowd of women and children. Kamrasi's long delay in replying to my request was due to his anxiety to assure himself that no ivory-merchants followed in my train. It was fortunate for me, therefore, that I had parted company with Ibrahim: his presence would doubtlessly have occasioned some bloody collisions.

Kamrasi's condition or stipulation, far from being unpleasant to me, agreed with my desires.

I had undertaken to dismiss, when I reached the confines of Unyoro, the men whom Ibrahim had lent to me, and my personal escort was so reduced by desertions that it did not exceed the total fixed by the king.

That same evening I crossed the Victoria-Nile. The natives welcomed me with a deafening concert of cornets and flageolets: men furnished with torches, and armed with lances, conducted me in great pomp to the residence prepared for me in the village. The Unyoros did not resemble the rude and naked savages with whom we had fallen in since our departure from Khartoum. They were attired in robes resembling in shape the Roman tunic. The tissue was of the colour of tanned hide; it was as supple as cotton, and was velvety in the extreme. The Unyoros manufacture it out of the bark of a particular kind of fig-tree. The women wear a graceful double *jupon*, made of the same stuff; and some of them also throw across their shoulders, and over their bosom, a kind of plaid.

Magungo occupies the summit of a lofty hill, whence it dominates the whole country. I rejoiced in the splendid view it afforded of the Albert-Nyanza. A bracing air reinvigorated us, and we now enjoyed a table plentifully served; for the Unyoros, in obedience to the orders of the king, brought us every morning a supply of poultry, eggs, potatoes, curds, and butter.

Ouelda had nearly recovered his health. Youth possesses inexhaustible resources; he regained his appetite and lively disposition, and our liberal diet in due time completely cured him.

January 20th, 1869.—On this day the escort promised by Kamrasi arrived. The Unyoro monarch was desirous of giving me a great idea of his power, and sent, as much to guard me, perhaps, as to do me honour, five hundred men, under the command of one of his principal officers.

Trustful and joyous, we quitted Magungo. Our native guides sacrificed a couple of kids, as propitiatory offerings to the Spirit of the Mountains and the Woods. *Mganga*, a kind of native priest, killed the victims, and flung their limbs in the road, in the direction we designed to follow: all our men trod under foot the bleeding remains,—an indispensable precaution for him who would travel safely!

The inhabitants of the district we traversed seemed pacific and hospitable. In localities where the population was numerous, they hastened to gaze upon the white man, offered us bananas and goats, and accompanied us along the road, filling the air with noisy acclamations. But when we passed before any isolated hut the natives fled at the sight of the Unyoro escort, who broke into their habitations, and devastated them pitilessly.

A few days' march in the heart of a fertile and undulating country brought us to the Kuffo, a river whose muddy and sluggish waters flow slowly across a marshy plain. From Magungo we had followed a south-easterly course, and we now found ourselves close upon the Victoria-Nile, which, between the Albert-Nyanza and M'rouli, the capital of Unyoro, describes an arc, of which we had traversed the chord. Half an hour later the chief of the escort commanded us to halt.

"Here is the place," said he, "assigned to you by the great Kamma for your residence."

I looked curiously around me: everything was sad, gloomy, solitary; three or four wretched huts, apparently deserted, were scattered along the bank of the Kuffo.

"You do not intend me to lodge in yonder frightful cabins?"

"The *Banas* (Europeans) who preceded you in this country had no other residence."

"Is this the way in which your king displays his hospitality? Travellers like me ought to be lodged in his palace."

"You are not far away from it; but the Kamma refuses to allow you to enter M'rouli, because he knows the enchantments of which you are master. We are told that you can dry up rivers, overthrow mountains, and strike with death in a few moments a whole army."

"Add to this, that, in my country, a little

vapour suffices us to move from place to place as swiftly as the swallow flies; and we make use of the lightning to transmit our messages. But this marvellous power the white man owes to Work, and not to Magic. Were I the dangerous sorcerer you think, I should begin by sinking beneath the waters the palace of your king, to punish him for his want of hospitality.”

“Take care of yourself, I pray you. The great Kamma is powerful, and will have his revenge.”

Notwithstanding this haughty reply, the Unyoro was not so composed or well-satisfied as he professed to be. He retired, promising to inform Kamrasi of my representations; but, for the time, I was compelled to accommodate myself in the melancholy huts which, before my arrival, had been occupied by Speke, Grant, and Sir Samuel Baker and his wife. I regarded with a mournful eye the humid soil on which the illustrious travellers had lived during the long months of their enforced seclusion. I sought in every corner for some traces of their occupation. A nail, fixed near the door in a banana stalk, attracted my attention. It was placed about a yard and a half above the floor, and in such a position as to receive from the doorway a few rays of light. Here, perhaps, the devoted Lady Baker had hung the mirror before which, to the great astonishment of the savages, she combed her blonde silk hair.

Ouelda, for whom these reminiscences could

have but little attraction, looked round upon our new abode with a most dissatisfied air, and loudly expressed his disappointment.

“Kamrasi must take us for buffaloes or geese; else he would never have lodged us in the midst of a morass.”

To which Mikaël made the consolatory reply, “To be sure, he wishes us to die of fever.”

January 29th.—After repeated parleyings, the scrupulous Unyoro prince consented to grant me an audience. His palace was situated on a little promontory at the confluence of the Victoria-Nile and the Kuffo; a position which he had chosen with a view to its impregnability against the incursions of one of his brothers, the rebel Rionga, who had established his camp some leagues to the southward, on an island in the middle of the river. A village, containing about a hundred huts, extended as far as the residence of the “chief of all the kings,” as Kamrasi called himself; but I was not permitted to enter it,—possibly because they feared my mischief-working powers. The Unyoro who accompanied me conducted me by a side-path to the palace of my host.

Kamrasi was a handsome African, nearly forty-five years of age, tall, well-formed, with a countenance expressive of both thought and craftiness. According to the custom of the country, the sharp dog-teeth of his lower jaw had been

pulled out in his infancy. His forehead, large and well-made, was, like his nose, furrowed by deep scars. A tunic of tissue of bark, fitting tightly to the figure, and falling to the knees, formed his only clothing. A stool of copper, placed on a carpet of leopard-skins, served him for a throne. At his feet were gathered his principal officers, squatting on the straw that covered the ground. As for me, I did not wish to assume so servile an attitude, and I had taken care to provide myself with a folding-stool. Having saluted Kamrasi with a respectful bow, I sat down without waiting to be invited to do so.

Supporting his head on his hand, and resting his elbow on his knee, the king gazed at me silently and long. At last, with an air of suspicion, he put several questions to me as to the aim and object of my journey.

“Many *Banas* have already visited the great lakes; what interest can they possibly feel in them?”

“It is love of science that makes my countrymen so powerful and strong. We aspire to know the cause and origin of everything. We travel to the sources of rivers, because we seek to account for the phenomena of nature. Thus it is that we have become a great people,—greater than you, in the depths of your deserts, can have any idea of. But do not be afraid to extend to me a friendly hand. I will teach you our arts, and will give you a share of our riches.”

The piercing eye of Kamrasi had not ceased to regard me; but his impassible countenance gave no indication of the thoughts within. He excused himself for having kept me on the frontier; the friends of Speke and Baker had, he said, committed so many ravages upon the country that he was obliged to beware of me. Now he was sure that I had nothing in common with the slave-traders, and I might count on his desire to be useful to me.

I seized the opportunity of representing to him that the pestilential morass in which he had confined me bore a greater resemblance to a prison than to a proper lodging for a guest and friend; but he coldly passed over my complaints, and endeavoured to ascertain the value of the presents I had to offer. I had brought with me a mantle of silk, embroidered with gold; a double-barrelled gun, some copper bracelets, pearl necklaces, a good many scarfs, a telescope, &c. Two natives, creeping on their hands and knees, carried these articles to the Kamma. Having arrived before his throne, they struck the ground with their foreheads, according to the Unyoro custom; and Kamrasi gravely accepted my gifts, without displaying either pleasure or surprise. Almost immediately, he put an end to the audience; probably, as I concluded, that he might be at liberty to examine leisurely the presents I had given him.

As some sort of compensation for an unusually

short interview, he had the condescension to accompany me to the bank of the river, which I was obliged to cross in order to regain my lodging. Once embarked in my canoe, I hung out the French flag I had with me in honour of the king, and ordered the Arabs who accompanied me to fire a salvo of musketry. A covey of birds, terrified by the unaccustomed noise, rose out of the midst of the tall grasses that bordered the river; but not even a smile rose to the lips of the taciturn monarch, who once more took the road to his palace, without even bidding me good-bye.

February 4th.—Kamrasi sent me word that he intended to honour me with a visit. Consequently I decorated my hut with all the luxury within the means of a traveller. The walls were hidden by flowing draperies, and at suitable points of vantage flags and antelope-horns were arranged as trophies. I covered with a showy tartan plaid a large tin box, and, in front of this improvised throne, I spread a carpet of fur.

I had scarcely completed these preparations when a fanfare of horns announced the king's approach. He looked around him with an air of mistrust, as if he suspected a snare at every step. The outlay of imagination with which I received him apparently pleased him not; and he seated himself outside the door of the hut on some leopard-skins which his attendants had

carried with them. I pressed him to accept the seat intended for him, but he refused it. Then, on my again urging him, he answered, in short quick tones:—

“Show me what lies beneath, that I may be assured you have not concealed there one of your diabolical machines.”

“In my country such a suspicion would be an offence. I have trusted to *your* loyalty: why do you doubt *mine*?”

While speaking, I made a sign to Oueda. He turned the tin case upside down, and showed the king that it was perfectly empty. Kamrasi, somewhat ashamed of his suspicions, complied with my invitation, but remained seated for a short time only. After questioning me with assumed indifference upon various European customs, he set himself to work to examine the poor and trivial furniture of my hut: mattresses, coverlets, table-knives, mosquito-nets, albums, sauce-pans, and so on. Every article excited his covetousness, and he asked me continually for one or other as a present. Very different from the good old Katchiba, who admired everything, but wanted nothing, Kamrasi pretended to despise all he saw, and yet would fain have carried off the whole. My case of drugs particularly attracted his attention. Several of his children having died at a very early age, he longed to obtain a remedy or talisman which might prevent the recurrence of a similar misfortune. I

gave him a few harmless drugs, which he accepted with his customary royal coldness.

In spite of the churlishness of his manners, Kamrasi was not cruel. I had expected to see one of those dreadful negro despots who play with the lives of men like children with old toys: I found a prince who governed his subjects with mildness, and punished with death only the most heinous crimes. His wives, it appeared, were better treated than those of the majority of the African chiefs. He did not exact from them any work, and surrounded them with a crowd of attendants; and these attentions, if report might be trusted, they fully merited, for they had the reputation of being incomparably fair. But beauty in this country consists in the possession of enormous corpulence. The greatest belle is she who can scarcely move for fat! The coquettes of Unyoro arrive at this enviable result by gorging themselves with milk, to the exclusion of all other food.

I learned these particulars through Ouelda and Mikaël, who—thanks to their dark skin—were allowed free communication with the natives. As for myself, immured in my encampment on the river-bank,—surrounded by a vast swamp, where the rank grasses rose to a man's height, and absolutely prevented me from walking,—I led the life of a prisoner in a cell. The only village in the neighbourhood was M'rouli; but I was not permitted to enter it, except on the days

when I was admitted to an audience by the king. No one visited me, save, indeed, the messengers despatched every morning from the palace to inquire how I had passed the night. Frequently deputations from neighbouring or tributary countries brought presents to the chief of Unyoro; and on these occasions gay festivals were celebrated. The noise of the drum which set in motion the dancers' feet reached the



SORGHO GRASS.

Kuffo; but far from being admitted to these joyous receptions, I could not even witness them from a distance. My only amusements were to study insects, to watch the pluviometer, and to listen to the news retailed by Ouelda, or to the gossip of the natives attached to my person as baggage-bearers.

These men often assembled in the smithy, which, in Africa as in England, is the rendezvous of the idle and curious. The forge is situated under a shed about ten

feet in height, made of the stems of the sorgho grass. A young lad, lying on the ground, set in motion a pair of bellows, terminated by a clay nozzle, which poured out a blast of air on the burning coal. A couple of workmen, wearing only a leather girdle, hammered, smoked, and chatted at the same time. The art of working iron is not much more advanced in Unyoro than among the tribes of the north; the weapons made are decidedly inferior. Small, frail lances are set in very long handles of common wood. Bows and arrows are unknown.

On the other hand, a certain degree of industrial aptitude is shown in the pottery. The chief utensil employed by the African savage is the calabash: entire, it forms a solid jar; divided into halves, it serves for cup and basin. I saw no other vessels in use among the negroes of the White Nile. But the less barbarous Unyoros manufacture pots, and bowls, and pipes, and bottles; reminding one, by their graceful forms, of the different varieties of gourds which grow in their country. This manufacture, humble as it is, merits particular attention; for it indicates the first step of the human intellect in the glorious domain of art.

February 9th.—The unwholesome air of my swampy prison rapidly exhausted my physical energy. Nor was it long before Ouelda felt the fatal influence of the malaria: frequent attacks

of fever undermined a naturally delicate constitution, and I began to regret very keenly that I had brought him with me. I sent messenger after messenger to Kamrasi, requesting him to fix the day for my departure; but the king, while fearing me as a dangerous magician, was desirous of securing my assistance in a campaign against his enemy Rionga. To all his entreaties I replied that so powerful a prince had no need of foreign aid to triumph over a rebel; moreover, I was a man of peace. I had made it a rule never to interfere in the quarrels of the natives. Kamrasi did not acknowledge himself foiled; but, before returning to the charge, he overwhelmed me with importunities of a different kind. He had sent me cows and goats: he was astonished that *I* made *him* so few presents. He therefore invited me to gratify him with a few muskets, with which he might put to flight his brother's partisans. I replied, laughing, that he would require to learn the way in which they were used; and he dared not even touch the rifle I had already given him.

In fact, whenever Kamrasi wished the chiefs who composed his court to hear "the thunder of the white men," he always sent for Mikaël; and while my Abyssinian loaded and discharged the piece, he was very careful to station himself in his rear, and at as great a distance as possible!

At the urgent request of the king, however, I sent him another musket, with a supply of

powder and shot. He then asked me for the talisman by which I tracked my path through the wilderness and the desert. I understood that he referred to the compass, and as I had several of these instruments, I gave him one, with the necessary instructions how to make use of it.

His greediness was not yet satisfied: he wanted pearls, he wanted needles, he wanted a knife. The more I yielded to his desires, the more his covetousness increased. At last I told him ironically that I thought I was dealing with a king, and not with a beggar. This answer disconcerted him not a little, and for a whole day I was free from his solicitations; but on the morrow he sent to ask for a lead pencil with which he had seen me taking some notes. A few hours afterwards he visited my hut, and entered, as usual, upon a regular perquisition. A cake of scented rose soap attracted him by its agreeable odour. He put it to his tongue, but quickly withdrew it, making a frightful grimace.

"Is this," said he, "one of the fruits of your country?"

"No, no. We make use of it to cleanse our skin from dust and dirt."

"Ah, true; you are white,—it is a dirty colour. But," added he, complacently regarding his black hands, "it would be useless to me."

The soap thrown aside, he seized a brush, a

comb, a packet of pins, and various other trifling articles. Then he resumed his conversation upon Rionga, and endeavoured to persuade me to march with him against the rebel; but an unhesitating refusal closed his mouth.

On the following day I sent Mikaël to carry to Kamrasi rich farewell presents, for I was determined to set out without further delay.

"The Bana is in a great hurry," said the king, dryly.

He detained me another week, in the hope of extorting from me additional presents; but I had reflected that the best means of insuring my dismissal was, not to grant him the smallest trifle, but, on the contrary, to make incessant demands for fresh supplies. And it must be remembered that my failing health justified my urgency. Sometimes I complained that the cattle were too lean; sometimes I asked for poultry, or fruits, or flour. Eventually I succeeded in inspiring the king with a keen anxiety to free himself from the presence of so inconvenient a guest. He would at once have given me an escort, if I would have turned my steps northward; but I had announced my intention of visiting the Victoria-Nyanza and the sources of the Nile. Now the king of that region was engaged in perpetual hostilities against Kamrasi. The suspicious sovereign was afraid that geographical zeal might not be the true or only motive of my journey. Suppose I was

bent on leaguering myself with the enemies of Unyoro? To prevent so formidable an eventuality, he described Uganda to me in the darkest colours. A prince of atrocious barbarity was its ruler; he sported with human life, and not a day passed without his dipping his hands in the blood of numerous victims. He regarded nothing as sacred. The title and character of "guest" would not save me; for M'tessa knew no other law than his own caprice. In short, I should do well to abandon my design of visiting the Victoria-Nyanza.

I replied to Kamrasi, calmly, that if he would not give me an escort, I should start without one. With my compass I could easily find the road to Uganda; and as for the perils which awaited me there, I was resolved to brave them. The king, not daring to detain me by force, at length decided to furnish me with guides; for, by doing so, he would at all events gain information of my movements.

February 16th.—The men who accompanied me, armed with spears and shields, attired in leopard-skins, and their head ornamented with antelope-horns to preserve them from malignant enchantments, resembled a company of demons, or a troop of strolling players, rather than an escort intended to protect a peaceful traveller. They carried few, or rather no provisions; it being the king's intention that the inhabitants

we fell in with should defray the expenses of our journey. On the route the Unyoros carried off, in the king's name, either cattle, or butter and flour, or poultry, according to our needs. These exactions, however, were made but sparingly; and the villages we passed were very flourishing, and inhabited by a numerous population. We skirted vast fields of doura, sesamum, and manioc, and halted under the leafy canopy of thick groves of jujube-trees and bananas. The country, in fine, offered a pleasing spectacle of prosperity.

But a vexatious incident retarded my progress: my native escort deserted *en masse*. The chief had heard that the news of my arrival having reached Uganda, the king of that country had sent messengers to invite me to visit him. So far, nothing could be better. I was delighted to hear of the favourable intentions of the terrible M'tessa; but his name proved enough to throw the Unyoros into a panic of terror, and my guides, fearing an encounter with the Ugandas, had bravely taken flight. Great was my perplexity. In spite of the haughty tone I had assumed in my dealings with Kamrasi, I was unable to dispense conveniently with the assistance of the natives. The escort, however, showed very little inclination to oblige; they would march only in the very hottest hours of the day; they made me pay dearly in bracelets and glass beads for the provisions which they "requisitioned" on



THE BANANA TREE.

the road; but, after all, they carried my baggage, and they protected me. Reduced to my own small company, I found myself in a position of extreme embarrassment. It was true I could rely on the fidelity of my Arabs. My firmness, joined to kind treatment, had completely disciplined them; you would never have recognized in them the mutineers of Gondokoro. Unfortunately, there were but fifteen.

The sight of the pearl necklaces, which I promised to the men who would engage to act as porters, proved all-powerful with the inhabitants of a neighbouring village.

From stage to stage I continued to drag myself along, melancholy, languid, and with no better provision for my dinner than some grains of *tullaboun*, a small cereal of a very unpleasant, bitter taste.

But on approaching the frontier, I met the envoys of M'tessa. The rumours which had terrified the Unyoros were not unfounded; and when I saw the number and bearing of the Ugandas, I could make some allowance for the panic of my guides.

"It is well," exclaimed the officer in command of the troop, after examining me with a critical eye; "long beard, smooth hair, white skin, narrow garments,—you are the brother of Speke and Grant!"

Things being put on this footing, we soon became well acquainted. The two eminent Eng-

lish travellers had left behind them in Uganda such sympathetic souvenirs, and had secured such an influence over the minds of the inhabitants, that every European was sure of receiving a hospitable welcome. The native from whom I gathered these particulars was named Maribou. Intrusted with the privilege of escorting Captain Grant, he had had frequent relations with the illustrious explorers.

"Do you possess, as they did," he said to me, "the power of making thunder and lightning at a distance, of restoring health, and of bringing to the very end of your talismans the remotest objects, so that one can examine them with ease?"

"Certainly. Stop, now; look yonder. Do you see a grayish cloud?"

"Yes; it must be a mountain."

"Very well. Now, place your eye here," said I, handing a telescope to the native officer; "can you distinguish nothing more?"

"Wonder of wonders! One would say the hill was within reach of one's hand. I can see a clump of trees, a brook, several huts, a herd of cows."

"I could show you things far more surprising if you visited my country."

While conversing on the arts and sciences of Europe, we reached the neighbouring village. The natives had taken flight at our approach,

and Maribou installed himself in it as in a conquered province. The Uganda districts which we afterwards traversed on our way to the king were not treated with more lenity. As in Unyoro, the inhabitants were ordered to furnish us with the necessary provisions; but they did not always conform to their prince's instructions, and preferred to abandon their habitations rather than expose themselves to the violence of the subjects of M'tessa. I found it a painful spectacle to observe the exactions and thefts committed by the escort. On this subject I addressed a few observations to Maribou; but he laughingly replied, that the natives were at liberty to retreat with all they had to the summits of the mountains. At the same time, all of them did not take things quite so quietly. One day our men came to me in a great state of excitement; the inhabitants of a neighbouring village had taken up arms and were threatening to oppose my advance, because, the night before, a child and two young girls had been captured in order to extort a ransom. Maribou came to me in much embarrassment, and begged of me to dismiss the rabble.

"A single shot from your gun will suffice to disperse them."

"Not so. Give up the prisoners first, and we will see about that afterwards."

"But that would only reassure the rebels!"

"Then give me your word and pledge your

honour that as soon as the crowd has been dispersed you will set the captives free."

This arrangement concluded, I filled my gun with powder, and fired. The report produced a magical effect. The horror-stricken natives fled in disorder to their villages; never was flock of pigeons more scared than they were. Maribou laughed till he cried, and then observing that no wounded remained on the ground,—

"Then your guns don't kill," he cried with an air of disappointment.

"They would have done so, had I so desired; but I was satisfied with giving the poor wretches a fright."

Meanwhile, we approached the *kibouga* or royal residence, and I could not fail to notice the absence of any signs of disorder: acts of violence being severely punished, if committed within a range of six leagues round the palace. Herds of cattle and flocks of goats were feeding quite peacefully by the side of the road; not one of the escort dared to lay his hand on them, although provisions were very scarce indeed: but then, the inhabitants of this district constituted the aristocracy of Uganda, and were in the enjoyment of peculiar immunities.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE KIBOUGA.—POMPOUS RECEPTION—MEMORIALS OF SPEKE AND GRANT—SANGUINARY CAPRICES OF A DESPOT—M'TESSA'S SIMPLE PRIDE—HIS OPINION UPON MARRIAGE—VISIT TO THE QUEEN-MOTHER—MEDICAL CONSULTATION—THE SOURCES OF THE NILE AND THE VICTORIA-NYANZA—FAREWELL SCENE.

February 22nd.



THE palace of M'tessa, situated on a hill, is visible from a great distance, and dominates majestically over the surrounding landscape. It consists of a group of spacious huts which serve as the residence of the king's officers, his wives, and his mother. The "profane vulgar" are not permitted to enter the apartments consecrated by the presence of the king. I had indulged myself in the proud hope that I should be at once admitted; but Maribou, assuring me that etiquette would not allow this, suggested that I should first make known my arrival by a volley of musketry, and then remain patiently in the hut prepared for me at the foot of the hill, until it should please M'tessa to receive me.

The Uganda monarch proved to be a very

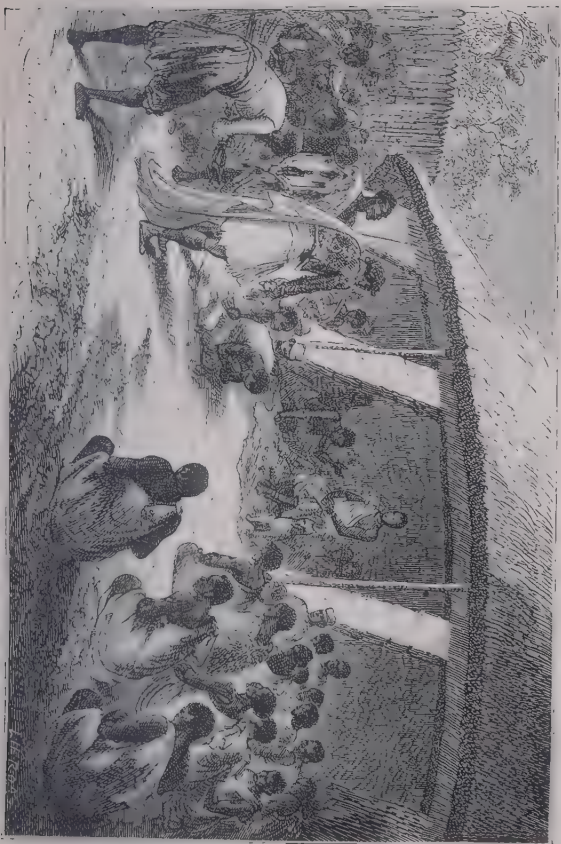
good fellow, and did not unnecessarily prolong the delay. Next morning half-a-dozen little negroes, the pages of his African majesty, announced to me that their master would give me an audience in the afternoon. I put on a rich Albanian costume, broidered with gold; for my Parisian attire looked absurdly out of place amongst the mantles of antelope-skins and the long flowing tunics of my savage friends. At the hour indicated, I set out in great pomp for M'tessa's palace. The tricolor waved before me; Maribou and some other officers walked by my side; and behind me marched my fifteen Arabs, clad in tunics of red wool, and carrying presents to the king in the shape of precious glass trinkets, stuffs, arms, powder, balls, bronze candelabra, packets of wax-tapers, boxes of matches, and books of engravings.

The outside door of the palace turned loudly on its hinges, striking against a bell placed above the lintel, and I passed under a cord to which several talismans were suspended. A wide and open court gave entrance to a spacious hut, surmounted by a lofty roof; this was the audience chamber, where a numerous body of Africans, bareheaded, and clothed in antelope-skins, were squatting in a circle, with their faces turned towards the entrance of the hut, at the end of which was seated his savage majesty. Signs were made to me to arrest my footsteps. At the end of a few minutes, the courtiers passed through

a door which had just been opened. I was about to follow, when it was closed by a sentry, and I remained outside, in the full rays of the sun. When all the preliminaries prescribed by ceremony were at last got through, I was introduced to the king, and placed my footstool in front of the bank which served him for a throne.

M'tessa was a fine young man, tall, well-made, and lively in manner; his very prominent eyes denoted the possession of intelligence; his woolly hair, carefully arranged, rose above his head in a sort of tuft; his tunic of finely-woven bark was gathered up on the right shoulder, whence it fell over the body in the most artistic folds. The trinkets that adorned his arms and neck displayed his excellent taste in the choice of colours. From time to time a young girl at his side presented him with a cup full of banana wine. After having drunk of it, he wiped his mouth with a napkin. The *kamaraviona* or commander-in-chief, the only man who was allowed to sit in his presence, crouched at his feet: on the left were his sisters and some women, who regarded me with great curiosity, exchanging observations with one another in a low tone of voice.

I longed to engage in the conversation; but I knew nothing of the language of the country, and none of my interpreters dared speak to the king except in reply to a question. In this way half an hour passed. The courtiers, kneeling



MY RECEPTION BY M'LESSA.

around M'tessa, with their nose glued to the earth,—and even my own Arabs bent double, and with eyes cast down,—presented the most grotesque spectacle imaginable. When the king thought I had been sufficiently impressed, he called forward Maribou, and demanded from him an account of the manner in which he had discharged his mission. The officer began by relating with much emphasis the details of our first interview in Unyoro. The assembly listened in the midst of the profoundest silence. Suddenly it was interrupted: Maulah, the chief of the police of the palace, had detected an infraction of etiquette; a man had been guilty—crime unpardonable, and worthy of death!—of murmuring, or whispering, a few words. The unfortunate culprit was immediately arrested, and dragged out of the hall. The look of anguish which he threw upon the assistants was painful to see; but no one ventured to intercede in his favour, and Maulah soon returned alone, his face glowing with satisfaction, as if he had accomplished a glorious exploit. This incident appeared to have no effect on the spectators. The roll of the drum, and the clash of rude musical instruments, drowned the lamentations of the condemned, and were continued for a considerable time, undoubtedly to charm the ears of the courtiers admitted to the king's levee.

It was evident, then, that Kamrasi had ex-

aggerated nothing; the young prince, notwithstanding his smiling and amiable mien, was a sanguinary despot. I had fallen into the claws of a ferocious beast, who might murder me without thought or remorse; but even the most ferocious beasts cannot but submit to the fascination which the intelligence and strong will of the tamer exercise upon them. On my perfect coolness, and on the manner in which I could make this savage feel my moral superiority, my safety depended.

Soon afterwards M'tessa rose, and engaged in a truly original exercise: he traversed the "hall," walking, like a ballet-dancer, on his great toe, and swaying himself alternately to the right and the left in a way which he imagined to be majestic, and to recall the gait and bearing of the lion, but which excited in me a very strong inclination to laugh, since it reminded me of the amusing strut of chanticleer in a poultry-yard. In this fashion he gained an inner chamber, the door of which was opened and shut by men who watched all his movements with a timorous eye. Their lives depended on the caprices of the master, and the slightest error might be punished by death.

The formalities of my reception, however, were not yet ended. The young king, a great amateur of theatrical effects, was anxious to exhibit before me all the splendours of his court. I was conducted to another hut, larger than the

first one, where I found M'tessa leaning against the porch, in an evidently studied attitude. Close beside him, two hundred women were crouching on the ground; no men were present, except the interpreters. My seat was placed at about four and twenty yards from the throne; that is, in the open air. As I was by no means inclined to risk a *coup de soleil*, I coolly put on my hat, and opened my umbrella; an unusual piece of impudence, which, fortunately, excited the hilarity of the prince. After having conversed for some time with his favourites, it occurred to him that, notwithstanding the precautions I had taken to protect myself from the heat, my position might not be exactly comfortable. He therefore ordered my seat to be removed into the shade, close to the throne, and a lively conversation took place between us. He requested me to let him see my uncovered head: the women, with much curiosity, stroked and handled my hair, and broke out into loud laughter; an excess of gaiety in which I joined most heartily, happy to escape from the overpowering weariness of the ceremonial.

"What guns have you brought me?" inquired M'tessa, whose scrutinizing eye had been more than once directed towards the presents with which my men were loaded. "My brothers, Speke and Grant, gave me several; but I can do nothing with them for want of powder and shot."

I seized the opportunity to compliment the king on the skill with which he handled our European weapons. I had heard of his reputation as a skilful marksman, and had consequently provided myself with rifles of the newest make and greatest power.

M'tessa seemed delighted with my panegyric; a smile of pride curled his lips.

"Yes, my brothers the Banas taught me how to make use of the rifle; we brought down together a great quantity of game."

Thereupon the king began to speak with great warmth and sincerity of his friendship for Speke, and of their frequent and interesting interviews.

"Why did he not return with you?" he added.

"Alas! you will never see him again. He is dead!"

"Dead!" cried M'tessa; "and how? Assassinated, perhaps, by the Unyoros or the Madis? Oh, I will avenge him!"

"Accuse nobody. Speke arrived safely in England: he died in the midst of his own friends; it was his own gun which killed him, during a merry hunting-party."

Profound grief was depicted on the young king's countenance; tears sprang to his eyes. This unexpected outburst of sensibility filled me with emotion. I related to M'tessa all the details of the melancholy event which deprived

science of one of its most illustrious representatives. The king listened sadly, and with his head bent down; at intervals an expression of sorrow escaped him. His wives had interrupted their blithe chattering, and in silence seemed to share the pain and regret of their master.

The sun was on the point of sinking below the horizon. M'tessa put an end to our interview: he retired, and left me at liberty to reflect on the strange incidents of the day. Just as I was crossing the threshold of the palace, the cries of a woman made me shudder. A negress, nearly naked, was being dragged, by a rope fastened round her wrist, towards a hut situated at the foot of the hill.

"Yonder," said Maribou, in a low voice, "yonder is the place of execution."

The unfortunate victim, who had scarcely grown out of her childhood, was struggling in the hands of the executioner, and repeating, in the accents of despair:

"*N'yawoh ! n'yawoh !*" — My mother ! my mother !

Another female, bound in the same manner, followed her slowly, but uttered no complaint. A shudder of horror thrilled through every limb: perhaps I had been, involuntarily, the cause of this act of barbarity. Strange contradictions of the human heart ! How could the prince who had just conversed with me so

familiarly, who had shown himself so susceptible to affectionate impulses, decree the death of these poor unfortunates ?

February 26th.—The executions which took place daily shed a deep gloom over my residence in Uganda. The chief of the executioners dwelt near my hut, and frequently I could hear the cries of his victims. I could even distinguish the blows of the stick which bruised and mutilated their limbs. One day, impelled by curiosity, I followed a poor woman whom one of the executioners, his head half concealed by a thick fringe which gave him a sinister aspect, led to the place of death. She was not eighteen years old ; and though her features bore the impress of the negro type, she was really pretty, with her large, tender, and patient eyes, her graceful figure, and her small and well-shaped hands and feet. What had this charming creature done to merit death ? She had had the audacity to offer some fruit to M'tessa, and was doomed to pay with her life the penalty of her familiarity. The rope which bound her wrists sufficiently indicated the doom which awaited her. She was the fourth who, in one morning, had passed into Maulah's accursed residence. A few moments elapsed. The noise was audible ; I saw not a solitary individual. Only, a large vulture planted himself on the trunk of a broken tree ; while others hovered in the air, staring

downwards with greedy gaze. I knew enough; and silently retired to my hut.

In obedience to a fresh summons from the king, I repaired on the following day to his palace, in spite of a heavy rain. The kamara-viona was not the less obstinate in compelling me to wait in the open vestibule, until his majesty condescended to give orders for my admission to his presence. Some musicians, wet to the skin, beguiled my weariness by a concert of "sweet sounds," which at length grew so insupportable, that I threatened instantly to retire if they were not discontinued. Personages like myself, I said, could not permit so much discourtesy; and I had already shown too great a condescension by answering in such weather the royal invitation! The kamaraviona threw himself at my feet; Maribou supplicated me to have patience: the king would be furious if I went away without seeing him. I refused to hear a word, and imperiously ordered the Uganda officers to open the palace gates, which they had carefully shut upon me. Heaven knows how this ridiculous scene would have ended, had not M'tessa, who from his chamber could hear my indignant complaints, announced his readiness to receive me.

On this occasion he was surrounded by only five or six women, and by the few courtiers who composed his private circle. On his knees lay

open one of the albums I had given him ; it included some good photographs of the principal sovereigns of Europe, renowned diplomatists, and the beauties of the fashionable world. A portrait of the ex-Emperor of the French, then in the plenitude of his power, caught his eye ; and he asked me, with an amusing air of self-satisfaction, if the Emperor had palaces as large, and servants as numerous, as he had. In reply, I showed the king some views of the Louvre and Fontainebleau ; then, when each courtier in his turn had examined them, I entered upon a description of their glories in a style outrivalling that of the "Thousand and One Nights."

"Since he possesses such splendid mansions, his people must be very obedient, and pay him immense tributes : but, perhaps, he cannot draw up so many men in battle-array as I can ?"

"Do not speak of the obedience of his subjects," said I, laughing. "As for the French army, imagine the inhabitants of a hundred countries like Uganda equipped with fire-arms, and you will then form but a very imperfect idea of it."

But M'tessa would listen to no more. His self-love was wounded, and he sought to change the subject of conversation. He examined a photograph of the Empress Eugénie, whom he pronounced very beautiful ; "only," he added, "it is a pity she is white." Then he asked me whether it was true that in my country every

man was content with a single wife. On my replying in the affirmative, he and his favourites indulged in a fit of laughter.

"I can understand it," said M'tessa, endeavouring to recover his gravity, "when your wife is young and pretty; but what do you do when she grows old and ugly?"

"Our women are never ugly, and time does but increase our affection for the partner of our joys and sorrows."

A murmur of incredulity greeted my words.

"But are there really *none* among you who wed more wives than one?"

"He who acted in a manner so contrary to our religion and our laws would be punished severely."

"That is absurd!" cried the king, with African bluntness.

Having thus royally closed the discussion, he presented me with a chronometer, a gift from Speke, his much-lamented brother.

"The instrument is dead," he observed; "undoubtedly it was unwilling to survive the Bana."

Not altogether satisfied with this explanation, I asked M'tessa if he had not handled too roughly the interior of the frail *bijou*, and he confessed that he had attempted to explain its mechanism to his wives; then, with all kinds of flattering circumlocutions, he gave me to understand that I should confer upon him an extreme pleasure

by the gift of another watch. As it had not occurred to me to bring any articles of that kind, —too delicate not to run a great risk in the inexperienced hands of savages,—I found myself somewhat embarrassed. For my own use I carried a chronometer of great accuracy, but I was by no means desirous of getting rid of it. I therefore insinuated that a watch was a scientific instrument, of much utility to travellers, but worthless to a king like him, who could regulate the hours according to his good pleasure, and not suffer himself to be the slave of time. Arms were objects far worthier of his courage: those which I had presented to him, needle-guns, attracted, at that moment, the personal attention of all the sovereigns of Europe. I am surprised that he did not ask me to explain how they were loaded, for he could not have known.

M'tessa's vanity was agreeably tickled by this prudent speech, yet a gloom overshadowed his countenance.

"What! do you dare, then, to make use of the terrible weapon which killed my brother Speke?"

"Does not fire sometimes burn down your huts? Yet you do not leave off making use of it."

"Well answered, Bana. In two days' time come to the palace; I will give notice to my hunters, and we will organize a hunting party."

On returning to my hut I found a dozen cows,

a whole regiment of fowls, some banana wine, and a quantity of fruit, sent in my absence by the king, who made it a point of honour to display the greatest generosity. These provisions arrived very opportunely after all the privations we had endured in Kamrasi's territories. There was no longer among us any apprehension of fever: Ouelda himself had recovered his indisposition: he conversed with M'tessa's pages in the language of the country, and grew in great favour with his new companions, to whom he taught a thousand mischievous tricks unheard of in Uganda. Maribou, whom they had chosen for their butt, was astonished at the mishaps which befell him daily: sometimes a dog darted between his legs, and brought him suddenly to the ground; sometimes the branch of a tree would snap exactly over his head, and overturn the magnificent head-gear of the grave and dignified personage, who picked up piteously, here his crown made of the stems of glycinas, there his wild boars' tusks, here his talismanic wands, and there the beads which ornamented his straggling locks.

The projected chase met with the most surprising success. Two vultures, which I had killed while on the wing, at a great height, fell at the king's feet. The crowd of courtiers were seized with a positive vertigo of enthusiasm; their cries, and shouts, and exclamations almost deafened me. M'tessa, naturally brave, quickly

forgot the involuntary terror which my guns had momentarily caused him; he burned to participate in my exploits. Half a league further his penetrating eye discovered a herd of antelopes which had not yet taken alarm. We approached noiselessly. I assisted the prince in taking aim: the shot struck full in the breast one of the finest males. Imagine to yourself, if you can, the king's triumph! Intoxicated with joy, he embraced me, he called me his well-beloved brother. It was a marvel that he did not indulge in gambols as eccentric as those of the aged Katchiba! His sense of dignity, however, acted as a restraint, and he contented himself with throwing a glance of haughty satisfaction on his officers, who filled the air with loud shouts of victory.

March 1st.—The *N'yamasora*, or queen-mother, expressed a desire to see the white man. This princess enjoyed much consideration in Uganda, and her influence was only surpassed by that of M'tessa himself. She lived in her own palace, situated about a quarter of a mile from her son's kibouga, built on the same model, but of smaller dimensions. You reach it by a side road, for it would be highly improper to pass before the king's residence without going in to pay him homage.

In order to treat the dowager with all the respect and ceremony due to her position, I was

escorted to her by my Arabs, who were in full uniform; that is to say, they were enveloped in their red cloaks, and carried, besides my presents, some gourds of pombé, some reeds for sucking up liquor, parasols, and the cushion of grass, or, to speak more exactly, the truss of hay, which served me for a seat; for my folding-stool had excited so much admiration that I was compelled to give it up. A discharge of musketry formally announced my arrival; but the queen did not seem to be at all moved by it, or perhaps she fancied she was displaying her dignity in making me wait. After two weary hours I was at length admitted, and advanced, my head uncovered, with one of those compliments upon my lips to which a woman always listens with delight, even though she be old and a negress ten times over. A loud burst of laughter stopped me in the middle of my opening sentence. The queen had seen my hair, and was pointing it out to her women. The circumstance seemed to put her in the best of tempers, and she made me sit down beside her,—an act of condescension on the part of royalty of which I ought to have been very proud; for her brother was compelled by etiquette to stand at such a distance from her that he was obliged to shout at the top of his voice in order to make himself heard!

The old princess had her head completely cropped, and her head-dress consisted only of a simple turban. She was short, and very like a

Tartar woman. We became engaged in a very lively conversation, and whilst talking with me, she caressed a plaything in the form of a hedgehog covered with cowries and with pearls, and took little sips of wine, and looked at herself in the glass, and stopped from time to time to give some orders to her slaves. Bananas symmetrically arranged and osier baskets full of boiled beef were brought to me as presents from her; and an officer, whose business it was to taste the viands, tore some pieces with his teeth, according to the Uganda etiquette.

I had taken care to provide myself with my box of medicines, for I was informed that the queen had been complaining of frequent stomachic disorders. I questioned her as to the symptoms of the disease, and begged her to let me see her tongue and feel her pulse; but the officers who were present would not allow this. No one, said they, could thus approach the sacred person of the queen. M'tessa would not permit it.

"Be silent," interrupted the N'yamasora, shrugging her shoulders; "I am of an age to know what is lawful to be done."

Without a moment's delay she resolutely extended her arm, and opened her really frightful mouth, into which, as a reward for her docility, I put two small pills, promising her a speedy cure.

Just as I was leaving the palace, enchanted with the good humour and simplicity of the

princess, I met some natives coming out of the royal kibouga, and asked them if M'tessa continued to use the guns I had given him.

"He has just come home from hunting," replied the men; "but as there was no sport, he has been consoling himself by beating a man or two."

His conduct evidently seemed to them the most natural thing in the world.

Maribou assured me that the king was obliged, by national custom, to behave in this way; for if he showed any tender carefulness for the lives of his subjects, his authority would no longer be respected. Besides, the Ugandas regard it as more glorious to perish by the hand or order of their master than to succumb quietly and slowly under the weight of sickness or old age. As I thought differently from them, and had acquired a certain amount of influence over the young despot, I sometimes interposed to save the lives of the unfortunate victims who were condemned to death. The very courtiers would put themselves under my protection when they were afraid they had incurred M'tessa's displeasure. The favour I enjoyed excited, however, a large amount of jealousy amongst the natives, who could not endure that I should enter unchecked into their master's palace at all hours of the day, while they were frequently compelled to wait whole months.

"Are you a king," they spitefully inquired of

me, "that you should insist upon being always received at the palace?"

The kibouga was situated nearly a dozen leagues to the west of the place where the Nile leaves the immense lake called by Speke the Victoria-Nyanza, after the Queen of England. When I had reached the cradle of the great river, the object of my journey would be completely attained. I should but have to gain the coast of Zanzibar, where I should find a vessel to take me back to Europe.

March 15th.—After repeated applications, I obtained guides from M'tessa; but he made me promise to return to his palace after having finished the excursion I meditated to the source of the Nile. I was to reach the Inland Sea by following the western bank of the river instead of the eastern bank, as I had intended; a change of route which the prince assured me would facilitate my journey considerably, because I should cross the territory of princes in alliance with Uganda, from whom I should be certain of a friendly welcome.

A rapid journey through the malignant swamps and across the barren hills which intersect the country, brought me in three days' time to the Ripon Falls. The Nile, bounding through a double line of precipitous rocks, rushes from the Victoria-Nyanza to commence the gigantic course which carries it to the Mediterranean. Majestic

at its very birth, it rolls its tumultuous waters in a channel from four to five hundred feet in breadth. A small elevation still concealed from our view the lake; but on advancing we discovered an inner sea, which yields only to the Albert-Nyanza in extent and magnificence. It is not so long, but it is much broader. The Creator seems to have impressed upon it the seal of his immensity. The superficial area of the Victoria is not less than three thousand square leagues. Its shores are indented by admirable bays, formed by wooded promontories which stretch far out into the waters, and throw off, as it were, the most picturesque islands imaginable. Near the margin, which is fringed thickly with the papyrus reed, the hoarse roar of the hippopotami might be plainly heard; and a flotilla of boats had brought thither a crowd of fishermen, who, line in hand, occupied every point of vantage along the rocks. Further to the east the vast silvery basin was contracted into a comparatively narrow canal, which opened, we were told, into another lake. Elevated about 3740 feet above the sea-level, the Victoria-Nyanza empties its tribute into the Albert, which is of inferior altitude. The currents feeding the two inland seas have therefore the same general destination—all converge towards the Nile.

Thus the problem, discussed with so much interest for ten centuries, was at length resolved. Modern science, through the enterprise and

THE VICTORIA-NYANZA.



patient courage of Speke, and Grant, and Baker, had raised, at least to a considerable extent, the veil which concealed the mysterious origin of the Egyptian river. What was thus completed would seem to have been commenced by apostolic devotion. The library of the Propaganda at Rome contains a map of Africa, laid down in the sixteenth century by some Roman Catholic missionaries. Whether they obtained their information from the natives, or whether they themselves penetrated as far as the Victoria and the Albert Nyanza, it is certain that they represent the Nile to issue from two great lakes situated south of the equator. Their observations, however, did not attract attention ; and for three centuries it was pretended that the Mountains of the Moon gave birth to the great river.

My exploration and examination of the Ripon Falls occupied me about a week.

On my return to the kibouga, I found the whole court abandoning itself to revelry. It was the time of new moon, and M'tessa had gone forth in royal pomp to examine the horns filled with talismans, which are the idols of the country. This ceremony comprises nearly the entire religious worship of the Ugandas ; so far, at least, as I, a stranger, could ascertain. The natives have the idea of an All-powerful Being, whom they call *Loubari* ; they have even consecrated to him a district situated near the sources of the Nile. But I never saw them, at any time

or in any place, render homage to this Supreme God; while they exhibit a profound veneration for the magic horns, to which they attribute a capability of warding off every evil, and revealing the future.

To the title of king, M'tessa joined that of pontiff or augur. I do not think, however, that he had in him the stuff which makes a skilful diviner: his brain was too capricious and unsteady, and he loved pleasure too passionately, to apply himself to magical studies.

After duly inspecting the talismans, he summoned me to the palace, that I might be present at the reception of several young girls intended to augment his harem. The kamaraviona introduced me into the hut where these new wives were assembled. Their limbs shining with oil, their hair adorned with garlands, and their neck with collars of pearls, each held in her hand a scarf, which she waved above her head. M'tessa passed them silently in review, his face unilluminated by a solitary smile; then he bade them wheel to the right, and march. Afterwards he seated himself, according to custom, on the knees of the aged matron who had presented the young girls, dismissed everybody except the interpreters, and entered into conversation with me upon various subjects. One hundred and thirty women had been captured a few days before: the oldest were destined to agricultural labour; the others belonged to the king, or

were distributed among the officers of his court.

To show me how far advanced I was in his good graces, M'tessa offered to give me for wives a score of these captives, selected from among the most beautiful. The queen-mother had already expressed a desire to marry me to two of her daughters; and my dusky *fiancées* still remembered with rancour the *spretæ injuria formæ*—the refusal I had given to this flattering proposition. I reminded the king of the usages of my country, which did not permit me to accept the compromising gift he pressed upon me. If he really wished to exhibit his royal benevolence, he could not gratify me more than by furnishing me with the means of returning to my own land.

This answer was not to the taste of my royal host, who had formed for me a friendship so sincere that he could not endure the idea of my departure.

"What are you in want of?" he said, after a few moments' consideration. "You have only to speak, and your lightest desires shall be gratified. If you will wed but one woman, choose among my sisters the one who pleases you most. You shall rank second to me in my kingdom; you shall have land, cattle, servants. But stay with us, and teach us some of the arts of Europe."

And some theorists pretend, I said to myself, that the savages reject civilization ! If they are sometimes or in some places afraid of it, is it not the fault of those who present it before their eyes, accompanied by violence, cruelty, and injustice ?

Not feeling in myself, however, the desire or capability to undertake a missionary's duties, I persisted in my resolution. I yearned to see my country, my family, my home, my friends. M'tessa promised to permit my departure, but advised me to wait a little longer, as it was the season when the rains are most abundant in Karagwé—the country lying to the south of Uganda. I should be unable to travel any distance without being brought to a stop by the floods ; it would be wiser, therefore, not to start. Under the equator, as in Uganda, the seasons have no special characteristics : storms and deluges maintain an extraordinary amount of humidity throughout the year ; but as we advance towards the tropics, we find the rains falling at regular seasons, and nearly always they follow in the sun's path. I had hoped they would not be heavy enough to delay my departure ; and it was therefore with very little patience I submitted to this additional delay.

But at last, on the 19th of April, M'tessa consented to bid me farewell. In return for the hospitality he had shown since I had entered his dominions, I presented him with, among

other gifts, the chronometer he had so eagerly desired. I parted from him, I confess, with mixed emotions. His barbarity had often revolted me ; yet I could not but admire his loyalty and his courage. Europe has had many worse princes than the African, M'tessa.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TROUBLESOME ROADS — DISEASE — ROUMANIKA'S HOSPITABLE WELCOME—THE DIMENSIONS OF A QUEEN—A RECIPE FOR BEAUTY—FEAST OF THE NEW MOON—THE WAHUMAS AND THE WANYAMBOS —A FATAL PLEASURE-PARTY.



THE principal centres of population in Uganda are connected with one another by well-kept roads,—the first which I had seen since I left Nubia. But as the country is very mountainous, they are so steep that it is difficult to climb them; for the natives never divert the line of a road in order to avoid an acclivity. In some places an attempt has been made to construct viaducts; but these rude erections are now in a state of deplorable dilapidation, and it would be dangerous to traverse them. The huts of the Ugandas are much superior to those which are met with in the neighbouring countries; they are loftier, and better built. The roof consists of a double ceiling; the sides are carefully wrought, and look very white and clean. They are supported by a great number of posts, to which the resi-

dent suspends his bags of corn, his dried fish, and his stock of meat. The interior is divided into several apartments by partitions made of banana-leaves.

The orders of the king assured us everywhere of an abundance of provisions; but they could not modify the face of the country, or prevent its hills and dales from seriously trying the limbs and strength of the travellers. To climb mountains is a painful exercise; and when one must also cross vast morasses, where in the mud and slime one sinks up to the knee, and where one is devoured by myriads of mosquitoes, weariness attains a climax. Let the reader figure to himself a valley about one mile in breadth, covered with papyrus and gigantic reeds: a narrow, winding path creeps through this jungle, but the hard and sharp roots remain under water. I was compelled to walk barefooted, for my swollen ankles could not bear the pressure of boots; and the tears rose to my eyes, so terribly did those odious roots lacerate my flesh.

But I was diverted from my own sufferings by thinking of Oueda's. The unwholesome air of the swamps brought back his fever. He dragged himself along by Mikael's side, more like a spectre than a living being. We were very near the Victoria-Nyanza—its western shore, in truth, we had been skirting for several days—and I had hoped we should gain by water

our next stage, the kingdom of Karagwé. No boat, however, had been sent for our accommodation, and, to my great regret, I was compelled



THE TRAVELLER ON HIS LITTER.

to proceed by land. I soon found myself utterly incapable of walking. I stretched myself on a litter; Ouelda was conveyed in the same way. But the roads were rough, precipitous, marshy.

The bearers ran quickly, clinging to the branches to assist them up the inclines, and shaking without pity our tortured limbs.

In this way we reached the borders of the lake. The vivifying air of the Victoria somewhat relieved my pain. I contemplated with subdued joy the magnificent scenes around me: the mountains, the plains, and, above all, that magical expanse of water, sometimes calm as the sapphire heaven, sometimes flashing and coruscating in the sun's tropical fires. I would fain have followed it up as far as its southern shore, but the palace of the King of Karagwé was situated about twenty leagues to the west. I could not pass through the territories of this prince without paying him my homage. A river, of the importance of which men spoke loudly, bounds Uganda on the south. At first sight, however, it appears a very ordinary stream. Its bed of white sand is enclosed between a double range of cliffs from 150 feet to 180 feet in height, covered with such an abundant vegetation of papyrus that the river itself is scarcely visible; but on drawing nearer one is struck by its majestic aspect. It is the largest feeder of the Victoria-Nyanza, to which it conveys the tribute of Lakes Karagwé, Kagera, Kisaka, and innumerable water-courses.

April 28th. — My Uganda escort quitted me at the frontier, and I was attended by natives

of Karagwé sent for the purpose by King Roumanika. I was struck by the peace and good order which reigned in the country; there was no violence, no pillage. A simple requisition was sufficient to procure from the willing inhabitants ample supplies of provisions; Roumanika having given orders that the guest of his ally M'tessa should everywhere receive the most hospitable welcome. At a league from the palace a Karagwéan officer met me to inquire, in the king's name, where I would wish to fix my residence, to the end that he might prepare a suitable house. This act of courtesy, so rare in Africa, led me to augur marvels of the comfort awaiting me. I replied, with a courtesy not less marked, that my only desire was to see the illustrious Roumanika, and that I left to him the choice of my habitation.

That same evening the king, in his impatience to show me his good-will, granted me an interview in the "audience-chamber." I found him a frank and intelligent prince, tall in stature, and of extraordinary strength. His fine features had a pleasant and manly expression. There was nothing about him to remind you of his negro blood, except the thick curly wool which covered his head. His profile was well marked, his countenance oval, his eyes were large. He wore an Arab mantle and a tuic of woven bark. His arms and legs were adorned with bracelets of brass and porcelain beads. This shepherd-

king—for the principal wealth of his subjects lies in their flocks—held, instead of sceptre, a long staff or wand resembling a crook. He had four sons, aged from twenty to five-and-twenty—tall, vigorous youths, remarkable for their dignified bearing and the extreme neatness of their costume.

After a thoroughly European grasp of the hands, Roumanika opened the conversation by asking me what I thought of Karagwé.

“Is there any other land so favoured by Heaven, which possesses such glorious mountains, and a sea like the Victoria-Nyanza?”

“Assuredly there is no other country in Africa which can bear comparison with your country; but what moves me most,” said I, bowing, “is the wisdom and grandeur of its sovereign, the comeliness, gentleness, and intelligence of its people.”

To this compliment the king replied with a smile; then he questioned me about France. His interrogations, as well as the manner in which he listened to my answers, showed a quick and open mind. I think we were mutually delighted, for our conversation was protracted much beyond the usual limits, without our noticing the flight of time.

The customs and manners of Karagwé differ completely from those of Uganda. Instead of possessing, like M'tessa, several hundreds of wives, human cattle doomed to death on the

slightest pretext, Roumanika had but five, and they enjoyed all the respect and attention due to their rank. On the following day I had the honour to be presented to these princesses. The king had warmly eulogized their charms, and never before, I confess, had I seen such phenomena. Their face, loaded with fat, was something monstrous, of which I find it impossible to convey any idea; there was no neck; the bosom and shoulders surpassed the dreams of the most fantastic imagination.

Abashed by such a luxury of *embonpoint*, I regarded with stupefaction these prodigious beauties. All at once a wild idea passed through my brain,—I felt that I would like to measure the incredible amplitude of the figure of the princesses; but how was I to obtain their consent? I despatched Mikaël for some silk scarfs, and some red and blue collars of pearls, each as big as a pigeon's egg. What woman can resist the bait of coquetry? The modest Karagwéans, however, courageously rejected the temptation. What should I do? In this embarrassment I remarked that they never for an instant took their eyes off my hands and face, the colour of which appeared to raise their astonishment to the highest pitch.

A gleam of light broke on my mind:—

“Complaisance for complaisance, my beautiful princesses: I will consent to show you my naked arms, if you will allow me to measure yours.”

Eve's curious daughters could not lose so rare

an opportunity of leisurely examining a European magician; and one of them crawled towards me, for she was unable to walk upright. While she examined me, I noted down the dimensions of her person, as follows: round the arm, twenty-four inches; round the waist, fifty-three inches; round the calf of the leg, twenty-two inches.

I observed that on the shelves inside the hut numerous vessels of milk were placed. I asked Wuazézéru, the king's eldest brother, what they were used for.

"Our women," he replied, "have no other food. It is *this* which gives them the *embon-point* that renders them worthy of us, and of our rank."

This luxury, let me here observe, is restricted to the wives of the princes and the great dignitaries of the empire. And therefore the doors of their huts are made much wider than those of ordinary cabins; a precaution indispensable if such colossal matrons are to make their "exits and their entrances."

Meantime, the sun, already sinking in the west, lit up the royal hut with a vague rosy radiance. I took leave of my Africans, and was preparing to return to my own abode, when one of Roumanika's officers approached, and, in his master's name, solicited my presence at the Feast of the New Moon.

After taking some hurried refreshment, I repaired to the palace. The king, concealed by

a screen which only left his head visible, was seated at the door of his hut: he wore a tiara of beads, surmounted by red feathers, and a long white beard, which gave him something of the aspect of a Jewish rabbi. In front of him, three and thirty drums were symmetrically arranged upon the ground, each one ornamented with a large white cross. This sacred symbol vividly excited my interest. Could it be a forgotten vestige of the Crusades, brought from Egypt among these people, whose customs and institutions undergo so little change? On observing the regular features of the natives, another supposition seemed to me more probable: I began to think that the inhabitants of Karagwé were a branch of the Abyssinian family, ingrafted on a negro stock, and hence modified to some slight extent. The same idea had occurred to me before, when I was presented to Kamrasi. Might not the nobles of Unyoro, like those of Karagwé, be a conquering race come from the north? However this may be, I could not clear up my difficulties; for the natives had not preserved the most trivial tradition of their origin and history.

To return to the New Moon Feast.

A number of men, each equipped with a couple of drum-sticks, stood by the drums, and, at a given signal, began to beat them with one consent, gradually accelerating the measure, and

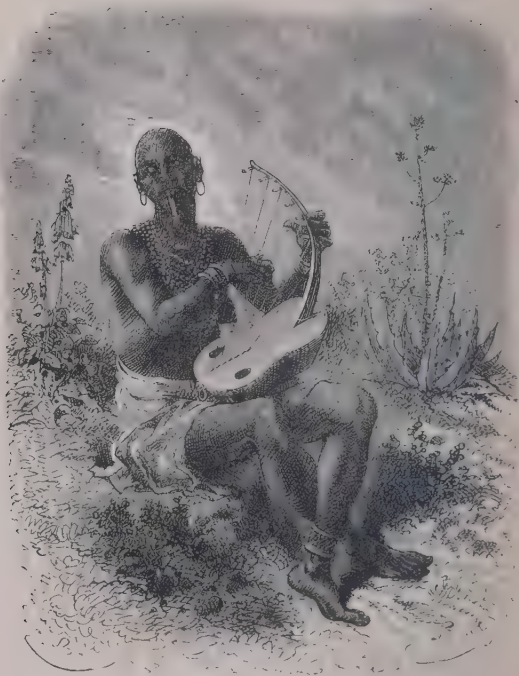
terminating with a formidable roll. A troop of musicians, stationed near the king, then played some joyous airs; and lads and lasses gave themselves up to the performance of fantastic saltatorial evolutions, until they were exhausted with fatigue. When the dance ceased for want of dancers, the chiefs of the districts or provinces of the kingdom, the *wakungos*, came forward, one after the other, to swear fidelity to Roumanika. They advanced on tiptoe, extending their arms, rotating as on a pivot, uttering discordant cries, and invoking the most terrible imprecations on their head, if they betrayed their sovereign. This semi-political, semi-religious ceremony lasted two days, during which the banana wine flowed in copious streams. Before its termination, Roumanika ordered the national talismans to be brought before him, and announced their oracles, which were received with profound respect.

An anchor-shaped piece of copper remained in an upright position on the ground all the time the festival lasted; it was afterwards laid prostrate at the entrance to the royal hut. This, I learned, was the principal idol of Karagwé. The natives address to it their prayers when they would obtain the divine protection against their enemies, recover their health, or ascertain the secret thoughts of men. Horns filled with magic charms play here, as among the Ugandas, an important part in the native worship. They

never engage in a campaign, or go upon a journey, without consulting, in the hope of ascertaining the issue, this mysterious emblem.

Music is not disregarded in the religious and national solemnities of Karagwé. The natives possess a variety of instruments, stringed, wind, and percussion. The best is the *nanga*, a kind of guitar peculiar to the country. I remember to have heard an ingenious French writer maintain that music and civilization are twin-sisters, who advance hand in hand; and that you may judge of the progress of the one by that of the other. In this respect, then, Karagwé would assert a decided superiority over the surrounding peoples. Six of the notes of the *nanga* follow exactly the diatonic scale; the seventh alone is wanting. Roumanika possessed an excellent band, which executed with great accuracy numerous dancing airs and warlike marches. The musicians accompany their melodies with a graceful undulation of the body. Arriving within a certain distance of the king, all halt respectfully, except the leader, who approaches the royal throne upon his knees.

By a singular anomaly, marriage, among this people so passionately addicted to music and revelry, is distinguished by no special ceremony. Everything is done in the most mysterious manner. The young girl, who, during her childhood, has remained completely naked, assumes a



A NANGA-PLAYER.

woven tissue of bark resembling a thick veil, in which she envelops herself from head to foot. Then she bids adieu to the paternal mansion, and an aged woman, undoubtedly her mother, leads her, without further formality, to her future husband's habitation.

The same simplicity attends their funerals. When a man is dead, his body, wrapped in a cow's skin, is flung into the lake; princes alone are buried in *terra firma*. Thus, there may still be seen on the summit of a lofty mountain the mausoleum of Dagara, Roumanika's father. To honour the memory of the deceased, his son gave orders for the burial alive of five beautiful young maidens, and fifty cows: the gates were shut, and the unfortunate victims destined to accompany the dead into the land of spirits were left to perish of hunger.

From this isolated fact, however, the reader must not form his opinion of the customs of Karagwé. As a rule, they are mild and merciful, and exhibit scarcely a trace of that barbarism so common in those of the neighbouring tribes. Human life is carefully respected: strangers are placed under the protection of the law, and have nothing to fear, neither as to their property nor persons. Theft is punished with imprisonment, the periods varying in duration from three to ten months: if it has been accompanied by blows and violence, a fine of ten goats is also inflicted. As for murderers, they are thrown headlong from a precipice, and their property is bestowed on the family of their victims.

The population is divided into two distinct races: the Wahumas, and the Wanyambos. The former, the conquerors of the country, form the

aristocratic class; their appearance recalls in a surprising manner the Abyssinian: Mikaël, like myself, was much impressed by the resemblance; and this observation confirms my conjecture relative to the origin of the inhabitants of Karagwé. The Wanyambos are the ancient proprietors of the soil, which they cultivate nowadays for their masters. Though they seem a decayed race, and though, owing to the ability of the king, peace is rarely broken, yet warlike exercises form their favourite pastime. They manufacture weapons of great perfection,—bows especially, which measure upwards of two yards in length, and are of extraordinary power; their arrows, the length of a man's arm, are never poisoned. For inflicting mortal wounds, the natives trust to their strength and skill. They love to assemble for merry jousts and tourneys; on which occasions their natural liveliness is reinforced by some capital wine: but it is remarkable that these negroes understand better than Europeans the value of self-respect. I never saw one of them a victim to drunkenness.

The sorgho and the banana are the principal products of the country; but coffee also is grown, and tobacco, and the sugar-cane, but to no great extent. Karagwé, nevertheless, is, commercially, of great importance; it is the entrepôt whither the Arabs of the coast bring their glass beads, and tissues, and brass wire,



A WAHUMA.

which they exchange for the ivory and slaves collected by the tribes of Central Africa. Roumanika is frequently called upon to decide the relative value of the wares exposed for sale: thus, one hundred and sixty brass rings are equal to a collar of pearls, while a goat is worth

twenty times as much. The price of slaves varies greatly. It sinks very low when the negro tribes are at war with one another. Sometimes an unfortunate prisoner may be bought for ten strings of beads, or half the price of a goat!

Karagwé being the centre to which all the products of all the neighbouring countries flow, one need not be astonished at the comparative luxury of its inhabitants. The hut used by Roumanika as his residence is artistically constructed. The roof is supported by perfectly symmetrical pillars; the ground is covered with the silky leaves of the papyrus; trophies of lances and javelins decorate the walls; openings made at intervals enable visitors to render homage to the prince by clapping their hands without entering the royal residence; finally, movable screens of straw, artistically wrought, serve as doors, and keep out the importunate. Numerous guards are stationed near these barriers, to prohibit the entrance of all but the privileged. It was in this hut, seated on a mat, and smoking a black pipe, that Roumanika and I spent long hours together. He was never weary of hearing me speak of Europe. He questioned me about our customs, our industry, our commerce, and made me describe our towns and monuments.

"Oh, these whites!" he exclaimed, admiringly. "What do they not know?—of what are they not capable?"

In these conversations, in which we discussed alternately questions of morality, religion, and geography, the king gave abundant proofs of a quick intelligence, and even of a tolerably wide local knowledge. He had not confined himself to an acquaintance with his own territory, but possessed much accurate information respecting the Victoria-Nyanza, the Albert-Nyanza, and all the countries surrounding these great lakes. He furnished me also with some valuable data as to the route I should follow for my journey to Zanzibar.

May 6th.—Roumanika's sons, who bore the reputation of being the best archers in the country, were impatient that I should display my skill as a marksman, and invited me to accompany them on a hunting excursion among the wooded hills overlooking the palace. A pack of superb hounds, and numerous "beaters," attended us on this merry chase. The young princes, veritable Herculean negroes, climbed with a light step the abrupt declivities. The gigantic bows of the country seemed but playthings in their hands. They shot their arrows above the tallest trees, struck the flying bird, and brought down the antelope while running at full speed. For my part, I spared neither powder nor shot. The game was literally heaped up around us. At the outset, we killed a noble rhinoceros, giving promise of a capital day's

sport. All at once, I uttered a cry of pain. In the heat of the pursuit, I had not observed the shattered trunk of a tree lying prostrate on the ground. My foot struck against the obstacle, and the hard wooden splinters tore my knee.

Mikaël hastened to raise me, for my wound prevented me from making any movement. A mist gathered before my eyes; I saw confusedly the two young princes approaching me. I heard them give orders for the construction of a litter of branches to transport me to my hut.....

When I recovered my senses, I lay extended on my mattress. Mikaël stood at my feet; Oueda's gentle face was bent over mine.

"At last!" he murmured, joining his hands together with a joyous gesture. "Oh, my good master, how you have alarmed us!"

"Who is that woman, Oueda?"

"A Wanyambo, whose skill, it is said, heals every kind of wound. Roumanika sent her."

I had not much confidence, I acknowledge, in the science of this feminine doctor. I reflected, however, that savages everywhere possess a curious knowledge of the properties of plants, and the weakness resulting from my wound effectually preventing any resistance, I allowed her to do with me as she would.

The young woman examined my leg, made with a knife some tiny incisions, which caused me atrocious torture, and then drew from her

bosom a roll of banana leaves, enclosing a black paste. This composition she moistened in her mouth, and rubbed with it the bleeding sores. In vain I endeavoured to withdraw the wounded limb from her painful treatment. A strong muscular negro held it in his vigorous grasp, and checked every attempt at revolt. Finally, my black *doctress* bound round my ankle a fragment of lava to serve as a talisman.

Two days afterwards she presented herself, for the purpose of renewing the operation; but as her first treatment had only increased my feverishness, I energetically refused her attentions. In obedience to my instructions, Ouelda and Mikaël had dressed the wound. I found myself better; and I was firmly resolved not to allow the terrible knife of the she-necromancer to carve and cut me.

Roumanika, his brothers, and his sons, frequently came to see me. The young princes brought with them gifts of birds, and eggs, and all other articles which they thought likely to give me pleasure; and of flowers, the perfume and brilliancy of which were worth more to me than cabalistic remedies, for they drove away the sad thoughts which beset my imagination—they spoke to me of life and hope, when at times I was tempted to lose courage. In the intervals of ease between the frequent crises of pain, I drew, for the king's amusement, some landscape-sketches of my beloved France. Sometimes I re-

presented my little château, overshadowed with tall chestnut trees; sometimes I sketched a group of soldiers, or of peasants engaged in rural pursuits. At length, the wound healed. Leaning upon Oueda's shoulder, I was able to seat myself at the entrance of the hut, where I inhaled with delight the balmy air. My heart overflowed with gratitude, and casting my eyes around me, I thanked God who had made nature so beautiful.

The spectacle before me justified my admiration. In the distance, the hills were clothed with tall grasses; lofty trees and thick bushes, the refuge of the antelope and the elephant, crowned the summits, and descended the sides of the ravine to the depth of the valley, where herds of splendid cattle wandered at liberty. On the right, a mountain reared its precipitous crest to an elevation of 5500 feet above the sea-level; fragments of rocks, and granite boulders, gave it a wild and picturesque aspect. At its base slept a tranquil lake, which Captain Grant named Windermere, and the oval outline of which was partly concealed among the trees which mirrored themselves in its transparent waters. Wooded islands were sprinkled over its surface; a thick grove of papyrus fringed its southern shore.

At intervals I caught sight of Roumanika, borne by four men in his state-coach—that is, a large pannier attached to long poles. The

king was bound for the hill, on a pilgrimage to the tomb of his father, Dagara. A troop of musicians led the procession, and the air resounded with their national songs. Several hundreds of negroes formed the royal suite, and child-pages, whom a milk-diet had puffed up to a premature corpulency, danced along the road. The drum regulated their movements, and their heads were covered with garlands of water-lilies plucked from the lake.

CHAPTER XIX.

I AM SUPPOSED TO BE A MALEFICENT SORCERER— HUTS SMOKED AND
PERFUMED*—AN INDISCREET MIRROR—EXORCISMS—TWO BROTHERS—
IN-ARMS—WAR AND VICTORY—ILLNESS OF OUELDA—HIS DEATH—
ARRIVAL AT ZANZIBAR—I RETURN TO EUROPE.

May 16th.



MY accident delayed me at Karagwé most inopportunistically. In spite of Roumanika's liberality, my finances diminished with disquieting rapidity; for I was obliged to recognize the good offices of my attendants, and the numerous gifts of the king, his wives, and the members of his family. I no longer possessed an article of any value, and my packages were reduced to shadows. The moment, therefore, that my leg was partially healed, I departed, though not without regret, from the country where I had been so hospitably received. I had no longer to traverse great and important kingdoms like Unyoro, Uganda, and Karagwé. My future course lay through the territories of the most savage tribes;

* Literally, huts *fumed* and *perfumed*. "*huttes fumées et parfumées*". The jingle of the French cannot be reproduced in English.

for to the south, as well as to the north of the great lakes, a complete barbarism reigns.

Uzui, a region on which we quickly entered, is a country of rare fertility. The soil is everywhere arranged in the most graceful undulations, as if by an artist's hand. It is covered with tall thick herbage, and with huge trees, rejoicing in the most abundant leafiness. Among these the banana is very plentiful. From its fruit is distilled the excellent wine in use in all these countries. Winding paths creep up precipitous hills of the boldest configuration, from the summit of which the traveller's eye embraces the vast plains and the numerous rivers which stretch and flow towards the Victoria-Nyanza; rocks of the most romantic outline, thickly mantled in verdure, rise, like tall cliffs, above the valley.

Carried on my litter—for my leg was not sufficiently healed to permit me to walk—I reached a scene so picturesque, and so full of freshness, that I could not resist the desire of halting there for a few minutes. In front of me a cascade fell from a height of seventy feet on volcanic stones, which formed a vast circular basin, surrounded by a luxuriant vegetation of ferns and mosses.

Meantime the natives, alarmed at the approach of a white man, tumultuously gathered around my encampment. The panic visible in their countenances excited my curiosity. I could not understand why a man, crippled and feeble, should appear to them so formidable.

"What does this stranger want here?" said the chief, in a timid voice; "does he wish to dry up the river which fertilizes our country, to drink up its waters, or divert its course?"

"Rest tranquil," answered Mikaël, smiling; "our master prefers your banana wine to the waters of your river."

The pleasant landscape was alive, so to speak, with birds of brilliant plumage: pintados and partridges peopled the bushes; clouds of swallows skimmed through the luminous air, some entirely black, others coquettishly decorated with a white collar, and fire-coloured spots on the head and belly; dainty water-wagtails seemed to wait for the traveller, that they might greet him on his journey; finally, a curious bird, called *m'linda*, which the natives regard as the king of the winged race, advanced into the plain, followed by a numerous "staff" of smaller birds, keeping near his person, ready to defend him, and attentively watching his slightest movements. A feather dropped from his wing: these *gardes du corps* hastened to tear it in pieces, as if to prevent it from falling into the hands of man, and serving, perhaps, to wing his deadly arrows.

In truth, were it not for its human inhabitants, this beautiful country would be an Eden.

Unfortunately, the tribes of the Uzui and the Uzinga are not only unpleasant to look upon, which would be but a small matter; they are

also—which is a serious calamity—addicted to pillage, and their rapacious habits render a visit to their territory peculiarly disagreeable. A negro pseudo-king commanded me, in threatening terms, to pay him homage. I refused, and went on my way. A couple of hundred natives, armed, pounced on my baggage, and, but for the courageous conduct of my Arabs, I should have been made to pay dearly for my audacity. Issuing victorious from this skirmish, I found myself exposed to a more serious attack. The natives would seem to have formed a determination to ascertain the contents of my bags; and I was compelled, much against my will, to halt at the next village, and offer to these too emphatic hosts a good share of what remained of my trinketry. That the rogues did not strip me completely must be attributed, without doubt, to the fear they entertained of being killed or enchanted by the white magician.

May 25th.—Frequent skirmishes taking place between the different tribes greatly increased the insecurity of the roads. I found it impossible at times to engage porters—the natives of the district being unwilling to carry my baggage to the frontiers of the adjoining district, with the inhabitants of which they never failed to be at war. Moreover, white men were looked upon as sorcerers of the most dangerous kind. The belief was, that certain death befell all who foolishly

consented to follow them. So I made but slow progress, overcome by these incessantly recurring difficulties, and by the great heat. At length the appearance of well-cultivated fields and neatly-kept villages indicated that we had reached a country where the inhabitants enjoyed some degree of prosperity ; while the masses of rocks, piled one upon the other against the azure horizon, lent to the scene an air of savage grandeur.

The village of Nunda, where the chief resided, was almost deserted, for we reached it at noon-day, when the natives were engaged in their various pursuits. An aged negro of ungraceful figure and uncomely appearance stood at the entrance with half-a-dozen companions.

"*Yambo*" (Good-day), said I, on approaching him.

The native returned my salutation, and then conducted me to a circular and unusually lofty hut, which exhaled a strong odour of the stable. This perfumed habitation, however, was the chief's palace ; and the old man, who was no other than the chief Ukulima, turned towards me with an air of benevolence.

"*Dougoh, yango*" (Enter, my brother).

The manners of my host, so different from those of the savages I had recently fallen in with, very agreeably surprised me. He placed his hut at my sole disposal for as long a period as it might please me to favour Ukuni with my presence. I caused it to be swept and

cleansed—the goats having left traces of their presence more significant even than the odour which had greeted me on entering. Mikaël then arranged in it the articles belonging to my personal use, and began to erect my bed. The chief's wife, a mild and amiable old negress, who had received me not less cordially than her husband, opened her large eyes and mouth at the sight of these preparations. She seated herself on my bed, timidly smoothed down the coverlets, and examined my packages one after the other, uttering little cries of admiration and astonishment. Ouelda, proud of the effect produced by our property, amused himself by exhibiting every article which could, he thought, increase the wonder of our hosts; but as the interlude seemed likely to be unpleasantly protracted, Mikaël created a diversion by asking for some pombé.

His request found an echo in the chief's heart, for his tottering gait and embarrassed speech were due to his fondness for that liquor. He brought a large calabash quite full; and, to set me the example, took several mouthfuls, sucking it up through a straw. The beverage was not bad. I tasted it, and returned the bowl to the chief. The latter, after again quenching his thirst, handed it to me anew. The same formality was repeated, I know not how many times. At length I could bear it no longer. I began to laugh, and Ukulima did the same.

The crowd, informed of the arrival of a stranger, had, in the meantime, collected round my hut. The drums beat, and the lads of the village danced their best in my honour. As for the chief, he quickly disappeared, and for the rest of the day remained secluded in his hut, completely conquered by the pombé.

The aged princess, whom my European usages had so completely astonished, was Ukulima's principal wife. It was a quite exceptional case that here, in Africa, where women are so little valued, she should enjoy the respect, the affection—I had almost said the reverence—of the tribe. Every morning her grandchildren assembled round her bed—if bed it might be called—and affectionately wished her good-day. As soon as she arose, she paid a visit to my hut, exchanged with me a cordial grasp of the hand, and showed a quite maternal interest in my health and occupations. An active, excellent housewife, she maintained order in her little kingdom, took care of the children, gave wise counsel to the mothers—sometimes she even carried a heavy burden of fuel or vegetables. Simple in her manners and her language, she nevertheless knew how to maintain her dignity; and it was pleasant to see all her people halt as she passed by, kneel, and clap their hands, as a sign of respect.

The chief had seven wives, each of whom dwelt in a separate habitation. He spent with

them a part of the day; but at night he shut himself up in a small hut, protected by amulets and lions'-paws. He was a robust old man, and active and hearty, in spite of his seventy-five years, and his assiduous devotion to pombé.

He paid me a visit daily, and displayed an excessive delight in examining the strange articles I carried with me. He made me, with the infantile curiosity peculiar to the Africans, open my trunks, and scrutinized my photograph-albums and illustrated books, every moment asking for additional information. One of the things which most astonished him was the chemical match, or fusee. He loved excessively to see it burn, though he never dared to set fire to one himself—imagining, I suppose, that it was connected with the sorcery of the "white man." Sometimes he incontinently thrust his huge feet into my boots or travelling-shoes, and hobbled along the village, escorted by a troop of children, highly amused by his clumsy gait. One day a strange fancy entered his head.

"Will you, who are so powerful," said he, "give me a talisman, by the aid of which I may distinguish my friends from my enemies?"

I told him I possessed no such charm. But the old chief obstinately refused to believe anything of the kind, and cajoled, and pressed, and implored me.

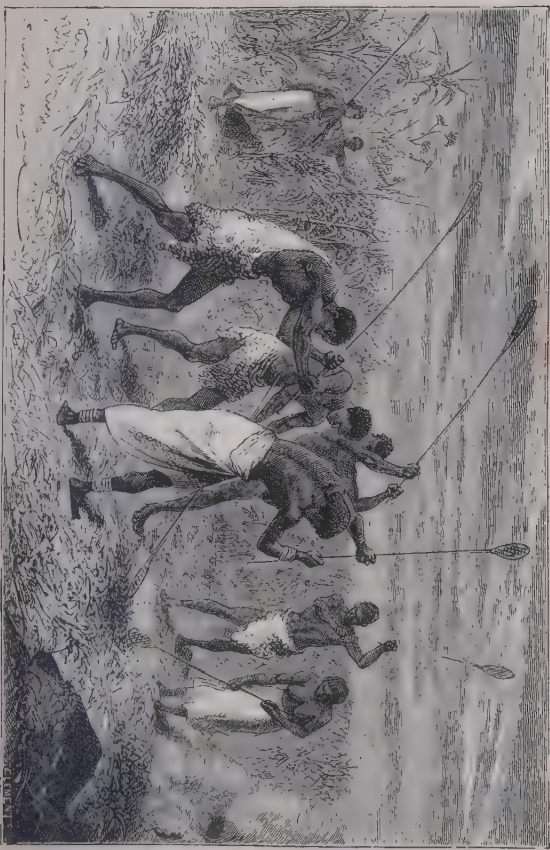
"The whites can do anything they like. Do not refuse me so small a favour."

Then, finding I was deaf to all his prayers, he grew angry, and sulked like a child to whom one has denied the moon.

A mirror, suspended in my hut, was likewise the cause of an amusing scene. Some women, whom Oueda had instructed in the properties of this marvellous object, had profited by my absence to seize upon it. On my return, I heard the sound of voices, and I surprised the negro coquettes grouped around my glass, in which—oh, unheard-of prodigy!—the traits of their countenances were faithfully reflected. They had seen pictures, but there was Nature herself; and, besides, this was an incessantly varying picture, alternately effaced and renewed. Alas, how many illusions did it not destroy! Each one, in her innocent self-love, had fancied herself most beautiful, and now each regarded with a disappointed air the impertinent witness which reproduced her image with too much fidelity. In return, each found her revenge in laughing at the disappointment of her companions. A somewhat lively altercation followed, and the scene threatened to become quite tragical. Two of the women began to quarrel, and rushed one upon the other with so much fury that the blood trickled down their faces! But at last they were separated, and I took care to remove the cause of the encounter, and carefully hide it.

These robust young African women work gaily in the fields, and wield the flail as vigor-

UKUNI WOMEN AT WORK IN THE FIELDS.



ously as the men. It was the time of harvest, and the natives were bringing in the grain. In the evening the young girls joined in a moonlight dance, and, interlacing their arms, sang and gambolled merrily about, until, overcome with fatigue, they stopped to take breath and to laugh. Some of them were quite masculine in their ways, and the two whom I had engaged to carry my luggage, were the most indefatigable smokers of the lot. The Ukuni women are generally very good mothers, and there are no instances of their having sold their children to the slave-dealers; the pangs of hunger could not compel them to do it,—they would prefer death, indeed, to such an act of cruelty.

Living as I did in the middle of the village, I often saw the young men go out to engage in exercises similar to our gymnastic sports. They sometimes amused themselves by discharging arrows at partridges and pigeons; others made out of reeds little guns armed with triggers, from which they ejected black balls of pith. They are of so frank a disposition, and are endowed with so much intelligence, that I cannot help looking forward to the day when a beneficent civilization will develop the happy gifts that Nature has bestowed upon them.

May 30th.—My sympathy with the natives was not, however, sufficiently powerful to lead me to take up my permanent residence among them.

I should have been much further on my journey long before this, had I been able to complete the number of my porters. The great majority had deserted me as soon as I set foot in the Ukuni territory ; and, although my baggage was considerably diminished, I could not reach the sea with my Arabs only, especially as many of them were stricken with fever.

The evil spirit, or *Phebo*, had taken possession of one of the daughters of the aged chief, (for the demons have no respect of persons,) and consternation prevailed throughout the tribe. It was imperative that they should at once expel the troublesome guest who caused all this commotion.

The old chief's hut had been sumptuously decorated with lions'-paws. On the threshold, in front of her father, crouched the young princess. Near her stood several women armed with spears. They flung libations of pombé into the air, which fell back upon those assisting; then they brought on the scene a cow, the muzzle of which was banded so tightly that it could not breathe. It was painful to see the poor creature; but no one paid any heed to its sufferings: it was destined for a sacrifice. One of Ukulina's guards of honour struck it a light blow with a hatchet between its horns. The possessed followed this example; and, finally, a man, with one vigorous and well-aimed stroke, felled the animal. The victim's blood was collected in a bucket ; the attendants besprinkled

with it the princess's forehead, and then, in succession, all her children and nephews, as they, too, knelt before the chief. Her sisters and kinsmen then lavished upon her their congratulations. For the remainder of the day the convalescent promenaded up and down the village, accompanied by a numerous train, who waved their well-filled gourds to and fro, singing cabalistic words. Her eyes were still wet with tears; she held in one hand a broom, on which her friends hastened to place bracelets and garlands of pearls. These presents she received with a serious air; while the women indulged in the most ridiculous exclamations, so as to make her laugh. Thus terminated the first day's ceremonies. On the following day, the princess, still equipped with her magic broom, but completely cured, returned thanks for her deliverance. The spirit, vanquished, had been forced to abandon its prey.

A poor woman and a young lad, accused of having cast a spell over the brother of the chief, were, in the following week, condemned to death by the elders of the tribe. The two unfortunates were laid prostrate on the earth, firmly bound with thick cords, which cut into their very flesh. Their cruel agony drew from them the most heart-rending cries; but the crowd of lookers-on only responded with jests and insults. Indignant at this barbarity, I betook myself to Ukulima, and

interceded on behalf of the accused. Their bonds were loosened. The young man, seeing that he had found a defender, asked permission to go into the forest to pick an herb which would restore the invalid to health. He hoped, undoubtedly, to find an opportunity of escaping; but he was surrounded by vigilant guards, and as several days passed and the king's brother showed no signs of amendment, the poor wretch was led from the village at early dawn and executed. Informed of what was intended by Mikaël, I made all haste to the place of execution, but found only a pool of blood, and, a few paces beyond, a small heap of smouldering ashes.

Meantime, not a few of my men had connected themselves with the natives by the closest ties. Mikaël and Ukulima's son came to the resolution of cementing their new affection by a solemn ceremony in vogue in this strange country. It is a kind of fraternization which reminds one of the customs of the ancient Germans, and shows that the people of East Africa are, notwithstanding their barbarism, capable of attachment and fidelity. Here are the particulars:—

A mat was spread on the ground, and the two friends, each attended by a witness, knelt down upon it. Two leaves, a little fat, and the head of a spear, were placed before them. Mikaël and Kirenga (the chief's son) made each a slight incision below the heart: a few drops of blood

oozed out, which the witnesses carefully received on the leaves ; then they gently rubbed Mikaël's wound with butter and the leaf covered with Kirenga's blood. A similar operation was practised on the young prince, after which the leaves were torn in pieces, and flung over the two "brothers." A pompous discourse was next delivered, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing ; the two friends clasped hands and exchanged good wishes ; my men discharged their guns ; the drums beat ; and a series of fêtes commenced. Mikaël and Kirenga were, thenceforth, inseparably united ; they owed each other succour and assistance on every occasion,—and there is no example on record of any native failing in this engagement.

In case of war, the two brothers go together into the battle-field, and as the African tribes live in a chronic condition of hostility, opportunities for displaying their attachment, even unto death, are frequent.

One morning I was aroused by a terrible din and clangour. "To arms ! to arms !" cried the natives ; "the enemy is upon us !"

The village was filled with tumult. Sixty negroes, armed with bows and arrows, hastened to defend the line of palisades. This was the entire army the old chief could bring into the field ; with a spear in each hand, he followed close upon his warriors. Notwithstanding the small number of the combatants, the conflict lasted several days ; but the inhabitants of

THE UKUNIS GOING FORTH TO BATTLE.



Nunda suffered little, for Ukulima succeeded in removing the scene of war to the enemy's territory. He returned covered with glory; his men chanting triumphal strains, and carrying as trophies numerous gory heads, which they fixed upon the palisades of the eastern gate of the village, the face upturned towards heaven.

Of course the victory was celebrated by a revel, in which dancing and pombé played their wonted part. Mikaël carried off all the honours; he had accompanied his brother-in-arms, and his rifle had dealt death and destruction in the ranks of the enemy.

The rejoicings at an end, the Ukunis assembled to hear from their chief's mouth the narrative of the expedition. An elephant's tusk decorated the centre of the village-green. Ukulima, surrounded by his guards, and seated on a raised platform, harangued the people for an hour. At intervals he paused to refresh himself, and to pluck from his beard a few hairs with a small pair of pincers; a ceremony the meaning of which I could not discover. The chief's oration, plentifully sown with bellicose sentiments and jests at the expense of the beaten foe, alternately provoked loud acclamations and bursts of laughter. Two men afterwards emerged from the crowd, and, in the name of the tribe, congratulated Ukulima on his skilful conduct of the campaign. These councils, or parliamentary assemblages, in which the chief rendered an account of his actions, and submitted

them to the judgment of his subjects, keenly excited my interest. Even the women were present at them, and appeared by no means the least attentive auditors.

June 5th.—Thanks to Ukulima's protection, I succeeded in recruiting a score of porters. I thought I should have no more to do than to pack up my glass trinketry and the other articles composing my baggage; but I had counted without my host. The good inhabitants of Ukuni were not exempt from the covetousness common to the African populations. The old chief, his family, and the villagers harassed me with requests for presents; so many greedy hands were stretched towards me, that, had I filled each, I should have had no need of porters, for I should have had nothing for them to carry!

At length I escaped from this ridiculous persecution. At a short distance from Nunda spreads a majestic forest, whose open avenues are haunted by the antelope and the zebra. Among the trees enormous masses of rock tower, like gigantic phantoms; in the distance, lofty hills and picturesque valleys remind the spectator of the landscapes of Hindustan. This country must be delightful in March or April; but it was June when I passed through it: the trees had lost their foliage, the sun had scorched the sward, the fields formed one immense expanse of blinding dust, and the south-east wind, blowing

through the skeleton groves, brought with it fever, small-pox, and ophthalmic affections. Disease broke out among my men, and, to add to my misfortune, my case of drugs was nearly empty. Ouelda, whom I had been delighted to see restored to health, sickened anew : his laughter, which diverted me in my hours of despondency, no longer echoed merrily in my ears ; and I fell a prey to the saddest and most distressing reflections. Ouelda, too, showed a melancholy and a gloom which completely overcame me.

"Master, I remember to have read in one of your French books, when you were teaching me your language, that Christians who died young were happy. Why ?"

"Because they escape all the miseries of this life, and, through Christ, are admitted into heaven. But what has brought this singular idea into your head ?"

The child was silent. After a minute, he said :—

"Will you think of me when you return to your own country ?"

"You will be able to prevent me from forgetting you, since you will be with me."

"Who knows ? We are very far from France ; so many things may happen."

"You have no common sense, child."

I pretended to be in a bad temper, to conceal the painful impression which Ouelda's words

produced upon me; but I observed, with ever increasing anxiety, his languid step and shrunken countenance. To husband his strength, I multiplied my halts.

The villages of Unyamuezi—for such is the name of the country we were traversing—are defended by lofty palisades, surrounded by wide ditches and thick fences of euphorbia trees. In some places the natives complete their fortification by an earthwork so arranged as to afford them a tolerable shelter, while they rain volleys of arrows upon their assailants. At the entrance to the town, an old hoe (*houe*), fixed on the summit of a hillock, and supporting a flag made of woven bark, serves, it is said, to foil the glance of the “evil eye.” The streets are formed by rows of palisades, and the huts, according to the general custom of the African tribes, present the appearance of magnified bee-hives. These huts are never swept out, and are as dark as the hold of a ship. All their furniture consists of a few earthen vessels for cooking purposes, some old dried skins, a bow and some arrows, cups, gourds, and, occasionally, a stool.

I was rarely admitted into these sanctuaries,—a circumstance which I had no cause to regret. I infinitely preferred to establish myself in the *iruansa*; that is, a more spacious hut, answering, so far as its use is concerned, to a European “club.” There the men gather together to smoke, and drink, and gossip, and even to enjoy a *siesta*,

stretching themselves on a kind of camp-bed covered with cow-hides. At times, the iruansa is converted into a ball-room, a *salon de danse*, as you may guess from the large drums suspended from the walls.

Sometimes, also, when the stage was a long one, we passed the night under the roof of the starry heaven.

One morning, we had not resumed our march above an hour, when I saw Ouelda stop suddenly, and then support himself, swooning, against a tree. He trembled from head to foot; his eyes glowed with the fire of fever; and his colourless lips vainly attempted to smile.

"It is nothing," he said, with an effort; "only my head aches, and I am cold."

Immediately I had my litter made ready, and my warmest coverlets. The child was laid upon them, and we directed our steps towards the nearest village. We were compelled to cross a patch of marshy ground; the wind shook the tall papyrus reeds, which towered above the litter like the black plumes of a hearse. The sun darted his fiery rays upon the stagnant waters; putrid miasmas were thrown off, and a suffocating atmosphere enveloped us as in a wet cloak. Gloomy and depressed, and suffering also from the fever, I marched slowly at the head of my little company. Towards evening we halted at a wretched village. Ouelda had fallen into a

state of complete prostration ; his heavy eyelids scarcely opened, and he seemed unconscious of all that transpired around him. I installed him in a hut abandoned to me by an aged negress ; with fresh water I bathed his burning forehead, and I made him drink a cooling draught. But, alas ! not only was my medical knowledge limited, I had not even the necessary remedies.

Along with Mikaël, I took up my residence in the invalid's hut ; for I could not intrust to indifferent hands the child who had served me with such faithful devotion. I had an abundant supply of fat : I made four balls, each weighing about half-a-pound, and each calculated to burn three hours or thereabout. A broken jar served me for a lamp, and a few yarns of canvas for a wick. Not a sound interrupted the silence of my gloomy vigil. In those disfigured features, on which death had already set its seal, I could scarcely retrace the gentle countenance which, but so lately, had shone with youthful hope. Was he about to pay with his life for his loyal affection towards me ?

In this manner several dreary days passed by. The woman whose hut we occupied had conceived a great interest in my poor invalid, and did all she could to assist me. As for myself, though I scarcely ever slept, I felt no fatigue. The condition of my poor Oueda remained unaltered ; excessive weakness and semi-conscious-

ness alternated with fits of delirium. He did not recognize me; incoherent words dropped from his lips. Sometimes he stretched his arms towards an invisible phantom.

"My mother!" he cried; "she calls me,—and I must join her!"

He made an effort to spring from his bed, but soon fell back exhausted. At night especially his excitement increased. My poor lamp scarcely lit up his countenance; the half-shadows which surrounded us lent to every object a lugubrious aspect; but what was gloomier still was the howl of the hyenas which fell upon my ear. I could not prevent myself from trembling, for a terrible thought darkened my mind. Should Oueda be buried in this wild country, would not the beasts of prey carry off his corpse?

After lying for some hours in terrible convulsions, Oueda fell asleep; but as the first faint rays of dawn appeared, he again awoke. The delirium had subsided; he looked at me with a gaze full of tenderness, and then folded his hands as if for prayer.

His head fell back upon the pillow; he slept again.

Perhaps the crisis, which had evidently taken place in his disease, might be favourable: he was so young; nature at that age contends so vigorously with the enemy.

Divided between hope and fear, I examined the calm face of the patient. His long eye-lashes

threw upon his cheek a dark shadow; his mouth had regained its natural expression of mildness and serenity. Soon a kind of lethargy overcame me. Conquered by fatigue, I retired to a corner of the hut, leaving Ouelda in charge of our hostess. When I reöpened my eyes, the sun had risen; the negress, standing beside the bed, was silently arranging the coverlets, was cautiously stretching out the child's limbs, was laying down on either side of his body the attenuated arms.

"What are you doing? You will disturb him!"

The old woman turned towards me; great tears furrowed her cheeks.

"He is dead!" she answered.

Poor Ouelda was buried near the village, at the foot of a clump of trees. A rough stone, and a rudely-shaped cross, indicate to this day the resting-place of that loving heart, too pure and too devoted for a world like ours.

His death made an immense gap in our little company. Not only Mikaël, but all the men of the escort, had been won by his gentleness: I found it a great consolation, in the bitter grief which I experienced, to see how the child was regretted.

My journey approached its goal.



OUELDA'S GRAVE.

A few leagues more, and I reached Kazeh, inhabited by several Arab or Indian merchants.

Having known one of them in the East, I was prepared for a warm welcome, though not, indeed, for one so thoroughly cordial as it was my privilege to receive. My friend, radiant in holiday garb, and accompanied by a numerous suite,

came to meet my little caravan, which, owing to the fatigue we had undergone, and the difficulties of the road, resembled a troop of beggars.

Nevertheless, the cannon were fired in my honour, and I was welcomed with the liveliest and the most friendly demonstrations. The women wept, the men embraced me, and I was conducted in triumph to a habitation which had been prepared for my reception.

The neighbourhood of Kazeh is surely the most melancholy in the world! Not a tree, not a stream, breaks the dull monotony of the landscape. Beyond, however, the country resumes its savage character. The road or track is laid down through forests of fig-trees and tamarisks. The very paths which wind around the steep hill-sides are rough, narrow, and impracticable to beasts of burden. But at length I made my way to the coast, and arriving at the small town of Bagomoyo, on the following day I disembarked at Zanzibar.

This island, which carries on a considerable commerce with the Mauritius and the littoral of the African continent, is an important rendezvous for merchant vessels. It is governed by the Sultan Saïd Madjid, and France, England, and the United States are represented there by consuls.

On landing from the steam-packet, I had my baggage carried to an hotel; the guests were



ZANZIBAR.

numerous, and European comfort reigned side by side with Asiatic luxury. I established myself in an apartment furnished with a bed, an arm-chair, and even, —incredible extravagance!—with all the appendages of the toilet. Everything around me seemed very strange. So long a dweller among the wild tribes of Africa, I had myself grown so much of the savage that the most ordinary objects excited my astonishment. The people in the court-yard of the hotel were well-clothed; they wore shoes and stockings; some of them were sipping ices;—all these were things which I had not

seen for nearly a twelvemonth. Quickly a complete banquet was put upon my table: soup, a leg of mutton, cakes, honey, fruits, spread out upon a cloth of the most inviting whiteness. One needs to have suffered the privations of an African expedition to understand the joy awakened by such apparently insignificant trifles! The smallest objects,—a knife, a salt-cellar,—spoke to me of commerce, and industry, and civilization. I felt myself in the midst of a different moral atmosphere. One sad remembrance, however, threw its shade over the happiness I experienced; I had frequently, in anticipation, associated Ouelda with the joys of home, and, alas, I was alone!



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