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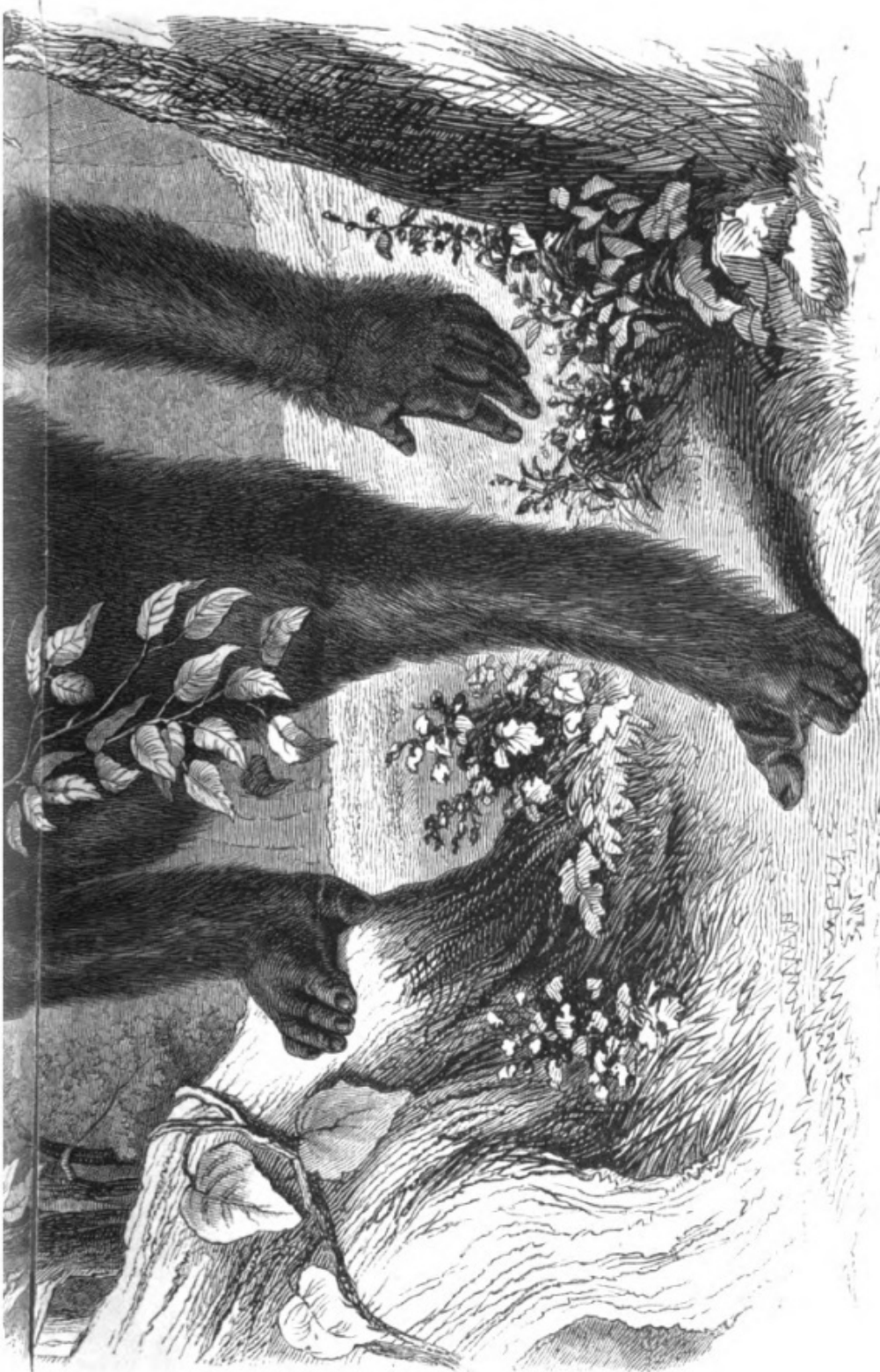

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Capt. Donaldson.
from his wife
to A. L.

EXPLORATIONS AND ADVENTURES

1 September 1861

IN

EQUATORIAL AFRICA;

WITH

ACCOUNTS OF THE MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE PEOPLE, AND OF THE CHASE OF THE GORILLA, THE CROCODILE, LEOPARD, ELEPHANT, HIPPOPOTAMUS, AND OTHER ANIMALS.

BY

PAUL B. DU CHAILLU,

COR. MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN ETHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY; OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND STATISTICAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK; AND OF THE BOSTON SOCIETY OF NATURAL HISTORY.

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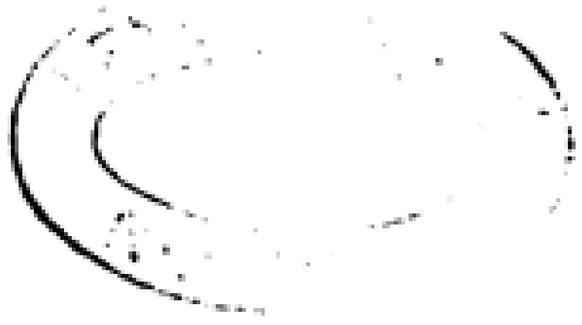

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PREFACE.

THE singular region of Equatorial Africa, which it was my fortune to be the first to explore, and of whose people and strange animal and vegetable productions I have given some account in the following pages, is remarkable chiefly for its fauna, which is, in many respects, not only extraordinary, but peculiar. In this comparatively narrow belt is found that monstrous and ferocious ape, the gorilla. Here, too, and here only, is the home of the very remarkable nest-building ape, the *Troglodytes calvus*, the *nshiego mbouve* of the natives; of the hitherto unknown *koo-loo-kamba*, another ape no less remarkable than the *T. calvus*, and of the chimpanzee. North, south, and east of this region, the lion lords it in the forests and the desert: only in this tract he is not found. Here, too, I discovered no less than twenty new species of quadrupeds, and upward of sixty new species of birds, many as strange as others were beautiful.

Thus it will be seen that this region formed a peculiarly rich field for an ardent naturalist. Game is not found in such plenty as on the vast plains of Southern Africa; there is less butchering; but, if the larder is not so well supplied, the half-starved explorer experiences many happy days, when the discovery of a hitherto unknown animal rewards him for all his toils, dangers, and sufferings.

Not only has the fauna of this region, for its limits, a very unusual number of species peculiar to itself, but even some of those animals which it has in common with the regions to the north and south seemed to me *varieties*. Thus I am almost certain

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that the elephant of this region is a variety distinct in several particulars from his South African brother.

Doubtless the peculiar formation of the country causes this exceptional condition. Instead of the vast thinly-wooded and arid or sparsely-watered plains of Northern, Eastern, and Southern Africa, the explorer finds here a region very mountainous, and so densely wooded that the whole country may be described as an impenetrable jungle, through which man pushes on only by hewing his way with the axe. These forests, which have been resting probably for ages in their gloomy solitude, seem unfavorable even to the rapid increase of the beasts who are its only denizens. There are no real herds of game; nor have the people of this region yet attained that primitive step in the upward march of civilization, the possession of beasts of burden. Neither horses nor cattle are known here: man is the only beast of burden.

The river system of this region seems to me extremely well adapted for the prosecution of commercial enterprise. Until I explored them, the rivers known to Europeans and Americans as the Nazareth, Mexias, and Fernand Vaz, were supposed to be three distinct streams; but the reader will perceive, by reference to my map, that they are connected with each other. The Mexias and Nazareth are only outlets of the Ogobay River, which also throws a portion of its waters into the Fernand Vaz, chiefly through the Npoulounay. Thus these three rivers are, in fact, mouths of the Ogobay; and they form, with the intervening lowlands (which are evidently alluvial deposits), an extensive and very complicated net-work of creeks, swamps, and dense forests. which I propose to call the delta of the Ogobay. This delta is bounded on the north by the Nazareth, which enters the sea in lat. 0° 41′ S. and long. 9° 3′ E., and on the south by the Fernand Vaz, which falls into the sea in lat. 1° 17′ S., and long. 5° 58′ E. The mouth of the Mexias lies between, in lat. 0° 56′ S., and long. 8° 47′ E.

I have not given in the narrative any account of my exploration of this labyrinth, because it was extremely barren of incidents

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interesting to the reader. It was a most tedious undertaking, and resulted only in the knowledge that this large tract is entirely uninhabited; that in the rainy season, when the rivers and their divergent creeks are swollen, the whole country is overflowed; and that the land is covered with immense forests of palm, there being found none of the customary mangrove swamps. Land and water are tenanted only by wild beasts, venomous reptiles, and intolerable swarms of musquitoes.

The entrance of the Fernand Vaz, which is one of the keys to this region, is rendered intricate by shifting sand-bars and a very crooked channel, which, however, carries from fifteen to twenty feet of water at all times. It, as well as the Mexias, throws a tremendous quantity of fresh water into the ocean during the rainy season. So vast is this supply, and so rapid the current, that, though the mouths of these streams are but half a mile wide, the body of fresh water launched from each, during the rains, forces its separate way through the ocean for at least four or five miles before it becomes absorbed; and I have seen days when the tide had no effect at all upon the vast column of water pushing seaward.

Above Monwé for about thirty miles, the Fernand Vaz, which here takes the name of *Rembo*, flows through a country so flat that in the rainy season its banks are overflowed for many miles, and in parts scarce a foot of dry land is in sight. Farther up, the country becomes hilly, and the upper parts of the Rembo and Ovenga rivers flow between steep banks, and through a decidedly mountainous region. But even here the magnificent mountains are divided by plains or broad valleys, which are overflowed during the season of rains. On the return of the dry season, these overflows leave great quantities of decayed or decaying matter, which, though enriching the ground, also cause fevers. But the interior fevers are not so frequent nor so dangerous as those caused by the mixed salt and fresh water vegetation of the seashore; and when this region becomes settled, the mountains will afford a convenient sanitarium for white men.

Leaving the Fernand Vaz, which, though partly fed by the Ogo-

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bay, is an independent stream, having its source in the Ashankolo Mountains, we come to the Ogobay, probably the largest river of western equatorial Africa. The Ogobay is formed by the junction of two considerable streams of the interior—the Rembo Ngouyai and the Rembo Okanda. The first I partly explored; of the Rembo Okanda I know only by report of the natives, who state that it is much larger than the Ngouyai, and that its navigation is in some places partly obstructed by vast rocky boulders, which, scattered about the hill-sides and on the higher plains of the interior, form a very remarkable and peculiar feature of the landscape. The banks of the Ogobay, so far as I have explored them, are in many parts subject to annual overflow.

The Rembo Ngouyai is a large stream, flowing through a mountainous and splendidly wooded country, which is the most magnificent I saw in Africa. It has numerous smaller feeders. Its navigation is unfortunately interrupted by the great Eugenie or Samba Nagoshi fall; but it is quite possible for steamers to reach this fall from the sea; and the upper portion, above the fall, is navigable for the largest class of river steamers during the greater part of the year, and flows through a region the tropical magnificence of which is quite unrivaled, and which abounds in many precious woods, while it is also well calculated for a rich agricultural country. I could not help longing heartily for the day to come when this glorious stream will be alive with the splash of paddle-wheels, and its banks lined with trading and missionary posts. Ebony, bar-wood, and India-rubber, palm-oil, beeswax, and ivory, are the natural products of this region, so far as my limited opportunities allowed me to ascertain. But any tropical crop will grow in this virgin soil; and it needs only the cunning hand and brain of the white man to make this whole tract become a great producing country.

My little knowledge of geology, and the impossibility of carrying heavy specimens, prevented me from making useful observations on the geological structure of this region; and I can only say that micaceous schist, talcose shale, and quartz, are found

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abundantly in the mountains, together with conglomerates and various sandstones, while a red sandstone seems most to abound in the Ashira country. Iron is plentiful; the ore, which is rich, is found cropping out of the ground in many parts. Copper I did not meet with, though it is brought by the Loando negroes from the southern interior to the sea-shore, where it is purchased by Europeans.

The mountain range which I explored on my last journey, and which is laid down on the map as far as my extreme point, or terminus, seems to me, beyond doubt, to be part of a great chain extending nearly across the continent without ever leaving the line of the equator more than two degrees. Not only were the appearances such, as far as I was able to penetrate, but all accounts of the natives and of their slaves tend to make this certain. Some of the slaves of the Apingi are brought from a distance to the eastward which they counted as twenty days' journey; and they invariably protested that the mountains in sight from their present home continue in an uninterrupted chain far beyond their own country—in fact, as far as they knew.

Judging, therefore, from my own examination, and from the most careful inquiries among people of the far interior, I think *there is good reason to believe that an important mountain range divides the continent of Africa nearly along the line of the equator, starting on the west from the range which runs along the coast north and south, and ending in the east, probably, in the southern mountains of Abyssinia, or perhaps terminating abruptly to the north of Captain Burton's Lake Tanganyika.*

In the northern slope of this great range originate probably many of the feeders of the Niger, the Nile, and Lake Tchad; while of the streams rising in the southern slope, it is probable that some join their waters to the Rembo Okanda, the Rembo Ngouyai, and the Congo, and others flow south into the Zambesi, and into the great lake or chain of lakes in the eastern part of Africa.

To this mountain range, so far as I have followed it and ascer

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tained its existence, I propose that the native name, Nkoomoo-nabouali, be given, from the splendid peak which I discovered, and which forms the western point of the range. I think it probable that the impenetrable forests of this mountain range and its savage inhabitants together put a stop to the victorious southward course of the Mohammedan conquest. South of the equator, at any rate, these have never penetrated.

Of the eight years which I have passed in Africa, the present volume contains the record of only the last four, 1856, '7, '8, and '9, which alone were devoted to a systematic exploration of the interior. As a traveler, I had the very great advantages of tolerably thorough acclimation, and a knowledge of the languages and habits of the sea-shore tribes, which proved of infinite service to me among the tribes of the interior, with whom I was in every case able to hold converse, if not by word of mouth, then by a native interpreter with whose language I was familiar.

A brief summary of the results of my four years' travel will perhaps interest the reader. I traveled—always on foot, and unaccompanied by other white men—about 8000 miles. I shot, stuffed, and brought home over 2000 birds, of which more than 60 are new species, and I killed upward of 1000 quadrupeds, of which 200 were stuffed and brought home, with more than 80 skeletons. Not less than 20 of these quadrupeds are species hitherto unknown to science. I suffered fifty attacks of the African fever, taking, to cure myself, over fourteen *ounces* of quinine. Of famine, long-continued exposures to the heavy tropical rains, and attacks of ferocious ants and venomous flies, it is not worth while to speak.

My two most severe and trying tasks were the transportation of my numerous specimens to the sea-shore, and the keeping of a daily journal, both of which involved more painful care than I like even to think of.

The volume now respectfully presented to the public has been written out from my faithfully-kept journals. I have striven only to give a very plain account of a region which is yet virgin ground

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to the missionary and the trader—those twin pioneers of civilization—and which affords a fertile field for the operations of both.

Before closing, it is my duty as well as pleasure to acknowledge gratefully very many kindnesses received from the officers and members of the Boston Society of Natural History, whose cheerfully-given aid greatly lightened for me the tedious task of cataloguing my large collection of specimens of Natural History. Also I owe especial thanks to my friend, Dr. Jeffries Wyman, the eminent Professor of Comparative Anatomy in Harvard University, for much valuable assistance; to Dr. S. Kneeland, the able recording secretary of the Boston Society of Natural History; to the Geographical and Ethnological Societies of New York; to my publishers, Messrs. Harper & Brothers, who have borne with kindly patience the many delays and troubles caused by my inexperience in the labors of authorship; and, lastly, to the many friends whose kind memories were proof against my long absence in Africa, and whose welcome on my return lent additional force to my gratitude to that God who watched over and preserved me in my wanderings.

The long and tedious labor of preparing this book for the press leaves me with the conviction that it is much easier to hunt gorillas than to write about them—to explore new countries than to describe them. In the year which has passed since my return to the United States I have often wished myself back in my African wilds. I can only hope that the reader will not, when he closes the book, think this labor wasted; and with this hope I bid him a friendly farewell.

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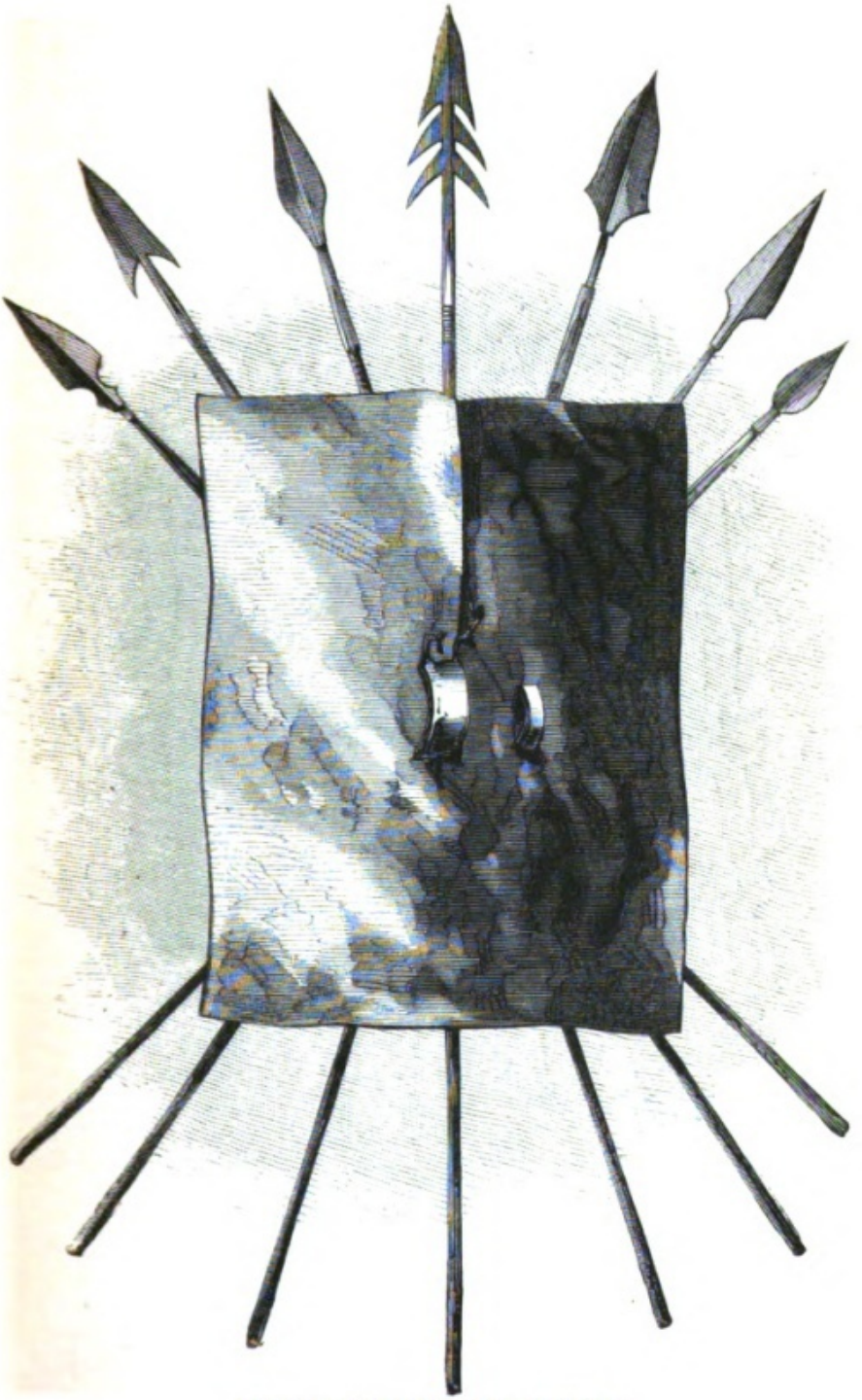

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NDIAYAI, KING OF THE CANNIBALS.

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EXPLORATION AND ADVENTURE

IN

EQUATORIAL AFRICA.

CHAPTER I.

Purpose of my Explorations.—Facilities.—Nature of the Country to be explored.—The Gaboon.—The Mpongwe People.—Their Jealousy of Travelers.—Trade Peculiarities.—Missionaries.—Baraka.—Manner in which the Missionaries teach.—A day's Work on the Station.

I LEFT America for the western coast of Africa in the month of October, 1855. My purpose was to spend some years in the exploration of a region of territory lying between lat. 2° north and 2° south, and stretching back from the coast to the mountain range called the *Sierra del Crystal*, and beyond as far as I should be able to penetrate.

The coast-line of this region is dotted here and there with negro villages, and at a few points "factories" have been established for the prosecution of general trade. The power and knowledge of the white man extend to but a very few miles from the coast, and the interior was still a *terra incognita*. Of its tribes, several of whom were reported cannibals, nothing was known, though terrible stories were told of their dark superstitions and untamable ferocity; of its productions only a rough guess could be made from the scant supplies of ivory, ebony, bar-wood, and caoutchouc which were transmitted to the coast by the people inhabiting the river banks. Of the natural history, that which interested me most, sufficient was known to assure me that here was a field worthy of every effort of an explorer and naturalist.

This unexplored region was the home of the fierce, untamable *gorilla*, that remarkable ape which approaches nearest, in physical conformation and in certain habits, to man, and whose uncon-

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querable ferocity has made it the terror of the bravest native hunters—an animal, too, of which hitherto naturalists and the civilized world knew so little that the name even was not found in most natural histories. Here, too, in these dense woods, were to be found—if the natives told aright—the nest-building nshiego, an ape next in the scale to the gorilla; several varieties of other apes; hippopotami and manatees, or sea-cows, in the rivers; and birds and beasts of many and various kinds, many entirely unknown to us, in the forests and among the hills.

To ascend the various rivers, hunt in the woods, and acquaint myself alike with the haunts and habits of the gorilla, and with the superstitions, customs, and modes of life of the black tribes, who had not hitherto been visited by white men: this was one object of my present visit to the African coast. Another purpose I had in view was to ascertain if in the interior, among the mountainous ranges in which the rivers took their rise, there was not to be found a region of country fertile and populous, and, at the same time, healthy, where the missionaries, who now suffer and die on the low coast, could work in safety and to advantage, and where might be established profitable trading-stations, which would benefit alike whites and natives.

Several years' residence on the coast, where my father had formerly a factory, had given me a knowledge of the languages, habits, and peculiarities of the coast natives, which I hoped to find serviceable in my interior explorations, and had also sufficed to inure my constitution in some degree to the severities of an African hot season, or at least to familiarize me with the best means for preserving health and life against the deadly fevers of *the coast*.

The Gaboon River, which takes its rise among the Sierra del Crystal mountains, empties its sluggish waters into the Atlantic a few miles north of the equator. Its mouth forms a bay, which is the finest harbor on the west coast; and here on the right bank the French formed a settlement and built a fort in the year 1842. It was under the protection of this fort that my father for several years carried on a trade with the natives, and here I gained my first knowledge of Africa and my first acquaintance with the Gaboon tribes.

When I returned now, after an absence of some years, my arrival was hailed with joy by my former acquaintances among the blacks, who thought that I had come back to trade. The ne-

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groes of the west coast are the most eager and the shrewdest traders I have ever met; and they were overjoyed at the prospect of dealing with, and perhaps cheating, an old friend like myself. Their disappointment was great, therefore, when I was obliged to inform them that I had come with no goods to sell, but with the purpose to explore the country back, of which I had heard so many wonderful stories from them, and to hunt wild birds and beasts.

At first they believed I was joking. When they saw landed from the vessel which brought me no "trade," but only an outfit of all things necessary for a hunter's life in the African wilds, they began perforce to believe in my stated purpose. Then their amazement and perplexity knew no bounds.

Some thought I was out of my senses, and pitied my father, whom they all knew, for being troubled with such a good-for-nothing son.

Some thought I had ulterior objects, and were alarmed lest I should secretly try to wrest the trade of the interior out of their hands.

These Mpongwes, or coast tribes, hold in their hands, as will be explained farther on, the trade with the back country of the Gaboon River; and the slightest suspicion that I was about to interfere with this profitable monopoly sufficed to create great terror in their trade-loving souls. They surrounded me, each with his tale of the horrors and dangers of a voyage "up the country," asserting that I would be eaten up by cannibals, drowned in rivers, devoured by tigers and crocodiles, crushed by elephants, upset by hippopotami, or waylaid and torn to pieces by the gorilla.

But when I convinced them that I had no designs upon their trade, and that my purposed travels and hunts would not affect their interests, all but a few steadfast old friends left me to my fate.

As I intended to remain a little time on the Gaboon to more perfectly acclimate myself, I took up my residence among my friends of many years, the American missionaries, whose station is at Baraka, eight miles from the mouth of the river. Here I found a welcome in the hospitable home of my friend, the Rev. William Walker, and was able to enjoy for a little while longer the comforts of civilized life and the consolation of a Christian social circle, which were soon to be left behind me for a long time.

Baraka is the head station of the American Board of Foreign

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Missions on the Gaboon River, and, indeed, the only mission the board has as yet on the western coast. It was established in 1842 by Rev. J. L. Wilson.

Baraka is a Mpongwe word, derived from *baracoon*, a slave factory or inclosure. Strangely enough, the very site whence now the Gospel is taught to these benighted Africans, and where their children are instructed in the knowledge and duties of Christianity and civilized life—this very place was once, and not many years ago, the site of a slave factory, where the cruel slave-trade was carried on with much energy and success.

Baraka is situated at the summit of a beautiful hill, distant a few hundred yards from the shore, and about eight miles above the river's mouth. The native villages surround the base of the hill, and are scattered along the river bank, and are thus easily accessible to the missionaries, who visit them at all times, and preach to the natives several times a week.

The missionary grounds are spacious, and are surrounded with a noble hedge of fragrant lime-trees. The buildings, which are mostly of bamboo, which is the best building material on this part of the coast, consist of two dwellings occupied by the missionary families; the church building, which has some fine shade-trees in front; the storehouse, the schoolhouse, a little building containing the missionary library, houses where the children attached to the mission are lodged; and, finally, the kitchen—kitchens being in the tropics necessarily separate from the dwellings—and the other necessary offices, among which figure fowl-houses, etc. Back of the houses is a fine orchard, containing various fruit-trees, all planted by the missionaries, as were also the fine cocoanut, mango, and other trees which are scattered about the premises, and beneath whose grateful shade the houses are built.

The missionary establishment begins its day with prayers, conducted, for the benefit of the children, in the Mpongwe language.

After prayers the girls and boys clear up their dormitories and the school-rooms, and arrange every thing for the day's labors. This is carried on under the superintendence of the missionary ladies.

Next comes breakfast, when the children are arranged about the tables in their neat dresses, and taught to eat after the manner of civilized people.

A little before nine o'clock the ringing of a bell calls the chil-

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dren who live at home in the villages to assemble in the school-room, and here, presently, the work of instruction goes busily on, being begun with prayers and the singing of a hymn in the native tongue. The missionaries and their wives are here assisted by native teachers, who are able to take charge of the less advanced classes. The children are taught in their native tongue first, and after mastering their A B C go on to reading the Scriptures in the Mpongwe. Then follow lessons in geography, arithmetic, history, and writing, and English lessons. Many of the scholars are bright and well advanced, reading English well, and having a good understanding of history and geography, and even writing in English. There is, of course, much attention given to religious instruction; and, by reading, explanations, and inculcation of Bible precepts, efforts are made to settle the rising generation firmly in the great life-principles of the religion of Christ.

It is only the children on whom it may be hoped the labors of the missionaries can have very important effects. The older natives are dull, lazy, and distrustful. They adhere to their vile superstitions, and are with difficulty influenced. If they come to church, it is too often out of curiosity, or to please the preacher, or from some fancied advantage to themselves. The children, on the contrary, as all children, are bright, docile, easily trained; and in these the hope of Christianizing Africa rests.

On two or three afternoons in the week the girls are collected in a sewing-circle, where the ladies of the mission instruct them in the use of the needle, and practice them in making their own dresses and clothing for their brothers.

Several times duiing the week there are prayer-meetings, when the word of God is explained to the heathen who attend.

Saturday is a holiday for the children, who then play, and prepare themselves for the Sabbath. Sunday, finally, is the great day of the week; then the bell calls all who will come together in the little bamboo church. The missionary children and employés attend, dressed in their best; and even the heathen of the village follow this custom, and are found in church with their best garments, perhaps their only ones, on. There the preacher speaks to them of the wisdom and goodness of God, and all, heathen and Christian, join in singing praises to His holy name. The audience is generally attentive and interested. But the positive success of the mission is so far not great. How should it be? To bring

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light out of such darkness, to remove the superstitions, the ignorance, the idleness and wickedness in which these poor heathen are steeped is a labor of many years. Many times, doubtless, my poor friends the missionaries are discouraged at the slight result of their hard labor; but they do their best and wisely leave the rest to God, knowing that He works in his own good time, and often effects great ends with slightest means.

I can not close this chapter without recording my gratitude to the Rev. Wm. Walker, missionary of the American Board on the Gaboon River, whose house was my home during my stay in Africa, and from whom I received very many kindnesses.

MPONGWE WOMAN, SHOWING THE MANNER OF DRESSING HAIR.

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CHAPTER II.

The Gaboon People. — Mysterious Disappearance of African Tribes. — Mpongwe Villages.—Houses, how built.—A Mpongwe Interior.—Costume.—An African Trader.—Monopolies.—The commission Business among the Negroes.—"Trust."—Extensive System of Credit.—Native Jealousy.—A Day with an African Trader.—Time of no value.—Mpongwe Coasting-trade.—Their Vessels.—Products of the Gaboon.—The Ivory-trade.

THE object of my stay at this time (January, 1856) was to be thoroughly acclimated before setting out on my interior explorations. I had known the Gaboon country and people for several years, but took occasion at this time to study closely the habits and customs of this tribe—the Mpongwe—who, once numerous, are now, like so many of the African tribes, from various reasons, entirely disappearing.

The causes for this mysterious and, to some extent, unaccountable extermination of certain tribes, who die out, leaving no mark behind them, I shall consider in some future chapter. The fact is patent to every observer.

The Mpongwe are a branch of one of the great families of the negro race, which has moved gradually from the head-waters of the Nazareth down toward the sea-shore, extending its limits meantime to the north and south, till now they are found from the Gaboon River on the north to Cape St. Catherine on the south. A portion have taken possession of the sea-shore, and others are located inland. They have probably taken the place of other tribes who have disappeared in the strange way in which even the Mpongwe are now gradually lessening, while the Ndina tribe is nearly gone, only three persons remaining of what was once a numerous people. They die, and little more can be said.

All the divisions of the Mpongwe speak the same language, with a difference of but a few words; though others again, sandwiched between, speak an entirely different tongue. The migrations of the great African nations can not be understood till we know more about the interior. I know only that there are eight different tribes now settled along the coast south of the Gaboon

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and in the interior, who speak the same language and have evidently a common origin.

The Mpongwe inhabit mostly the right side of the Gaboon for about thirty miles up. They live in villages, which are generally located with particular regard to the trading facilities afforded by the position, for these negroes are inveterate traders—in fact, the most intelligent and acute merchants on the coast.

The Mpongwe villages, though not extensive, are the neatest and best arranged I have seen in Africa. They have generally but one main street, on both sides of which the houses are built. Sometimes there are a few short cross-streets. In a considerable village, the main street is often 20 yards wide and 200 yards long. The houses, of course, vary in size according to the wealth of the owner. They are built of a kind of bamboo, which is obtained from a species of palm very plentiful hereabouts, and whose leaves also furnish them mats for the roofs. Indeed, this palm is one of the most generally useful products of the country to the negroes.

The houses are always of quadrangular form, and from 20 to 100 feet in length or breadth. The principal room is in the centre. The floor is of clay, which is pounded hard, and by long use becomes a hard and clean flooring. Both houses and street are neatly kept.

The walls are built up by first driving stakes into the ground, and to these stakes neatly tying the split bamboos. One set is tied outside and another inside, and the crevices which are left between are made close with the leaves of the palm-tree. Thus the walls are smooth and glossy, and perfectly clean. Near the creeks they get a large yellowish-white bamboo, which has a particularly fine appearance.

The building of such a house is a matter of considerable importance to a Mpongwe man. He has great quantities of mpavo —the matting for the roof—made up ready, then collects a sufficiency of the bamboo, which has sometimes to be brought a considerable distance up the river, and finally, getting all his slaves together, marks out his ground-plan, drives in his stakes, and puts up the walls. Then comes the question of doors and windows, in which each man exercises his own taste, which gives a certain pleasing variety to the outsides. As for the interior, the various rooms are fitted up with all the riches of their owner;

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and on the coast it is not uncommon to see them adorned with looking-glasses, chairs, tables, sofas, and very often a Yankee clock.

There is a great contrast between such neat dwellings and the low, circular, dark, and dirty hovels of the negroes between the Niger and Senegambia, with their rude high-peaked roofs and clay walls.

They are the best-looking people I have seen, looking very much like the Mandigoes; of ordinary size and with pleasant negro features, but handsomer than the Congo tribes. The men wear a shirt, generally of English, French, or American calico, over which is wrapped a square cloth, which falls to the ankles. To this is added a *straw* hat for the head. Only the king is allowed to wear the *silk* hat, of American or European manufacture. The wealthier men and chiefs, however, are fond of dress, and, when they can afford it, delight to show themselves in a bright military costume, sword and all.

The chief, and, in most cases, only garment of the women is a square cloth, which is wrapped about the body, and covers them from above the hips to just below the knees. On their bare legs and arms they delight to wear great numbers of brass rings, often bearing from twenty-five to thirty pounds of brass on each ankle in this way. This ridiculous vanity greatly obstructs their locomotion, and makes their walk a clumsy waddle.

Both sexes are extremely fond of ornaments and of perfumery, with which they plentifully besprinkle themselves, with little regard to kind.

The most characteristic point about the Mpongwe—indeed of all the negro tribes I have seen—is their great eagerness and love for trade. My friends the Mpongwe live by trade. Their position at and near the mouth of the Gaboon gives them such facilities and such a command of the interior as they know but too well how to use and misuse to their own advantage.

Let me here give the reader an idea of African commerce. The rivers, which are the only highways of the country, are, of course, the avenues by which every species of export and import must be conveyed from and to the interior tribes. Now the river banks are possessed by different tribes. Thus, while the Mpongwe hold the mouth and some miles above, they are succeeded by the Shekiani, and these again by other tribes, to the

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number of almost a dozen, before the Sierra del Crystal mountains are reached. Each of these tribes assumes to itself the privilege of acting as go-between or middle-man to those next to it, and charges a heavy percentage for this office; and no infraction of this rule is permitted under penalty of war. Thus a piece of ivory or ebony may belong originally to a negro in the far interior, and if he wants to barter it for "white man's trade," he dares not take it to a market himself. If he should be rash enough to attempt such a piece of enterprise his goods would be confiscated, and he, if caught, fined by those whose monopoly he sought to break down, or most likely sold into slavery.

He is obliged by the laws of trade to intrust it to some fellow in the next tribe nearer than him to the coast. He, in turn, disposes of it to the next chief or friend, and so ivory, or ebony, or bar-wood, or whatever, is turned and turned, and passes through probably a dozen hands ere it reaches the factory of the trader on the coast.

This would seem to work against the white trader by increasing the price of products. But this is only half the evil. Although the producer sold his ivory, and though it was resold a dozen times, all this trade was only a *commission* business with no advances. In fact, the first holder has *trusted* each successive dispenser with his property without any equivalent or "collateral" security. Now, when the last black fellow disposes of this piece of ebony or ivory to the white merchant or captain, he retains, in the first place, a very liberal percentage of the returns for his valuable services, and turns the remainder over to his next neighbor above. *He*, in turn, takes out a commission for *his* trouble and passes on what is left; and so, finally, a very small remainder—too often nothing at all—is handed over to the poor fellow who has inaugurated the speculation or sent the tusk.

Any one can see the iniquity of this system and the fatal clog it throws on all attempts at the building up of a legitimate commerce in a country so rich in many products now almost indispensable to civilized nations. The poor interior tribes are kept by their neighbors in the profoundest ignorance of what is done on the coast. They are made to believe the most absurd and horrid stories as to the ferocity, the duplicity, and the cunning of the white traders. They are persuaded that the rascally middle-men are not only in constant danger of their lives by their intercourse

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with the whites, but that they do not make any profit on the goods which they good-naturedly pass on to a market, so that I have known one of these scoundrels, after having appropriated a large share of the poor remainder of returns for a venture of ivory, actually, by a pitiful story, beg a portion of what he had handed over to his unsuspicious client. Each tribe cheats its next neighbor above, and maligns its next neighbor below. A talent for slandering is, of course, a first-rate business talent; and the harder stories one can tell of his neighbors below the greater profit he will make on his neighbor above.

The consequence is that the interior tribes—who own the most productive country—have little or no incentive to trade, or to gather together the stores of ivory, bar-wood, ebony, etc., for which they get such small prices, and these at no certain intervals, but often after long periods, even years elapsing sometimes before a final settlement is found convenient. Thus these are discouraged, and perforce remain in their original barbarism and inactivity.

The trade in slaves is carried on in exactly the same way, except that sometimes an infraction of trade-laws, or some disturbance on account of witchcraft, causes a war between two tribes in the commission business, when, of course, each side takes all it can of the opposite and ships them direct to the coast—to the barracoons, or slave dépôts, of which I shall have something more detailed to say farther on.

There are, however, other obstacles to the prosecution of a regular commercial enterprise even by the shrewder among the negroes. It is not permitted that any member of a tribe shall get into his hands more than his share of the trade. It occurred some years ago to a shrewd Mpongwe fellow that in trade transactions honesty might be the best policy, and he followed the suggestion so well that presently both the whites and the interior natives threw a very considerable trade into his honest hands. But no sooner was this observed than he was threatened with poisoning, accused of witchcraft, and such a hullaballoo raised about his ears that he was forced to actually refuse the trade offered him, and, in a measure, retire from business to save his life.

More recently still, there were three or four men in the river who had obtained, by long good conduct, quite a character for honesty, and also, in consequence, got a good deal of business. At last a captain came for a load of bar-wood, and declared that he

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