

TO KUMASSI WITH SCOTT - CHAPTER X

Buntama Described • Human Sacrifices • The Fall of Fetishism
Africa for the Africans • Samory • Fetish Trees Destroyed
English Impressions • The Future of Ashanti
A Midnight Reconnaissance • Prempeh's Country House

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PALAVER, the native levy marched to Bantama and surrounded the Royal Mausoleum and fetish houses. When these were broken into, nothing was found except a row of empty brass coffins in the Mausoleum. The contents of the houses, which were of great value, had all been removed with the sacred bones of the Kings, before the capital was invested. The practice in Ashanti, when a person dies, is to bury all the personal belongings, that they may accompany the defunct to the next world. Before burial, each article has to be "killed," i.e., broken, to enable its spirit to "shuffle off this mortal coil."

On the decease of an important personage, slaves have to be sacrificed, guns and spears snapped, bow strings carefully cut, arrows split, and the odd utensils, as plates, calabashes, &c, cracked; and thus the spirit of the departed native makes its exit in a manner befitting its rank, attended by the spirits of every needful commodity, from slaves to the deceased's ditty pipe. The Ashantis have no belief in award or punishment in the future state, though the fetish power looks sharply after its adherents in this life. Fetishism is a religion only in the literal sense of that word, which means "fearing the gods." There is no question of right or wrong in their creed, for the fetish is a spirit, or combination of spirits, manifested in material things, and which is ever ready to seriously injure unless handsomely propitiated. In short, by means of fetishism kings hold their despotic sway, and the priests draw large revenues, and exercise an enormous influence. In its tenets there is no question of doing good here and being rewarded in the next world, and in this respect, it differs greatly from the lowest forms of Hindoo idolatry, for even the Thugs professed to think they would reap a rich posthumous reward for every victim they secured with the sacred noose and pickaxe of Kali.

These fetish houses at Bantama had doubtlessly contained rich treasure belonging to the defunct Ashanti monarchs, and this would be looked upon as sacred by the natives; but it was not to be found, having been previously removed. Outside the chief buildings were various food offerings placed for the refreshment of the departed chiefs, and the door was firmly cemented up. These offerings showed that the people were unaware of the sacrilege committed, and the villainous priests may have surreptitiously removed the valuables for their own use, months before the Expedition was thought of.

Near the buildings stood the sacred banyan tree, with a large metal basin fixed below. Beneath the shade of this tree, human fetish sacrifices took place on regular festivals, slaves being barbarously executed as offerings to the manes of departed

kings. These festivals took place quarterly, when the King paid his periodical visit to show his respect to the deified shades of the departed, and also to satiate his real, and their imaginary, blood-lust, by the decapitation of twenty victims, whose blood was collected in the sacred bowl.

The fetish village was speedily set on fire, and the tree blown up, the bowl falling as trophy to the popular commander of the levy. The ground round the tree was saturated and foetid with human blood, and the very roots were stained and impregnated with red corpuscles.

Some specially interested gentlemen, misled by the Ansahs, publicly stated that human sacrifice was unknown in Kumassi. The Princes (*par nobile fratrum!*) had serious thoughts, when in London, of bringing an action for slander against Governor Griffith and Sir Francis Scott, for stating that Prempeh indulged in the mild dissipation of occasional head-chopping; and thereby casting a reflection on the character and the integrity of the Ashanti Embassy then in London. The solicitor acting for these masquerading princes and forgers, found he could not weave a single mesh of the legal net required for a *prima facie* case, though he had twisted and contorted every clause of the laws relating to libel, and waded through briefs innumerable, in the hope of finding a precedent. He adopted, however, the moderately wise course of writing to the Press on the subject, and by a striking coincidence, the same week, abundant proof of recent sacrifice arrived by mail from Accra, the reports being voluntarily furnished by eye-witnesses.

Every day that we spent in Kumassi, also brought to light fresh evidences of the continuance of the practice, though the people had been warned, under pain of fearful penalties, not to give any information to the white men. By means of an interpreter I talked with many of them freely on other topics; but one had only to touch on anything connected with fetish or sacrifice, and they instantly glanced round much disturbed. "The priests are so wise and will tell the white man all he wishes to know, but we must not say words about it;" and the dark native minds fully believed the priest knew every thought they had, or word they uttered. There were fugitive Ashantis on the coast, however, who were not afraid to speak, and native traders who visited Kumassi with goods, and sometimes forfeited their lives for their temerity, have brought reports from time to time, of strange and bloody doings of Prempeh & Co. Much information was given me by an intelligent and well educated young captain or chief from Accra. He was in charge of his people serving as carriers to the Expedition, and proved to be a perfect mine of information in respect of West African habits and customs.

There were two ways of evading sacrifice after a person had been selected for execution. One was to repeat the "King's Oath," a form of declaring allegiance to the sovereign; or the intended victim must break away from his captors and reach a certain spot on the outskirts of the town, which formed a sanctuary or place of refuge. Another subject would then have to be selected, and the escaped victim would be free for the time being. These seemingly merciful provisos were not available for those who were to be executed for an offence, real or imaginary, against

the King, and if he wanted a victim, he had not far to look for an excuse. Even the person who unwittingly passed under the shade of a fetish tree was condemned to death. To prevent intended victims getting clear by either of the before-mentioned methods, the executioners sprang on the poor wretch from behind, and thrust a long stiletto through his cheeks and tongue to prevent him speaking. A long wooden skewer was then thrust through the muscles of his arms, fixing them behind, and in this horrible condition his legs were put in irons to keep him fast until he was wanted for execution.

On the death of any great personage, slaves were immediately sacrificed on the threshold. If a chief, male victims were selected; but if a great lady died, females were slaughtered, often young virgins of tender age. The burial was marked by another scene of bloodshed, and more victims were chosen and executed, one of the mourners being sometimes seized and killed, if it suited the priest's caprice to further amuse the crowd. Quite recently, Aframi, King of Gyeso died, and Prempeh had six men beheaded at the burial to "wash his grave," as the custom is called.

When the King or any of the royal family of Kumassi died, enormous sacrifices took place, and on the death of the King's aunt, 400 slaves were tortured and executed for the supreme joy and edification of the people. In these large executions, the executioner in his frenzy would often seize an unsuspecting onlooker he had a grudge against, or had been bribed to remove, and the victim's head would be hacked off amid the plaudits of the onlookers. Fiendish tortures were also often resorted to, especially with prisoners of war, when the executioners vied with each other in devising fearful methods of torture, such as flaying alive, plucking out eyes, and even more original devices. When Prempeh ascended the throne enormous sacrifices also took place to celebrate the event.



AN EXECUTIONER.

Human sacrifices were offered to avert threatening calamities, and even as the troops invested the capital, two young slave girls had their throats quietly cut in the confines of the palace, their blood being poured out as a libation to the gods to act against the invading white man.

Sir Brandford Griffith closed his dispatch of February 19th., 1895, to the Marquis of Ripon, with these words:

"I trust your Lordship will pardon me for placing this ghastly record of savage atrocity, barbarity and reckless sacrifice of human life before you for I know it will shock you, My Lord; but all things considered it has appeared to me that under existing circumstances, it was my duty to place before your Lordship in a connected form, the account contained in this Dispatch, of the savage, cruel and ruthless conduct of the King of Kumassi, and of those supporting him in his atrocious and murderous career."

In these pages I have given accounts of a few atrocities gathered from various sources, and must apologize to my readers for the sickening details; but so much talk was made at the time on this "totally uncalled for" Expedition, that it is well the true nature of the Kumassi Rulers be made known. The great wonder is that the bloody capital had remained so long. It has only been during the last few months that affairs in Ashanti excited comment; but for a considerable time past, the Liverpool and Manchester Chambers of Commerce had urged on the Government the necessity for strong action. On the Gold Coast itself, also, public opinion had been expressing itself in both the missionary journal and the regular newspaper. The following extract from the "Gold Coast Chronicle" savours rather much of the editorial "We," and the style is a good specimen of the work of a coloured journalist. However, the pith of the remarks is true, and not out of place at this juncture when little more than a year had elapsed to see the fulfilment of the Editor's dearest wishes as in this extract from the Gold Coast Chronicle, Accra, Friday, 30th. November, 1894:

"So many reports are afloat with regard to Ashanti at present, that one does not really know what he is to believe, although it is universally admitted that the public chest must suffer if something of a decisive character does not take place, as there have been no end of expeditions to the "bush" in late years, and no sooner does one expedition return from Cape Coast than another is sent to the same place, and still we have the greatest unrest conceivable in the interior. What are we all about? Can no one open his mouth and speak? If we were wise in our generation, we would just march our troops direct to Kumassi, and once and for all, put an end to fruitless missions to the interior. If after we reached Kumassi there was the slightest disposition on the part of the Ashantis to fight, we would then be afforded another opportunity of giving King Prempeh and his followers some adequate conception of the resources of civilisation. In plain words, we must go straight to Kumassi and occupy or annex it, declaring Ashanti a British protectorate. A District Commissioner with some 200 or 300 Houssas could be

left in Kumassi to ensure the maintenance of order. This, surely, would not be a difficult task for us. In fact, it is almost impossible to understand the infatuation which has led the local Government so far into so many blunders with regard to Ashanti. To tell the truth, we appear to have been playing with the question of having a firm and vigorous policy in regard to Ashanti all along, and we must be ready to confess this.

We were told last week that Prince John Osoo Ansah was coming down to Cape Coast with some 500 followers on his way to London, but he has not reached the sea-board yet, from what we can gather, and the Governor is now waiting in Cape Coast for him, we believe; and if the information that we received a few days ago is to be relied upon, the Prince in question may suddenly alter his intentions, which would probably imply further waste of public money. There is no spectacle, hardly, more humiliating than this! Here we are being led about like pigs by Ashantis! The latter know full well our most vulnerable or weakest parts. When they wish us to pitch away a few thousands, they simply create some little row, and threaten to do this, that, and the other, and forthwith an expedition is sent to the "bush" to await the turn of events. Certainly we are being fought with weapons of a most amusing description by the Ashantis. The demands on our chest, in consequence of the constantly recurring expeditions, are getting so numerous that before long, at this rate, we shall have very little money left. Possibly the King of Ashanti thinks he can more conveniently injure us by placing us constantly under the necessity of sending expeditions to the interior; and thus contributing towards the ultimate exhaustion of our resources. If every expedition costs, say, 5,000, 10 must necessarily cost 50,000, and so on! It is time for us to see that we have not too much money to pitch away. We should like to hear of some demonstration of force which will be final. If there are 800 Houssas in this Colony, send them all to Ashanti with the Union Jack, and let the whole of that country be declared once and for all a British protectorate in spite of all opposition.

Our interior policy has been throughout a failure, and had the 1883 Administration possessed the good sense to avail itself of the offer that was made, the whole of Ashanti might now be under our flag, and during the past 11 years we should not have heard of fruitless missions and unnecessary expeditions to the "bush" so frequently, for in 1883 the Ashantis expressed a willingness to become British subjects, the King having sent down to the late Governor Rowe to ask whether Her Majesty's Government would effect some arrangements in the matter, and thus put an end to the quarrels, while avoiding all future misunderstanding or unpleasantness. In fact, we should not like to assume any responsibility for the acts of the Government in the year in question, for all round we had blunders; and it was just about the same time that Little Popo was also offered to us, but which the Germans, through our want of foresight and supineness, ultimately seized; it is difficult to see how we could have been very alive to our interests in those days, while manifesting so much indifference in

matters pertaining to the extension of territory; but whatever we might have done in the past, it is obvious that we are being made now to suffer for it. But we can certainly atone for our past misdeeds by wiser action in the future. Every year has its lessons and they should not be forgotten. There is, however, a fair opportunity now to take Ashanti. Shall we avail ourselves of it, or shall we not? Are we for ever going to remain dead to our interests?

The traders who are living in the regions behind Ashanti would be glad to hear that our flag was in Kumassi, as they could then come right down to the sea-board to trade without any interruption, and be under no necessity to deal with us, as they have hitherto done, through the Ashantis, and the latter have heretofore occupied, commercially, the position of "middlemen." The Jebus were made to suffer for acting as "middlemen." And the Ashantis must certainly not be considered as saints when compared with the Jebus. It strikes us forcibly that when the inquiry is really made, there will be found some "balance" in favour of the Jebus, who have never been known to have been half so atrocious as the Ashantis. The Lagos trade was not injured so much as the Gold Coast trade has been by the Ashantis when war was declared against the King of Jebu. Is the British Government afraid of the Ashantis? If it is not, why should King Prempeh be permitted to do such things with impunity that no other monarch in Western Africa would be suffered to do? As middlemen, to continue the indictment, the Ashantis have almost ruined our trade. They are perpetually having wars, too, among themselves, and it comes to this, that they will not, whenever the civil wars break out, come to the Coast to trade or allow any of the people living in the regions behind their country to come down. It is a reproach, moreover, to the civilisation of this century, that any savage King should be suffered by the British Government to do what King Prempeh is daily doing. In a previous issue we also referred to the periodical slaughter of men, women, and children in Kumassi, and the constant sacrifices, and all notwithstanding the existence of the Treaty of Fomona!"

In the Gold Coast Methodist Times of August 31st. 1894, there was a statement under the head of "Ashanti (from a correspondent) Coronation of Prempeh. Magnificent Display of Royalty", that:

"On the 4th of June last, Prempeh, who had been elected to the Stool in 1888, was formally installed King of Ashanti and placed on the Golden Stool, amidst magnificent display of royalty at the Ashanti metropolis. The election of Prempeh, some six years ago, occasioned much serious contention and bloodshed in the kingdom, which led one of its principal Chiefs, Osai Esibey of Kokofu, to quit his district and flee to the Protectorate. Among the influential Chiefs present at Kumassi on the grand day mentioned, were Asafu Buakyi Bantuma Ewua, Etsia Yaw Buakyi of Bekwai, and Yaw Sapon of Dwabin, who turned up in state, making Kumassi look like it was on some memorable days gone by. After the

coronation festivities, the Chiefs and King with his Counsellors are said to have devoted full two weeks to deliberations as to how order and peace could be restored in the kingdom, and Ashanti regain its past glory and renown. The assembly dispersed about the 24th of June; it having been agreed to levy from the nation an amount of money to send to the British Government for the giving back to the Kingdom of Esibey of Kokofu and Nkansa of Adansi, Chiefs who have taken refuge in the Protectorate. To this end 40 pereguins (£324) was to be raised by each of the great Chiefs in their various districts."

The next paragraph, headed: "Dreadful Slaughter of Human Beings," ran as follows:

"It being customary with the new King of Ashanti on his enthronement to observe a general funeral custom for royal relatives deceased, Prempeh also being now installed, kept the hereditary custom by slaying some 400 human beings in cold blood in honour of the royal dead, each of his Chiefs bringing him presents of human victims from their provinces except the Chief of Bekwai, who brought gold dust instead of human victims, stating his intention to conform to British custom and practice, for, said he, 'My ancestors did not prosper by their human sacrifices, and I am determined not to follow their practices.'"

A trader also gives a fearful account of a "custom" he saw in Kumassi in the previous November. It was held by General Amanquanta of Ashanti in memory of General Awan, killed in the civil war with Asibi and Kumassi. To celebrate the anniversary, eight Nkoranza male captives, and one unfortunate Princess, daughter of the late King Kari, were slaughtered in cold blood. Prempeh attended this blood feast in person.

The following is an account given by Mahama Dankawrah, a young Houssa, who joined the force with his friend Bapio, when they reached British territory, after escaping from Ashanti. He states:

"About 12 years ago I came from my country (Kawrah) to Attabubu to trade. While there Chief AH caught me and sold me as a slave to one Kwadjo Mensah at Nsuta. I was there only two days when my master sold me for a pereguin (£8) to one Cucoe Tumfo at Agogo. I was employed by Cucoe trading with the Coast, and out of the money I earned, my master was able to buy Bapio Grunshi (who is here with me) at Mampon for £8, about four years ago. After the soldiers came about three weeks or so our master asked us to go to Quarmin with him to bring some of his sheep which were at Quarmin back here. We went with him there. When we arrived he took us to the King's house and sold us for £7 each to the King. After the King bought us he put me in irons, but not Bapio, for 12 days. I tried all I could to break the irons, and managed to do so after some time, when I ran away with Bapio to Agogo to Mr. Harri Tenuha. About two years ago the present Nsuta King's mother died at Konkrompe (near Attabubu), but they did not bring the remains back to Nsuta till a fortnight ago. The day that the remains

arrived at the town we heard the beating of the great drum (Tumpang). I was at Quarmin in irons, but Bapio had been sent to Nsuta to bring meat, and was going to see what the matter was, when a man told him that the King would kill him if he went to look on, as he was a stranger, so he did not go. A man told Bapho that it was slaves who were sacrificed on this occasion. He does not know how many, but whenever the Ashantis beat Tumpang, it means that there is to be sacrificing. While I was lying in irons I overheard the executioner in the next room tell a friend that he had just killed seven slaves. The same night I broke my irons, and Bapio and I ran away. Some time ago a Kumassi man died at Quarmin. His family came about 16 days ago to Quarmin to get the remains. The same day they bought an old female slave and sacrificed her there; we saw the headless body of this woman lying in the street the same day, the head having been taken by the family above-mentioned to Kumassi, as the custom is."

After Prempeh's capture, the streets were filled with flying Ashantis, taking what they could carry, to the bush. A group of priests and fetish men crowded together in anxious deliberation in a temple, on the north side of the town. Vile wretches, murderers, capable of any deed of cowardly cunning. Were these low looking creatures real humanity? The humanity which God created? Surely not! They were more like apes than human beings. The very leers and contortions of those lean faces, as their owners wildly gesticulated, resembled the grin of the skulls that we kicked into light when we walked through the dank grass of the horrible fetish grove. Their palaver did not last long, and priests and executioners cleared to the bush, though in strict justice, it seemed a pity some at least were not hung to the adjoining fetish trees, as carrion for the vultures they could provide food for no longer. Some of these "Ju-Ju" men, trained from childhood in the mystery and ways of the forest, and taught carefully all that has been handed down in their profession for generations, are not altogether imposters, and know secrets which are not known in the Western World of Science; but all that counts as nothing against their bloody and devilish rites.

The immense fetish trees were blown up one after another, and the sacred houses and temples set on fire, or razed to the ground, and a cry of despair went up from the miserable creatures watching from the surrounding forest. "Our fetish is gone and our gods have deserted us!" In a few hours they had a practical lesson on the fallacy of fetishism that years of patient missionary labour could not have taught them. The day before, they would have declared that no power on earth could prevail against the gods of Ashanti; but when they saw Prempeh, the natural head of fetish, forced to humble himself and afterwards be taken prisoner, when the sacred houses and blood-washed trees, the very abode of the spirits, were destroyed by the white man's powder, and still the gods availed them nothing, their faith was shaken. It was a trial of orthodoxy that even the negro mind could not stand.

A mission is being founded again in Kumassi by the Wesleyans, under the personal direction of Revs. Dennis Kemp and Somerville. This mission is to embrace

Ashanti, and will not be confined to the capital alone; but a large sum is needed to put it on a firm and satisfactory basis. I have referred to the splendid work done by Methodists on the Gold Coast, and as this is simply an extension of the work there, I trust among the large amounts annually subscribed for Foreign Missions, ample funds will find their way into these channels, where, I am convinced, good use will be made of the money subscribed. The native mind has never been so ripe for instruction, and with their belief in fetish shaken to the very foundation, the mission will be a great blessing and success.

The Ashantis, with all their blood lust and cruelty, are a superior race to the Fanti, and much of the Ashanti savagery and butchery lay at the door of the rulers and priests. When the people have regained confidence, with judicious government and wise teaching, the Ashantis will be creditable allies to Great Britain, and the country a valuable acquisition.

Mr. Labouchere may say "Africa for the Africans," and plead the cause of the negroes being robbed of their land. Let him ask any reliable native resident, where British rule has been firmly established, if he would prefer his own ruler or the present administration, and ninety-nine cases out of a hundred I guarantee the answer would be for a civilized government.

Think for a moment of Kumassi under the bloody rule of a despotic tyrant like Prempeh, the people ground down and degraded with slavery and every other dark form of barbarism, the country in a state of perpetual civil war, and trade - nil.

Under British rule, trade will flourish, slavery and bloodshed are abolished, the people also being instructed in schools, and taught habits of self-respect and cleanliness. Thousands of the natives are rejoicing even now at the downfall of Prempeh.

No doubt in the Congo Free State things are in a most disgraceful condition in the interior, and I heard some heartrending tales from a hammock bearer, who had previously been pressed into the service of the State by Belgian agents in Sierra Leone. As his statements only bear out reports from other sources, they are no doubt true. The natives in this place, so aptly called "King Leopold's White Elephant," are ground down and wickedly oppressed and tortured by the officials of a civilized government. It is time that strong measures were taken to alter the unsatisfactory state of affairs, mainly brought about by young and inexperienced Belgian officers, whose sole aim seems to be extorting goods from the natives, and making money. The poor negroes in those districts have indeed found the rule of the white man anything but a blessing, and one can imagine the sort of oppression under the gallant Major Lothaire and others of his kin.

Ashanti had stood as the great barrier to the development of our West African Colony, and the Expedition had been a brilliant success in fully accomplishing its object, in spite of Mr. Regan's prophecy, published on December 23rd, 1895, and which reached us by the mail that arrived on the same day that the whole thing was satisfactorily settled, and Prempeh captured.

It was interesting to learn that everything had been muddled from the start; also that a Resident might have been fixed and the question permanently settled for a couple of thousand pounds; but happily for the prestige of England, she has not descended to settling State affairs by "Whiteley," or by "Regan" either. If that gentleman had only waited a few weeks, he would have found the means justified the end. There was also much talk of Samory and his intentions, but how the Alamany could attack us at Kumassi it is difficult to say, for their army is chiefly cavalry, who would be useless in the forest, for bush fighting. It is far more likely that Samory will be only too glad to be able to trade extensively with the English. This will naturally take away the monopoly from the firm who now send their agents to trade with the great Mohammedan chief in the Hinterland, as the whole country will be opened up to the traders on the coast. A railway line is to be built from Saltpond which will be joined to Accra and Cape Coast Castle by a coast line. The main line will lead through the valley round the Adansi Hills, across the Ashanti country to the Hinterland beyond.

The limit of the forest is reached 70 miles north of Kumassi, and the country is then healthy and open. Large herds of cattle and horses are owned by the Mohammedan Houssa tribes. The country is rich, the inhabitants a fine race, intelligent and industrious. Samory will no doubt be affected, as one of his best slave markets is now closed in Kumassi; but with fair treatment, judging from his present attitude, he will be rather willing to assist than hinder the British.

The forest land will for ever remain much as it is. The coast tribes are far too indolent to clear, and the climate is too deadly for white men to attempt to work even as overseers, but when a good road has been made from the coast, the timber trade may be greatly developed, as it is now only hindered by the difficulties of transport. There is much gold in the forest, but the climate forbids the white man to disturb the surface of the earth, and stir up the malaria germs; for it is certain death for the European to attempt to prospect.

The gathered loot was sold by auction outside Headquarters, and fancy prices were realized for specially interesting articles, though much of the stuff was not worth picking up.

Everyone in camp turned out to see the enormous fetish tree, facing the market place, destroyed. Charges were inserted all round the massive trunk, the cable was attached, and when everyone had withdrawn to a safe distance, the lever was pressed. There was a dull roar; a complete section about a foot wide was blown away as cleanly as if cut, and the mighty trunk rearing its lofty branches over 150 feet in the air, poised itself for a second, and fell to the earth with a thunder and force that shook the ground, crushing down large trees and part of the sacred grove in its fall, and badly injuring some natives who had gone too close after they had been warned. The enormous stump with its buttresses and gnarled roots was afterwards set on fire, and when darkness fell on the capital the blazing fetish houses and heaps of rubbish, with the black bodies of the levies as they rushed hither and thither, demolishing walls and throwing fresh fuel on the blazing piles, made a

weird and striking scene, that will be long imprinted on the minds of those who witnessed it. The public square was turned into a temporary Gehenna, and tons of filth and rubbish there destroyed.

There were many trivial but exciting episodes during the day with Ashantis being mobbed and robbed by carriers, or natives being disarmed by the Houssas, but a few of our niggers were tied up and thrashed for robbing Ashantis, and things quieted down by night, and the proud capital was left desolate and deserted.

Strong piquets were stationed right round the place, as it was thought probable that an attempt might be made to rescue Prempeh, but the night passed quietly, broken only by the challenges of the native sentries, "Halt dere! who come up dat dare road?" "Hullo! did you take me for Shanti man?" "Oh no, sah! Shanti man him bad tink, sah! You no smell like Shanti, sah! Good night, sah!" and the cheery little Houssas resumed their watch.

The Governor's smart coup in arresting all the chief men, had robbed the warriors of their leaders; and the open failure of the fetish power had demoralized them thoroughly, but every precaution had to be taken. A popular tradition was that if the King died at Kumassi, his fetish power remained, being transmitted to the next ruler; but if he crossed the boundary, the power departed with him from the capital, never to return. If Prempeh had acted up to his acknowledged principles he should have committed suicide rather than be removed; but he was too great a coward to do that, simply to bestow his evanescent power on his successor. There were many who would have been glad to save his Royal Highness the trouble, by assassinating him; for thus the fetish would remain with them for ever; but they lacked opportunity as a careful watch was kept on the King, till he was transferred to a safe region.

On January 21st, a report reached Kumassi of Ashanti warriors massing in a village near Mampon. Major Baden-Powell took charge of a flying column, consisting of the levies under Major Gordon, two companies of Houssas under Captain Mitchell and a Maxim gun under Armourer-Sergeant Williams. They started at midnight, and after a toilsome march through thick bush and reeking swamp, reached the village, only to find the 400 armed Ashantis had heard of their coming, and made off, leaving smouldering camp fires as evidence of their recent presence.

When this column returned to camp, the main body was just preparing to set out on the return march to the coast. They had fresh orders to reconnoitre Prempeh's summer residence where much valuable property had been stored. On arrival at this palace it was found to be deserted and looted. It subsequently transpired that Prempeh's head slave had been placed in charge, and other slaves, freed from bondage in Kumassi, had flown there with the news of Prempeh's downfall. They had then all systematically plundered the store rooms, securing the valuables, shaking the dust of Ashanti off their feet, returning to their own tribes with a recompense for their forced sojourn in the King's service. A large number of these slaves were taken during the war with Mampon, who opposed Prempeh's enstoolment. Over a thousand prisoners of war were then dragged into slavery to Kumassi, and many of the chiefs, beside the old and infirm, were bound together

and burned alive by the savage army of Prempeh. Prempeh afterwards placed Osuche on the Mampon Stool, where he had reigned as right-hand man of the Kumassi rulers. His capture by the British will be hailed with joy by his people, whom reports say he has kept down with an iron hand, and an ever-ready beheading knife. Many a home in this district would rejoice in the restoration of a long-lost son, father or husband, freed after, perhaps, years of bondage.

While in Kumassi the number of sick swelled to rather an alarming extent, and the Medical Officers anxiously looked forward to the day the mud of Ashanti should be shaken off. Every white man, paradoxical as it may read, was a sickly yellow, for the malaria was upon all in a slight or severe form, and a fever bred of the grisly and horrible surroundings. It was always pretty hot, though not so glaring as on the coast, where you lay an egg aside, and if you wait long enough, find a chicken in its place. Then there were the tortures of prickly heat to contend with, and a longing for a draught of water a few degrees below 90. At midday clothes might go; the natives were to be envied; and the noblesse oblige of civilization, in dress at least, was to be lamented. Then as night came on, the falling dew chilled you to the bone; yet when rolled in a blanket the perspiration would drop from the forehead while alternate shiverings and burnings succeeded each other in painful monotony. Darkest West Africa indeed is no ideal spot; and as to those would-be journalists, sitting in the snug security of their Fleet Street attics, and writing on the Ashanti Picnic - well, they ought to be made to partake of a similar picnic. The West African medal may well be hung on a ribbon of yellow and black, as fever and death stalk hand in hand in effective combination.

The Field Hospital was as well arranged as possible, and everything was done to relieve the numbers of sick, who were in a pitiful state with the dreaded fever. It was also a case of "physician heal thyself," for malaria is no respecter of persons, and attacked the Medical Staff as freely as other corps. Many a fine lad lay suffering in the Hospital tent, dreaming in a hazy delirium, of the home and dear ones far over the sea, which some of the poor fellows were destined to never see again.

Close behind the town the forest rose in a dense, gloomy wall. One day I ventured to explore this unknown waste. In half an hour I could not have got more than two hundred yards. The ground was a complete quagmire, and my journeying was from root to root, and leaping on to fallen trunks and branches. A miserable silence was over everything; and around, as far as the eye could reach, stretched the dreary mangrove swamps, dark brownish green foliage above, and a mass of twisted roots rearing their pale stems above the mud and water below. The muddy stream gleamed in the fierce sunlight, while here and there among the trees the white fever mist hung in thin wreaths, of which, if the white man breathe, he shall surely die. Emerging from a narrow tunnel-like waterway under the trees, which I had traversed for the last hour, winding in and out among the mangrove roots, amid the semi-darkness made by the dense foliage overhead, with its stifling, steam-like atmosphere, heavy with the foul smell of putrifying mud and rotting vegetation, I reached drier ground.

The forest was still as dense as ever and there were many curious trees, and low shrubs of graceful palm-like leaves, forming a huge crown over the top of the branches, high palms, with their smooth columnar stems and finely pinnated leaves interlocked above, forming arches and woven canopies of varied shape. Then high above them rose the taller forest trees, whose giant branches formed a second canopy from the sun. Immense creepers clung around them, some stretching obliquely from their summits like mast-stays, others spirally twisted around each other and winding round the trunks like huge serpents ready for their prey. Many of the trees were covered with parasitic plants, and creepers climbing over each other in one vast struggle for existence. Moralists would no doubt liken this scene to the clamorous fight of humanity in the hopeless struggle of man to lift himself to the vague unattainable ideal of life, as shown in the picture of M. Roehgrosse, "Angoisse Humaine," recently exhibited in the Paris Salon; and their simile would not be out of place.

Looking upward, the finely divided foliage was strongly defined against a cloudless sky. There were few flowers, and the ground was deeply covered with dead leaves and rotten wood, through which low-creeping plants thrust their heads. Here and there huge trunks lay rotting on the ground, forming a playground for hundreds of lively lizards, with red heads and brilliant green tails, which are the prettiest creatures to be seen in the bush, though rather alarming at first, when they dash over your sleeping body, and the thought of a venomous bite crosses your mind. They are, however, perfectly harmless, and though the larger species could inflict a nasty wound, their fangs are not poisonous.

This forest land and the savage inhabitants who dwell in its recesses, amid a chaos of slave-raiding and village-burning, which goes on ceaselessly in the wild country that lies between the north of the European colonies and the little-known Soudan, is indeed a place of weird and interesting memories, and weeks might be spent in exploring the forest and the hinterland beyond, finding fresh interest day by day in the study of the features of the country, both animal and vegetable. A lengthy account of the information that I was able to glean, would hardly be in keeping with this work, which is dealing with the campaign, and not an exploring expedition, scientific or otherwise; but this short description of the flora and fauna seen near Kumassi may be of interest.

Pushing through the forest there were few animals to be seen; occasionally a rustling among the bushes announced some lordly snake on the prowl, or a chatter and cracking overhead denoted that a solemn palaver of monkeys had been disturbed. Then birds there were in plenty, parrots of large size, a few aasvogels or vultures also clattered affrighted through the trees, leaving their meal off some dead creature in the bush. In one place near a narrow streamlet were nests of the passerine weaver birds, some hanging from fine branches along which even the bamboo snake would not have the temerity to crawl in search of the luscious eggs. The nests were composed of twigs and fibre, with a cunningly made exit at the bottom of the carefully-woven chamber. There were many brilliant birds, including gorgeous

copper-coloured pigeons, but these had been found lower down the road, where Prince Henry had shot a fine specimen.

After coming off second best in a patch of prickly pear, a cactus which is happily not common in the bush, I suddenly reached swampy ground again, while in places the trees cleared, opening out on large sticky patches of arundineous mud, which would have made a capital ground for sportsmen. The green canes made a refuge for numbers of small animals, and if properly taken in hand, would probably have provided some lord of the forest to add to the spoils. On the outskirts of one of these swamps an animal of the peccary species broke cover, but disappeared with a whisk of his tusks before I had time to pot him. There was soon more sport on hand, for a buzzing hum and a stinging sensation on the cheek localized the swampy haunt of the tsetse fly, which fortunately had not worried us much on the upward march, and had left one or two donkeys that travelled with the force unmolested. My face was soon in a pickle, and in West Africa, where any little bite or cut becomes a festering sore which will not heal, such things are to be dreaded.

The tsetse is much more active than the mosquito. In its flight it moves with such intense rapidity, that the eye cannot follow it, and when it settles it alights so quietly that the victim does not feel it. When it considers itself secure it thrusts in its weapon and sucks the blood. It is only while its needle-like proboscis is embedded in the flesh that the fly can be caught. Even when distended with blood it escapes by a rapid flight sideways. To man the bite is as unpleasant as that of the mosquito; and that is saying a great deal; for anyone who has been forced to give his body as a prey to these little pests knows how painful are the wounds which they inflict. Horses, cows, sheep, asses, and dogs, with other animals useful to man, are destroyed by the tsetse; and so deadly is its poison, that if a cow is only bitten once by a fly it will die of the effects, although wild animals are quite safe. It is on them chiefly that the tsetse feeds, and they are apparently inoculated and do not suffer any evil effects.

Needless to say, the ants also were everywhere apparent, both the cannibal black, who takes a fiendish delight in burrowing his head into your flesh and feasting to his heart's content, and also his vegetarian but more destructive white brother, who chaws up every article of clothing or equipment he can lay his jaws on. In the rainy season the young ants, who have wings, rise in the air, but they return to mother earth as soon as dry weather sets in and the wings then drop off. It is said that so prolific are they, that a single female deposits as many as fifteen thousand eggs in twenty-four hours. Many an African traveller has had to fall back upon a colony of white ants for food. Hunger is a good sauce, and the creatures are collected, and a handful or two thrown into a fry-pan with a little fat, and though I did not try this tempting dish, they are said to be just passable, will keep a long time, and can be easily prepared. Of course, in size the insects are like young shrimps; to the English idea of ants, cooking them would seem impossible.

Another African insect that should be mentioned is an enormous spider which the niggers call "Boui." According to M. Foa, a famous French traveller, the natives pin much faith in the revelations of this curious-looking creature. He was engaged

once on a very long chase after elephants, and his followers were becoming impatient, when at last they found the home of one of these spiders. "Now," said one of his men, "we shall know whether or not we shall find the elephants."

M. Foa and his men placed themselves in a circle round the hole, but at some distance. In the middle the oldest negro crouched near the hole and commenced his invocation. "Boui," he said, "behold for three weeks we have travelled through the woods from dawn till sunset. We can travel no farther, and we have seen no ivory. Tell us : Must we return to our village? If such be the case, return quickly into your mansion. But if we shall have ivory and food, come out and take the air."

At the last words he threw a little water into the hole. Four velvet paws, joined like the fingers of a monkey's hand, showed themselves immediately near the orifice. The men stood in silence, their eyes fixed on the insect. If it withdrew, the negroes would at once abandon the chase. After a moment's hesitation the yellow velvety spider, as large as a pigeon's egg, came forth. There was no more talk about going back. The Boui had foretold success, and, as results proved, foretold correctly, for they got two fine elephants.

On my return to the town, the natives were cutting down a large patch of elephant grass to clear the environs. Unfortunately, most of the officers were busily engaged preparing for the coast-ward march, as sport in plenty was provided, this grass being full of animals. Several fair-sized pythons also came to light, and were dispatched by the niggers, who so battered the carcasses that skinning was out of the question. At intervals, a loud cry would announce the discovery of some fresh animal, chiefly of the wild pig species; but, as a rule, after an exciting chase, the four legged brutes had the best of it, and got clear into the forest. With organised beaters a good day's shooting might have been organized. The only animal of importance killed was a not over-big leopard, which was so battered about the head by the eager natives that it was completely spoiled, the skin falling a trophy to a Sergeant-Major of the Supply, who gave it the first blow with a heavy stick as it ran.
