A RESIDENT'S WIFE IN NIGERIA

By

CONSTANCE LARYMORE

WITH FORTY-ONE ILLUSTRATIONS AND A PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR

LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LIMITED
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Dedication

TO THE VERY BEST OF COMRADES
AND FELLOW-TRAVELLERS
'THE SAHIB'

Preface

In offering this little book to the public, I want to admit at once that it is in no sense intended as a literary effort, but is merely a record, gathered up from journals and notes of our everyday life and journeys which have occupied the last five years.

My excuse for offering it is that I have been specially fortunate in having opportunities and privileges of travelling about a little bit of the world where few Englishmen have been; and though sorely handicapped by very limited scientific knowledge, I have tried always to keep eyes and ears open.

Only a short time ago, I read these words, written by a wise man, on this very subject—

‘But the best way of travelling is to ride on a horse through country where there are no railways, and no roads, and where, accordingly, the people are rooted and untroubled in mind, and do as little work as they can. Such travelling, it is not to be questioned, makes the best books.’

In the hope that he is right—for, as I have said, he is a wise man—I send my little book forth, to take its chance. The last few chapters, I am aware, should belong to a separate volume, and they were never intended for publication in this form. But they are the outcome of *actual* experience, and not generalizing from hearsay. Most of them, indeed, were written originally in 1902, but they have been revised, corrected, and corrected again, as time showed me my mistakes and failures. In manuscript form they had been read by many of my friends who pronounced them ‘good,’ and it is by their request that these chapters are included here. It is to these friends that I offer my grateful thanks for the majority and the best of my illustrations. I also have to acknowledge the kindness of the Editors of *Chambers Journal* and the *Pall Mall Gazette* in permitting the reproduction of articles published by them at different times.

CONSTANCE LARYMORE.

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CHAPTER I
Sierra Leone to Lokoja

On the 10th of April, 1902, we left Sierra Leone, embarking on the *Sekondi* for Forcados, *en route* to Northern Nigeria. We had spent seven months in Sierra Leone, my husband doing duty with a company of native gunners, and had grown to heartily dislike the place. In spite of its undeniable beauty, it is the possessor of a most unpleasant climate, and the impossibility of getting horse exercise, and the necessity of continually ascending or descending steep hills, either on foot, or, worse still, in a hammock, was most distasteful to us both after four years of the free and active life of Indian military stations. So we could not help looking upon our departure somewhat as a release, and even bidding good-bye to our many kind friends did not entirely damp our joy as we steamed out of the harbour and passed the lighthouse, gleaming white amidst the luxuriant greenery and bright blue water, and set our faces and thoughts towards Nigeria, and the life of a Resident there.

It certainly was a step in the darkest dark; no Englishwoman yet had gone where I meant to go, or done what I hoped to do: we knew little or nothing of the conditions of life before us except that it was ‘rough, *very* rough!’ I had met only one official from Nigeria, and he looked at me doubtfully and in silence when I announced my intention of accompanying my husband, much as one regards a wretched scraggy-looking screw, sometimes produced by an Irish horse-dealer, with confident asseverations as to his qualities as a hunter—and yet, the ‘screw’ scrambles along fairly all right sometimes! One of my friends in Sierra Leone—having visited Accra—felt qualified to speak, and, in endeavouring to dissuade us from this rash venture, assured me that ‘Nigeria was just like Accra—not a tree, not a blade of grass anywhere!!’

(This is quoted with apologies to Accra!) I have often smiled to myself over that pithy saying, while marching through magnificent forests, and miles of open, grassy, park-like country! Luckily, I still permitted myself to hope for trees and grass, and felt that my four years in India, and some experience of camping in Kashmir, would, at all events, prove to have been

a useful education, and seven months in Sierra Leone could leave one few surprises in the shape of an unpleasant climate.

On the *Sekondi* we were fortunate to find an old friend of Indian days, Captain Ashburnham of the 60th Rifles, also faring forth to Nigeria for the first time, to serve with the W.A.F.F. or, as it is called there, the Northern Nigeria Regiment. He was armed with valuable experience, learnt from the South African War and life in Uganda, and many were the talks we had, and the plans we made, sitting under the awning, on the deck, while the *Sekondi* rolled her way south.

One of our fellow-passengers had already been to Nigeria, but I think he had outlived his enthusiasms a little, and possibly thought me an unlikely specimen to survive among ‘the fittest,’ for he responded but little to my tiresome curiosity, while the ship’s officers were unanimous in headshaking and mournful prophecies, judging Nigeria generally by their own cursory stay at Burutu, and cheerfully promising to convey me home ‘next trip’—*if* I should be above ground to be conveyed! At table I sat next to a Lagos official, who proved himself a real friend, and I have never ceased to be grateful to him for his encouragement and cheerful prognostications, at a time when I sorely needed them. Mr. Stone’s work at Lagos—that of road construction—lay entirely amongst the up-country natives, and he would tell me a thousand anecdotes of their simple kindly ways, courteous hospitality, and child-like interest in white people—prophesying that I should be friends with them at once, and, if anything, get rather spoilt amongst them—a forecast which has been amply fulfilled since.

The trip was an uneventful one, though not the pleasantest I have made down the Coast: the sole occurrence of interest that I can recall was that we lost one of our boats overboard during the night, and the following morning, when the loss was discovered, we turned back and sought the open seas

for the derelict—and found it! A couple of stalwart Kru-boys were despatched overboard, and swam to the boat, only to find there were neither oars nor paddles inside, and they presented a comically helpless spectacle, sitting in the boat, and frantically endeavouring to paddle with their hands! They had to do another swim, to possess themselves of the paddles thrown from the ship before they could bring their prize alongside. And so on—by

day, sunshine, sapphire water, the fringe of low grey coast-line, which never loses its fascination for me, by night, glorious stars and an infant moon, and —night and day alike, the monotonous, infinitely soothing roll of the ship, as the huge swell swept shorewards, to break itself in thundering surf, away by the grey palm-trees and the yellow sand.

We left the *Sekondi* outside the bar at Forcados, transhipped ourselves and our belongings to the 'branch boat,' a small steamer of light draft, and spent four or five weary hot hours crossing the bar and finding our way up to Burutu. Here we were most kindly and hospitably received by the Marine Superintendent, who gave me a most welcome cup of tea, and assisted us to arrange ourselves on the *Karonga*, one of the Government stern-wheelers, which travel up and down the Niger, carrying mails and passengers. These little boats consist of an upper and lower deck, the latter loaded with cargo, fuel and native passengers, the former reserved for European travellers, and though, nowadays, they boast of regular cabins, when I first made the acquaintance of the *Karonga* the after part of the deck was merely divided off into partitions by canvas screens, an arrangement which I still prefer to a stuffy cabin! At Burutu we bought stores, etc., for the up-river trip, and as we had brought a couple of native servants from Sierra Leone, we shook down quite comfortably.

That evening we dined on board the *Jebba*, which was lying at Burutu, and, later, embarked on our little stern-wheeler, and set out on our river journey, under a full moon, threading our way along one of the labyrinths of creeks—a liquid silver path, walled on each side with straight lines of mangroves, dense black shadows, and weird, bare white roots and stems—a scene suggestive of mystery, and full of a strange beauty of its own.

I enjoyed every day of that trip; we were a cheery party, and all prepared to make the best of life: as we left the Delta behind, the country became more diversified, little villages appeared on the banks and we were surrounded by tiny canoes, the occupants of which, boys and girls, clamoured loudly in greeting, and fierce competition ensued over the empty tins and bottles flung to them.

The second evening we were destined to discover the weak points of the *Karonga*; the rain came down in torrents, poured through the roof of the deck in vigorous streams, soaking beds and bedding in five minutes. We

stripped our beds, and sat patiently, watching the water dripping steadily on the bare canvas, till, in sheer weariness, we rolled ourselves up in mackintoshes, rigged waterproof sheets on top of the mosquito nets, and slept soundly in spite of wet pillows and the prevailing drippiness!

In the morning, however, hot sunshine turned our sorrow into joy—every available space was employed for the drying of wet blankets and clothing, and, with all our gloom dispersed, Captain Ashburnham and I mixed the dough, and treated ourselves to hot scones for breakfast!

We arrived at Lokoja rather late one evening, and after sleeping that night on the *Karonga*, the next morning we were most kindly taken in charge by Mr. Gollan, then Chief Justice, who was temporarily filling the place of the last Resident, just invalided home. Mr. Gollan escorted us to our quarters, a massively built double-storeyed stone house, known as the ‘Preperanda,’ which had previously been the Mess-house of the N.N. Regiment, but was now in a very bad state of repair. The rooms below were used as offices, and those above as a dwelling-house.

The verandah was in a ruinous condition, and most of the glass had vanished from the doors and windows; even the shutters had fallen off, so that, when the tornadoes came, as they did with annoying frequency, salvation lay in one direction only, to collect *all* one’s belongings in frantic haste in a heap in the centre of the floor, cover them with waterproof sheets, and sit firmly on them till the storm had spent itself, when the floor could be mopped up, and books, pictures, etc., returned to their places.

Still, I have always loved the Preperanda: it was almost buried in trees, gorgeous scarlet ‘flamboyant’

(*Poinciana Regia*), red and yellow acacias, deliciously scented frangipani, both white and pink, huge bushes of rosy oleanders, lime-trees, mangoes, orange-trees and guavas: leaning over the verandah railing in the fragrant soft darkness, I then and there took to heart the lesson which I have tried to practise ever since—the absolute *duty* of planting trees everywhere for the benefit of one’s successors.

At the Preperanda, I began to study the art of Nigerian housekeeping, and forthwith engaged a cook, a most unprepossessing looking individual, a Kru-boy, rejoicing in the name of Jim Dow; he proved an excellent cook, as

they go in West Africa, but a frail vessel where intoxicants were concerned; nevertheless, he did us good service for three years in many places, was untiring on the march, and, in the main, sober. The further knowledge I acquired on this all-important subject I have gathered together in a later chapter for the sake of convenience.

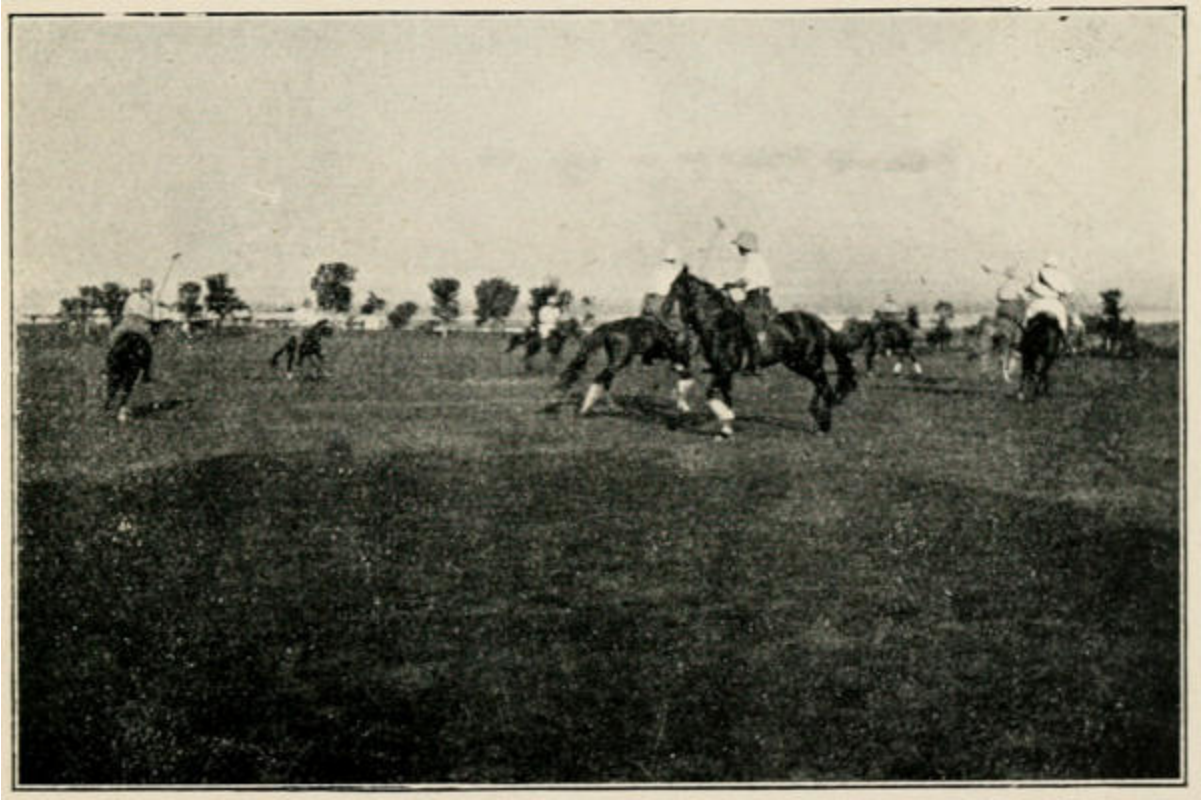
Our first month in Lokoja was, in many ways, a busy one; my husband had his hands only too full of official work, we bought a couple of ponies, and I set to work to organize a stable, realizing sadly in a day or two that the amenities and conveniences of Indian life were not to be found here, any more than inside the house. We made friends, too, with the small community of white people in the station, the nursing sisters, N.N.R. officers and civilian officials, and many were the helping hands and kindly hints given to us, on all sides, and most gratefully received.

Lokoja is placed most picturesquely on a strip of level ground, encircled by hills and the Niger.

Above the native town towers the Patti Hill, a flat-topped mountain some eight hundred feet high,

on the summit of which, originally, there was a town and many acres of cultivation. The town has vanished, but traces of old farms can easily be seen, and the former occupiers are, even now, anxious to return to their perch and build a new village. They seem to have a high opinion of the soil up there, and we have often wished that the English community might be able to form a new station on that breezy hill-top instead of grilling down by the river bank. Perhaps it may come to pass some day, for the present Cantonment is, most unfortunately, down-stream from the native town.

THE PREPERANDA (p. 7)



POLO AT LOKOJA (p. 9)

I often wonder whether any one who had not seen the place for ten years or so would be able to recognize it to-day! The change, even since I have known it, has been amazing. When we landed there, five years ago, the ‘Civil Lines’

consisted of a straggling row of bungalows, rejoicing in the significant appellation of ‘Blackwater Crescent’! In front stretched a waste of swampy ground, thickly covered with coarse, rank grass.

To-day, with its numbers of neat bungalows, well-tended little gardens, the swamp drained and converted into a recreation ground, containing tennis-courts, cricket-pitch, etc., good roads, and flowering trees and hedges, it is as pretty a little cantonment as one could wish to see, and the view from the hills behind is extremely beautiful—the two rivers, Niger and Benue meeting just below the cantonment, winding down to the confluence like two

silver ribbons, visible for miles up river.

The 2nd Battalion of the N.N.R. are quartered in Lokoja, with a company of native gunners, and we still call their lines ‘the camp’—a survival of the days when the soldiers existed in wretched discomfort, under canvas. Behind the camp is the polo ground, and, on the farthest ridge, the new hospital is prominent, with the Sisters’ bungalow, and medical officers’ quarters. Personally, I have always thought Lokoja a far prettier and pleasanter place than Zungeru, the new headquarters, but comparisons are ever ungracious, and lasting impressions of places—to me—depend so much on associations, that Lokoja has always been more of a

‘home’ than a ‘headquarters’ to me. I have always been sorry to leave it, and always glad and contented to see it again.

CHAPTER II
On Tour

Exactly a month after our arrival, we set forth on our first tour in the ‘bush.’ The object of our journey was the delimitation of the Northern Nigeria-Lagos boundary, from Aiede to Owo, and at the former place we were to meet the Lagos Travelling Commissioner.

We made our preparations mostly by the light of our Kashmir camping experience, for, beyond generalities, none of my friends in Lokoja—with the best will in the world—could help me very much, never yet having had such a problem to tackle! Indeed, I think, had they advised me frankly, they would have said, ‘Don’t go!’ and they were quite wise and kind enough to refrain from saying that!

So, on the 28th of May, we rode leisurely out of Lokoja, about four o’clock, having decided on a short march for the first day—a very sound precaution, on which we have acted ever since. We

jogged down to the Mimi River, on the far side of which our camp was arranged, the carriers and servants having been sent on ahead, so that everything was ready for us in the little ‘rest-house’

(a thatched shelter, innocent of walls), hot baths announced, and dinner preparing.

Things were not exactly ship-shape that night—they never are at a first halt—and the sandflies and mosquitoes gave us a bad time; but, all the same, we were *very* happy at being out in camp, with a good six weeks before us, to be crammed with novel experiences, new flowers, new birds, new butterflies to discover, heaps to learn about everything, and no drawbacks, saving a little physical discomfort, a comparatively trifling matter to energetic inquisitive folks like ourselves.

‘A rare holiday’ we said, and so it proved itself, amply!

The next morning we were off early, and rode along through lovely park-like country, wide stretches of grass, picturesquely dotted with clumps of palms and light bushes, crossed by streams the courses of which are marked

by a broad band of thick luxuriant foliage—like a dark green ribbon lying across the sunny plain of grass. I made delighted acquaintance with the Gloriosa Superba lily, not the magnificent apricot yellow climbing variety, but a more delicately regal one, with glowing crimson petals edged with gold, standing up among the grass, slender, tall and graceful.

That night we had heavy rain, but our rest-house, mercifully, was watertight and very cosy, and we smiled contentedly, and promised ourselves a cool march for the morrow. And so we had:—it was a perfect day full of joyful discoveries, climbing beside the narrow path, like a sheet of flame, was *Mussaenda Elegans* in full bloom, two furry grey monkeys sitting solemnly on a rock, birds of wonderful blue, crimson and yellow, some scarcely larger than beetles, a tiny village tucked away at the foot of a little round hill, and, later, when we climbed the Shokko-Shokko hill, great clumps of pure white lilies, the bulbs of which were the size of a man's head, as I discovered, when, afterwards, I bore one back in triumph to Lokoja. At Shokko-Shokko we celebrated my birthday with a dinner-party of two, and I cannot recall a cheerier or more light-hearted birthday in my life!

The following day, I had my first view of forest country: I had listened so often to my husband's descriptions of the Ashanti forests and their dreary monotony, and I was ready to cry out to him that it was, after all, the loveliest thing in the world—though, later on, I quite came round to his opinion!

It is a rather specially beautiful piece of forest round Oduapi; the sunshine filters down pleasantly through the branches of huge trees and swinging creepers, on the thick undergrowth of bushes and ferns; there are acres and acres of pineapples, the smell of them rather overpowering, for they are such prickly souls that the natives gather only those which grow close to the path, while the rest rot in their hundreds; but the sickening scent attracts perfectly splendid butterflies—positive *coveys* of them, of all shapes, sizes and colours.

We passed a tiny farm, belonging to an ex-soldier, a Hausa; he and his family work the little homestead, and the acres increase year by year, I am glad to say! On this first visit he and his wife came out to greet us, and, with the simplest kindly hospitality, offered us of their best—kola-nuts and wild

honey, both of which I ate on the spot, to their great delight. The honey was rather a problem, on a fidgety pony, with a twig for a fork!

The Chief of Oduapi, a most cheery old gentleman, with a loud and jovial laugh, came out to meet us, accompanied by his ‘suite,’ and I tried hard not to laugh—the caparisoned steeds were so quaint, and still more so their riders, picturesque in flowing gowns, made of velvet, originally of loud gaudy colours, but softened by time and exposure to perfectly artistic tones. Oduapi’s gown is always a delight to me, the blue has become the blue of Gobelin, and the green the softest of sage tints.

Their dignity was sadly impaired by the head-dress of huge flapping straw Hausa hats, with leather strings—now perching rakishly, now pressed down, granny-wise, now flapping wildly half-way down the rider’s back, as his pony plunged and reared.

‘KUKA’ (BAOBAB) TREES. (p. 14)

A HAUSA BEAUTY. (p. 19)

The rest-house at Oduapi is placed in a clearing in the forest—a lovely spot, with troops of little grey monkeys chattering and swinging in the trees, the undergrowth alive with birds and butterflies, and an occasional ‘ough, ough,’ betraying the whereabouts of the larger dog-faced monkeys, who, however, did not show themselves, though they seemed to resent our intrusion.

That night, I woke suddenly, listening intently, to hear, for the first time, the roar of a lion. It was a very awe-inspiring sound, echoing again and again in the depths of the silent forest, followed by a deep hoarse cough, and made one, for the moment, consider our thatched shelter somewhat inadequate!

However, we had a fire burning outside, and, remembering the saying that no lion will tackle a mosquito curtain (and, further, being *very* sleepy!),

I merely took the precaution of lifting Timmie, our Irish terrier, on to my bed, and slept placidly till dawn.

After a hot march, we reached Kabba, and though we were most kindly received by the officer commanding the detachment there we found the ruinous tumble-down ‘fort’ so uncomfortable that we were glad to leave again. Afterwards, I saw a good deal more of Kabba, and learnt to love it, and think it far the most beautiful spot I have seen in Northern Nigeria. At Lukpa, where the village nestles away among the trees, and the rest-house is set on a hill with magnificent views all round, an incident occurred which is worth describing in detail, for it ‘gives one furiously to think’!

‘The Sahib’—as, from ineradicable Indian habit I still commonly call my husband—had gone out at sunset, after deer, and, during his absence, the entire population of the village came streaming up the hill to the rest-house, all talking loudly and at once, and evidently under the influence of strong excitement. I was, by that time, well accustomed to creating a sensation wherever I appeared, no white woman having been seen previously; but these people struck me as having more than salutations in their minds and on their clamouring tongues.

I had been six weeks in the country, my knowledge of Hausa was confined to salutations and a few simple words, so I summoned our interpreter to help me to entertain my visitors. They chattered, shouted and gesticulated at ‘Paul,’ who eventually explained to me, smilingly, that they had never seen a white woman before, and were anxious to offer me a personal welcome. I nodded and smiled in high gratification, thanked them cordially, and, when I had exhausted my small stock of polite salutations, told the interpreter to give them leave to go home. This they did, somewhat reluctantly, I thought; but after describing the interview with some amusement to the Sahib, I dismissed the matter from my mind. Six weeks later we passed through Lukpa again, on our way back to Lokoja, and found it *deserted*—not a man, woman or child, not a goat, not a fowl—all gone, obviously fled into the bush! I felt distinctly hurt at this churlish behaviour on the part of my late admirers, and learnt, long afterwards, that, on our first visit, our precious interpreter and others of our party had *seized and killed every goat and fowl in the village*! The wretched owners had rushed up to the rest-house to complain and implore protection, and all they got was: ‘Thank you! Thank you! Yes, that’s all right! You can go home now!’ I am

not ashamed to confess that I *cried* when I made that discovery! The lesson, however, went home to us both, and drove us to work ceaselessly at the Hausa language, knowing there could be no security for ourselves, or justice for the people, until we could be independent of dishonest interpretation.

At Ekiurin, we pitched our tent under a great shady tree in the centre of the village, and strolled about in the cool of the evening, finding large plantations of scarlet and yellow Cannas, the seeds of which are pierced and threaded into Mahomedan rosaries. As a great mark of confidence, I was shown the interior of the 'Ju-ju house,' and was as disappointed as one usually is at the unravelling of a mystery! The shrine consisted of a dark, empty room, swept very clean, the walls were roughly coloured red, and on one was drawn an unshapely, meaningless figure, executed, apparently, in white chalk. In the verandah, another reddened wall was decorated with similar designs, and in a prominent place was the sacrificial stone, black and roughly carved. In a niche in the wall stood a carved wooden figure, some eighteen inches high, hideous and much blackened with exposure and nasty gory smears, caused, however, by nothing less innocent than the blood of an occasional fowl.

And so on to Aiede—the country alternating between grass-land and forest. I found precious trophies in the shape of terrestrial orchids, varying in hue from palest mauve to deepest purple, with delicate reddish-brown stems, and growing about three feet high. There were yellow ones and some were green, all most wonderfully striped, spotted and splashed with contrasting colours.

Very prominent features of the Nigerian landscape are the red ant hills, sometimes attaining a great height, and most fantastic in shape and appearance.

They remind me of a story told of a gallant officer, more zealous than comprehending, who was engaged in quelling a petty disturbance in West Africa.

This hero, spying one of these queer-looking clay erections, took it to be a 'heathen fetish,' and, plunging his sword through and through the imaginary idol, exclaimed to the astonished villagers and his troops: 'Thus does the Great White Queen destroy the Black Man's Ju-ju!' The villagers,

of course, thought him mad, but were too polite to say so, and the native soldiers must have smiled!

At one small village I created a painful impression, apparently; the headmen, who came to the usual interview, lay on the ground, their heads wrapped tightly in their gowns, and groaned aloud, in abject fear, and no persuasion could induce them to speak or look up till I retired from the scene!

The scare subsided happily, before we left, and they recorded their opinion that I had come straight from Heaven, and besought me not to permit it to rain for a day or two. I could but hope for the best, and felt relieved when we got away without a shower!

The roads, or rather tracks, were terribly bad going when rain caught us on the march; we crossed mountains, stumbling along among masses of rock, loose boulders and slippery clay, on foot, of course, riding being out of the question, and our hearts ached for our plucky little ponies, labouring and clambering up—the descent in each case being worse and more dangerous. They were indeed ‘as active as monkeys and as clever as cats.’ On the return journey we tied putties on their knees to save them in case of a slip, and felt much happier.

Aiede is a straggling, rather dilapidated Yoruba town; it looked pretty, as there is any amount of vegetation, bright sunshine and cool shade, but the prevailing smells are atrocious, and the people most unattractive. They are Yorubas, but appear to be exceptionally lazy and idle, ignorant and fetish-ridden. Strictly ‘on the quiet,’ I was taken to see the Ju-ju stone, hidden away inside a circular enclosure: a large rock against which was propped a roughly carved wooden image, very ugly, smeared all over with blood, feathers, etc., as was also the ground. I was told that a sacrifice (of a goat or a fowl) is made there every morning, so that the image may be ‘watered with blood’; there were indications of special oblations having been made —possibly on our account!

A compound was pointed out to me as the dwelling of their ‘Ju-ju woman,’ described as ‘white,’ held by the Aiede folks in great reverence; many sacrifices of dogs are made to her, as she has a particular fancy for eating them! My Irish terrier ran fearlessly in, and, lest he should get his throat cut, I rushed in after him, and came face to face with the old lady.

She was a loathsome object, an albino negress, with snow-white hair, skin of a horrible blanched colour, and a terrible pair of red eyes.

Her astonishment at the sight of me was quite ludicrous; she may have considered me as a possible rival, about to set up in her line of business! The Lagos Travelling Commissioner, who we met at Aiede, seemed to have grave suspicions of the people there in the matter of twin-murder and human sacrifices—they certainly looked capable of both.

Part of the road from Aiede to Alashigidi was declared impassable for the ponies, so we sent them round by a longer road and did the eight miles on foot. It was rather a pleasant variety, and included some rough climbing, after which I was made acquainted with palm wine; it was icy cold and quite fresh, and seemed to us delicious, but I suppose we were very thirsty, for it has never seemed so good, to me, since.

After leaving Alashigidi, the country was dense forest, damp, gloomy and utterly monotonous, only compensated for by the magnificent butterflies.

We succeeded in capturing a good many, especially of a kind that was, at that time, new to me—a truly beautiful person, with glorious colouring, the wings quite iridescent, appearing in one light, pale green, in another deep glowing purple, in another shimmering white, with a general effect of mother-of-pearl.

Along the banks of the Osé River a

rough path was blazed, to mark the boundary line, and we made an expedition along it on foot. It was a very interesting experience, penetrating this silent forest, where no human being had passed before, and delightful to notice how utterly fearless were the birds and butterflies, scarcely moving at our approach. The men who hacked out the path for us had immense difficulty in inducing a large python to ‘move on’—he had to be actually burnt out before he would remove himself! The river itself was very lovely, cool and silent in deepest shade, winding noiselessly through the forest.

Our objective was Iporo, a little standing camp, composed of much dilapidated grass huts in a clearing, on the banks of a stream, really tinkling

and purling exactly like a Scotch burn, and which I flew to sketch on the spot!

The following morning we started back on our long return journey, passing from Alashigidi to Erun, where we spent what should have been Coronation Day. On the strength of this, we decided to hold a *durbar* of our own, congratulating ourselves on being far from the crowded streets of London, and all unconscious of the tragic shadow then hanging over England, while the King lay dangerously ill.

A number of Chiefs came in from the surrounding villages, to pay their respects, all arrayed in their bravest attire, and a very gaudy crowd they were!

Erun himself was arrayed in a garment composed of stripes of crimson and gold plush, embroidered on the breast with gold and sequins; over this was worn a long mantle of silver grey plush—it made my heart ache to see its delicate folds trailing in the dust! On his head was a comical high hat, shaped like a Bishop's mitre, made entirely of white and coloured beads; from it, all round, hung a long, thick fringe of beads, thoroughly concealing his face. This original costume was completed by a necklace of coral, huge slippers, also of bead-work, and a staff completely covered with beads in intricate patterns, surmounted by a bead dicky-bird!

He sat, with immense dignity, under a crimson and gold State umbrella, with the other Chiefs arranged in a semicircle, strictly according to precedence, making a brilliant splash of colour with their robes of blue, purple and green velvet and brocade.

While my husband explained carefully to them why the day had a special significance for us all, and described what we imagined to be going on at Westminster, I whiled away the time by making a sketch of the old Chief, and took some photographs, but found our guests most fidgety folks to get into a group—at the critical moment some one was sure to get up and stroll away, or lean across to make a remark to his neighbour!

In the evening, rather to our dismay, they all turned up again, singly this time, and gave us a good deal of useful information. Before each other they would say nothing, this being a matter of etiquette, but, in private, were brimful of troubles, complaints and general talk.

From Erun we made our way back to Kabba, coming in for quantities of rain, but usually at night, so we had little real inconvenience from it, except in the matter of fording swollen streams. On one of these occasions, crawling cautiously into the river, the ponies suddenly dropped out of their depth, and were obliged to swim for it. It was decidedly uncomfortable for ponies and riders, but the good little souls made a valiant struggle against the rushing current, and landed us safe, though wet, on the far side. The worst part of that business was the struggle to get off my dripping boots!

We were delighted to leave the stuffy forest behind, and find ourselves back in the fresh air and breezes of Kabba. It was an uneventful march, my chief concern the catching of butterflies. We got one or two fine "Charaxes," and greatly exercised ourselves over the moths that thronged the sweet-scented blossoms of the paw-paw trees at night.

We got back to Lokoja about the middle of July, having thoroughly enjoyed our *trek*, and, myself, feeling very pleased with my initiation into the methods of African travel.

CHAPTER III
Bida and Egga

We spent the rest of July and August in Lokoja—my husband, as usual, full of work; I, very busy gardening. We watched the building of the bungalow destined for us, and, as soon as the actual building was finished, we set to work, and made our garden, having the coarse elephant grass dug out, and turfy ‘dhoob’ grass planted instead. Numberless seedlings and cuttings were put in, dotted over the grass; we had scarcely one failure, and my seedlings are now respectable sized trees!

But trouble overtook us too—our dearly-loved little Irish terrier sickened and died, as did also my pony, ‘Mouse,’ who had carried me so gallantly over all those miles we had travelled. Both losses, I imagine, were the result of that ‘beautiful forest country.’

About this time the High Commissioner arrived, bringing Lady Lugard; they paid Lokoja a short visit before going on to Zungeru, and the real Coronation Day was celebrated. In the middle of August we moved into our new bungalow, and, for me, naturally, the days flew until the beginning of September.

My husband was very anxious to meet and confer with the Resident of Nupe, who was less able to leave his headquarters at the time than we were, and, as we were nothing loth to extend our acquaintance with Nigeria, we packed up, and started for Bida.

We went up river on one of the stern-wheelers, as far as Dakmon on the Kaduna River; there we found ponies, sent down from Bida to meet us, and rode in, an easy march of about fourteen miles. We were struck with the general air of prosperity and comfort displayed by the flourishing farms and neat little hamlets, and were rather amused to come upon a scarecrow, the first I had seen in this country.

It was a great day for Bida: no white woman had ever been there, and the Emir and his people were determined to do honour to the event; so, as we approached the town, a great concourse of people began to throng down the hill from the Residency. At the head of the procession rode Mr. Goldsmith, the Acting Resident, followed by the Emir, an immensely tall and stout

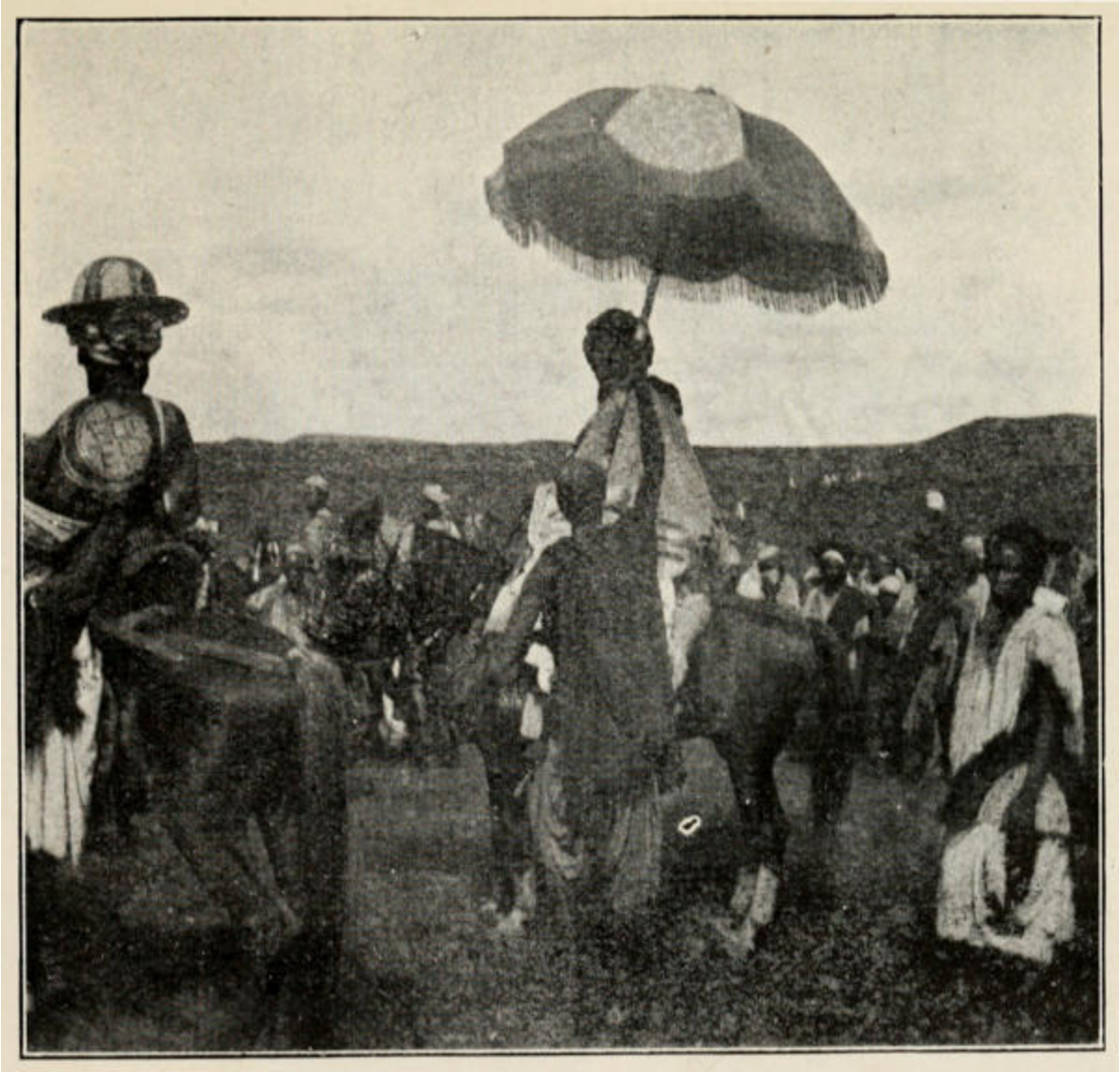
personage, gorgeously attired, and having a State umbrella held over his head as he rode, and ostrich feather fans waved by attendants on either side. Behind him followed the members of his family and ‘Court officials,’ and the procession ended in a surging crowd, on horseback and on foot. They made an attractive picture, splashes of brilliant colour and snowy white robes and turbans dashing hither and thither, pulling up their horses suddenly on their haunches, with a great display of jingling brass and gaudy leather trappings, then darting off again, scattering the crowd like irresponsible butterflies! After the ceremonial greetings we all proceeded to the Residency, where more greetings ensued, and, on his dismounting, one could get a better idea of the vast proportions of the Emir—a truly huge man.

The city of Bida lies rather in a hollow, surrounded by low hills; its wall extends for about nine miles, and is pierced by a number of large gateways, most cunningly set, with dark recesses in their depths—probably with a view to dealing effectually with unexpected or undesired visitors! Inside, the streets are lined with shady trees, which give a delightfully cool appearance to the thatched huts and market places. The Emir’s palace is a great pile of clay buildings enclosed within a high wall, and on the occasion when, accompanied by Mr. Goldsmith, we went to visit him, we had an opportunity of inspecting the Nupe style of building and decoration. The inner apartments were more or less like great vaults, unlighted save by the doorways, and appeared to us, at first, to be in pitch-darkness; but, after a time, when our eyes became accustomed to the gloom, we could follow the outline of the high vaulted roof and the massive pillars, the surface of which is plastered and beautifully polished (I believe with special clay, obtained from the inside of ant-heaps), resembling black marble.

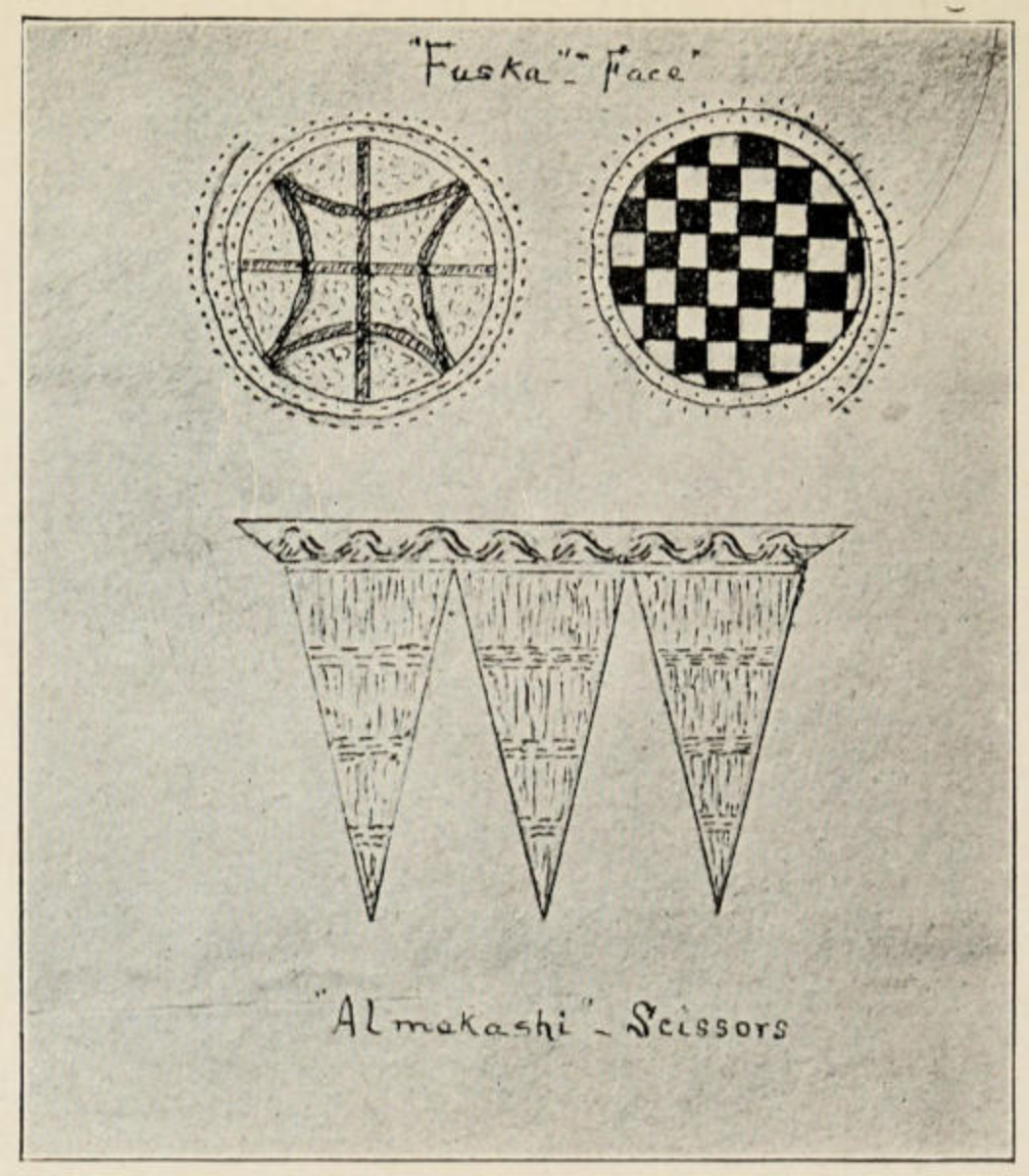
It was an odd experience, sitting in the warm scented darkness, our host and his people more guessed at than seen, great fans softly waving behind him, and every rustle of every gown wafting out the heavy perfume of musk, an interpreter conveyed in a hushed, monotonous murmur endless salutations, compliments and pious aspirations between us, the atmosphere was highly soporific, and we were all relieved when the Emir proposed a move to the verandah.

I requested, and obtained permission to pay a visit to the ladies of the harem, and, escorted by an aged—and presumably privileged—dotard, I

passed through the heavy door and found as great a contrast to the dim quiet scene I had just left as could well be imagined! A crowd of women, some mere girls, others middle-aged, nearly all carrying babies, and a swarm of brown toddlers, all laughing, clapping their hands, calling greetings and salutations incessantly. To them it was indeed a ‘bolt from the blue,’ and, in their placid lives of seclusion, a marvellous and startling occurrence; but, though they were frank enough in their expressions of astonishment and pleasure, their perfect courtesy, that fine characteristic of the African people, prevailed to restrain them. There was no mobbing, no pushing, or crowding. I was invited to seat myself on a large carved black stool, while the Emir’s mother, a very aged sweet-faced woman, evidently set in authority above the rest, crouched on the ground beside me, gently patting and smoothing my skirts and feet, while she poured forth greetings and salutations, thanking Allah fervently that ‘in her old age, she had been spared to see this wonderful sight.’



THE EMIR ESCORTING US IN TO BIDA. (p. 27)



DETAILS OF GOWN EMBROIDERY. (p. 31)

It was very touching, and, at that time, I little thought I should ever see her again, though, afterwards, I had frequent messages from her to say that she still lived and still remembered, and when would I come back and visit her again?

The Emir presented us with an enormous and almost embarrassing ‘dash’ or present—oxen, sheep, fowls and various special Bida products. Fortunately, the custom (which hurts no one’s feelings) is to dispose of the live stock in the market and present to the donor, in money or cloth, the full value of his present, so I ‘bought in’ eagerly some of the really beautiful

coloured grass mats—there were seventy-five to choose from!—and handsome brass-work, and bore them off with me when, on the following day, we took leave of our kind host, and cantered down to the Wonangi Creek, where our steel canoe was waiting, and slowly dropped down stream to Lokoja.

I afterwards sent the Emir of Bida, as a token of friendship, a Hausa gown, made for me locally, of white material, much pleated, and heavily embroidered in white in the customary patterns, and this embroidery I outlined and embellished with gold thread, producing a very fine rich effect, which was highly appreciated by my friend.

A few words on the subject of Hausa embroidery may not be inappropriate here, for it is distinctly interesting, and, in its way, artistic.

The finest and most elaborate needlework is found on the Hausa gown or *tobe*, which, in itself, deserves a few words of description in detail. The accompanying drawing gives an accurate idea of its shape—a surplice-like garment of immense width, reaching to the ankles. The material is frequently pleated all over from neck to knees, where it falls loose, taking on a most up-to-date flow and expansion! I have seen as much as thirty yards of wide English cloth put into one tobe; under these circumstances, the weight of the gown is, of course, very considerable.

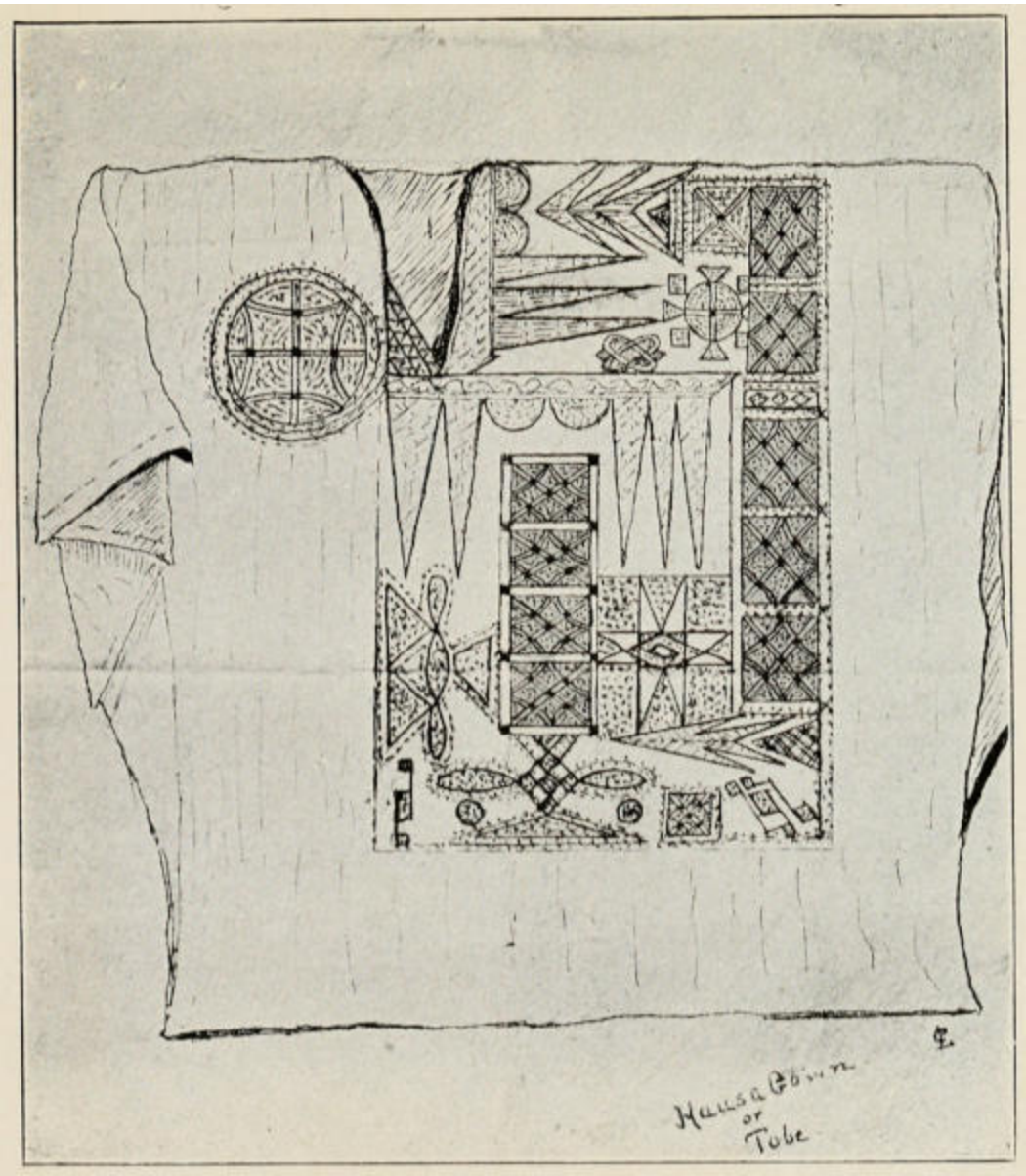
These garments are made of every kind of stuff, according to the length of the wearer’s purse; sometimes they are fashioned of European cotton velvets, brocades and plush, and, in the districts where the Lagos trade makes its influence felt, many of these gowns are to be seen, made, alas, of shoddy velveteen, and the beautiful native needlework replaced by tawdry tinsel and sequins. The vast majority, however, are composed of country-made cloth, which is, by necessity of the tiny, primitive looms, woven in narrow strips, some four inches wide, and laboriously sewn together. Some of it is dyed with indigo or magenta, but the best kind remains a creamy white, resembling a coarse heavy linen, and forms a most desirable background for elaborate stitchery. The tobe has a deep pocket on the left breast, reaching to the knees, and it is on this, principally, that the embroidery is concentrated: there is also a single circular design at the back, high on the left shoulder, which never varies, though the decoration in front may be amplified and elaborated at pleasure.

All the designs used in Hausa embroidery are obviously symbolical, and their significance and history is a subject of deep interest, but it is most difficult to acquire reliable information on the point, as the people themselves are, for the most part, hopelessly ignorant about it, and merely reproduce the same designs from generation to generation, for the excellent —and, to them, conclusive reason that their fathers and grandfathers did so!

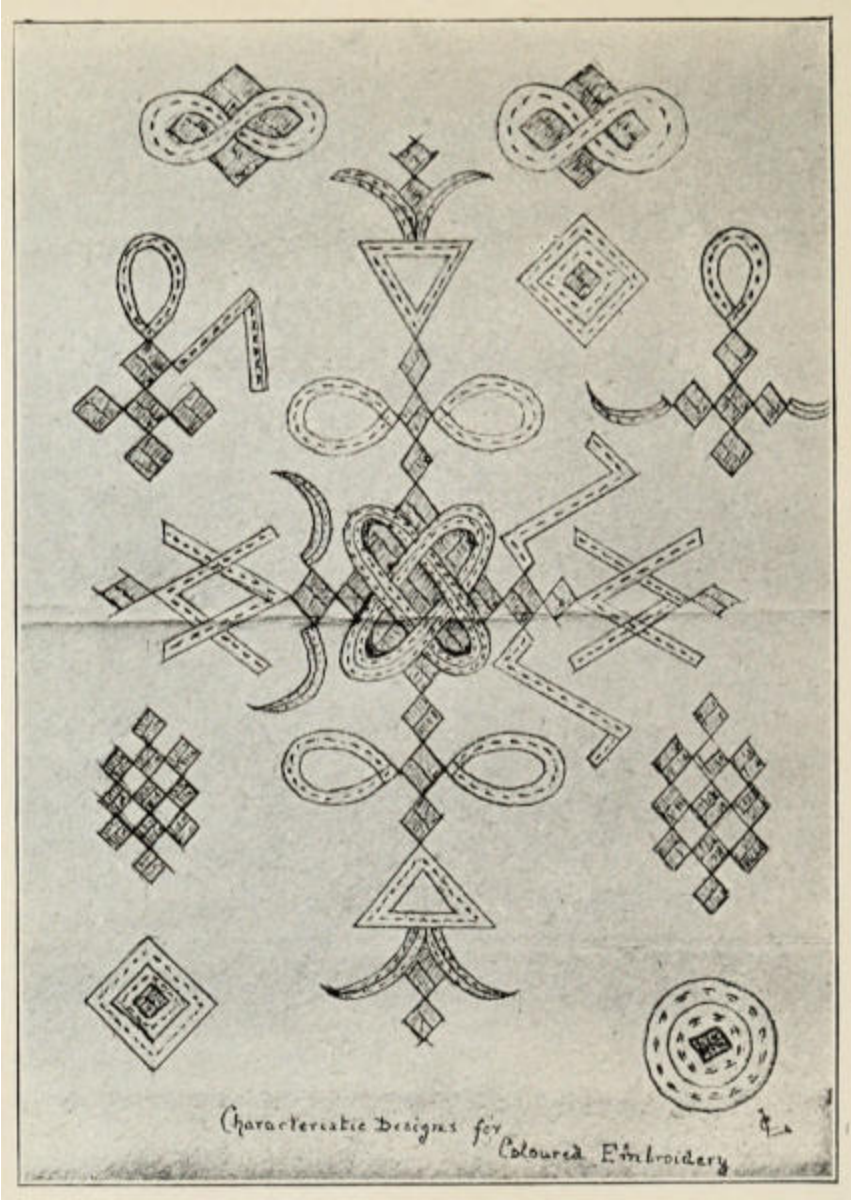
The most frequent designs are the *Fuska* (face) and the *Almakashi* (scissors); these I have always found included in every decorative scheme, however intricate and elaborate. The pattern is drawn in native ink, with a pointed wooden pen; it is entirely free-hand, and is rather a go-as-you-please process, with little regard for symmetry, though, in the case of the gown I have illustrated, I think the complicated conventional design is marvellously accurate for a free-hand performance.

The work is carried out in native thread, occasionally dyed with indigo, or to the correct Islamic shade of brilliant green but usually of the same creamy tint as the cloth itself. The stitchery is absolutely simple, being mainly chain-stitch squares filled in with long stitches, and a curious handsome effect is produced by a series of tiny eyelets, worked in buttonhole stitch, giving a rich damask appearance. Couching stitch is also used, and most patterns are outlined with French knots.

There is also another quite distinct kind of embroidery, universally employed for decorating the enormously wide trousers worn underneath the tobes. These voluminous garments terminate in an almost tightfitting band, some nine inches deep, just above the ankle, and it is here, and on the outside of the leg, that this needlework is lavished—a cunning piece of vanity, as it is well displayed when the wearer strides about with a sufficient swagger!



A TYPICAL HAUSA GOWN. (p. 30)



TROUSER EMBROIDERY. (p. 32)

The designs, as can be seen from the sketch, are quite different from those used on the tobes; some are distinctly Masonic in character, some are quite ecclesiastical, others suggestive of Persian embroidery. They are carried out in gaily-coloured wools, procured from Lagos,—the usual tints being bright crimson, royal blue, purple, orange, green and black. The combination I am aware, sounds daring, to say the least of it, but the result is wonderfully effective and brilliant, without being in the least bit gaudy, and it always seems to me a thousand pities that so much industry and real artistic effectiveness should be thrown away, usually, on the most wretched

materials, cheap cotton cloth from Manchester very often, and on these inferior wools which will not bear the ordeal of a single washing.

I have interested myself in collecting these designs, and have worked them myself on the best linens with fast-dyed silks and the equally beautiful modern flax threads, and the result is eminently satisfactory—the designs, of course, requiring to be corrected and straightened. Indeed, for tea-cloths, borders, cushions or doyleys, and for an endless variety of decorative purposes, I think it would be difficult to find embroidery of a more striking or original kind than that peculiar to Nigeria.

In November, my husband had orders to accompany a patrol on the Northern-Southern Nigeria frontier, and as friction with some of the natives was a possible contingency, it was not thought advisable for me to go too, so I remained in Lokoja alone, feeling sad and rather lonely, and envying my better half the opportunity of finding ‘pastures new’ which I was unable to share.

On leaving, the Sahib commended me to the care of the Sariki and Chiefs of Lokoja, mainly, I think, as a friendly joke, but they took the charge quite seriously, dear souls, the whole cavalcade turning up regularly each morning to make careful inquiries of the most minute description, and to ask whether I did not ‘feel sad without the Resident!’ After a few days they informed me that ‘it was quite impossible for them to take *proper* care of me while I lived so far away from them—they had a *fine* compound swept out, next to the Sariki’s house, in the town—would I not come and live there, till the Judge’s return?’

It was rather a dilemma, and I had to meet it by telling them how much I should have enjoyed visiting them, but that I had my duty too, and I must look after our house and garden, ponies and dogs, so as to keep everything in order, and finally satisfied their kind hearts by promising to send to them for all and anything that I might want! Each time a letter arrived from the absentee, I summoned my friends, read it aloud, translating each sentence as I went into halting Hausa; every single word was repeated and passed round eagerly, discussed and commented upon, amidst much chewing of kola-nuts, provided by the hostess, and ponderous messages of an affectionate nature were impressively given me for transmission in my reply!

The arrival of General and Mrs. Kemball cheered me greatly, and the week they spent in Lokoja was a very happy one for me, in Mrs. Kemball's bright and sympathetic companionship. There was a cheery dinner-party at the Mess in their honour, and I said good-bye very regretfully when they went on their way to Zungeru. Shortly afterwards we had another glimpse of them as they passed through on their way down river, and we little thought then that our next meeting would be at Trinity Lodge, Cambridge!

One morning, three weeks later, I put on my riding habit with a very light heart, and rode out, accompanied by the whole of the Sariki's cavalcade, to escort our 'judge' home in triumph. It was a glorious morning, and perfectly delightful riding through the crops of guinea-corn, now ripe, and standing ten feet high,—the leaves splashed and stained with crimson, purple and gold, like gaudy, waving ribbons, the heavy plumes of grain swaying above one's head, brilliant red, or black and white. Underneath the pony's feet was a veritable carpet of a tiny lilac blossom which always flourishes among the guinea-corn at harvest time and hardly anywhere else. 'The little pink flower that grows in the wheat' always comes into my mind, but this one happens to be mauve instead!

We escorted our lord and master home—a most rowdy party, the boldest spirits wildly racing their ponies along the winding track—girths (composed of widths of ancient cotton cloth!) parting company continually, and saddle and rider together taking a flying toss into the grass, amid shrieks of delight from the rest of the crowd. At each tiny hamlet the entire party would tumble off their ponies, greet and salute, salute and greet, drink quantities of water, climb on again, set the horns and drums braying their loudest, and gallop off irresponsibly, like the light-hearted children that they are.

My husband afterwards told me that in the course of the patrol they passed through a valley where the inhabitants of the rocks and hills above apparently made their homes in holes and caves; one member of the party idly asked what was the scientific name for cave-dwellers, it having slipped his memory for the moment. No one appeared to be able to supply the word, when the native interpreter, plodding along behind, came up, saying: 'Pardon me, sir, don't you mean *Troglodytes*?' The Englishman, amazed, asked where he had ever heard such a word, and 'George' replied placidly: 'I was *reading a dictionary* one day, and I saw it!' I cannot imagine myself

reading a German or Italian dictionary for pleasure, and storing in my mind, for future use, conversationally, a specially unusual scientific term; I only wish I could!

Christmas Day of that year found us at Egga, a small riverside town on the right bank of the Niger, sixty miles above Lokoja. Canon Robinson (in *Hausaland*) describes Egga as an island, from which one may conclude that he only visited the place in the rainy season; we have marched overland to Egga, and walked on dry—very dry—ground all around it in May, and, three months later, passed over the same spots, steaming easily in a stern-wheeler! It consists really of three or four elevated tongues of land, with low-lying creeks in between, which are so flooded by the rise of the river, that to traverse the town from end to end several canoe journeys are necessary. On the high ground the grass-roofed huts are clustered thick as bees, they perch perilously on the very edge, threatening to topple into the creek below—perhaps they do, sometimes, for the banks suffer considerably at each annual rise in the water. Our domicile was perched in solitary state on one of the small Ararats, farthest from the river bank, and that Christmas morning, creeping from under the low verandah of the rest-house, I had a glorious and uninterrupted view of mile upon mile of grass-land, flanked in the distance by the curious flat-topped hills at Padda. The distance was marked only by the ‘wire road,’ the telegraph line leaving Egga and disappearing into the pearly iridescent Harmattan mists in an ever diminishing perspective—the one link with civilization, unless one counts, too, the ceaseless meagre stream of humble traders, in ones and twos, padding in noiseless procession at the foot of our little hill, making their way to Ilorin, at that peculiar half trot, half run, which looks like walking, but which covers the ground in amazing fashion.

It was rather an event, this Christmas Day, the first we had spent in Nigeria, and much care and thought had been expended on the dinner menu. There was a plump turkey to be roasted in a native oven, a most uncompromising-looking affair, consisting of a large earthenware pot, half buried in the ground; this is heated by the simple process of stuffing it full of blazing wood, and when the cook deems the temperature high enough, he will haul out the fuel, pop in the turkey, plant a flat piece of tin on the mouth of the oven, piling it up with much burning wood—and, wonderful to relate, it *will* roast the turkey to perfection!

The *chef* had his work cut out for him that day, for the feast was to include a most desirable fat teal, shot the day before, which had to be similarly cooked in a similar oven; also a plum-pudding from ‘Home’, round which most pleasurable anticipations hovered.

When the Christmas presents had been distributed to the household, the morning spent itself peacefully in writing and sketching, the Sahib working away, as the habit of political officers ever is out here, in spite of my loud insistence on a whole holiday: all arrangements had been made for an afternoon on the river, among the wild duck, and luncheon had been despatched, when, with housewifely care, I bethought me of making final arrangements for dinner, and summoned the cook. He was not forthcoming, but, after much whispering and suppressed giggling among the small boys of the household, Momo, our faithful head steward, appeared, taking generous support from the side of the doorway, and adorned with a vacant giddy smile that turned my heart to water!

Very slowly he spoke, and with deadly care; speech was very difficult, but he struggled through manfully, and, though I was bubbling with wrath, I could not help feeling sincere admiration. ‘The cook was *not at all* well.... Yes, he certainly had drunk far too much pito (native beer) ... and he, Momo, had had a little too—for Kismiss!’—smiling vaguely at the floor. ‘No, he did not think Jim Dow would be able to walk till three o’clock, but’—with renewed cheerfulness, and a tremendous pull on himself—‘Cook say he get *quite* well very soon, cook dinner *proper*, Missis go shoot, no fear at all.... Jim Dow fit to cook all right *very* soon!...’

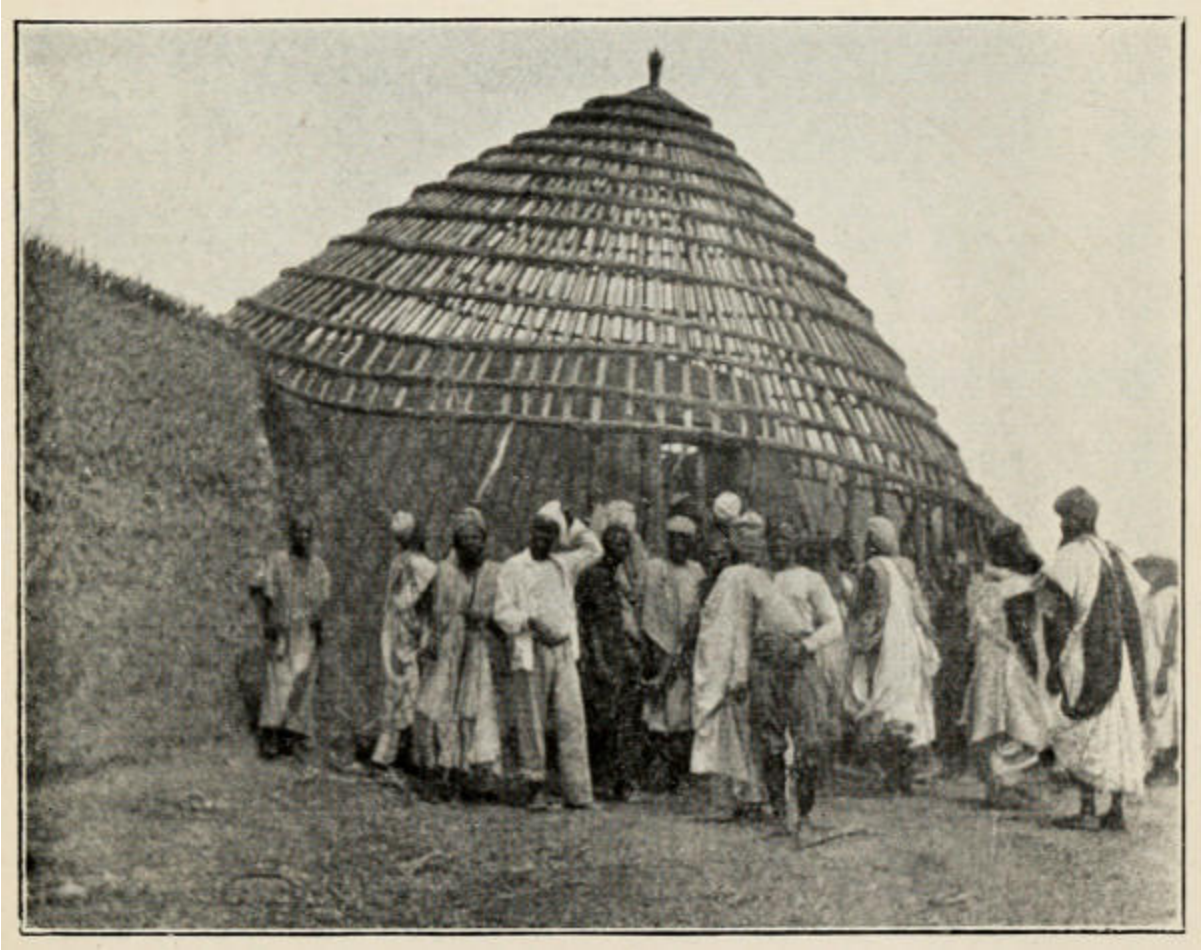
Well, there was no help for it—I certainly could not go and find the delinquent in the purlieus of the town, nor, had I found him, could I have done anything, so we resigned ourselves, sending the steward to ‘sleep it off,’ and reflecting that we might as well spend the afternoon happily as not, we stepped warily into the native canoe, determined to banish all dismal forebodings on the very slender chances of our getting any dinner at all!

The canoe, an ordinary dug-out, about twenty feet long, contained our two camp chairs, the guns, four polers, and Ganna.

Ganna is one of my many friends out here; he is the younger brother of the Rogun or Chief of Egga, and has been interpreter to the late Captain

Abadie, and, like all who came in contact with him, had the liveliest admiration and affection for him. He is in the latter stages of consumption, poor soul, and has a thin eager face, a fair command of English, and a terrible rending cough. He gets thinner each time I see him, and though he sometimes comes to Lokoja, and attends the native hospital there, the doctors can never give me any hope of his recovery. Poor Ganna, I wonder if I shall ever see him again; the last time was when we were poling down the river in a steel canoe, and, in the early morning, as we drifted slowly past a tiny hamlet, a figure flew down the bank, and the familiar emaciated face and skinny, almost transparent arms appeared over the side, bearing a fine leopard skin, while, in a voice saddeningly husky and laboured, Ganna explained how he had kept the skin for us, watched for us many days, knowing of our approach in the weird, mysterious fashion in which news travels in Africa. ‘Yes, he was doing a little work now, but his chest hurt him, and he would come to Lokoja when his work was finished ... he would go again to the hospital, indeed he would, and ask the Likitor (Doctor!) for some more of that good medicine.... Good-bye!... Sai wota rana! (lit. till another day) ...’ and the canoe dropped down stream, leaving the sunken hollow eyes watching us from the bank, and the painful hacking cough reaching our ears after the corner was rounded. Poor Ganna, I wonder where our ‘wota rana’ meeting will take place—not in Africa, I think!

A Camp on the River Bank. (p. 40)



ROOFING AT KEFFI. (p. 51)

However, this particular Christmas Day was four years ago, and Ganna was then a stronger man, and a keen shikari, and had arranged this shoot. I looked at him with special interest, as he crouched, smiling, at one end of the canoe, clad in a dazzling white Hausa gown, heavily embroidered in green—there seemed to be more of him than usual, and the hope crossed my mind that he was perhaps gaining flesh. But, when we had poled down the creek where the water-lilies are clustered thick, past the Niger Company's warehouses, and out on to the great grey river, nearly half a mile wide, and shrouded in pale Harmattan mists, and were sweeping rapidly down stream in the direction of the duck grounds, Ganna dissipated my hopes by cautiously divesting himself of his white garb, and emerging, clad in a faultless Norfolk suit of light tweed—a present from his beloved master, as he explained proudly.

The water was like oil, greyness was everywhere as soon as the sun began to drop into the haze, and a great silence prevailed—the loudest sound being the crackling of numberless bush fires along the banks, for at this season of the year the dry grass is fired, and in all directions there are leaping tongues of flame and columns of smoke.

Presently, the ‘Quack! Quack!’ of contented ducks could be heard, and we crept off our chairs and crouched in the bottom of our canoe, the polers squatting motionless at either end, their wet poles slowly dripping into the greasy-looking water, while the canoe drifted down to the sand-bank where the ducks were—in their hundreds, some standing in the water, preening their feathers, others solemnly waddling about on the bank—all discoursing ceaselessly in their gossippy, monotonous language. The whole bank was dark with them, tall, graceful ‘crown-birds’ standing motionless or stalking thoughtfully about on the sand, plump, sturdy mallards, and restless little teal, all busy, chatty, supremely happy, and utterly unconscious of the danger creeping on them, in the drifting canoe.

We were so absorbed in watching the scene that we forgot the object of our expedition, and, indeed, it seemed nothing short of criminal to disturb a party so contented and peaceful, but the thousands of restless little bright eyes spied the glint of a gun barrel, the alarm was given, there was a rushing whirr, and the sky over our heads was instantly dark with beating wings. A couple of shots brought down some victims, and the canoe wended its way to another duck-ground, after landing me on a sand-bank, for the purpose of sketching a picturesque little hamlet built there by the fisher-folk during the season of low water, when they spend their time catching and drying fish; later, when the water rises, and, each year, sweeps away the whole colony of frail grass huts, they return to Egga, and dispose of their season’s catch.

When the canoe, laden with further spoils, picked me up again, the sun was just setting in the banks of mist, a gorgeous colour display of sunset had turned the whole world rose-colour, giving to the water a strange pale violet hue, and we had a good six miles to pole against a swift current, so the nose of the canoe was turned up stream, and we crept along close under the banks, where the stream is least strong, and the edge gives some purchase for the poles.

Our progress seemed incredibly slow, but I could have sat there for ever, slipping through the still evening, the silence only broken, away behind us, by the faint quacking of disturbed and outraged ducks, returning cautiously to the feeding-grounds; one felt at peace with all the world, and I could not even bother to give an anxious thought to the complete uncertainty of our dinner!

Ahead of us was a tiny canoe, with only one occupant, but fully laden with newly-made earthenware pots, coming to seek a market at Egga; steadily the man pulled, watching the sinking sun all the while; then, as it finally disappeared, he deliberately poled into a flat sand-bank, tied the canoe to the pole fixed in the sand, carefully washed and prepared himself, then, with his face devoutly raised to the eastward sky, he commenced his evening devotions. A picturesque figure with the flaming sunset afterglow as a background, intent only on his prayer, unconscious of our approach under the bank, alone and—to his knowledge—unseen, not a gesture, not a movement of the hands, not a single word was omitted or hurried over—a curious blending of simplicity and solemnity, and, as we left him behind, I murmured, ‘Thy Father which seeth in secret ...’ and the Sahib nodded his head comprehendingly.

It was quite dark when we slid into the Egga creek, and figures began to move on the bank and lights flash as we pulled up; the most prominent was a short, squat personage, clad in spotless white drill, white shoes and a jaunty straw hat in his hand, holding the big lantern and generally directing the disembarkation! Jim Dow, the sinner, restored to his former greatness, perfectly sober and full of serene cheerfulness—assuring us genially that he was ‘quite well again’ and the dinner progressing most satisfactorily!

A scramble up to the rest-house, hot baths and a change—and Jim Dow was quite as good as his word!

CHAPTER IV
Keffi

Immediately after the New Year we marched north from Egga to Pateji, where we were to meet the Resident of Ilorin, and with him accomplish the delimitating of the Ilorin-Kabba boundary. At one of our halts we were lunching one day, when the servants ran in, begging us, in some excitement, to ‘come and look!’ In the dusty roadway were a couple of donkeys, loaded with potash, a pair of evil-looking men, and two of the most forlorn, wretched little mites of children that it has ever been my misfortune to see. The younger of the two was certainly not more than four or five years old, both were crying helplessly, stumbling along in the dust, limping and exhausted. They had begged our boys for water, and so, most fortunately, attracted their attention.

It was the first case of obvious slavery I had ever seen, and the terrible cruelty of it made one’s blood boil. My husband of course detained the ‘caravan,’

the leader of which declared glibly that the children were not slaves, but his own offspring, and that their mother was just coming along behind. The elder toddler had spirit enough to cry out: ‘We are not, we are not! He bought us, for a horse ... a *thin* horse.’ ... with a mournful touch of self-pity.

Presently, a young girl came toiling along the road, and the caravan leader flung at her a flood of a language unknown to us, so that, when questioned, she spiritlessly agreed that they were her children.

She was, herself not more than fourteen or fifteen, and could not possibly have been the mother of either child; her owner, when sternly reminded of this, hurriedly shifted his ground, saying that this was not the woman of whom he had spoken, the children’s mother was still further behind. This was greeted with loud denials from the mites, who had already placed themselves definitely under our protection! We had the caravan leader removed when the next dejected figure came slowly in sight, and the new-comer immediately and frankly described them all as slaves, confirmed the children’s story, and with pitiful indifference remarked that they had already

covered twelve miles that day, and were prepared to travel another six, so as to avoid the observation of the ‘White Judge.’

The men were taken into custody, the donkeys and loads confiscated, the women elected to attach themselves to another caravan, travelling back to their own district, and we took charge of the children. After a good meal and twelve hours’ sleep, they were different creatures, but their swollen feet made it almost impossible for them to walk a yard.

I carried the tiny boy on my knee, and, after a grunt or two of satisfaction, his head dropped back on my shoulder, and he slept for hours. It was not exactly a comfortable arrangement in a side-saddle, and we were much relieved when we reached Pateji, and could ship our charges down to Lokoja, where they became two of the liveliest inmates of the Freed Slaves’ Home.

At Pateji, my husband found orders to return at once to Lokoja, hand over the Province to a new Resident, then on his way out from England, and start for Keffi, the headquarters of the Nassarawa Province, where he was to take temporary charge.

We crossed to Mureji, at the mouth of the Kaduna River, and returned to Lokoja to make preparations for our departure. There was excitement and unrest in the air, events in the North had made the Kano-Sokoto Expedition an immediate necessity, the greater part of the Force had already concentrated at Zaria, and the Lokoja garrison was reinforced by troops from Southern Nigeria, under the command of Major Moorhouse. Dr. Cargill, the Resident of Nassarawa, was urgently needed at Kano, so, after a week spent by my husband in initiating his successor into the mysteries of the daily work of a Resident, we started off for Keffi, congratulating ourselves on this opportunity of seeing

a new part of the country.

We left Lokoja one hot day at the end of January, occupying a steel canoe which was towed alongside by the steam canoe *Black Swan*. This latter was —well, ‘occupied’ is not the word—*overflowed* by a party of officers and N.C.O.s; Captain Macarthy Morrogh and Mr. Steward being on their way to join the Anglo-German Boundary Commission, Major Mackenzie and Mr.

Carré from Southern Nigeria, bound for Loko and Nassarawa to recruit carriers.

The two former had, of necessity, a great quantity of stores and baggage, and the discomfort of that crowded canoe must have been extreme, intensified as it was by the heat from their steam pipes: I should imagine that on parting with four of us at Loko, the sentiments of the remainder must have been unmixed relief!

The Benue River struck me as being remarkably clearer and purer in colour than the Niger, and the scenery is very lovely. Each evening we ‘tied up’

by a convenient sand-bank, and the men camped there, rejoiced, I fancy, to spread themselves out a bit.

One evening the *Black Swan* contingent gave a dinner-party, the novel feature of which was that our menu was to consist of a ‘French dinner’—a most luxurious invention for travellers, one large box containing five tins, each representing a course, with fascinating French names. These only need to be heated in boiling water—and, behold—your French dinner! As we were a party of six, two ‘dinners’ were requisitioned, and we fared royally on delicious soup for a start. After that, I fear the various cooks and boys got hopelessly astray among the courses, for I found myself eating filleted sole, with apple charlotte by way of a sauce! We gave up all attempt at sequence after that, and simply ate our way through a list of most excellent dainties, discovering many new and delectable combinations, and voted the ‘dinners’ an unqualified success!

At Loko the party broke up; we found ponies waiting for us, and hastened off as soon as possible, for it is a most unpleasant mosquito-ridden spot.

The road to Keffi is monotonous and wearisome, consisting of the path cleared for the construction of the telegraph line, and it is the dullest process following that interminable wire, winding in between the stumps of decapitated trees. The only halt of any interest on the way was at Nassarawa, a town which had evidently ‘seen better days,’ finely situated on rising ground above a broad river.

Keffi has always had a sinister reputation—firstly as a famous slave market, and later on as the scene of Captain Moloney's tragic death. The Keffi people are queer restless folks, finding their greatest pleasure, apparently, in *munafiki* or intrigue of all kinds.

Our native friends in Lokoja shook their heads dismally, and deplored our being obliged to go among these 'bad, hard-hearted people,' I remember, and were evidently prepared for all kinds of unpleasant developments!

As we rode in through the South Gate, and up the long sandy road through the town, it seemed indeed a desolate spot after the teeming streets of Lokoja; nearly all the houses were unroofed (a precaution against fire in the dry season), many were ruinous, and scarcely a soul was to be seen. But, glancing into the narrow low doorways, one was conscious of lurking forms and inquisitive peeping eyes; there were subdued scufflings as, seeing themselves observed, the peepers scuttled off into devious back alleys, like frightened rabbits. The town had been practically deserted since the trouble of the previous autumn, when Captain Moloney's death took place, and the outlook was indeed a depressing one.

The Resident was occupying the great, mud-built pile, originally the house of the Magaji, forming one side of an open square, just opposite it was the Mosque, and on the left the Sariki's 'palace.'

The Residency was, to say the least of it, a gloomy spot for a dwelling-house—a very large compound, surrounded by a thirty foot wall, affording, at best, a view of the sky alone, the inside occupied by a labyrinth of houses, some mere circular huts, dark and low, others well-built, flat-roofed cool houses.

Many of the smaller huts had been pulled down, giving more light and air and improving matters greatly. It was very quiet, very prison-like, scarcely a sound penetrated from outside, save the cry of the Muezzins from the Mosque opposite, and only terrific smells from the indigo dye-pits reminded one that there was life and industry beyond the wall.

Dr. Cargill left for Kano almost immediately, and we settled down to await the arrival of our relief, Mr. Granville. A detachment of the N.N.R.

had 'barracks' near the South Gate, and Mr.

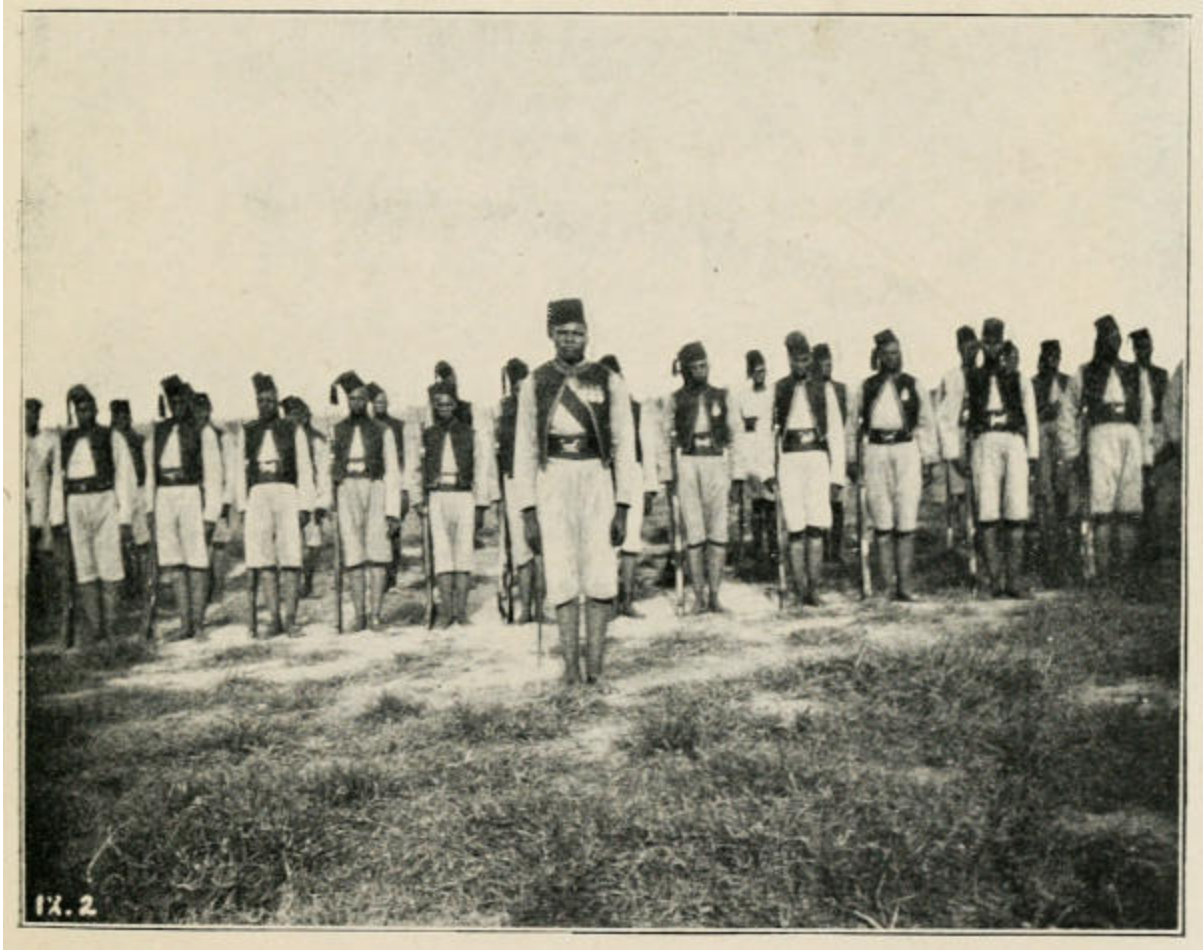
Wilcox, in command, was our daily companion when we went out shooting in the evenings, the country round Keffi producing plenty of birds, or when we explored the higher ground behind the town, searching for a suitable site for a new Residency.

On the summit of a high hill, overlooking the town, was a circular wall, enclosing a solitary grave, the resting-place of Captain Moloney, and, in the square, outside the Mosque, stood a tall white wooden cross, marking the spot where he died. All honour to those who placed it there—but that cross has always been a sorrow to me: close beside the wall of the Mosque, it could not fail to be an offence to a Mahomedan community, and, being on the way to the market, each man, woman and child who passed, must be reminded daily of the tragedy that had ruined the prosperity of the town, and wrecked so many innocent, humble homes.

During the short time we were at Keffi, we spared no pains in endeavouring to ‘re-establish confidence’

walking about the town in every direction, and striving to make friends with the people. They were, even then, beginning timidly to return and to come to the market, and, before we left, we had the satisfaction of seeing hundreds of nice new thatched roofs appearing, and the householders coming to their doors to call greetings and salutations, instead of making panic-stricken rushes in the opposite direction!

NATIVE DRUMMERS AT KEFFI. (p. 54)



A Detachment of the N.N. Regt. (p. 68)

Our thoughts, while there, were naturally occupied with the sad events of Captain Moloney's death, and we heard the story in detail from the Resident's clerk, a native called Silva, who was present, and as his account of it is rather a curious one, I may mention it here, though, of course, I cannot vouch for the absolute truth of it, and give it just as it was told to me. The main facts (I am quoting partly from the best authority, the High Commissioner's Annual Report for 1902) are as follows:— On the day in question, Captain Moloney, being anxious to 'come to an amicable understanding'

with this influential Chief, the Magaji, who had apparently been giving him much trouble throughout the Province, slave-raiding and robbing caravans, and preferring to endeavour by argument and persuasion to win him over to the side of law and order, and make of him a useful friend to Government, determined on a decisive interview, while he had a large

military force temporarily at Keffi, to back up his authority if needful. The account runs thus:— ‘Captain Moloney ... went to the king’s house, and the Magaji was summoned to attend. He declined to do so, and Mr. Webster, Assistant Resident, was sent to fetch him. Misled by the Government native agent, to whose intrigue and false representations it now appears probable that the deplorable results which followed were directly due, Mr. Webster entered the private quarters—probably the harem—of the Magaji. That Chief

was surrounded by armed retainers, who immediately set upon Mr. Webster. He very narrowly

escaped with his life, and was eventually seized and literally thrown out. Captain Moloney then sent him to call up a detachment of troops. The Magaji, seeing his arrest was imminent, rushed out of his house, and killed Captain Moloney and the agent, Awudu, before the soldiers could reach the spot. He and his followers then fled, but sent messages that they would presently return and finish their work.’

Now, this clerk, Silva, had been a hospital dresser, and the task of preparing Captain Moloney’s body for burial, fell to him. He declared earnestly and emphatically that there was no wound on the body whatsoever, except an arrow wound in the neck which had pierced the carotid artery, and caused almost immediate death. He further described how the Magaji was armed with a ‘gun’ *only*, he did not touch Captain Moloney, but rode straight at Awudu, the native agent, who, as described by the High Commissioner, was the cause of the whole trouble, and, crying out, ‘*You* have done this!

It is your fault!’—shot him dead, as he ran, in terror, towards the barracks. The whole crowd of the Magaji’s followers, rushing out like a swarm of angry bees, of course fired off a cloud of arrows, more or less at random, and, from this man’s earnestly told story, it seems fairly certain that it was one of these which killed Captain Moloney. The old Sariki of Keffi, who was standing close by, endeavoured to support the wounded man, but received an arrow himself, in the foot—a slight wound, however, from which he recovered.

These differing facts do not, however, in the least remove from the Magaji’s shoulders the indirect guilt of murder, although his hand may not

have given the actual death-blow; he was said to have been killed at Burmi, among the army of the Ex-Sultan of Sokoto, in the following July.

We beguiled some of the long hot hours by making an effort to learn Arabic; we did not progress very far or very fast, but, indeed, I think circumstances were rather against us! Our teacher spoke Arabic and Hausa —no English, of course—we spoke Hausa, much English, and, in moments of excitement, as our habit is—voluble Hindustani! Our

text-book and dictionary were Arabic-French! Something like a miniature Tower of Babel ensued, and we decided to postpone our studies till a more favourable opportunity presented itself! I also amused myself by decorating the whitewashed walls of our house with sketches, which completely depleted my paint-box, but entertained me mightily—I believe they are still to be seen there!

We had bought a very handsome pony in Keffi, and one day, to our distress, he developed violent colic, and appeared to be dying. Every available remedy was applied, and for the whole afternoon he was fomented with hot blankets, but he lay helpless, swollen, limp and moaning. We then resigned him, at our boy's earnest request, into the hands of a native horse-doctor, a wizened old individual, who stood and looked, then, remarking laconically, 'He will recover!' proceeded, with great difficulty, of course, to get the pony on to his feet.

He then passed his hands five or six times down the pony's flanks, murmuring to himself the while, finally taking the muzzle in both hands, he looked very hard into the pony's eyes, recited a string of rapid Arabic sentences and, stooping low, blew into each nostril three times. I stood by watching and wondering, then, in amazement, realized that *a cure had been effected*! The 'doctor' stood aside, and announced as placidly as ever: 'He has recovered!' directing that a bran mash should be given at once; this 'Kim' ate eagerly, and never showed another symptom of pain or illness! I cannot explain this cure in any way; I can only say that I saw it done, and done in less than ten minutes, and that the wizard stoutly declined to give me his prescription or to share the secret!

Shortly afterwards, Mr. Granville arrived and took over, and we rode out of Keffi, feeling distinctly light-hearted, as we had 'Leave' and 'Home'

before us. But the impression of gloom and sadness left on my mind by Keffi was deepened later, for we never saw Mr. Wilcox again, as he died at Bauchi a few months later. Mr. Carré, one of our cheery party on the Benue River, also died, Mr.

Granville was invalided Home later, dangerously ill, and Major Marsh, whose kind genial face was the last we saw on leaving Lokoja, was killed in July at Burmi, to our sorrow.

We started for England at the end of March, and had a most comfortable trip on the *Jebba*—one of the few voyages I have ever enjoyed; we were fortunate in our weather, our fellow-travellers, and in most of the amenities of boardship life, and I ‘lazed’ on deck, feeling very well satisfied with my first year in Northern Nigeria. I had ridden over three thousand miles, learnt a new language, made thousands of new friends in the animal and flower world, as well as valued human ones, I felt as if I had ‘enlarged my borders’ mentally, and had certainly begun to know and love Africa with a deep affection that, I think, is never lost by those who once acquire it.

My husband was elected to the Hausa Scholarship at Cambridge, and we spent a truly delightful May Term there, which passed only too quickly in the cordial friendship of charming cultured people, and among the lovely surroundings of the University.

CHAPTER V
Trekking North

The following September we turned our faces again towards Nigeria. The ‘Home’ climate had somewhat disgusted us, exemplified as it was by weeks of hopeless, unceasing, soaking rain in Scotland, and, but for the horrible wrench of parting again with our nearest and dearest, we prepared for our return in the most cheerful spirits.

My husband had been appointed to a new Province, eastward from Kano, named Katāgum, one which had come inside the scope of the Administration as a result of the Sokoto Expedition, and hitherto had not been ‘administered’ at all. The prospect of absolutely new ground, the North country, people of a high-class Mahomedan type, all appealed strongly to us both, especially as our way lay through Kano, of which we had all heard so much during the last six months.

To our responsibilities we added an irresistible little fox-terrier, acquiring him absurdly cheap from a dealer, on account of what the latter called a ‘marble’ in his eye—a sort of discoloured patch, which, although, of course, a blemish, did not appear to affect his sight, and was almost certainly the result of a blow. This fact we were able to deduce from subsequent events. Long before we reached Africa, we discovered that Binkie had an undying hatred for any one who had the temerity to wear *blue trousers*!

He commenced to act on this principle at once, by attempting to bite the guard of the train, made unfriendly overtures to the hall-porters at the hotel in Liverpool, although on the most affectionate terms with every one except the wearers of these obnoxious garments; on the landing-stage, in the intervals of caressing, and being caressed by a little girl, he made purposeful grabs at one and all of the blue-clothed porters, and reached the zenith of his reputation by biting two quarter-masters on board! It was a tiresome, and, incidentally, expensive habit, as we had no muzzle for him, and I only breathed freely on landing in Lokoja, where the majority of the inhabitants are guiltless of blue trousers. To do him credit, I must say he

never touched a native, but I had to scan the garments of my callers anxiously, and warn Binkie accordingly!

On the way down the Coast we were given a ten days old bull terrier pup, a very highly-bred little person, who, having had the audacity to be born with a fawn-coloured patch, had thoroughly disgraced himself in his owner's eyes. We had

a difficult time rearing him, and nights in bed became 'things hoped for, not seen!'

On arrival in Lokoja we found Mr. Wallace there, just starting up river to Zungeru, and he gave us a cordial invitation to visit him there, when we had made the necessary preparations in Lokoja collecting 'the office furniture' for Katāgum, and engaging carriers. While there we were burgled in a fashion so characteristic that it may be worth describing.

My husband was known—evidently—to have a large sum of money in silver; this he deposited, naturally, in the largest, heaviest, and therefore least removable of our boxes, but the enterprising burglar evidently thought that a tin uniform case (which happened to be padlocked) looked promising, and, during a tornado at night, carried it off!

We discovered our loss early next morning, and I was utterly dismayed, as its contents were mainly a new photographic outfit, chemicals, paper, etc.

We 'communicated with the police,' but, meantime, some thirty carriers came to be enrolled, and, guided by previous experience, my husband informed them of the loss, expressed an opinion that the box was not far off, and, telling them to search the 'bush,' offered a reward of five shillings to the finder.

The grass all round was over the men's heads, and drenchingly wet, but they plunged gaily in, shouting and hunting, and in less than half an hour emerged triumphant, with the box and its contents, the latter practically ruined, having been scattered far and wide in the frantic but unavailing search for money. It must have been a 'horrid sell'

for the thief; his only prize—at least, the only article missing—was the clockwork engine of a toy train, which I had brought out as a present for a small black friend! He had, luckily, quite overlooked a large envelope,

containing stamps to the value of £25, the nucleus of a Katāgum post-office!

We left Lokoja, a large party of twelve or fourteen people, with various destinations, rather tightly packed on the *Sarota*, and, during a tornado, trying to shut a cabin window, my husband had a nasty accident, absolutely tearing the nail right out of one finger. It was not an auspicious moment for even a ‘partial disablement,’ and gave him a bad time at first, but healed splendidly, and, in spite of many gloomy prognostications, he succeeded in growing a new nail eventually!

We made our way up the Kaduna in a steel canoe, slept one night under a corrugated iron shed at Barijuko, and the next morning started ‘by train’

for Zungeru. It was an experience quite amusing for the first time; safely embarked in a roofed-in truck we rattled, bumped and swayed along the tiny line, with much shouting and vociferation; various passers-by, walking to Zungeru, placidly crossed the line in absent-minded fashion, under the nose of the crazy little engine, and had terrific abuse and chunks of coal hurled at them by the native engine driver. The dirt was choking, and the noise made speech impossible, so I clutched my bull-pup tightly, and watched with interest the flowers along the line—glowing yellow coreopsis, tall and slender, away down below were patches of vernonia purpurea, like a copper-coloured ‘button’

chrysanthemum, while the grass was thickly dotted with a tiny rose-coloured flower, one which grows in uttermost profusion there and in the North, but which I have never seen farther South.

Some days later we had an opportunity of really appreciating the tram-line, when we made an expedition to Wushishi on a pump trolley, and found it a really exhilarating and delightful method of travelling!

We got a warm welcome from Mr. Wallace, and spent a few days with him, enjoying his cordial hospitality and kindness while we made our final preparations for our start. Government House is, indeed, an ‘oasis in the desert’ to the weary traveller, luxuriously furnished with costly English furniture, soft carpets, bright chintzes and silk curtains, and fitted with electric light; it is all very charming, though, perhaps, not the very best preparation for thirty days in the bush!

My husband had brought out from Home a couple of mono-wheel carts, his own invention, and now had them put together preparatory to our long trek.

The cart, briefly, consisted of a single wheel, about three feet high, which revolved in the centre of a platform six feet by four, with ordinary wheel-barrow handles at either end. The platform was fixed below the wheel axle, and thus lowered the centre of gravity as much as possible, and lessened the inclination to fall over. While in England two ordinary carpenters in the workshop where the carts were built, had taken one with a load of about seven hundred pounds up and down streets with ease, and we were therefore delighted, and hoped that Nigerian transport would receive a helping hand thereby. Alas! we had not reckoned with the carrier, who, we fondly imagined, would prefer the lesser effort of trundling to carrying. He would have none of it! While the man behind had to raise the handles and start, the one in front, whose duty was only to pull and assist the balance, would also endeavour to lift! This, naturally, threw much more weight on the back handles, with the result that every few yards the whole thing would tumble over and have to be reloaded. Even placing a man on either side to prevent this happening made no appreciable difference, and, in desperation, we were finally obliged to engage extra carriers for the contents of the carts, and eventually marched into Zaria, the carts being triumphantly carried on the heads of two men!

At that time the path on leaving Zungeru, was simply villainous, beset with huge stones which even the one wheel could not avoid with the cleverest of steering, and this increased the local prejudice immensely. I really think that, had Fate decreed for us an ordinary, fairly level and well-patted down bush path, some nine inches wide, miles of which are to be found in some districts, and had our men been able to get accustomed to the novelty under such circumstances, the invention would certainly have proved a success and a great convenience at distant stations, where, at present, a tin of kerosene oil, for example, adds ten shillings or more to its original cost by the time it arrives, on account of the carrier’s pay. Later on, while we were detained at Kano, we tried to make a single cart out of the two, using both wheels, but with a very narrow track, about two feet wide, and this worked excellently until the dry wind of the Harmattan and the fierce sun heat through the day so ruined the wood-work that the wheels

came to pieces, all the spokes falling out. Upon this we sorrowfully resigned the idea until a more favourable opportunity, and endured the daily irritation of seeing loads damaged by being rubbed off at each convenient tree by pack animals!

But this digression has taken me far ahead of my story, which must be resumed at Zungeru, where, one hot afternoon, on the 29th of October, we said good-bye to Mr. Wallace, and finally departed, while the bull-terrier pup shrieked aloud at being immured in a basket and treated as a ‘load’; we walked down to the river crossing, and were ferried over in a crazy canoe half full of water, which started my new riding-boots on their downward path! We afterwards discovered that one box had been planted comfortably in the same water, and, on opening it some days later, a sad scene of literal ‘blue ruin’ greeted our eyes—books, writing-paper, photographs, clothing, all hopelessly destroyed and mildewed—such is African travel!

We slept at Ganan Gabbas, a dirty stuffy little hamlet, and a sharp contrast to our quarters of the night before, but, happily, we were not in the least disposed to feel depressed over the absence of armchairs and soft carpets!

I was interested in watching the young wife of one of the native police among the escort, bathing her tiny baby (three months old) in the chill morning air before sunrise, the cold water being well smeared all over the little brown body, while the poor mite—naturally—yelled lustily! The bath finished, no

drying operations being included, the mother scooped up a handful of water, closed her hand with the thumb pointing downwards, and, using the latter as a kind of spout, directed a stream of water into the baby’s mouth, slowly and steadily, totally disregarding loud gurgles, chokes and struggles of protest: meantime she was feeling and pressing the rapidly expanding little stomach, until convinced, I suppose, that its limit of capacity was reached.

This treatment is meted out to all the babies, and is considered to be a great strengthening agent!

This Spartan parent, having strapped the baby tightly to her back, and made ready for the start, stooped to lift a towering load of calabashes and

other household goods, and doing so, put her shoulder out. She appeared to suffer a good deal of pain, but took it quite quietly, turning meekly to her husband, who, with one bare foot planted under the injured arm, gave a mighty pull, and with a snap the joint returned to its place. She thanked him prettily, adjusted the load on her head, and started off happily on her day's march!

The march proved an interesting one, though very hot; the autumn is almost the best time of the year to 'see the country'; in the farms the guinea-corn was just beginning to ripen and droop its massive plumes of grain, underfoot was a terribly stony path, but much of the road lay over hills, and we got magnificent views of miles upon miles of wooded hill and plain, unrolling themselves into the dim blue distance.

At Zaria we pitched our tent on the wide plain outside the great pile of mud buildings then used as the Residency. Every one was most kind to us, giving us every sort of assistance. Major Hasler, then commanding the Mounted Infantry at Zaria, specially delighted me by a present of a huge bunch of the most splendid zinnias I have ever seen—grown in the tiny garden round his quarters. He and a brother officer, I remember, 'spread a banquet'

for us, as they expressed it, and a very merry party it was. Some anxiety was experienced during the afternoon as to the probable behaviour of a very special feature of the feast—a claret jelly—and diligent search was made for the coolest and breeziest spot in which to 'set' it. Our minds were relieved, however, by the triumphant announcement that it had 'jelled' admirably in plenty of time for dinner. We had quite beautiful table decorations of a lovely rose-coloured shrub, cunningly set in discarded cigarette tins, and one of our hosts, in his determination to do honour to the very first 'Ladies' dinner' in Zaria, decided on most daring flights in his costume. But, alas! difficulties intervened, and after a little delay, he appeared—full of apologies—magnificent in regulation English evening dress, with a peerless glossy shirt-front, a tie tied to perfection—but *no collar*! This item was 'lost, stolen or strayed,' but our intrepid soldier friend did not for a moment allow such an obstacle to defeat his original plan, I am glad to say!

The road northward from Zaria was interesting, a regular market garden, miles upon miles of cultivation and farms; the grass was quite fine and short, utterly unlike the luxuriant growth down south, and tinged with a warm brownish red shade, which made a delicious ‘colour scheme,’ stretching away under great spreading trees into the far pearly blue haze.

We found Bebeji most interesting. On approaching it, the scene seemed familiar, and we felt convinced that we had seen it before, until we recollected the delicately executed pencil drawings illustrating Barth’s travels: here were the very same isolated tall palm trees, the flat-roofed massive buildings, high clay walls, and only the shortest and most meagre of herbage. We were given quarters in a couple of excellent cool lofty rooms, with a vaulted roof, beamed with wood and decorated high up with gaudy coloured earthenware plates of the commonest description, but much appreciated for this kind of mural decoration. We were destined to see them very often afterwards, and in any dwelling which has been hastily quitted by the occupants during war or under the influence of panic, almost invariably the plates are torn from the walls and carried off.

CHAPTER VI
Kano

I suppose no one can approach Kano, even to-day, without a certain thrill of excitement and interest.

One's thoughts involuntarily turn back to the days when it was all but inaccessible to white men, and yet the mere name of it was a kind of lodestar, irresistibly attracting travellers in the face of almost insuperable difficulties. One thinks of Clapperton, Lander and Barth journeying hither, and rather specially, perhaps, of Richard Oudney, who died within a few days' march of the goal.

I believe that every member of our party, down to the most irresponsible 'small boy,' had something to express in the way of satisfaction and excitement when the long red wall began to appear above the horizon, and we approached the very place of all others which we too had so longed to reach and see for ourselves.

Outside the gate, the Resident, Dr. Cargill, met us and escorted us through the city. Our way did not lie through the markets and busiest thoroughfares, and, looking back, I think my first impression was the surprising area of open ground inside the walls, the vast stretches of cultivation and flourishing farms. This is intentional, and has been done for all time, so that in the event of a long siege, the inhabitants would be well supplied with food-stuffs, and practically independent of the farms outside the walls.

It took us an hour to pass through the city, and I fear I carried away only a misty impression of my first ride through Kano—blurred through my very eagerness to see, to absorb, to miss nothing, added to my delight at being there, and anxiety to make the most of my very special privilege in being the first white woman to enter there! I can only recall breathless heat, glaring sunshine on pink walls and white dusty ground, in sudden contrast to the warm, dark purple shadows, an endless stream of passers-by thronging to and from the various markets—hundreds of different types, diversely clothed, speaking different languages, but all ready with courteous

salutations and friendly greetings—it made one's eyes ache and brain whirl, and it was something of a relief to pass through the gloomy depths of the Nassarawa Gate, and ride up the grassy mile leading to the Residency, formerly the Emir's summer palace. Later on I had opportunities of learning to know the great city better, but, living as we did, outside the city, and quite four miles from the markets and busy streets, each visit was somewhat of an expedition, and it was hard to get more than cursory glimpses of the life that was lived there, and the immense volume of trade going on daily.

In the year 1824 Clapperton recorded, in the simple, naïve fashion that characterizes the whole of his narrative, how, on approaching Kano, he attired himself in all the bravery of his naval uniform and rode into the town, and not a soul in the crowded markets turned a head to look at him, but, 'all, intent on their own business, allowed me to pass without remark!'

So is Kano to-day; to the casual sight-seer or the curio-hunter it has little or nothing to offer, no beauties of architecture, no minarets, no palaces—the smallest Indian bazaar displays more gay colours, more material for the globe-trotter's satisfaction.

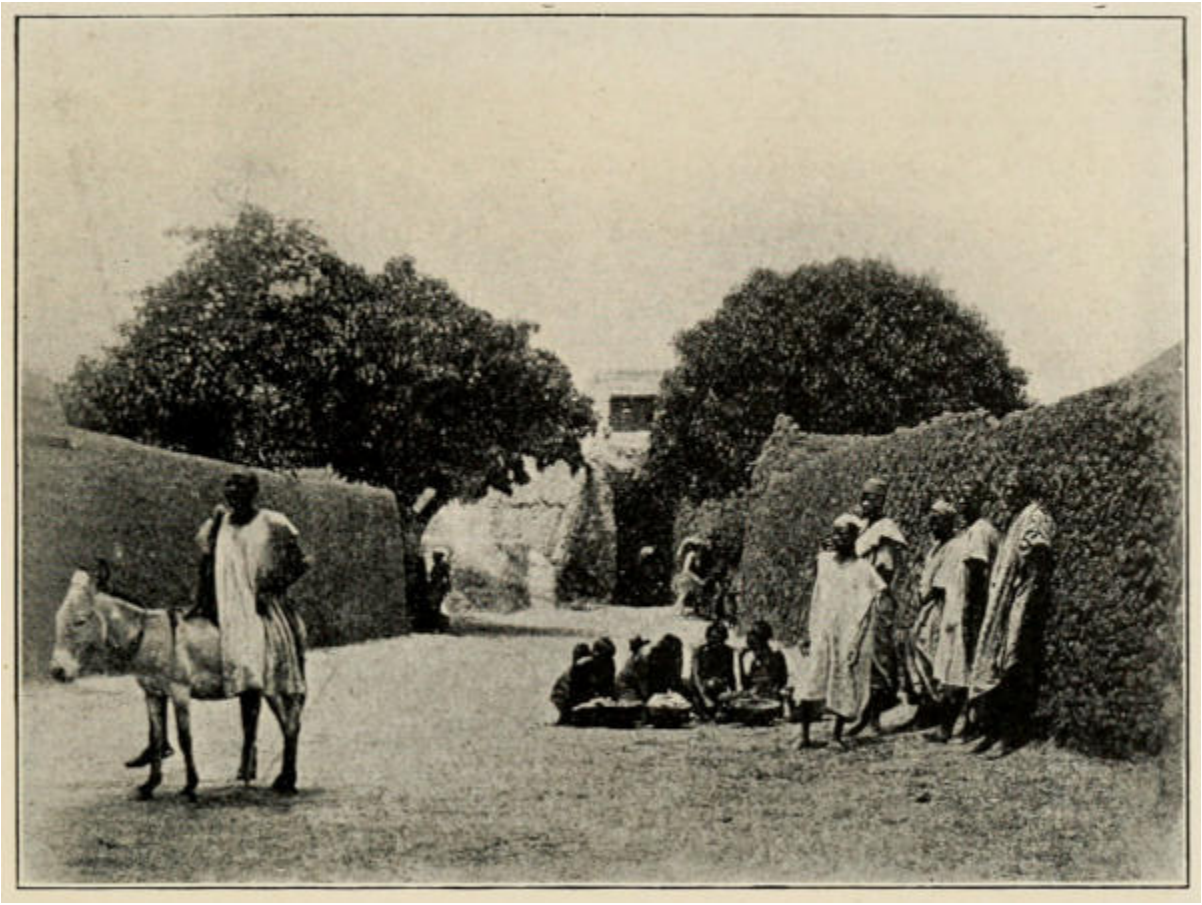
Kano is a centre of strenuous trade,

there is no dallying and chattering and laughter, no sign of the ubiquitous hawker of trifling curios, who haunts an Indian bungalow, and even squats below the verandah of a Lokoja house to-day. The wares that have been brought across the Great Desert amid perils and hazards innumerable are not to be lightly disposed of, and the fierce-eyed swaggering Arabs do most of their bartering privately within the square, dark, low buildings, over much coffee and many cigarettes.

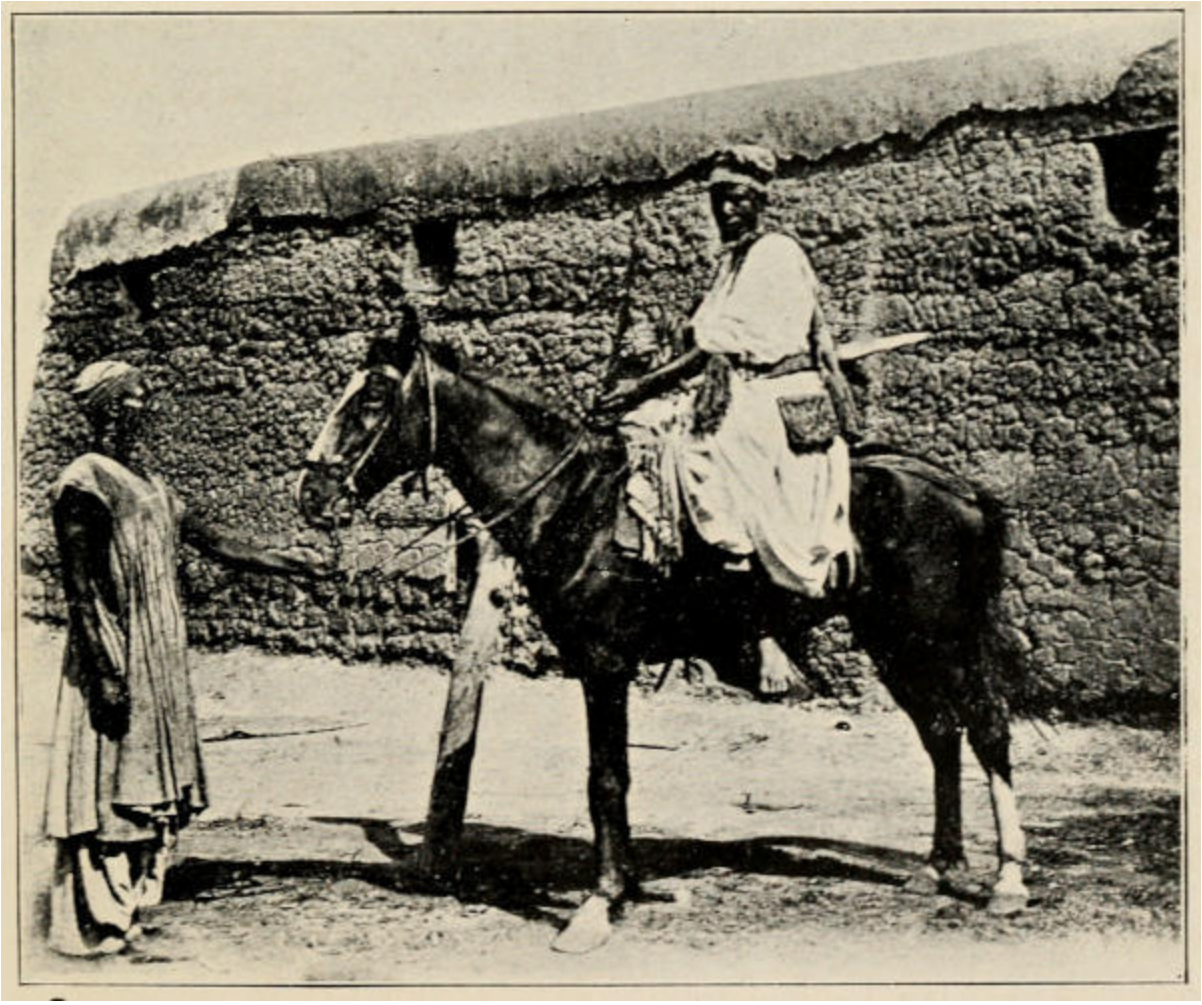
The great pulse of commerce, here, is as well concealed as is the throbbing heart in a motionless body, and gives as little sign of its presence to the casual passer-by, unless he looks keenly enough at the silent hurrying throng all intent on trading for a livelihood, not sauntering, idling, gossiping, like the denizens of an Eastern city. The sternness of the Desert influences the whole place and the people of it. Patient seeking in the various markets reveals an almost incredible collection and variety of wares: Turkish coffee, green tea, French sugar, delicious rare tobacco, silks and cloth, all can be bought at a price—an enormous price, too, be it said!

But it is Kano itself as a city, rather than as a commercial centre, which stands out in my memory distinct, unique, with a charm all its own, like nothing else in the world. Almost all those who saw the city for the first time that year, when it became the youngest-born of the Mother Government, expressed great disappointment with its appearance; I have heard it contemptuously stigmatized as a ‘glorified mud-heap,’ and it is often complained that the actually inhabited portions occupy so small a space inside the huge area of those massive walls. This, to my mind, constitutes one of the city’s greatest fascinations. There is such infinite breadth and restfulness about those vast stretches of short, crisp turf, surrounding the streets and alleys and humming markets; such a wonderful peace and dignity about those two astonishing, jagged, flat-topped hills, ‘Kazauri’ and ‘Dala,’

standing up abruptly in the middle of the plain, like tireless mighty sentinels, watching ever, in every direction, over the distant line of serrated pinkish wall.



A KANO STREET SCENE. (p. 75)



A KANO MOUNTED MESSENGER. (p. 81)

This wall itself is an object lesson to any one who grumbles at the quality of Kano's architecture.

It is fifteen miles in circumference, forty feet high, and wide enough to drive a motor-car round the inside terrace, without much danger to life or limb: at the base it is not much less than eighty feet wide.

There are two deep ditches set moat-like outside the wall; from these all the material for the huge fortification has been taken. How many weary days of ceaseless patient labour, how many pairs of industrious hands have gathered that incredible mass of clay, handful by handful, carried it in miserable little grass baskets and calabashes, piled up the walls and gates

inch by inch, till Kano became the impregnable fortress of the Western Soudan—why, the very thought is stupendous!

Remember, these simple folks have no tools, save one roughly fashioned implement, shaped like a pickaxe, that can do no more than loosen the soil—beyond this, nothing but ten slim, brown fingers, and that magnificent disregard for time which pervades Africa and makes such marvels possible. As an achievement, I think this plain, loop-holed clay wall compares favourably with any of the glorious monuments and fairy palaces of Indian fame.

The gates—thirteen in number—are on the same scale, massive solid square towers, with a narrow passage and various shadowy recesses. The slaves of Kano in the early days must have been as the sand of the sea, for, inside the city, the buildings are on the same plan and of the same material.

In Africa, it is only to the white man that Nature shows a brazen pitiless face; to the child of the soil she is tenderly, munificently bountiful. The clay for building Kano was under their feet; they dug it out, and set up enormous dwellings, almost fortresses, masses of cool dark halls, windowless except for slits high up near the vault of the roof, where the temperature never varies by ten degrees all the year round. And if by doing so they *did* leave great deep pits everywhere, which, in the rainy season, are filled with water, and even through the six months of deadly drought remain stagnant and smelling horribly—well, of course these are fearful evils from a sanitary point of view, and undeniably odoriferous, but that they add an additional charm can hardly be disputed, the foul surfaces hidden by a carpet of clustering water-lilies, and the softly sloping edges clothed with velvety green grass. There is one in particular, so large that it forms a fair-sized lakelet, once a place of grisly association, for it was formerly the custom to execute criminals on its banks: but now the utterly placid surface reflects, like a mirror, its surroundings—houses, palm-trees, the splendid, branching-horned cattle, sheep and goats cropping the smooth greensward around the brink, and the ceaseless *va et vient* of the passers-by. Slender, straight-featured Fulani girls come to fill their water-pots, balancing them on their heads with inimitable grace; the whole scene is faintly veiled and shrouded in the milky haze of the Harmattan, and the slow-rising aromatic smoke. Yes—it may spell malaria and miasma to some, but if any one can pass the ‘Jakko’ as it is called without drawing rein, I am sorry for him, for he has

missed one of those special moments that come to us all, perhaps only once in a lifetime.

One particular evening, just before sunset, as we rode slowly across one of the great levels, sounds of trumpets and drums, mingled with occasional explosions of gunpowder, came drifting along to us, and presently his High and Mightiness, the Emir, came forth for his evening ride, having duly notified his intention beforehand to the Resident—a piece of deferential courtesy never omitted.

He was a fine specimen of the handsome Fulani, regular in features, full of keen intelligence, and extremely dignified. He wore tobe upon tobe, gowns ample in material, gorgeous in colouring, lavishly striped with crimson, gold and blue—French silks which have travelled from Tripoli, and decorated with silver Turkish embroidery. His ‘fulah’ or turban was immense and snowy-white, the folds drawn over his nose and chin, a necessary precaution against dust. He sat with ease and majesty on a proud-stepping camel, head and shoulders above the surging crowd, caparisoned and ornamented with leather, coloured red, blue, green and yellow—a thoroughly regal figure.

Six hundred horsemen or thereabouts accompanied this almost daily ride, all rushing, galloping, saluting, waving arms and shouting, horses rearing and flinging bloodstained foam around, maddened by the cruel iron bit, sharp spurs, and metal, shovel-shaped stirrups, dashing off into the great cloud of dust which followed them, enveloping the throng streaming after on foot, banging drums, blowing shrill blasts on trumpets six or eight feet long, and firing off fusilades from ancient flint-locks and muzzle-loaders! It was a curious spectacle, widely apart from the world of to-day, and one that might have stepped out of the Arabian Nights or the stirring days of Shah Jehan.

A KANO CARAVAN DONKEY DRIVER. (p. 88)

We watched them on their way, and rode slowly about the city, finding something new and fascinating at every turn, till the scarlet sun dropped behind the far-off wall, and the rugged side of Kazauri and Dala turned rosy-red, indeed the whole city glowed suddenly pink, and the heavy smoke wreaths twined in sapphire blue curves in the rapidly cooling atmosphere. It was obviously time to go home; the Emir was back in his palace, and only a few straggling horsemen and a cloud of dust marked where he had passed; the mu'ezzins were already calling in all directions from the summit of the Mosques, 'Allahu akbar! Allahu akbar!'

and the faithful were wending their way to evening prayer. Reluctantly we turned our horses' heads, passed through the Nassarawa Gate, gloomy and dark in the fading light, cantered up the wide sandy road to the Residency, in the swiftly falling darkness of the African night, and were suddenly jerked back into civilization and modernity, to the dusty parade-ground, English voices, and joyful leaping fox-terriers!

The Residency itself, our home for the time being, consisted of a very large compound, surrounded by a high wall and entered by the usual recessed gatehouse. Inside the courtyard were several massive buildings, one the first two-storeyed native houses I had seen. They were great vaulted apartments, cool and dim, eminently suited to African royalty, but as dwellings for English folk, more than a trifle gloomy. However, we found our spacious mansion (extremely like a crypt!) was speedily and easily brightened by the introduction of clean matting, a few cheerful-tinted cloths, and quantities of sketches and pictures on the sombre brown walls. The upper storey was reached by a solid staircase of clay, and comprised a fine large room with plenty of light and air, commanding a splendid view over the imprisoning compound wall.

Outside were the hospital buildings, the barracks where the detachment of the N.N.R. was quartered, and, beyond, the Mounted Infantry Lines and officers' quarters, all forming a sort of semicircle round the parade-ground, where I used to sit and watch many an exciting game of polo, rendered more eventful by sundry rather alarming obstacles on the ground itself, in the shape of holes and tree-stumps.

There was, in particular, a cotton tree, in the buttresses of which the ball lodged itself with malignant and unerring precision; the process of hooking it out looked so extraordinary to an observer, that one might almost wonder 'what the game was!'

I tried, as usual, to make a garden, but it was up-hill work—every scrap of earth had to be carried in from outside the compound, sheep and donkeys from the caravans regularly smashed the frail fence, and trampled on the beds, hordes of lizards nipped the head off each seedling as it appeared, and, the month being December, the middle of the dry season, my efforts were utterly defeated.

I suppose there was not ‘much to do’ as a matter of fact, but the daily stream of caravans, pausing to pay their toll, were an unfailing interest; we were a fairly large community, amongst whom were some old friends of Indian days, the cool hours were filled with polo, and the horses of the Mounted Infantry proved a continual point of attraction for an evening stroll, every one was sociably inclined, and we all gave dinner-parties according to our several abilities. We had even a patient in hospital to concern ourselves about—he gave us plenty of food for thought for a time, but, I am glad to say, recovered absolutely, and has probably completely forgotten the many evenings when he lay, weak and helpless, in the dropping twilight, watching the flying figures in the dust outside, and listening to the cheerful shouts as the last ‘chukker’ came to an end. I hope he has, for they must have been long weary hours.

We were very happy at Kano, and sincerely sorry when the time came for us to pack up again and start on the last stage of our journey North.

CHAPTER VII
Katāgum and Hadeija, and Back

On December, 15 we actually left Kano. Trials and tribulations had already been our share in more than generous measure, over the collection of animals for transport, to replace the carriers who had brought our belongings so far. The donkeys were difficult to obtain and wretchedly small, and the problem of tying up miscellaneous luggage into ‘loads’ was the hardest we had yet encountered.

It *sounds* so simple, but I have never met any single traveller in this country who, having once endured the ordeal—I can call it nothing else—of ‘animal transport,’ ever willingly repeated the experience! And indeed it is, or should be, apparent to the least observant that the caravan transport is one thing, and an Englishman’s luggage is another.

I have watched hundreds of times the arrival of caravans at their camp for the night: the weight of the loads (salt, potash, kolas, cloth, etc.) is regulated to an ounce, each one is packed in *exact* similarity to its fellow in size and shape, so that the two form a perfectly equally balanced burden, which never slips, falls, nor worries the donkey; moreover, once packed, so they remain, the tremendous web of string, knotted and turned, twisted and knotted again, holds good for the entire journey.

On arrival, the two loads are simply lifted off the donkey’s back, deposited on the ground and the *leferu* on which they rest, laid beside them. In the morning, the pillow is replaced, and the same loads laid on it—the whole process taking less than five minutes.

Now observe the unfortunate European traveller!

He will naturally look round, as far as he can, for loads of an equal size, and, with luck, will discover a couple of similar uniform cases. But who can guarantee that the contents of each weigh exactly the same amount? Indeed, are there any two boxes among his ‘kit’ that do? With muscular carriers, six or even ten pounds more or less make little difference; here, it means that the heavier box over-balances the other, drags the pillow, and incites the donkey to quietly scrape against the nearest tree, relieving himself of the

whole thing—small blame to him!—and the crash of falling loads is a sound only too familiar to any one who has travelled in this way.

The wayfarer next hunts round among his possessions, and wonders how he is to unite any two of a folding bath, a camp chair, a Lord's lantern, a tent and an open box of cooking pots, into equal-sized and shaped loads. The answer may, and

should be, arrived at without any of the mental strain usually devoted to it, for it is quite simple—*it cannot be done*!

The wretched little animals are small and weakly at the best, and, since even in the caravans, with short marches and the 'perfect' load, they acquire terrible sore backs, the employment of them with ill-balanced odd-shaped burdens is simply gross cruelty. I shudder now when I remember our donkeys' backs, washed, dressed and cared for as they were, with the utmost tenderness. Another serious drawback is that they travel far more slowly than carriers; indeed, the caravans hardly ever do more than eight or ten miles a day, and the 'trek ox' proceeds even more leisurely! Unless each animal has its own driver, the accidents are incessant, and the delay maddening, for what can be done by the driver of five, when one donkey casts its loads and skips off into the bush? Is he to leave the remainder of his charge, knowing as he does, for a certainty, that those he leaves will immediately do likewise? Having captured the runaway, how is he, unaided, to get two awkward sixty-pound loads into their former position? It means that the traveller, his servants, escort and staff are all compelled to crawl at the rate of two-and-a-half miles an hour, with probably twenty miles to cover before water can be reached. Many and many a grilling half-hour have we both spent in this agreeable occupation; personally I preferred catching the donkeys, in spite of the heat, to adjusting my battered belongings on their shrinking backs! I can safely say we had more of our possessions lost and destroyed during our journey to Katāgum and back, than we have lost in the whole of our five years out in Africa!

On the return journey the pack oxen were our greatest trial; they had an inveterate habit of lying down, loads and all, in any shallow river they crossed, and once a pack ox lies down 'all the king's horses and all the king's men' will not move him an inch until he has recovered from his fatigue. One of our largest and best defeated us in this fashion in a village,

and no method we could devise, including the whole strength of the village, and even, in despair, a flicker of fire just under his nose, had the slightest effect, the latter device merely producing a faint smell of scorch, so horrible in its suggestion that we flew to stamp it out, and hurriedly sold the delinquent to the villagers, who, seeing us at a distinct disadvantage in the matter, made an uncommonly good bargain for themselves!

By ten o'clock on December 15 we had begun to get an inkling of what lay before us; the whole of the donkeys had straggled out of the compound, we said our last good-byes and followed them—only to find most of the loads scattered on the road, not fifty yards away, and the donkeys careering gladly back to their happy homes!

Patience, patience, and yet more patience! There is really nothing else for it—fury only exhausts one, and does not catch the donkeys!

Eventually we got off, and were fairly started on the long white road, trending south-east, winding in and out on a dead level, among miles of farms and hamlets. Barth has remarked that 'the Province of Kano may truly be called the garden of Central Africa,' and to us it appeared marvellously fertile, especially at that season of the year, when every river-bed was dry, and the whole land waterless, save for an occasional well.

One evening we had rather an interesting experience: among our party we numbered a 'political agent,' Ganna by name, and a strict Mahomedan, an interpreter called Daniel, a Christian convert with more zeal than tact or knowledge, and a Senegalese soldier, Braima, who had become a fast friend of mine, marching always beside my pony, and giving me his opinions on things in general, in his queerly pronounced French, while he contentedly munched away at my kola-nuts which I scrupulously shared with him. He had served with the French troops in Dahomey, and his stories of their proceedings were most amusing, if slightly startling! His affection for us became so strong that, before we severed our connexion, he cheerfully offered to desert from the N.N.R.

for my benefit, on condition that I would install him as 'head boy,' and was quite mournful when shown the impracticability of his suggestion!

In an idle moment, these three men had embarked on a theological discussion, and, like their enlightened and highly civilized white brethren in

England, got so heated and furious in their argument that Ganna only averted bloodshed by a happy suggestion that they should all come to us and let us arbitrate.

Daniel had first say. He commenced by a sweeping denunciation of all Mahomedans, and, incidentally, such dogs of heathen as Senegalese and such like. Their hearts and consciences were of the blackest, he informed us; and drew vivid pictures of their final fate and destination. On being sharply pulled up, and told to confine himself to his own creed, he unctuously explained as follows: 'Well, God is a kind of a scorpion. When man do bad, he turn up him tail—so—and bite him *proper*! If man do good, then God just lef (leave) him!' Ganna's creed was too well known to us to require explaining at length, and the soldier added little to the discussion except furious indignation against Daniel for having stigmatized him as a dog and a heathen.

His own 'views' were ill-defined, I fancy, except for a strong sense of personal loyalty and affection, and a fatal passion for a row of any kind!

We then set to work to place before them all Christianity pure and simple, untainted by creed or dogma, the plain doctrine of one God and Father of all, Christian and Mahomedan, black and white, and every living creature, whether known as 'Allah', 'God,' or 'Le Bon Dieu.' They seemed curiously astonished at such a pronouncement, Ganna receiving it with deep-voiced 'Gaskia ne!

Gaskia ne! Mahad Allah!' (True, true, thank God!) Braima, staring into the fire and grunting, 'C'est ça!' at intervals; while Daniel sniffed suspiciously and with some contempt. He retired

finally with his smug complacency quite unshaken, evidently considering our doctrines milk-and-water affairs compared with his own fiery ultimatums!

This little episode reminded my husband of another, which took place some years ago in Accra, when his 'boy', a Christian, having learned to read at school, delighted to read Bible stories aloud to the orderly, and on this occasion selected 'Jonah and the Whale' for his instruction. The orderly listened with round eyes and growing incredulity, and at the conclusion remarked emphatically: 'That be dam lie!' 'Dam lie? You say that?

Dis be *Bible*—if you say Bible be lie, you go hell one time!' 'Don't care!' said the orderly doggedly, 'P'raps I go hell, I don't know, but I no fit to believe that story—dam lie!'

The outraged little reader trotted off with his Bible under his arm, and wrath in his heart!

After a few days' marching through rather uninteresting country, level, sandy and treeless, we climbed on to a sandy ridge which looked exactly as if it *must* have the sea behind it, and continued our way along the top for nine or ten miles, in deep sand, most fatiguing to men and ponies alike:

> Toiling in immeasurable sand O'er a weary, sultry land, Far beneath a blazing vault.

There was a wonderful view on either side, miles and miles of plain, all sand, low bushes and scanty grass—a veritable sea of grey-green fading into pale blue in the far distance. When the eye became accustomed to the vast sweep of green, one discovered innumerable tiny hamlets and farms, all neatly fenced, and growing healthy crops of cotton and cassava, apparently in pure sand. It was a remarkable sight, and seemed to be the very edge of the Desert. I could image it being brilliantly beautiful in the rainy season, but in December, with everything enveloped in a dismal hot grey-drab mist, the scene was depressing and gloomy to a degree.

Far apart were isolated wells, some presenting quite a Biblical appearance, with the waiting herds and flocks, and white-robed figures.

As we entered the Katāgum Province, the country changed to light woodland, a great relief, and pleasant to march through, had it not been for the truly terrible thorns. The trees were mostly mimosa and camel-thorn in full blossom, the sickly-sweet scent of which is most unpleasant and powerful.

The last march into Katāgum was like entering a new country, as rich and fertile as the last had been barren and dreary.

We arrived on Christmas Eve, and felt great satisfaction at not being obliged to spend Christmas Day on the road. The Acting Resident was waiting to welcome us, and we took possession of a 'house'

of grass matting, built round an immense Kuka tree, the trunk of which formed one entire side.

It was very spacious and really exceedingly comfortable but for the presence of some highly objectionable large black ants, the smell of which, should they be disturbed or crushed accidentally, was so truly awful as to drive us all—dogs included—out into the open air to recover! We had some really cold nights, when the temperature dropped to 54°, and regularly, each morning, a strong chilly wind would spring up about seven, and last till ten o'clock, when it sank away quite suddenly, and usually some extremely hot hours

followed.

From our doorway we could look for miles around, over a plain of waving grass, dotted with palm trees, mainly the Egyptian Doum palm with its curious bifurcations. The town was about a mile from our settlement, and the river wound away to the south-west, bordered with brilliant green patches of wheat and onions. Game of all kinds was very plentiful at that time; we could always see the deer roaming fearlessly about, and, evening after evening, we used to ride out in different directions, and had capital sport.

My own small occupations were of quite a different nature from my usual hobbies; gardening at this season of the year was, of course, out of the question, but we had succeeded in conveying a few Black Minorca fowls from England, and they behaved splendidly, laying well all the time—even on the march, every day, we found one or two eggs in the basket! The care of a farm-yard was quite a novelty to me. I found it a fascinating occupation —one that grows upon one, too. We also revelled in rich milk, and every morning I amused myself by making butter in a small plunge churn, which I had brought with me. It was very excellent butter, and I was equally proud of my cream cheeses!

But my efforts to manage cows, calves, and herdsmen after the manner of an English dairy, were a dismal failure, and I gave them up, submitting meekly, but much against my will, to the 'custom of the country!'

The Katāgum people were specially pleasant to deal with: half Fulani, half Beri-beri,—a combination which seems to make for unusual

intelligence, coupled with admirable spirit and innate courtesy.

They made friends at once, and the Sariki and his immediate followers were my almost daily visitors.

On one of these visits, with a sort of shy reproach he touched the skirt of my coloured linen frock, and asked gently why, when I came to his house to see him, I did not wear pretty clothes like that—his people only saw me in a black *gown* (my habit!) After that I had to sacrifice comfort to friendship, and be careful to ride into the town in my lightest muslin!

On another occasion, the Sariki explained to me that, as I had evidently been ‘sent’ to them as a special mark of favour, it was quite necessary for them to know my name;—what should they call me? ‘A man’s name,’ I remarked, ‘is given to him by his friends. Give me a name yourselves,’

After cogitating in whispers, the old man said, smiling, that they would in future know me as ‘Uwāmu’ (Our Mother), and so I received my ‘country’ name, one that has stuck to me ever since, and by which I am known to all my dark-skinned friends throughout Nigeria. I am always proud of it, for though, at the time, I felt inclined to smile at being so addressed by men old enough to be my father, the title is recognized to be the highest expression of respect and affection that the African man can offer to a woman.

We were presented with a pair of tame marabouts, but their tameness was a doubtful quantity; and though it was amusing enough to see them dancing and playing about in the sunshine, their temper was not of the best, and they attacked every one who approached the house, snapping their formidable beaks angrily. The poor dogs were in absolute terror of them, and would warily wait their opportunity outside, till the marabouts’ attention was distracted, when a white streak of fox-terrier would fly in, only just escaping the furious beating of wings and clapping of beaks! They were so tiresome that we parted with them, and replaced them by a baby ostrich, which we bought for a sovereign: a most attractive little person, about the size of a duck, a mere ball of soft, mouse-coloured fluff, with beautiful velvety black eyes, and long *eyelashes*! It had never occurred to me before, that ostriches had eyelashes! His diet consisted mainly of chopped-up onions and bran, though he fulfilled the traditions of his race—and alarmed me horribly—by swallowing all kinds of weird things.

I have seen him devour with relish all the pieces of a broken glass bangle; and any odd bits of china, stone, or metal appeared to be equally tasty morsels.

He became very tame at once, and would wander about freely, and sometimes stand beside me for an hour at a time, gently nipping at my sleeve or slippers.

Life in this rural retreat, however, did not last long, and the end of January found us under orders to return to Zungeru, and, very sadly, packing once more. We started, after infinite difficulty, as usual over transport, which delayed us so long eventually that the sun was uncomfortably high before we said our farewells and rode away from Katāgum. We had a guide to set us on the road to Murmur, a different route from that by which we had reached Katāgum, and he either misled us, or was ignorant himself, for, after his last asseveration of ‘Oh! it is *quite* near now!’ and subsequent departure, we marched for hours, losing the almost imperceptible path, finding it again, after collecting our straggling party—a matter of some difficulty—all thirsty, tired and grumbling, calling down Heaven’s vengeance on the perfidious guide, and eventually reached Murmur after sunset.

It was a curious coincidence that we found ourselves on the spot where Richard Oudney died, exactly eighty years before (January, 1824), striving, in spite of desperate illness, to reach Kano, in company with Clapperton. The latter describes the sad events—Oudney’s determination to make a further effort, insisting on resuming the journey, for which he was quite unfit, ministering to the needs of the natives with what was absolutely his last flicker of strength, then reluctantly giving up the impossible, ‘retiring into his tent’ and lying down to die. There, Clapperton buried his beloved friend, and we were deeply interested in the site of his resting-place. The village people were quite touchingly surprised and delighted when we repeated the story to them; it was obviously a familiar one.

The Sariki’s father had been a boy at the time, but such a remarkable event was not likely to be forgotten, and they started, as one man, to conduct us to the grave. It may be remembered that Clapperton gives minute details of its position, which accorded exactly with the spot to which we were led, leaving no possible doubt of its accuracy. The ‘great tree’ had

fallen, and the tomb, originally a massive erection of clay, had been worn down by rain to an insignificant mound, round which we planted a circle of seeds of the fragrant white acacia, or *marengo*, in the earnest hope that they might grow and stand, for many years, a memorial to the honour of that brave unselfish soul.

At Murmur, a grave difficulty presented itself.

The people told us we were off the main road altogether, the wells were almost dry, and we could not hope to find enough water for our party and animals between there and Kano, save on the regular caravan road, joining which necessitated our turning north and marching to Hadeija, a large town twenty miles north of Katāgum. It was not a matter to be lightly decided, adding even twenty-five miles to a march as long as ours; yet, the responsibility of taking a large party of men and animals through a waterless district was one from which most people would shrink, so we assembled the whole party, explained the situation, and frankly consulted them.

They unanimously voted for the extra march to Hadeija, knowing, I suppose, better than we did, the utter impossibility of obtaining sufficient food and water anywhere ‘off the line;’ and probably influenced by the fact that the carriers from Katāgum bolted in the night, giving as their reason for so doing their determination not to ‘die of thirst.’

The decision relieved us of an immense anxiety, and we started cheerfully for Hadeija, sleeping that night at a tiny hamlet, where we were met and welcomed by the Emir’s messengers.

The following morning we reached Hadeija, and the scene, on our approach to the town, was one that I shall never forget. There was the vast extent of rose-red wall, swarming with dark figures, the river flowing between us and the town, and, on the far bank,—a space of nearly half a mile—a dense mass of people watching with intense interest and expectancy. They stood, an absolutely silent, swaying crowd, as we picked our way down the steep bank, crossed the shallow river, and scrambled our ponies up the other side. There we saw a pathway in the crowd kept by troops—positively *cavalry*, four or five hundred of them,—drawn up in two double lines, rigid and motionless in their saddles, the horses loaded with jingling brass armour, heavy breast-plates and head-pieces, neighing,

squealing and kicking, but forced to stand comparatively still, merely pawing the ground and tossing foam from their tortured mouths; stirrup touching stirrup with a military precision that would not have disgraced any regiment of British cavalry.

The soldiers were fine big men, splendidly turned out, and sat like living statues, but for the bright, restless black eyes, between the folds of white cloth *litham*, following our every movement.

I doubt, though, whether any one there could have been half as much interested in us, as I was myself at seeing this spectacle of truly barbaric African splendour, riding behind my husband, feeling *very* small, travel-stained and dusty, amid so much brilliance and colour! It seemed to take one back centuries in the world's civilization, and, with a gasp, came the realization that we had stepped into a world where time had stood still, and the ages passed over without leaving a mark!

At the end of the long line of horsemen was a little group of the chief office-holders, surrounding their Emir, who, as we dismounted, approached to greet us. He was a large, powerfully-built man, with the kindliest of faces, and the gentlest voice I have ever heard; his quiet tones, almost a whisper, veiling an authority, the response to which, in its instant obedience and child-like submission, was quite startling.

His voluminous garments of brilliant green and white, and towering white *rawani*, or turban, were surmounted by a burnous of white cloth, the hood of which, edged with silk fringe, drawn over the tall head-dress and falling round his face, gave him a positively patriarchal expression of benevolence and kindliness. The courteous, dignified cordiality of our welcome was perfect, and, the ceremonial greetings over, we were escorted to the rest-camp prepared for us outside the city. Here, a regular little colony of grass houses had been built, large enough to accommodate a party twice the size of ours: water, wood and provisions were ready; not a comfort was lacking, not a detail had been overlooked. My friend, the Senegalese soldier, having, as he frankly said, no experience of such friendly visits while he served in the French army, harboured suspicions of an ambush and treachery, and displayed, at first, a fierce determination not to let us out of his sight;—suspicions which, however, were completely

dissipated when he discovered the unbounded, lavish hospitality offered to him and his companions!

In the cool of the evening, we walked into the city, and were amazed at the solidity and immense size of the wall, the area inferior to Kano, but, in point of height and condition, greatly superior. The gateways were huge, and so cunningly arranged with rectangular approaches that no armed force could possibly rush them,—indeed, no more than three or four men at a time could cross the narrow bridges, and, were any attempt at defence being made inside these would probably not cross them alive. The gates themselves had been removed, in obedience to an order issued by my husband, while we were at Katāgum, and Hadeija, the impregnable, the unconquered, stood friendly, smiling, open to all

approach,—surely a happy omen for the future for increased prosperity and uninterrupted progress, we thought,—a hope, alas! not destined to be fulfilled.

Inside the gate by which we entered was an extensive space of open ground and level turf, where the cattle were quietly grazing, and the people passing up and down; far away in the distance were the buildings, flushed in the sunset, overtopped by towering trees and clusters of feathery palms. It was a sore disappointment to have to turn away without exploring that unknown city, to turn my back on Hadeija, a mere passing traveller, knowing that the chances of my seeing it again were infinitesimal,—to me, it has always been the most poignant regret of these five years spent in Nigeria. I am thankful not to have known then, that so soon those peaceful streets would echo with war-cries, and bloodshed and death be dealt out with a just, though unsparing hand, for the sake of civilization and progress. I had just time to try to make a hurried pencil-sketch of the scene before me, and the gate. This, however, was rendered almost impossible by the friendly surging crowd, by that time assembled,—all longing to know what in the world I was doing, chattering, peeping, pressing forward—not mobbing, though—that delicate attention is reserved for highly civilized countries; in Africa it is ‘not done!’ So I gave up the attempt in amused despair, showed my pictures to as many of my new friends as I could reach, and shut up my sketch-book to take a last look at one of the most fascinating places of its kind that I have ever seen.

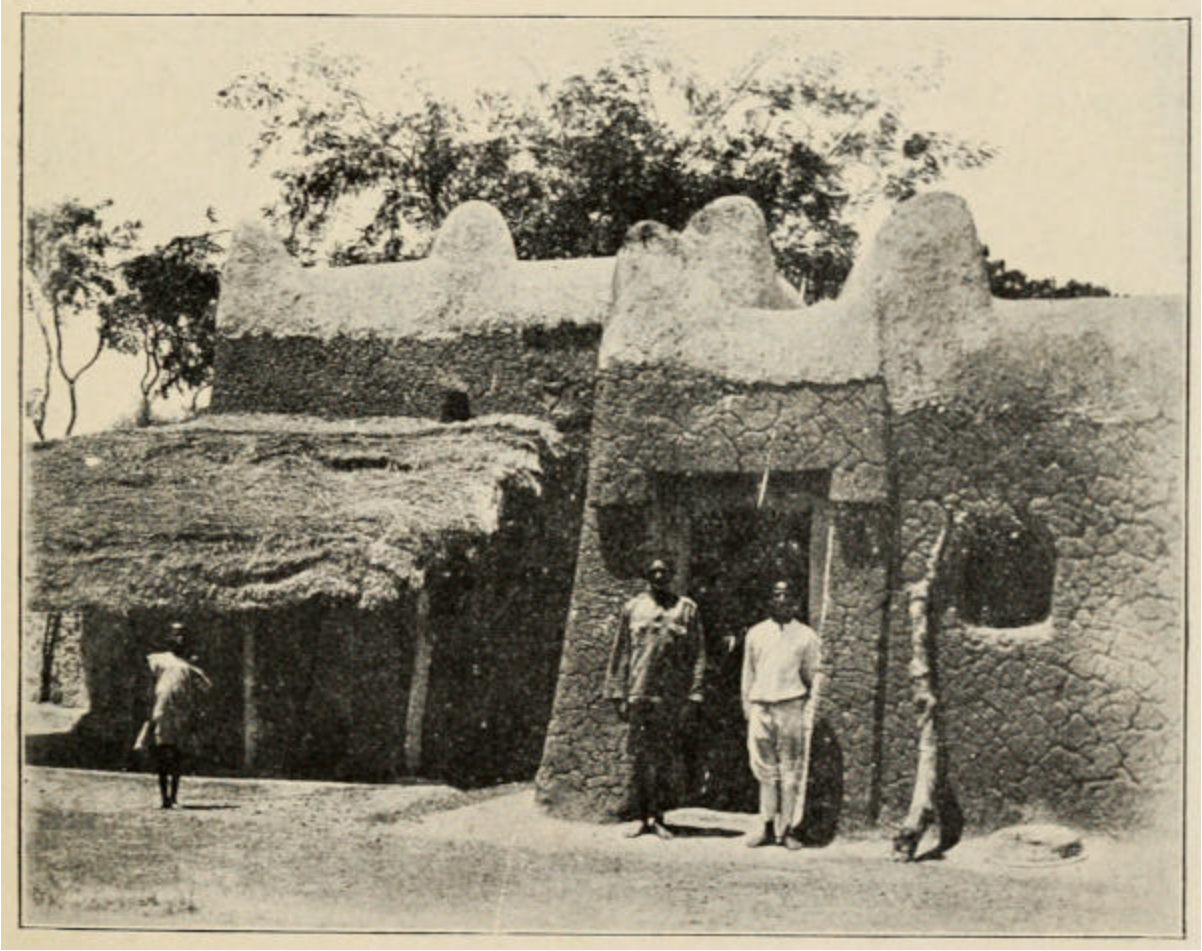
The next morning we were up early, teeth chattering, and shivering in the bitter chill of the winter dawn, in spite of a huge wood fire. The Emir had announced his intention of escorting us on our way, to a point seven miles from Hadeija, adding with emphasis, that, when the Sariki-n-Mussulmi passed through, he only accompanied

him *five* miles! He clattered off, surrounded by his army of horsemen and an apparently unlimited crowd on foot, leaving us to digest the compliment, and drink our morning coffee over the

fire.

We found them all assembled under a group of trees. As we dismounted, the horsemen formed up into a gigantic double circle, ourselves, the Emir, his head men, and a few of our own people in the centre. When the last farewells had been said, my husband asked that the Limam might offer prayers for our safe journey, and—perhaps—another meeting some day, a suggestion which evoked a deep murmur of satisfaction. The ‘cavalry’ dismounted and stood beside their horses, the Limam stood up, his towering white head-dress and earnest dark face turned to the morning sun, his solemn clear voice pouring out the prayer in sonorous Arabic, every word distinct in the great silence; thousands of heads and hands around followed every gesture, our own included, for, at that strange moment creeds seemed very far away, and the one Father of us all, to whom such earnest words were being addressed on our behalf, the sole reality. It was a sight, I suppose, such as few people have ever witnessed, and it made a very deep and lasting impression on us. I had a lump in my throat when, as I turned to mount my pony, the stately old Emir laid his slender brown hand, with a beautiful amber rosary twined among the fingers, on my arm, and said gently: ‘You will come back to us; surely God will send you back,’ And perhaps not the least remarkable incident was, when, as we turned our horses’ heads, our escort, those who had been most suspicious, most incredulous of our host’s good intentions, asked leave, to a man, to fall out and obtain the Limam’s blessing, kneeling humbly at his stirrup!

BRINGING IN FIRE-WOOD. (p. 103)



A KANO DOORWAY. (p. 107)

The whole circumstances of our visit to Hadeija, compared with the stormy events which took place there two years later, are illustrative of a point, we have frequently noticed, on hearing accounts of the peaceful journeys of missionaries and sportsmen, and of the perfect hospitality and friendliness they have found everywhere: that it is one thing to travel independently through the unknown parts of Africa, and quite another to administrate them successfully, introducing, of necessity, unpopular measures, and restraining undesirable

existing customs. One acquaintance of ours, travelling about in search of sport, has wandered all through the Munshi country, where the natives have proved themselves aggressive and inimical to a degree towards any effort to establish law and order. This is a fact, I think, commonly overlooked by those who, with insufficient knowledge of the immense difficulties confronting a Government in territories such as these, are inclined to

condemn wholesale and belittle the necessity of punitive expeditions and display of force.

From Hadeija our march was perfectly ‘plain sailing,’ The Emir’s messenger went before us and smoothed away every possible difficulty, only leaving us on the border of the Kano Province.

One incident of the road which stands out in my memory was the ludicrous struggles of our old cook, Jim Dow, to become an expert horseman, and to fully enjoy the privilege of having a horse to ride.

He had bought an extremely tall horse, attracted more by its utter mildness of disposition than by any other remarkable point of suitability. Having saddled up his depressed-looking steed, he, being a dumpy little individual, under five feet in height, could not possibly mount without assistance. This he indignantly spurned, and would solemnly lead the horse, till he discovered a likely-looking tree.

The horse was placed conveniently under it, and the little man clumsily and slowly climbed into the lower branches, from which he hoped to drop gracefully into the saddle. But the sad steed invariably strolled off in an absent-minded fashion at the critical moment, leaving poor Jim Dow hanging painfully from a branch, and using blistering language in ‘Kru’! I have seen this manœuvre repeated four or five times on a march, and he was a never-failing source of amusement to the whole party!

We reached Kano on Sunday, the 7th of February, having decided to sleep the night before at a tiny village a few miles out, as one of our ponies had broken loose and could not be re-captured until late in the afternoon. This small mishap was extremely fortunate for us, as a matter of fact, as we afterwards heard that at the very hour when, had we not been delayed, we should have ridden up to the Residency gate at Kano, a curious and unpleasant scene was taking place there.

A native soldier had been confined in the guard-room on account of insolence and insubordination.

While there, he coolly possessed himself of a rifle and a pouch full of ammunition, and darted out of the guard-room, the bewildering suddenness of his action apparently paralysing the guard for the moment. He rushed out on to the parade ground, shrieking vengeance on all ‘Batures’

(Englishmen), calling to them to come and be shot, brandishing his rifle,—evidently quite insane and ‘running amok.’ Taking careful aim, he shot dead five horses tethered in the shade, belonging to his officers, and his shooting was so straight that most natural reluctance was displayed by his comrades in the matter of his re-capture. He actually sent a bullet through the doorway of the hospital hut, possibly seeing some one moving there. Finally the unfortunate lunatic was shot down, having been successfully ‘stalked’ from behind trees and other cover.

It was a nasty occurrence, and much relief was expressed at our non-appearance at such an awkward moment.

On arrival we found every one very sad and anxious about Captain Abadie, who was lying very ill. He did not improve during the two days we spent there, and, shortly after leaving, we heard, to our sorrow, of his death,—a loss to Nigeria and his friends which could never be over-estimated.

At Zaria we met many old friends, but stayed one night only, as we were anxious to lose no time in getting down country. It was wretched there then, in a tent, with a strong Harmattan blowing clouds of sand into our eyes, filling every crevice, and covering our food before we had time to eat it, even with the greatest expediency!

At Karshi we had the good fortune to meet Captain Robinson and Major Porter, going North. We had tea with them at their camp, outside the town, and in the evening they came and dined with us, only stipulating that they should be allowed to contribute to the feast; and I shall always remember the procession that preceded the arrival of our guests,—‘boys’

carrying chairs, lanterns, Lager beer in buckets of cold water, roast guinea-fowls, and a box of chocolates! We had a most cheery dinner, and sat talking into the small hours, and even managed to breakfast all together the next morning before going our several ways. It is one of the pleasantest of my many pleasant memories in this country,—the spontaneous friendly kindness of two complete strangers, as they were then, coming at a time when most needed, for our spirits were almost as low as our provisions, and the bull-terrier pup had distemper! I do not suppose the two people concerned realized then, or do now, what a difference they made in our outlook on life at that time,—if not, I make them a present of the information now!

On the 28th of February, we found ourselves once more in Zungeru. A vacant bungalow was lent to us, and we spent a few days there very comfortably, in spite of the excessive heat. We heard with dismay of the terrible disaster in the Bassa country, where Captain O'Riordan and Mr.

Burney lost their lives. My husband received orders to take over the Kabba Province once again, and we started on the last stage of our long journey.

The noisy little train rattled us back to Barijuko; we embarked in a steel canoe, and commenced to paddle and drift down the Kaduna. The river was very low, and we stuck continually on the sandbanks, when the polers all turned out into the water, not more than seven or eight inches deep, and literally dug out the canoe till she was once more afloat. We were overtaken the next day by a second canoe, containing Captain Wright (who had won a V.C. in the Kano Expedition) invalided, home, and three others. Each evening we 'tied up' in company, and had cheerful 'sand-bank'

dinner-parties. It was very placid and delightful travelling; I suppose we were both rather tired, and, for the first time in my life, I found huge enjoyment in doing absolutely nothing, beyond watching the river banks and sunlit water.

At Mureji there was quite a gathering, and—a thing unknown—a collection of five ladies! Dr. and Mrs. Thompstone were there, on their way to Zungeru, and three Nursing Sisters, travelling up and down. We met some old friends, and were quite a gay party, but it was a sad day for me,—my beloved baby ostrich was suddenly taken ill, wandering about as usual, on the bank, and, in spite of the greatest kindness shown me by Dr.

Miller of the C.M.S., who was on board, the poor little bird died in a few hours. It seemed piteous indeed, when he had travelled so far without a single mishap, and I was bitterly grieved at the loss.

It was, however, a great delight, under any circumstances, to see the Niger again; as the *Corona* sped down stream, every bush and rock seemed familiar, and to be welcoming us 'home' to Lokoja.

We settled down in our former bungalow, and, in a few weeks, I could hardly believe that we had travelled all those hundreds of miles in the past six months. The much-talked-of North country had considerably

disappointed us in its appearance; and, with the exception of Kano and Hadeija, I think I can safely say that neither of us has the least desire to see any part of it again.

CHAPTER VIII
Kabba, Semolika and Patti Abaja

It was not until the end of July that I found myself ‘touring’ once again, when we started for Kabba.

It was interesting and pleasant going over the same ground that we had covered two years before; and characteristic of the country that there was not a single change to be noticed on the road: the little Hausa farm, somewhat expanded, perhaps; Oduapi as loud and genial as ever, with the blue and green gown apparently standing the test of time and wear most satisfactorily!

At Kabba things were altered for the better.

The old quarters had been pulled down and new ones built; police barracks had sprung into existence; and a general air of progress and prosperity was there.

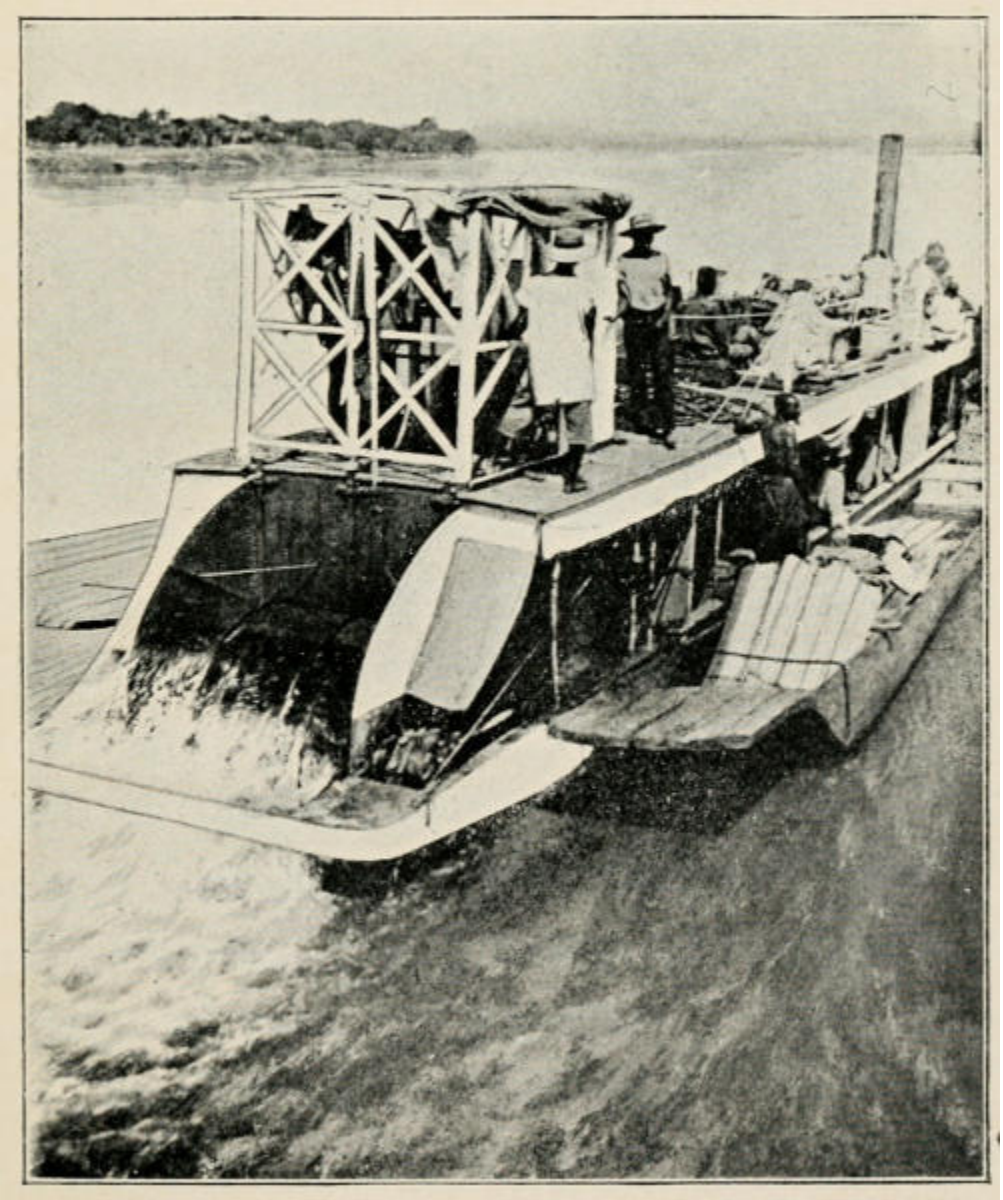
We stayed a few weeks, and the place took such a hold on our affections, that, at the risk of appearing sentimental, I will give some description of it here.

My enthusiasm is the more excusable when I recall that the High Commissioner himself expressed unqualified admiration for Kabba, even after his long tour, during which he had visited nearly every part of the Protectorate.

It is, in itself a small and insignificant town in the centre of the Province, it is not on the way to anywhere in particular—anywhere, that is, that draws the stream of Europeans so ceaselessly passing up and down the highways of the Protectorate; it has no great political importance to drag it into prominence, no Emirate, with all the pomp and circumstance attending a powerful native ruler; it has none of the halo of mystery and attraction which hovers over Kano, Sokoto and the North generally; nor is it on the path of the immense caravans which throng the Northern routes. These either end their journey at Ilorin, and return North, laden with fresh merchandise, or else, passing down through Nassarawa, divide themselves

into small canoe-loads, when they meet the Niger at Loko. Kabba only sees those humble traders, who, in twos and threes, are carrying native-made cloth to Lokoja, or returning with loads of potash; in fact, the little place just sits there, a tiny mouse-coloured town, snugly tucked away on the slopes of a thickly wooded hill-side, in one of the very quietest backwaters of all the world's rushing and scurrying tide.

MUREJI—A CARAVAN ABOUT TO CROSS THE NIGER. (p. 110)



A Steam Canoe on the Niger. (p. 116)

Picture to yourself a green—truly emerald green—plain, holding an area of, roughly, ten square miles, dotted with palm-trees (*Elaeis guineensis*), their tall slender stems crowned with crests of graceful drooping plumes, and bearing a respectable fortune in the palm-oil contained in the closely clustering bunches of nuts on each tree. Hundreds of acres are under cultivation, mainly yams, cotton and capsicums, the last-named glowing like little tongues of flame among the glossy winding trails of the yams, which, at a distance, resemble smilax on a magnificent scale.

Away, beyond, rise the blue hills, in a huge circle, jealously shutting in this little green paradise from the tiresome world of restless white folks, who would take count of time, make roads, try to introduce sanitation, and otherwise employ themselves in fruitless and unnecessary works to the dire discomfort of the peaceful denizens of peaceful places!

The ancient wall stretches away across the plain, enclosing an area of which Kabba town to-day occupies possibly one-hundredth part. A second inner boundary wall surrounds the town proper, excluding the steep little hill crowned by the Fort, which is now in as bad a state of repair as the aged walls themselves, but which, three years ago, was nevertheless the abiding-place of a small military detachment, and a handful of native police, in fact, the English Quarter of Kabba, whence might be heard any morning ringing words of command in English, bugle-calls all day long, and at evening-time the native sentry challenging all and sundry with ‘Holl!-who-go-thaire!’ in his most awe-inspiring tone. This ‘English Quarter’ was the only aspect of Kabba that had the power of damping my spirits, beside the literal and visible damping of our belongings which took place pretty regularly.

Our quarters were a rambling, ill-constructed clay building, measuring a good sixty feet from end to end; the crumbling mud walls and ant-eaten, collapsing wooden supports surmounted by a painfully inadequate thatched roof. This house, incredible as it may seem, was designed by an Englishman, whose desire for spaciousness and magnificence of proportion evidently outweighed his knowledge of elementary architecture, and blinded his foresight.

How the native labourers must have smiled, and patiently shrugged their shoulders, as they piled up the ridiculous structure under his imperious orders!

Meantime, the tornadoes swept up over the hills to the South and West, tearing like a white wall across the plain, and wreaking their fury on this ill-fated hill-top in a most thorough-going fashion. At such a time it made one giddy to look up at the roof, while it creaked and swayed horribly in the hurricane, each gust seeming to bring the inevitable collapse nearer.

We had spent rainy seasons in Africa before, so we took no needless risks, and in the places most essential for our comfort, we rigged up tents and ground-sheets, thus securing to ourselves and a percentage of our

belongings islands of comparative safety and dryness; but, for the rest...! I never could help smiling at the sight of the Sahib, manfully getting through his day's work, interviewing the chiefs and headmen of various neighbouring villages, with the rain pouring through the roof, and an umbrella held over his head, while his guests squatted around him, placidly enduring the ceaseless streams of water pattering on their persons, and displaying as much polite cheerfulness as the circumstances would permit.

Kabba itself is much the same as any of the smaller towns in the Protectorate in appearance; a collection of clay-built thatched houses, clustered closely together, seeming to cling affectionately to the rocky hill-side above—the Ju-ju Hill, deeply reverenced, dearly loved, and jealously guarded by all. There is the usual crowded market, with low, dark booths or shelters lining the streets, where the ladies of commercial pursuits display the invariable collection of coloured cotton cloths, beads, miscellaneous food-stuffs, spices and capsicums. They are some of the most light-hearted and spirited women I have met, those at Kabba. As I rode through the busy market heads would be popped out, and white teeth flash in smiles, calling merry greetings to 'Uwāmu,' and vociferating warnings to the fat brown toddlers, rapt in wonder, and straying perilously near my horse's hoofs. They are dear, simple souls, untouched by civilization, happy and unspoilt as little children, yet self-reliant and independent withal. A scene illustrative of this was enacted before me daily while at Kabba: the open space in front of our quarters bathed in warm sunlight; above, blue sky and wheeling kites; below, the valley, stretching away into purple distance. Little groups of people, humble folk, trading in a small way between Lagos and the Hausa States, carrying country-made cloth, palm-oil, salt and kola-nuts, turned in here daily to disburse, with cheerful reluctance, the small percentage then levied on each load as a caravan tax. Those moving in the same direction were, of course, travelling acquaintances. Many were women, and the babble of laughter and chatter in various tongues was incessant. The tender-hearted philanthropist would have to seek far and long in this merry crowd for the 'down-trodden women of Africa' and the 'black sister in slavery', of whom one seems to have heard. There is not much that indicates subjection or fear about these ladies, sitting at graceful ease among their loads, or strolling about in the hot sunshine, polished mahogany shoulders gleaming, white teeth flashing in laughter, while the slender perfectly-shaped hands gesticulate dramatically, illustrating the

incident of absorbing interest, which is being related in musical sing-song Nupe, almost like a Gregorian chant in its slow cadences. The outer garment, consisting of a gaily-tinted country-made cloth, wrapped tightly round the body, just below the arms, is adjusted, tightened, tucked in with lightning rapidity, and precision. The “black sister”

has a word, a joke, a stream of courteous greetings for every individual there. As each new arrival appears upon the scene, a chorus of salutations in Hausa, Nupe and Yoruba meets him; a dozen kindly hands are stretched out to help him down with his heavy load; endless inquiries are pressed upon him as to his health, the comfort of his journey, the state of the road, etc.; and he becomes at once an honoured guest in the cheerful coterie. Every departing traveller has the same circle of willing friends, eager to help him to adjust his sixty or eighty pounds of merchandise, and start him off on a fresh stage of his journey with a shower of valedictions, good wishes and pious ejaculations and prayers for his safety,—his replies borne faintly up to us on the warm air, as he drops down the steep path into the valley below.

Of course, it may be called merely superficial friendliness and courtesy, and it is quite possible that, while the latest arrival absents himself for ten minutes or so, discoursing to the Resident, the speckled chicken which erstwhile dangled by one leg and a piece of string from his load *may* not be there when he returned, and may be adorning the baggage of the astute trader, who has just left with some alacrity; but, even so, for myself, I would gladly take the chance of having my pocket picked, if, on one of the many occasions when I have entered a crowded omnibus in London, one of the row of cold, critical unfriendly faces opposite would break into a smile, and say what I heard all round me at Kabba, in sonorous Yoruba: ‘Akwabo! Akwabo!’ (You are welcome, very welcome!) Indeed, I can never conquer that curious feeling of chilly depression that overtakes me each time I return to England, and feel that, except for the tiny minority of my own friends, I am alone in the crowd; infinitely more alone in Bond Street, where almost every brick and stone is familiar, than I could ever be in the busy streets of Kano, or any other city of Nigeria, which I might enter even for the first time, where I should find two hands and one willing tongue all inadequate for the due return of the ceaseless shower of smiling salutations and greetings that would be poured upon me from every side. And this is by no

means a tribute to any personal charms of mine. Any traveller, black-skinned or white, receives the same treatment as a matter of course.

It is, however, a ‘far cry’ from Bond Street to Kabba, and I very much doubt whether moralizing is permissible in so small and simple a record as this.

It must have been—as usual—the fault of those chattering ladies!

Outside the town, there is a little stretch of forest belt, and, as no one has ever disputed its possession with me, I am pleased to consider it exclusively my own property! The path is of the very narrowest, not more than three feet anywhere, giving barely room enough for me and my pony. On either side rises a wall of greenery, full of climbing plants innumerable. Hanging from the branches of great trees, twenty and thirty feet above my head, themselves loaded with ferns and parasites, are gracefully twining creepers, swaying tantalizingly and rather contemptuously, it seems, just out of reach of my farthest stretch. Two months before, it was a flaming mass of glorious scarlet *Mussaenda elegans*.

Now, in July, that has passed, and the mode for the month is a flower I dearly love, but which, owing to a miserable ignorance of botany, I cannot address by its proper name. I think it would strike the lay mind as a species of mimosa. The stem is thorny; the leaves, which are minutely pinnate, close modestly at sunset. The flower smells of a thousand sweet things, and consists of a collection of tiny florets massed together, forming one infinitely delicate ball of slender, silvery-white threads tipped with golden pollen. It is everywhere, clasping the tree-trunks, foaming over the bushes, and shrouding the deep cool recesses, where the shining dark ferns lie hidden away, scenting the whole air, and proving itself an irresistible fascination to the butterflies—busy gossips that they are—flashing purple and velvety black, gleaming yellow and palest blue.

One of the huge ‘Kuka’ trees is clothed to a height of fifteen or twenty feet in a gorgeous mantle of *Gloriosa superba*, each vivid green leaf ending in a long tendril which clings desperately to all it meets. The blossoms, when first opened, are of a delicate pale golden colour, daily developing crimson splashes at the base of each petal, and later becoming entirely an exquisite deep apricot shade—a perfect feast of daintily varying hues.

Added to these treasures, my ‘Kingdom’ is the happy home of troops of gay restless monkeys, seldom visible, but everlastingly on the move behind the green curtain, swinging, leaping and chattering, ever disturbing flights of tiny green parrots and demure little grey doves.

Skirting the crumbling wall, one follows a narrow footpath towards a rocky eminence a quarter of a mile away, and, dismounting, explores it on foot. It is a tiny hill of great steepness, composed for the most part of piles of massive boulders, from which nearly all the soil has been washed away by the rain of many seasons. An almost invisible track guides one up the precipitous side to the summit, an area of, possibly, fifty feet square, occupied entirely by great rocks, shady niches and coarse creepers.

The place has a history and a reputation of its own; it is called the ‘Look-out Hill,’ and was greatly used—so runs the tradition—in the times of Fulani slave-raiding expeditions from Bida. Once arrived at the top, the full significance of the name is grasped.

Far and wide, in all directions, one can view the surrounding country, and command every road leading to Kabba, without being visible from below.

How vividly one can picture the anxious watcher, crouching motionless among the rocks, scanning with straining eyes the paths winding like white ribbons among the peaceful yam-fields and waving grass, on the alert to detect the first signs of the advancing Fulah army, and then flying breathless along the scented forest ways, back to the town, his poor heart thumping on his ribs, to carry the dread news that sounded the knell of slavery for himself, his wives and children.

The Kabba folk are of the Bunu tribe; whence their origin I cannot venture to say. At all events, they speak a remarkably unpronounceable language of their own, to the utter confounding of any unfortunate interpreter who does not happen to have been born within fifty miles of the place. Bunu language is not precisely musical, but I have observed with mild astonishment that these natives rather like talking it! My friend, the Balogun, likes to chat easily with his retinue in this tongue, which appears to have no vowels except odd sounds evolved from somewhere in the region of the collar-bones, and which seems to demand some special development about the nose and chest, just as Yoruba and Kru require peculiarly shaped mouths for their correct enunciation.

I think the Balogun likes to feel that he is making an impression on ‘the Judge’ in a small way, by this exhibition of jaw-breaking phraseology. He, by the way, is a man of property, and, as befits the ‘second chief’, is a leader of society in Kabba, dressing recklessly in a gorgeous black and white velvet robe. He knows, too, what is due to a lady, even an English one. Once, when I showed him some elaborate embroidery on which I was working, he rose manfully to the occasion, and, making use of his one piece of colloquial English, rather startled me by ejaculating pleasantly: ‘My God!’

Fetish has a firm hold in Kabba, but to which ‘school’ the people belong, I have never been able, nor indeed have I tried, to find out, as I have some belief in treating any man’s religion with as much reverence and reticence as he does himself. Before describing what I do know of Bunu ceremonies, I would like to repeat here Mary Kingsley’s admirable definition of ‘Fetish’: ‘the religion of the natives of the western coast of Africa, where they have not been influenced either by Christianity or Mahomedanism’: a fairer and truer view than that usually taken, as ‘rank heathenism.’ However, the whole subject of Fetish is so well and exhaustively treated both by Miss Kingsley and Major Mockler-Ferryman in their respective works on West Africa, that it would be as futile as unbecoming for me to attempt to stumble and halt over the ground they covered so royally and so completely; therefore I will content myself with describing the Bunu funeral ceremonies as carried out in Kabba, as these happened to come under my notice and seemed to me rather unique and interesting.

In the first place, the corpse is wrapped in the family burying-cloth, which is an intrinsic feature of every Bunu household. It is a large cloth quilt, sewn and embroidered with yarns of every imaginable hue—the wealthier the family, the more elaborate and gorgeous the burying sheet, the value frequently running up to several pounds. As soon as one is devoted to its special purpose, the bereaved relations immediately set to work to provide another according to their means, against a future death.

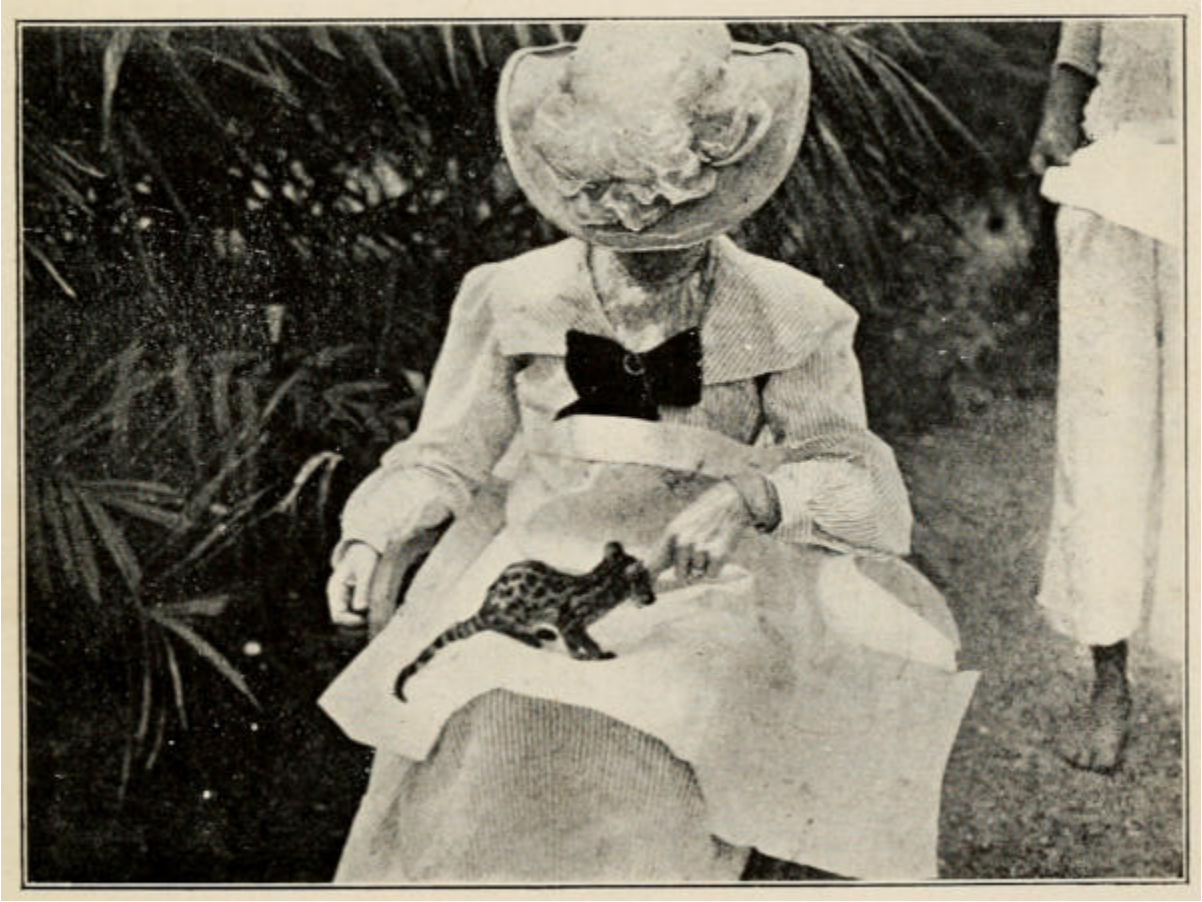
Nature appears to be very much the same all the world over, and feeling in Kabba, on the subject of a proper burying-sheet, runs just as high as it does in the Mile End Road over the momentous question of coaches and plumes!

When thus suitably arrayed, the corpse is kept in the house for three days, while four maidens of tender years are selected, and, being placed in strictest seclusion in a house set apart, are not permitted to speak a single word during these days. As soon as the lying-in-state is accomplished, a great number of people from the neighbouring villages arrive, in obedience to the Sariki's summons; not necessarily out of friendship for the dead man, but merely as a matter of religious ceremonial. Each guest brings a certain proportion of gifts in cloth, food-stuffs and cowries—especially the last-named. The whole party having assembled, they start forth for the Ju-ju Hill, the corpse borne in the midst, drums beating, horns hooting, women uttering mournful cries, and general excitement prevailing. The grave has been previously dug in a chosen spot on the hill-side (which is practically one large and over-crowded cemetery), and is of a curious shape. After the ordinary grave has been prepared to a depth of four feet or thereabouts, a tunnel is dug at one end of it, and continued into the earth for a distance of about twelve feet, the passage being wide enough to admit a man, creeping on hands and knees.

The party at the foot of the hill seat themselves in a wide circle, and the four silent girls, coming forward, and raising the body, bear it away up the hill. It is lowered by them into the grave, and carefully pushed up the tunnel, the idea being that no earth shall fall on it. Then, in solemn silence, they return and collect the various offerings of food, cloth, and cowries from the assemblage, and deposit them beside and around the corpse; finally, the outer grave is filled in. I have been told that several pounds' worth of cowries are thus buried at each funeral. Meantime, the folks below are holding high revel, dancing, singing, capering, banging tom-toms, and shouting a most enthusiastic send-off to their departed fellow-countryman, while he sleeps, all unconscious of the fun he is missing, lying just where he would choose to lie, on the slopes of his beloved Ju-ju Hill. Is it very different from an Irish wake?

And is it really much more 'heathenish?'

THE EMIR'S BAND, BIDA. (p. 124)



MY 'PALM' CAT. (p. 137) (*Nandinia binotata.*)

Local funerals remind me of another Kabba story, which, though startling, I know to be absolutely true. It is as follows—An English Police Officer, while conducting an inquiry there, had a number of witnesses brought before him (natives), amongst them a woman, with, as usual, a child strapped to her back.

While the inquiry was proceeding, the Police Officer became conscious of a horrible smell, and, when he could endure it no longer, inquired the cause among his interpreters and the people collected around him.

All sniffed incredulously, and declared that, to their consciousness, there was no smell whatever. They could detect nothing, and evidently put it down, in their own minds, as one more of the imbecile fads that Englishmen are prone to! The day was warm, the court-house crowded, the flies seemed more numerous and more maddening in their buzzing than usual, and, the terrible odour becoming intolerable, the Police Officer, feeling slightly sick, called for brandy and soda, and, springing up, declared his intention of

discovering the cause. One turn round the court-house decided him that the horror was in the neighbourhood of the female witness. He peered closer, and saw at once that the baby on her back was *dead*! He announced his discovery in horrified amazement, and was informed quite tranquilly, and as a matter of course, that the child had been dead for ‘many days,’ but that, as the mother had come from a distant village to give evidence, she must, of course, wait till her return before she could give the body burial! There are many minor ceremonies and festivals, connected with matters agricultural, the ultimate success of the crops, the coming of the new yams, etc., but there is little variety in the proceedings, the main point being, apparently, the making of a ‘cheerful noise’ and the sacrifice of nothing more dreadful than a few

fowls!

Some distance to the south of Kabba there exists a tiny town of the name of Semolika, curiously situated on the summit of a steep hill, below which runs the winding bush path—the traveller’s highway.

The Semolikas are not nice characters; most of their time is spent in squatting on the rocks, watching the road below, till they can spy a string of traders, or a small caravan, when they swoop down like hawks, robbing and murdering these unfortunate passers-by! At other times they amuse themselves and ‘keep their hands in’ by attacking their neighbours, who hold them in the lowest estimation, describing them as having ‘hearts of stone,’ which means, roughly, that they are insensible to sentiments of friendship, honour, family ties and common humanity. No Semolika youth can claim to be considered a man, until he is the proud possessor of a drinking-cup, consisting of a human skull, taken with his own hand from some poor wretch he himself has murdered!

These amiable people cherished undying resentment against the ‘white man’ in general; they claimed—rightly or wrongly—to have been unfairly treated by him, and, having sworn to kill the very next Englishman who entered their stronghold, they fiercely attacked a small military patrol, under a young officer, who, on hearing continuous complaints of the Semolikas and their behaviour from the neighbours all round, decided, with pardonable imprudence, to march through the place as an object lesson of superior force. The Semolikas did enough damage to the party to

necessitate reprisals, and in October of that year an expedition left Lokoja to avenge the insult, accompanied by my husband.

The force was entirely successful in breaking up the culprits' fastness, and as the operations were specially interesting owing to the peculiar situation of the place, I will quote from the Resident's official report of the attack.

'... On Sunday, the 16th, we marched into Igarra, which is curiously situated, being on the opposite side of a narrow valley to Semolika; the inhabitants of both places are therefore always in view of each other from the summits of their respective hilltops, and sit by the hour watching each others'

movements—the distance being about three thousand yards. The people of these two places have never been friends, the Semolikas, owing to their hill being the more difficult of the two to climb, frequently raiding the Igarra farms, and, in addition to the farm produce, as often as not carrying away women and children. As they are known to practise human sacrifices, the Igarras are kept in constant dread of these raids, and, on markets being held at places in the neighbourhood, large parties arrange to pass along the road together, and are always armed.

'On climbing to the summit of the Igarra hill, 1,750 feet, it could be seen what a very awkward place Semolika hill must be to ascend. The local formation of boulder-like smooth-topped rocks appears to have been rather concentrated in this particular mountain, and they rose, one after another, in constant succession, at gradients varying from almost the perpendicular, the thin silvery strip of colouring over the surface of these slabs showing the direction of the ascending path. The Igarras helped us tremendously, but still, when it came to asking for information about other ways of getting up to Semolika, the ignorance was too general to be credited, and I think that even then they were not too sure that the "white man" would win, and were he *not* to they might expect a bad time for long years to come from their old enemy! So, although much reconnoitring was undertaken, no better path could be seen. On reconnoitring parties approaching within earshot of the many observing points the Semolikas were continuously guarding, they would be received with shouts of defiance and derision, the question being always asked: "Why don't you come and try?" etc.... The Semolikas were

kept busy now, and could be seen improving sangars, or endeavouring to make difficult places still worse.

‘Finally, it was decided to advance on the morning of Tuesday, the 18th, and on the night before, at 8.30 p.m., the gun detachment carried out their gun, in order to commence the ascent of the Igarra hill, from where it had been decided to cover the advance. Although this hill is not so difficult as Semolika itself, still, no ordinary leather sole and heel could ever hope to reach its summit, and it was with wonder and admiration that I watched the manner in which the Igarra people turned out in their hundreds on this cold and drizzling night, to help to get the gun to its destination. At places they, accustomed as their toes have apparently become to cling to smooth surfaces, suffered severely, and at two points in particular one could only describe their manner of handling by comparing the gun to a heavy beetle being carried off by a vast company of ants! It was at one of these places that Captain Phillips, who was commanding the detachment, had, with admirable foresight, arranged for drag-ropes, hold-fasts and corresponding paraphernalia, but our eager allies would brook no delay, and, literally falling on the gun and its mounting, ran the heavy loads up the sides of this precipice by sheer force of keen desire. After three hours’

hard climb, at each resting interval of which the streamingly hot volunteers were most affectionately patted on the shoulders by gunners and permanent gun carriers alike, with many “Sanu’s!” to denote their admiration of the herculean task, the selected ledge of rock was safely reached, and the gun duly mounted. Heavy rain set in about 2 a.m. and without bedding or shelter of any kind, the conditions were not pleasant.

‘The main body was supposed to leave camp at 3.30 a.m. which would enable them to arrive at the foot of the Semolika hill at dawn. One of the worst places where it was thought opposition might prove most effective against our side was about one-third of the way up, and was marked by three palm trees. Some strong sangars had been built, and the natural features of the place certainly presented the most fearsome difficulties. It was hoped, therefore, that the gun would succeed in clearing this trap, and facilitate the advance for the attackers; from about 4.30 a.m., therefore, every effort was made either to distinguish our own men commencing their climb, or the enemy concealed in the heavy undergrowth which was interspersed among the rocks. Unfortunately, there was a thick mist after the

night's wet weather, and this handicapped the gunners to a very great extent. At 6 a.m. the first Dane gun boomed out, reverberating among the rocks and hill-side, and almost immediately after a break occurred in the veil of mist, showing some hundreds of the enemy, scampering, veritably like monkeys, from ledge to ledge, from boulder to boulder, making their way to their various points of vantage, in order to assist in the defence of their virgin stronghold. A very well-judged shrapnel was fired at this moment, and, I think, must have checked the enthusiasm of some at least of the defenders, who could be seen hurriedly scuttling back. Could this have been repeated, the attackers would have been much less opposed, except, of course, by the natural existing difficulties which beset the path, the chief of which, was, I believe, regarded by the Semolikas as their *pièce de résistance*, which was most thoroughly emphasized personally, in my case, as it was while clinging to an eight foot ledge, struggling in vain to get a foothold, that a Dane gun was fired from most uncomfortable proximity! A long pointed boulder, impossible to climb, terminated at the so-called path, which, at this place, consisted of a narrow ledge close to, and under the point of, the boulder. The defenders had ingeniously built up from this ledge, and thus most effectually shut an apparently natural entrance gate to the hill-side. At short distances away were stone sangars in well-selected positions and, had they been occupied by a more modernly armed enemy, I fear our casualties would have been very heavy. The drop to the right from the ledge was considerable, but a small, loaf-shaped foothold happened to be protruding some feet down, and this was the only means of proceeding onward. A hurried one-legged balance had to be made upon its surface when the ledge beyond had to be smartly clutched. On parting with the perch, it was occupied by a native, who, by pushing upwards, succeeded in precipitating the climber, on his face, on to the higher level, once again in comparative safety, and thus every one had to take his turn!

'The higher level was a vast sheet of smooth rock, 100 to 150 yards in length, sloping at a very steep gradient, and offering another deadly opportunity to the modern firearm. But the Semolikas, at this place, were content with stones only, and were not, apparently, good shots with these missiles, for though many were more or less hurt, only one man was struck in the face. After this, the defenders retired, firing continuously, until the king's quarter was reached, where a further determined stand was made—and where Lieutenant Galloway received a wound. This was their last

combined effort, and for the remainder of the day only desultory firing took place by people hidden here and there in caves and behind rocks. A zareba was formed in the best place available ... an attack being expected during the night, but nothing happened, the rain possibly damping the enemy's ardour, as well as his ammunition!

For the next few days every endeavour was made to discover the whereabouts of the fugitive Semolikas, but without success, although acting on supposed reliable news which was frequently brought in, the hills for miles around were diligently searched by our troops....'

Meantime, knowing what I knew of the Semolikas and their rocky fortress, I spent an anxious and miserable time in Lokoja, waiting for news of the result; I also said good-bye, with much regret, to Mr. and Mrs. Wilmot, of the Bank of Nigeria, who left for England. For two whole years Mrs. Wilmot had remained in Lokoja, with only a few days' change, occupying the smallest and most uncomfortable quarters, making acquaintance with most forms of discomfort, but ever cheery, energetic and plucky, an object lesson to us all, and though I knew I should miss my friends greatly, one could not help rejoicing to see their well-earned holiday come at last.

My husband hurried back to Lokoja a day ahead of 'the Army' and delighted me with a few curios he had secured for me at Semolika. One special treasure is worth describing in detail; it was, I believe, the Chief's own stool, and consists of a solid block of mahogany, black and polished from long use. The base is solid, and the seat upheld by roughly carved kneeling figures, while the centre portion is a pillar, having four doors which actually open and shut, turning in clever little sockets, and revealing recesses inside, the whole thing being, as I have said, one solid block of wood, without a join or addition anywhere. The cutting of those little doors is a great delight to me, and I have never seen among the many stools I have collected, another at all like it; indeed, the servants were so impressed with the odd arrangement that nothing would induce them to open the doors, suspecting Ju-ju, and they greatly disapproved of my doing so!

For the next few weeks life drifted quietly along, the monotony relieved by a passing visit from General Kemball, and very sadly, later on, by the death of 'Binkie,' our dearly-loved little fox-terrier. His devotion and

faithfulness to the last was very touching; when he was too ill to walk, he would painfully and slowly drag himself down the steps, across the gravel, and lie, exhausted, at the gate, his head between his paws, watching the Resident's office with wistful eyes for the return of his beloved master.

Over and over again I carried him back to his basket, only to see him persistently make his way out again.

I remember finding in the *Spectator* some lines headed, 'Modie, a fox-terrier,' and with the name altered to 'Binkie,' I have kept them tucked away in my mind ever since. I will make no further apology for quoting them here, beyond the hope that the author, 'G.W.F.G.', will accept as a tribute the comfort they gave to a heavy heart; any dog-lover who has not seen them before will love them as I do, and the unfortunate person who is not a dog-lover will simply—skip them!

Not strange, perhaps, that, on her beat, Nature should hush, by one wide law, The patter of four fitful feet, The scrape of a persistent paw.

And yet the house is changed and still, Waiting to echo as before Hot bursts of purpose hard to chill, And indignation at the door.

No friendly task he left unplied, To speed the hour or while the days, The grief that mourned him when he died Spelt out his little meed of praise.

They say he only thought in dreams.
What matter! Lay the silken head Throbbing with half a world of schemes Under the silent flowers instead.

The Spring winds in the lilacs play, Beside the old wall where he lies: The ivies murmur night and day Their tiny lisping lullabies.

Then ask not if he wakes again: He meddled not in things too deep; And Nature, after joy or pain Gives nothing half so kind as sleep.

In the beginning of December we spent a fortnight on a short tour, in the course of which we discovered Patti Abaja, a quaint little spot just North of Lokoja, and not more than fifteen miles from cantonments. The path winds

among rather thick bush to the foot of an abruptly-rising lofty hill, thickly clothed with trees. Here we dismounted and sent the ponies round to make the ascent by a longer but easier path, and after a really stiff climb over rocks and boulders for about an hour, we arrived at the summit, breathless but triumphant, and were confronted by miles of an absolutely flat plain, partly cultivated, but covered mainly with fine short grass.

It looked exactly as if some playful giant had shaved the top clean off the mountain! A further walk along the level brought us to the little hamlet of Patti Abaja, and here was still further room for wonderment, for, close beside it, the same playful giant had evidently been to work again, and had scooped out a dozen or so huge handfuls of the centre of the hill, then tired of his joke, and wandered off to seek new occupation elsewhere! There was a completely circular basin almost under our feet, the sides precipitous and rocky, covered with thick greenery; down below a carpet of farms flourished, and a few figures moving about looked like ants from our lofty perch. At a point just below the village a stream, issuing from the rock itself, tumbled and foamed away down into the valley, and meandered off among ferns, water plants and grasses, supplying delicious cold water to the community above. The air was perfectly glorious in its invigorating freshness, with the most delightful ‘nip’ at sunset and dawn. While there we had a pair of very fascinating little animals brought to us; they were, I think, what are called ‘palm-cats’ (*Nandinia binotata*); at that time they were very tiny, and, when full grown, only slightly larger than a ferret, extremely pretty, with soft dark grey fur, marked with black spots and rings. They were very young and helpless, and required a good deal of hand-feeding before they got lively and independent, but they travelled round with us in a covered basket quite safely, and, once settled in Lokoja, they were quite at home, perfectly tame and delightfully playful. One, alas! was killed by accident, but the other grew and flourished for some months, till one sad day, when he caught and ate a large locust, and from that time he refused food, drooped and died. I was sorely disappointed and grieved at the loss of my tiny pet, who, at a call, would come flying out from any corner, scamper up to me, run up my skirt, and sit on my shoulder, with his little wise eyes twinkling, and tiny paws upheld.

We made a shooting camp at Patti Abaja, and spent Christmas there, in company with Captain Phillips, of the Gunners, whose tastes were similar

to ours, and though the sport, as far as big game was concerned, was a failure, we were all happy pottering about after guinea-fowl, etc., and thoroughly enjoyed the difference in the temperature. It was practically impossible to get near big game, although there was plenty about, for the ground was as hard as iron, and the steps of a booted foot, or of a pony, rang as though on a pavement, and must have been audible to the animals at a great distance. We wound our way down the hill a few days later, feeling that, even if our spoils had not been many, our Christmas camp had, at all events, been a pleasant ending to a pleasant year.

About the middle of January we fared forth again, with the object of, at last, accomplishing the delimitation of the Kabba-Ilorin boundary, interrupted two years before, and went up the river to Egga, where we were to meet the Resident of Ilorin, Dr. Dwyer, and from where the boundary line would start. I had some misgivings, for travelling and camping in company is not always conducive to peace and harmony; but directly we all started off my anxieties were laid to rest, and we spent a delightful three weeks together. If the roads were of the worst, the camps were of the best, all the arrangements worked smoothly, and we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves sitting cosily round huge wood fires in the chilly evenings, chatting and exchanging reminiscences.

I made some new acquaintances in the flower world: the Mexican poppy (*Argemone mexicana*) made me wonder how it got there; Strophanthus was in full bloom—queer uncanny blossoms, each pinkish cream petal lengthening out into a streamer four or five inches long, resembling a flower less than some curious butterfly or sea anemone. The natives are terrified of it; beside its poisonous qualities, they believe that the juice produces instant blindness, and I could not persuade any one to break off a spray for me to sketch, and was obliged to do it myself, amidst much alarm and disapproval! In the forest was bright red Bryophyllum and another small shrub, loaded with glowing flame-coloured flowers; Dr. Dwyer discovered a specimen of Isochelis for me, and my last ‘find’ was *Kigelia Africana*, a large tree with truly splendid blossoms of deep crimson, hanging on pendant stems like glowing lamps set in the brilliant green foliage.

The middle of February found us back in Lokoja, with plenty of work in the office to be ‘wound up’

before we went on leave, which kept my husband busy until the High Commissioner arrived in March, desiring to inspect Kabba with a view to its becoming the headquarters of the Province. A flying visit was paid there while I packed up, the Sahib hurrying back to catch the next mail-boat, and as—to use an Indian expression—we had ‘laid a dak’ at various points on the road, he managed to cover the fifty odd miles in eight hours! My bull-terrier had just then burst a blood-vessel, and had to be destroyed, to my grief, and on March 23 we set our faces down river and towards home, with no more impedimenta than a parrot, a first-rate talker, who, by the way, distinguished himself, after a few days in the neighbourhood of the galley, by exclaiming, while I was displaying him to a friend, ‘Who the hell are you?’

After that I was allowed to keep him in my own charge!

We had a very pleasant trip, and found a special interest in the persons of two Arab merchants, who, trading between Tripoli and Kano, had had the suggestion made to them at the latter place, that, instead of the long and perilous Desert journey back, occupying seven months at least, it would be far cheaper and more convenient for them to convey themselves and their merchandise (ostrich feathers) to the Coast, and return to Tripoli by sea—a most excellent plan, and one that should, and would, be universally adopted, but for deep-rooted conservatism and distrust of new ways. As these two men consented to make the experiment, every assistance was given them by Government to reach Lagos, and Sir Alfred Jones gave them and their loads free transport to Liverpool—for they were, on this occasion, to come to London, instead of transhipping at the Canaries, so as to test the London market for their feathers. They were most highly intelligent men; one, ‘Nassuf,’ was the son of an extremely wealthy Tripoli merchant, the other was a travelling acquaintance, who, having been robbed of all his possessions in the Desert, was, with characteristic kindliness, being taken charge of and seen safely home by Nassuf. They were in quite prosperous circumstances, and had plenty of money, but found themselves sorely handicapped, once they left Africa, by speaking nothing but Arabic and Hausa. Therefore, our assistance as interpreters was requisitioned, and we visited them daily on board, enjoying many long talks about Tripoli, Kano and the Desert, so that they came to look on us as their natural protectors and friends, and, on learning that we, of course, intended leaving the ship at

Plymouth, their dismay and alarm was so deep and sincere, that we decided to go round to Liverpool with them, and, at least, see them safely ashore with their valuable merchandise, valued by Nassuf at £60,000!

On arrival, we were met by Sir Alfred Jones, who, with his usual enterprise, took a keen interest in the experiment, and, at his earnest request, we consented to take charge of Nassuf and his companion while they were in England, and bore them off to the *North-Western Hotel*. There they naturally attracted a good deal of attention in their picturesque flowing white robes, but their manner of receiving it was perfection in its well-bred unconsciousness; indeed, their simple, quiet dignity was in marked contrast to the behaviour of the gaping crowd which followed us everywhere, and also, alas! to that of well-dressed strangers who thought them fair game for rude impertinence. Given a pot of coffee and a box of cigarettes, our 'lambs,' as we called them, were perfectly happy, and would sit for hours in the big hall, utterly unmoved by the novelty of the scene of continuous bustle of arrival and departure, but watching it all with their bright intelligent eyes, and asking numberless shrewd questions in low-toned rapid Hausa.

We then conveyed our charges to Euston, and, on the road, Nassuf confided to us that he much disliked being mobbed and stared at, therefore he wished, immediately on arrival in London, to exchange his Arab dress for orthodox English garments, and, much as we regretted the change, we could only sympathize with the feeling that prompted him, and promised to 'make an Englishman' of him without delay.

At Euston we packed our 'lambs' into a cab, and before getting into another ourselves, explained the situation to the cabman, requesting him to drive to the first general outfitter he could find in the Tottenham Court Road. Just as we were starting, he pulled up, climbed off his box, and, putting a perturbed and puzzled face through the window, inquired in an anxious and somewhat embarrassed whisper: 'Beg parding, sir, but might they be *males or females*?'

With heroic efforts to preserve our gravity, we gave the necessary information, and were unfeignedly thankful at having escaped being driven up to a 'ladies' shop,' and the consequent explanations!

Arrived at the outfitter's, Nassuf, treading noiselessly, and smilingly serene, walked up to the counter, and asked us to convey to the salesman his desire to be dressed from head to foot—'just like him,' indicating my husband—'one of everything—*good* things,' he added, 'I have plenty of money!' and, to the bewilderment of the onlookers, he untied endless knots in a mysterious hidden, white sash, and poured forty sovereigns out on the counter! A kindly assistant took charge of him, and we waited patiently, much amused at the fragments of Arabic and English, struggles with refractory and novel garments, and suppressed chuckles that proceeded from the little dressing-room, until Nassuf emerged radiant and complete from his shiny boots to the gloves he so proudly carried, all his picturesque grace vanished, alas! but quite secure from unwelcome attention, and, to his amazement, his outfit cost him rather less than £6!

I greatly suspect that the wily young merchant retailed that costume to great advantage when he reached Tripoli; meantime he adopted quite an air of indulgent amusement over the appearance of his friend, who, either from conservatism or from a chivalrous desire to spare his benefactor's purse, firmly declined to alter his costume!

We spent several mornings in a great feather warehouse in the City, with a view to finding a market for Nassuf's wares, but his hopes were rather dashed at the sight of masses of splendid plumes from South Africa, and the price offered for his feathers was, he declared, not half what he could obtain in Tripoli.

Even allowing for Eastern methods of striking a bargain, he was obviously telling the truth, for, had it been at all to his advantage, nothing would have been easier than for him to have disposed of all his feathers then and there. I am inclined to think the reason is that the Tripoli market, not being supplied with the really beautiful South African feathers, possibly values more highly the inferior sort from Nigeria—and they *are* very inferior, possibly because the birds are not farmed, and are plucked at any season of the year, and in a most thorough and cruel fashion. Poor Nassuf was mournfully puzzled to see his enormous ox-hides, in which the feathers were packed, valued at five shillings each! In Tripoli, he explained, they are eagerly bought for a high price, being in great request for Arab tents!

So, after every kindness and courtesy had been showered on the young merchant—and nothing could have exceeded his grateful acknowledgment of it—the decision was arrived at to repack his feathers, and speed him on his journey to Tripoli, and, after a visit to the Colonial Office (when we persuaded him to resume his national dress), we conveyed our charges down to the Docks, much encumbered with packages of apples, razors, cheese and a gold-topped umbrella, and saw them safely established on the *Gulf of Suez*, *en route* for Malta and Tripoli.

It was quite a sad parting, the two men were child-like in their grief and affection, and we could only console them by promising, whenever the opportunity occurred, to visit Tripoli as the guests of Nassuf's father, and, meantime, to bear them in mind, and send them news of ourselves.

A couple of hours later we were watching a play, our leave had really begun, and the *Gulf of Suez*, preparing to slip down the Thames, carrying off our 'lambs,' seemed already part of a passed fantastic dream.

CHAPTER IX
Borgu

Outside the Bar at Forcados an October tornado was in full swing, huge green seas swept past, the wind howled and the rain fell in torrents, almost hiding from view the little black ‘branch boat’

tossing uneasily half a mile away. We stood on the streaming deck, watching our belongings being transferred, with the greatest difficulty, from the mail-boat to the other, each boat-load apparently faring worse than the last as the hurricane increased in violence, and it seemed an absolutely foolhardy risk for us, and four other passengers for Nigeria, to attempt to reach the *Dodo* in an open boat. It was an *impasse*, for the tides did not suit, and, with every desire to assist us, our Captain was not justified in incurring the danger of trying to cross the Bar: waiting was out of the question, even for twenty-four hours, as these tornadoes sometimes last for days together, therefore we had to make the best of an unpleasant situation and ‘face the music’! So the *Dodo* steamed round us and anchored on our lee side—at what seemed a *very* long distance—so as to give us, at least for the start, a certain amount of protection, and enabling the ladder to be let down, a great consideration, which avoids the dangerous process of being deposited in a heaving, rocking boat by means of a ‘mammy chair’ or a bucket.

Our baggage safely (more or less!) transferred, kind friends lent us oilskins, and we six unfortunate wayfarers cautiously crept down the ladder, established ourselves in the boat, waved farewells to the line of anxious faces at the rail above, and set forth, benefiting for a few minutes by the shelter afforded by the ship, but only too soon finding ourselves very much at the mercy of wind and waves.

Most fortunately, however, it is provided that, in the face of *real* and present danger, the smallest-spirited of us has no sense of fear, but rather one of exhilaration—it is no new discovery of mine, I know, but it is an immense comfort at the moment, and, though the chances of our being swamped at any moment were enormous, I had the satisfaction, while I hugged ‘Diana’ (our latest acquisition, a beautiful setter-spaniel), of

deciding that if this *was* the end of the chapter, it was nice to finish in such good company! I think I had just arrived at this philosophic reflection when our boat was whirled and sucked in under the stern of the *Dodo*, where the propeller was revolving, and the heaving sea threatened to throw us up and crush us like egg-shells.

There was just a moment while we all

stared upwards at the black stern and held our breaths, then the wave passed and a mighty pull brought us round, just in time, and a few minutes later we were all standing on the *Dodo's* dripping deck, congratulating each other on having succeeded in getting there! It was quite the nastiest experience I have yet had, and I know that all my companions would agree that I have by no means exaggerated the seriousness of it. This transhipping from 'intermediate' boats is a most unpleasant, and also dangerous business, ruining baggage and risking lives; it is not too much to say that no one should be called upon to take such a risk, and I believe that every official in Northern Nigeria would rather sacrifice a week's leave than do so.

We returned our borrowed oilskins by the boat-men's hands, and groped our way, in the driving rain, to our luggage, only to find that the particular box we sought had been forced open and rifled, and our new three-guinea mackintoshes had vanished!

This was getting on towards 'the last straw,' but the kindly skipper, after much hunting, found a large native cloth, which I could wrap over my soaking muslin blouse, and, when some tea had been made, and one of us had produced an immense plum-cake, we began to forget our sorrows, and steamed up to Burutu just as the darkness was falling, much comforted to see the smiling black face of 'Momo,' our faithful head steward, come down to meet us.

The next morning, as the *Empire* fussed and paddled up the familiar creeks, and the sunshine was bright again, we opened the boxes that seemed to have suffered most from sea-water. My own clothes had fared badly, and it was a little saddening to cast overboard stained sodden masses (including my best evening frock!) which had been dainty muslins and chiffons. Destruction to nearly all one's possessions is all in the day's work in

Nigeria, but it was rather saddening to see the destructive process well begun even before arrival!

We had a coop full of English fowls, Buff Orpingtons and Black Minorcas, and they, poor things, had very narrowly escaped drowning, and had been so terribly knocked about that they could hardly stand for many days; indeed, I think we were lucky in losing only two hens as a result of their experiences.

We arrived in Lokoja on the 14th of October, and found many familiar, kind faces to welcome us; one dear friend of mine had even delayed her leave a few weeks so as not to miss us—a really heroic proof of friendship, and one greatly valued!

Almost immediately my husband was ordered to take charge of Borgu, the Northernmost Province on the right bank of the Niger, and we were jubilant at the prospect of seeing some new country, especially as Borgu possessed a great reputation for good shooting; but our departure was delayed unavoidably for nearly three months, involving a state of restless uncertainty and suspense, a thing abhorrent to us both, and which has, oddly enough, been our portion almost continuously for the last ten years!

There came to Lokoja at this time a quaint and unusual visitor in the person of ‘Fritz.’ ‘Fritz’ was a young hippopotamus, I can hardly call him a baby on account of his size (about that of a very large pig), though he was only a few months old, brought down the Benue by Captain Stieber, the Resident of German Bornu, on his way to Berlin. He (Fritz, I mean!) was the oddest thing in pets, for he was perfectly tame, and could scarcely be called sharp, or even lively, but there was distinct individuality in his wide, rather satirical smile and tiny twinkling eye which commanded respect, though he did not lend himself to petting. For fear of losing this valuable little person he was usually tied up when taken down to bathe, for which purpose he wore an elegant and original collar, made of a cask hoop; he seemed perfectly happy and contented, wandering among the grass at the Preparanda, consuming untold quantities of tinned milk, and rolling in awkward ecstasies in the warm sand. I believe Captain Stieber was perfectly successful in landing his pet safe and well at the Berlin Zoo.

In December we got our ‘marching orders,’

packed up, and—on Christmas Day!—started on our long river journey to Bussa, our new headquarters.

When our last friend had waved ‘Good-bye’

at Mureji, and the little white stern-wheeler swept round the bend, and swung out into the great silent, gleaming river, where the distance was all opalescent Harmattan mist, the water like glass and the heavy air laden with soft aromatic scents, floating lazily out from the walls of tropical verdure on either hand, we felt that the ‘onward and outward’ craving which so deeply possesses us both was in a fair way to be gratified.

After the hurry and stress of departure from the busy station down river, and the final disgorging of passengers, mails and cargo at Mureji, it was infinitely peaceful to lie out on the now deserted deck and absorb and drink in the matchless beauty of it all, a beauty which seems to seize and hold one, making the blood race and pulses throb. The marvellous colouring, the masses of vegetation hanging over motionless reflections, clear and detailed as their originals, in the olive-hued water; the solemn fish-eagles, sharply silhouetted against the pale sky, immovably still and ceaselessly peering into the silent pools below; those mysterious little creeks creeping inwards where the branches hang low giving glimpses of flecked sunshine and shade, gloom and gold, bringing to mind that strange indefinable world that is neither dream-land nor fairy-land, but which very surely exists, and is sometimes momentarily revealed to most of us.

‘FRITZ.’ (p. 151)

OUR START FROM BUSSA FOR ILLO. (p. 161)

A tangible part of the universal placidity was our pilot: he would sit crouching on the deck, hour after hour, wrapped in a white blanket, for the morning air was very keen, his wise old face tirelessly watching the water. They steer by sight, of necessity, as the channels shift and change continually; not a word passed, but the slightest

wave or quiver of his slender brown hand conveyed his meaning to the stolid sailor at the wheel, and the little boat crossed and re-crossed, dodged and curved in perfect obedience to the silent watcher, closely noting every ripple and swirl with his far-seeing dreamy eyes.

At Jebba the scene changed abruptly from low-lying grassy marsh land and warm sandbanks, where the wild duck and geese were wont to gather, to great beetling cliffs and walls of rock, which rose sheer from the still water, seemingly shutting in the river altogether, and giving the impression of one end of a Highland loch. Jebba struck me as rather a dreary spot, in spite of its undoubted beauty, having been formerly the headquarters of the Government and now utterly deserted, save for the Niger Company's Store, which gives it an air of some life and briskness. I climbed the hill by the old zig-zag path, now scarcely discernible, and wandered round the remnants of ruined bungalows; of some, nothing remained but the flight of cement steps, standing forlorn where all else had vanished; others were the crumbling ruins of native-built mud houses—everywhere was desolation and decay. There is something essentially saddening about an abandoned station, and the island at Jebba, with its traces of 'white' occupation, added to the impression of melancholy desertion: the cemetery was there, a lasting and tragic record of duty doggedly done, in the teeth of all difficulties, quiet heroism, and true British persistence, under the inspiration of an indomitable leader—to the end.

However, there was little time for cheerless reflection; our evening was spent strenuously—the Sahib struggling with fever—in shifting our belongings from the security of the *Kapelli* which now had to turn round and steam down river again, to carry the mails and passengers from Mureji to Lokoja, to the narrow quarters of a steel canoe; and, in the chilly grey dawn of the following morning, with endless unnecessary buzzing, chatter, and running to and fro, the little paddle-wheel began to revolve, and we were away on the next stage of our journey.

The fussing and churning of our tiny boat seemed utterly impertinent in the face of the gigantic frowning cliffs, the 'Ju-ju Rock' towering grim and bare save for a thick undergrowth, at the base, of the unsightly euphorbia, greatly dreaded by the natives, who declare that like strophanthus, it will cause instant blindness to all who touch it.

The sun rose on scenery resembling a mighty salmon river, the water swirling past smooth grey rocks, sheer cliffs and overhanging verdure; this stretch of the Niger immediately above Jebba had almost the appearance of a stone gateway, for, later, the swift current spread itself out again, wide and

placid, to level green lowlands far away on either bank, until Badjibo was reached, and we were once more among rocks and rising ground.

Here a halt of two days occurred, perforce, as our small craft could go no higher, a further transfer of our possessions into native canoes being necessary, and we had to wait until the ‘Etsu’ of Badjibo could procure the said canoes from some mysterious direction indicated by a vague wave of his hand.

Meanwhile, we were most comfortably installed in an excellent rest-house—excellent, that is, to African travellers’ eyes—the square compound, encircled by a mud wall, containing four native-built huts, might not appeal very strongly to fastidious tastes, but, to us, it spelt something like luxury, plenty of room, a dim, cool, clean dwelling, built solidly and well as the Nupe custom is, and a real relief after the terribly cramped accommodation and blistering heat of a steel canoe. Here, too, a new diversion awaited us in the shape of the undesirable activities of an angry swarm of bees, whose advent made our household generally move faster than I had ever seen them do—I can imagine nothing more effective than swarming bees for making slow folks bustle!

Outside our compound were two immense trees, one covered with creamy-white pendant blossoms, the other bearing bright yellow berries in almost incredible profusion. It was one of our chief pleasures to watch these trees, and find delight in the ever-varying throng of brilliant-hued birds who came, chirped, ate and fought all the morning long.

Great plump green pigeons, with their exquisite plumage, deep yellow breast and wings shaded mauve, green and grey, others which we called the ‘black fidgets’ from their incessant twittering and flying, flashing, as they went, a deep metallic blue; there were smaller birds too, one almost entirely canary-coloured, another tiny wren-like thing, all crimson and soft brown, hundreds of tiny atoms of bird-life, hopping and darting so quickly that a clear view of them was almost impossible, except in the case of the exquisite little ‘honey-birds’

who, caring nothing for the luscious berries, frequented the other tree, and delicately sipped the honey out of the drooping flowers, their backs gleaming brilliant green, and breasts glowing copper—their whole persons smaller than a cockroach!

They were a busy, merry crew, children of the sunshine, happily untouched by want or fear.

We fished the next day, without much science or skill on my part, and, to our immense surprise, our efforts were rewarded by the landing of a most uncanny-looking fish; indeed, as it whirled out of the water, I believed for a moment that we had inadvertently hooked the corpse of a green pigeon!

Its length was about ten inches, the head blunt and the body very round, gaily striped with brilliant yellow and green, the breast a paler yellow, and protruding like a pouter pigeon. He was quite a stranger to me, and to this day I have never discovered his name—I trust it may be one befitting his truly gorgeous appearance! At all events, the immediate circle of admirers of our prowess unanimously cried ‘A—a!’ (No, no!) and assured us that our catch was bitter and uneatable; and when an African native pronounces any living thing uneatable, it must be uneatable indeed, so we took their word for it, and having sufficiently admired his somewhat grotesque beauty, we carefully unhooked him and put him back.

Early next morning we left Badjibo, heading a procession of native canoes, and a most adventurous journey we had! The river hereabouts is split up into various channels by islands and rocks, and we found ourselves in true Highland scenery, brown water rushing and creaming in its fall round and over huge boulders, the river fringed on either side by an immense growth of trees and bushes hanging above the stream, and making it a matter of great difficulty for the canoe-men to make any headway against the strong current, owing to the almost impossibility of finding ground for their long palm-wood poles. They could only seize branches and twigs, and so endeavour to haul the canoe up-stream, which method was, naturally, productive of a rich crop of misadventures, such as the sudden crashing down of the rotten branch to which the muscular brown arms were clinging, and the consequent rush down-stream of the canoe—our heads being banged and swept by branches and creepers, until it could be brought again under control by the whole party hanging desperately on to the nearest tree, and the strenuous effort, swirling and rocking, had to be commenced again, till we could crawl back to the same point, and beyond, perhaps, into smoother water, till the next rapid appeared, and the same difficulty—and, incidentally, danger—had to be encountered once more. I can vouch for it that we had not a ‘dull moment’ from start to finish, and

one could hardly be reproached for harbouring a slight feeling of insecurity, especially as the water continuously bubbled in through a very inadequate mend in the bottom of the canoe, just under my eye, and vigorous baling went on ‘amidships’

all the time! Anything less like the lower reaches of the Niger could hardly be imagined; in the narrow channels where the trees meet overhead and the water tumbles, loud-voiced, over rocks and snags, it is hard to recognize it as the same river, and only in the open reaches do the crimson and white quisqualis and purple convolvulus remind me that I have met and loved them some three hundred miles nearer the coast.

At the worst points, where the whole face of the river appeared to be barred with a rush of falling waters, and no smallest passage was visible amidst the tumbling foam, the canoes were hauled under the steep bank, and their entire contents bundled out thereon, we, the passengers, clambering, by the aid of roots and branches, to a place of some security, where we sat on the warm sand and watched the manœuvres down below. The majority of the canoe-men, divesting themselves of their clothing, took boldly to the stream, where, with the rushing water up to their shoulders, struggling against the current and slipping on the stones, they deftly and manfully dragged the absurd little crafts through the rapids by means of rope hauling, vigorous pushing, swimming, and attempts at poling. They are practically amphibious, these men, and it was a fine sight, the active figures swimming and wading, dark, wet skins gleaming, white teeth flashing, while the air was full of shouts and cries, not to mention the chorus of advice and directions from the bank, and pious ejaculations of thanksgiving as each canoe reached a place of safety. Once arrived in more placid waters, the re-embarkation would take place, and the journey be resumed.

Our river trip ended at Leaba, a small village above which is the Wuru rapid, about the worst on the river; the natives have driven great tree trunks vertically into the rocky bed of the stream, and attached to them a stout rope by which the unfortunate traveller must drag himself and his canoe through the seething torrent. There is a saddening loss of life here, and death by drowning is so frequent that the riverside folks are perfectly stolid and unmoved by it, as we noticed when a man lost his life that very afternoon, trying to cross the river at this spot. The water is also infested with

alligators of considerable size; possibly they come up at high water, and are unable to get back until the next wet season—one is told that the body of a man upset from a canoe in the rapids is seldom or never recovered.

At Leaba we found ponies awaiting us, and did the remaining few marches on horseback, leaving the baggage to make its way slowly up-stream, and on the 9th of January we reached Bussa, where the Assistant Resident, Mr. Dwyer, gave us a cordial welcome. Bussa town is a mere hamlet, or, rather, collection of hamlets, straggling along the river bank; a place of no importance whatever, where there is not even the mildest attempt at a market, where trade is nil, and existence about as stagnant as the mind can picture it.

At that time, however, we had no opportunity of making close acquaintance with the place, as, about ten days after our arrival, we were obliged to hurry off to Illo, as work of much urgency awaited my husband there. Anticipating long marches and great heat, I decided to travel in an improvised hammock, but the paths were so bad, and the bearers so unskilful, that, after the first day, I gladly mounted my pony, leaving Diana in sole possession of the hammock! It was a hot, weary journey, the dust and glare very unpleasant; each halting-place seemed a dirtier and more unsavoury hamlet than the last, till we reached the large walled town of Kaoji, where our spirits, which had rather drooped at the apparently hopeless poverty and desolation of our new province, revived a little at the sight of brisk, intelligent Fulanis, replacing the apathetic, ignorant, dull Borgus.

We had scarcely unpacked at Illo, when, to our intense dismay, Diana, who, with her sweet disposition and high intelligence had made herself very, very dear to us both, began to flag and display the usual dread symptoms, and ten days later we miserably buried her under a great shady tree. I do not think we have ever cared to go out shooting since.

That very day came the disquieting news of the disaster at Satiru near Sokoto, involving the deaths of Mr. Hilary, Mr. Scott and Mr. Blackwood, while endeavouring to effect the arrest of the ringleaders of a small faction of malcontents, who had been spreading disaffection. Such an event as anything resembling a native rising naturally called for prompt action, and troops were hurriedly moved north, the Illo detachment was ordered away

at once, and, as my husband's work called us to Yelwa, we also prepared for departure, and, less than six hours after the telegram had arrived, the busy 'lines' and fort stood empty, silent and deserted, while a procession of canoes was rapidly descending the river.

Illo is not actually on the Niger, and at Giris, the small village where we embarked, we noticed a quaint local custom which I do not remember to have seen elsewhere. Some of the round huts had bunches of short, dry bamboo twigs hanging from the apex of the thatch, rattling cheerfully in the evening breeze, and, on inquiry, we were told that any young man who desired to marry hung out this signal, so that all match-making parents of daughters might take a note of his intentions, and presently parade their most attractive daughters for his benefit!

A vision crossed my mind of this simple system adopted in more civilized circles, and harassed mothers anxiously scanning the surrounding chimney-pots from a top window in Grosvenor Square!

A few days later we were back at Bussa, and a time of considerable discomfort arrived for all of us. March and April are always the hottest and most unpleasant months in Nigeria, but Bussa seemed to me to be much hotter and more unpleasant than any other spot I know. This was partly due to our wretched houses—badly built, ill-thatched mud dwellings, which afforded little protection from the heat, the inside temperature reaching 103° and 104° every afternoon. The nights were oppressively hot. We used to move our beds all over the compound in order to catch the least particle of breeze, and were out each morning at five o'clock to get an hour's ride in the cool—for by half-past six no one would care to be out in the sun. Perhaps the worst feature of these months was the 'dry tornadoes,' violent dust-storms, when the clouds would roll up with most hopeful rapidity and inky blackness, and a hurricane of wind would tear through the house for an hour or so, laden with dust, dirt and sand, almost instantly covering every thing with a deep layer, at the same time usually removing a good deal of the flimsy thatch. One could only sit and endure, protecting eyes, mouth and hair from the flying grit by means of a motor veil, and longing for rain till the hurricane passed and died away, leaving us *very* miserable and uncomfortable—and as dry as before!

However, the 30th of April brought the first rain, and we thankfully put the ‘hot weather’ behind us for the rest of the year. At the end of May we started on a visit to Ilesha, a customs station in the south of the province, to inquire into a serious theft of Government money which had occurred there. It was infinitely pleasanter marching than our last journey northward, and the paths were good enough to allow of our cantering a great part of our long marches. From Bussa we were escorted to the Meni River, some three miles, by the Sariki and all his myrmidons on horseback, and, as we had a march of twenty-two miles before us, and a good road, we drove the whole party in front of us at a sharp canter. It is curious and amusing to notice how utterly uncongenial to the native and his horse is a steady canter—they simply cannot do it, their horsemanship consisting entirely of furious sprinting and a dancing sort of walk, varied by plunges into the high grass, and rushes back on to the road. We had the greatest difficulty in keeping our escort going, and, to our surprise, men and horses were quite blown when we reached the river bank. Here we said our farewells, crossed the river in canoes—the ponies swimming—mounted again and rode off.

We had a capital sandy track through shady forest country, the young green grass seemed absolutely *made* to be a background for primroses and bluebells—instead it was thickly sprinkled with delicate mauve terrestrial orchids, and the deeper purple iris-like flowers of ‘ground ginger,’ while feathery asparagus fern climbed and trailed everywhere.

We crossed two deep rocky rivers with some difficulty, lunched and rested awhile on the shady bank of the second, and late in the afternoon reached our first halt, a town named Wa-wa. One incident of that day’s march which comes back to me was my dismounting to lead my pony across an awkward deep cleft in the road; he jumped very wide, dragging the rein from my hand, broke away and cantered gaily off up the path towards Wa-wa, leaving me to contemplate ruefully the joys of a five-mile walk to complete a long march!

Nevertheless, recollecting an insatiable greediness to be one of the culprit’s chief characteristics, I set off along the path at a leisurely walk, and, as I expected, very soon discovered him, grazing to his heart’s content, and so pleased with his surroundings that he submitted most placidly to be captured and mounted.

Wa-wa is a large town of rather unusual appearance, consisting of groups of tiny hamlets separated by wide green spaces, at this season of the year covered with delightful short turf. Narrow red gravel paths connecting these clusters of houses gave quite a cultivated air, and the spacious green stretches were very pleasant to look at. The trees, too, were unusually large, and each hamlet rejoiced in spreading ‘shedia’ and ‘durmi’ trees. We had a roomy and comfortable rest-house, which unluckily admitted a fair share of the torrential rain which fell during the night!

The following day we found the rivers much swollen, and crossing them by means of fallen trees and rickety native bridges savoured somewhat of Blondin’s feats. Between Kali and Vera we had quite a special piece of good fortune; cantering through the cool shady woodland, we both pulled up suddenly, noticing two large animals moving among the trees and high grass. We had barely exchanged a whisper when, as they bounded across an open grassy space, we discovered, to our delight, that we were watching two large lions!

There was no possibility of doubt, the ground was quite open and the animals were distinctly in view, in brilliant sunshine—and the tail of a lion is quite unmistakable, with its odd little bunch of hair at the end! The road itself was crossed and re-crossed with numberless tracks of deer, so, no doubt, the lions found it a profitable hunting-ground.

We watched the bush intently on the

chance of getting another glimpse of the splendid creatures, but the few stragglers who had come up did not apparently sympathize with our desire, and displayed unusual activity about reaching the camp!

As we approached Kaiama, the old Sariki came out with all his people, and the usual accompaniment of beating drums and blowing horns, and escorted us to the confines of the town, where we turned off, and, after following a path in the bush for about a mile, came upon a clearing, some eight or ten acres in extent, in the centre of which stood, bare and solitary, a double storeyed brick bungalow—the Residency! Formerly Kaiama was the provincial headquarters, and the staff inhabited a clay-walled enclosure in the town, containing a few wretched huts, originally a French fort. Here, the site was low and unhealthy, and a change was decided on; the brick bungalow was built, but was never finished or permanently occupied, as a

further decision was arrived at to move the headquarters altogether to Bussa! It is regrettable that the bungalow could not have been removed too! It was very comfortable, of course, to find oneself on a wooden floor, and under a watertight roof, but the situation was so ill-chosen, so utterly lonely and desolate, that it was depressing to a degree.

Absolutely nothing was in sight but the monotonous endless bush, not a sound, not a single habitation, not even a breath of rising smoke, for the town was distant and invisible. Scarcely a soul ever came or went, for the path to the town was said to be infested by leopards and hyænas, and was sedulously avoided, even before sunset.

We visited the grave of Mr. Ward-Simpson, a young police officer who died there three years ago; it was a very peaceful spot, in the deep shade of a spreading tree, and we satisfied ourselves that it was well-cared for, and neatly fenced in.

The Sariki of Kaiama is a highly intelligent old gentleman, though he bears a distinctly bad character among all his neighbours for high-handed bullying and dishonesty. We found it very interesting listening to his stories of past years, which he delighted to tell with a considerable sense of humour, while he turned the leaves of the *Spectator* with a great air of interest and appreciation. He had rather a special connexion with the late High Commissioner, Sir Frederick Lugard, having, years ago, when the latter was travelling through Borgu, making treaties, saved his life by warning him of an ambush prepared for him. He has always been very loyal to the Government, and it is a pity that he is held in such detestation by his own people, though, perhaps, only natural that, with native cunning, he should have used his boasted friendship with the High Commissioner as an universal threat to all whom he wished to intimidate. He goes in terror of death by witchcraft or ‘medicine’ (i.e. poison) and solemnly assured us that quite lately he had had a wonderful escape—a woman in the town having actually *kept an iguana*, and, of course, everybody knows that to touch an iguana with any article belonging to the Sariki would cause the latter’s instant death! This well-known fact was warmly upheld by many of our own following, so it evidently behoves one to choose one’s pets carefully in Kaiama!

The Sariki had, however, soothed his shattered nerves by relieving the conspirator of every bit of ‘real estate’ that she possessed!

A few days’ marching through the cool green woods, lavishly decorated with what the florists call ‘stove plants,’ white and crimson striped lilies, and the earliest Gloriosas, unfolding their delicate crimson, gold-edged petals—for, in June, the ‘mauve’ season is over, and the ‘scarlet-and-gold’

time coming, brought us to Bodebere, a pretty little hamlet where we camped under a huge shady tree, and had the benefit of a truly magnificent view of miles of wooded country, sloping away to the south, where some blue peaks were faintly visible.

We were much struck with the quantity of young life around us—beside the human babies, there were lambs, kids, ducklings and chickens scuttling about under our feet. The sheep and goats in this country are extremely small, for the most part, and their babies are the most fascinating, absurd little furry bundles imaginable, about nine inches high, and needing only a green painted stand to make them perfect toyshop treasures!

On the road into Ilesha we noticed that almost every third bush was a custard apple, loaded with fruit. We gathered them as we passed, and thoroughly enjoyed their delicious creamy golden-hued pulp. The people call them ‘Gwando-n-daji’

(wild paw-paw), and, judging by the hundreds of skins and stones scattered on the road, they greatly appreciate them also. The custard apple is almost the only wild fruit in the country which is really palatable, except, perhaps, the tamarind, which, though very refreshing, is terribly acid when eaten raw.

We found Ilesha a wretched ruinous-looking town, dirty and unattractive; there was no rest-house on the high ground where the police

detachment is quartered, so we descended, rather disgustedly, into the town, quite fifty feet lower, and, after winding amongst grubby little lanes and evil-smelling narrow byways, emerged upon an open

space beside the market, where a fair-sized native house was got ready for us.

There was a general air of disturbance, quite contrary to custom no one had come to welcome us, the markets were deserted, hardly an individual was to be seen—obviously there was trouble in the air! Presently a string of most forlorn-looking, decrepit old men limped, crawled and hobbled up, and, when they had, with immense difficulty, doubled up their rheumatic limbs into a sitting posture before us, they poured forth their tale of woe. A misfortune unprecedented, unheard-of, beyond the experience of even the most aged of them, had occurred in the night—the old Sariki had died! ‘Full of years’ he must have been—our toothless, palsied visitors mumbled that he was much older than any of them, and one amongst them was actually the heir!

REPAIRING THE BUSSA RESIDENCY. (p. 170)

BALU. (p. 180) (SERVAL CAT.)

Their sorrow and dismay was truly pathetic, as they lamented that ‘all the people were bewildered ... they could do nothing ... they knew not what to think....’ We offered our condolences and sympathy, and when they had asked and received permission to carry out the funeral ceremonies exactly as if we were not there, they departed somewhat cheered and comforted.

The three next days were rather a trial—the drumming day and night, the incessant wailing and shrieking of the women, the entire cessation of business of all kinds, and the consequent difficulty of obtaining supplies, made me watch the digging of the huge grave with rather a personal interest.

It was done in a manner exactly similar to the Kabba custom which I have already described in detail. By the evening of the third day all the people from the surrounding villages had arrived, the last comer being the

special person entrusted with the duty of actually laying the dead man in his grave, a duty which might be performed only by one who had never seen the Sariki's face in life.

The funeral was accompanied by much firing of Dane guns, a terribly noisy performance, and we felt sincerely thankful to hear before long that the ammunition had given out. But the drums and horns lasted all night, and were used with untiring vigour!

The curious custom ordains that the women of the establishment must 'wail' in idleness for three months, and, further, that no head of a household may sleep inside his own house for the same period.

Therefore, immediately the burying was accomplished, a large camp of little grass huts sprang up all round the grave, outside the 'royal' compound. It seemed to me very touching, the absolutely conscientious way these simple souls obeyed the 'custom' at what must have been the greatest inconvenience and discomfort to themselves, many of them infirm old men, bent and crippled with rheumatism, sleeping for many weeks in miserable little grass shelters, in the torrential rains just then commencing.

Some days were spent in endeavouring to get light upon the robbery of money from the toll-clerk's house, but with little or no success. It was rather defeating, at the outset, to be gravely assured by the clerk himself, an intelligent, educated native, that 'the robbery was undoubtedly effected through the wicked machinations of these evil-minded Borgus—they having placed ju-ju or medicine in his dwelling, so that he—and the police guard!—should so soundly sleep that the unprincipled thieves were enabled to pass over his prostrate body, and remove the box!' This perfectly lucid and apparently satisfactory explanation was borne out by the production of the said ju-ju, consisting of little balls of grass containing horrible mixtures of various ingredients, which had been found stuffed into the thatch of his house. Such overwhelming reasons for successful burglary had, in every one's opinion, rendered all inquiry useless, and the thief had had plenty of time to carry his prize out of Northern Nigeria altogether, which made the investigation rather a hopeless task. Not a clue of any kind could be obtained, and all examination produced nothing but the wearying reiteration of the bewitchment story.

On our way back to Bussa we spent two days at Kaiama, and while there a terrific tornado came up one afternoon, and we were very thankful for the solid protection of the bungalow there. We stood on the verandah, watching the magnificent lightning, as the storm passed away over the town, and, simultaneously with a blinding flash, came a report like a Howitzer, which made us both wonder if anything had been ‘struck.’ Early the next morning arrived the Sariki himself, and with an air of mystery and some trouble, informed us that ‘a stone from God’ had fallen during the storm, burning and wrecking a hut—happily unoccupied at the time—and had buried itself at some depths in the ground. His people were scared and worried, and were already ‘making ju-ju’ and preparing offerings of blood and oil on the spot where the ‘demon’

lay buried. They seemed, in a dim sort of way, to connect the event with our visit, and when we suggested digging up the stone, they obeyed with the greatest alacrity, and the ‘devil’ was accordingly exhumed and handed to us, while we, in return, made a present of money to remove unpleasant impressions by means of a little feast.

The find *appeared* to be an aerolite of most singular appearance, and I cannot describe it better than by quoting a letter written by my husband to the *Spectator* on the subject:— ‘It is shaped like an axe-head, or like a slightly flattened egg, with the broad end sawn off and filed to an edge. It is four inches in length, and two and a quarter inches wide at its widest end, gradually narrowing to a blunt point. At its greatest depth, about three and a quarter inches from its point, it measures an inch and a half; from this point its curves to both ends are beautiful.

It has a smooth mottled surface, is non-magnetic, and weighs a little over half a pound.’[1]

[1] This ‘aerolite’ has subsequently been examined by the Royal Meteorological Society, and pronounced to be ‘a very good specimen of a Celt.’

We bore this treasure off in high delight at acquiring so unusual a curiosity, and found ourselves back at Bussa by the end of the month. By that time the rains were in full swing, and the surrounding country had become a marsh, rendering walking impossible, and riding dangerous and unpleasant.

It was, however, a good opportunity for closer study of the primitive Bussa folks, and their town—the scene of Mungo Park's tragic death. I spent much time endeavouring to elicit details on this latter subject, which might have more resemblance to the probabilities, and even the truth, than the published and accepted accounts. I am now convinced of what I had always suspected, that Mungo Park's death was a purely accidental one, due entirely to ignorance of the dangers of the river in the neighbourhood of Bussa. The statement that 'armed natives, seeing the predicament the strangers were in, hurled their weapons in showers on them,' is, to any one who knows the geography of the place, bordering on the ridiculous, and is strenuously denied by the natives of Bussa, who declare that the correct version of the tragedy is that said to have been given to Major Denham in Kuka by the son of a Fulah chief, who had come from Timbuctoo. This man 'denied that the natives who pursued the boat in canoes had any evil intention; their object was mere curiosity to see the white men, and the canoes that followed Park from Timbuctoo contained messengers from the King, who desired to warn the strangers of the dangers of navigating the river lower down!' More than this, the Bussa people tell how, at every hamlet by the riverside, the inhabitants, seeing the travellers speeding to almost certain death among the rapids, rushed to the bank, gesticulating and shouting warnings, which, alas! misunderstood by the Europeans, doubtless hastened the tragical climax.

And this is by far the most reasonable hypothesis, for, had any of these natives desired to compass the destruction of the exploring party, there was no need for them to raise a finger or a voice—the rocks in the river would accomplish all that was necessary.

That they had no sentiments of ill-will towards Park is manifest from the fact that the Sariki-n-Yauri (king of Yelwa) had provided him with all necessary transport, and was himself a heavy loser in canoes and men by the disaster. I laboured patiently to obtain the true facts of the story, and felt rewarded by the hope that, in the future, the Bussa folks may be acquitted of so cowardly and cruel a deed.

Another theory about the Borgus which, to the best of my belief, is entirely erroneous, is their supposed connexion with early Christianity. Major Mockler Ferryman remarks that 'they (the Borgus) themselves assert

that their belief is in one Kisra, a Jew, who gave his life for the sins of mankind.'

I was much astonished to find that this idea is utterly fallacious, and is not even known to the people. In the first place, Kisra, or rather Kishra, is buried close to Bussa, and his tomb can be seen by any one, which immediately disposes of the possibility that the Borgus, in honouring him, refer in any way to Jesus Christ.

Kishra was a Mahomedan pure and simple; he lived—so the tradition runs—in Mecca, during the lifetime of Mahomed, and beginning to prove himself positively a rival to the Prophet, was driven forth, with his large following, and apparently drifted eventually down to Borgu. His memory is deeply honoured and revered, but entirely as a warrior king, and in no sense as the pioneer of any special religion. Certain rites and ceremonies of the most frankly Pagan description are still performed at his burying-place, the site of which is well-defined and, as I have already said, visible to all.

The Borgus to-day, whatever their previous record may be, could not, by any stretch of imagination, be called a war-like race. They are absolute Pagans, and appear to be still very low in the order of civilization; their progress has perhaps been hindered by their being somewhat apart from the large Emirates and busier centres of the Protectorate: they are also separated by their peculiar language and customs. In Bussa itself a language quite distinct even from Borgu is spoken, which greatly increases the difficulty of obtaining reliable historical information from them. They are the quietest and most law-abiding folks imaginable—indeed, I have heard it said of them that 'they have not the intelligence to commit a crime!' They do not trade, and appear to have an unlimited capacity for sitting silent and motionless, dirty and unclothed, before their huts, gazing vacantly into space. Their farming is as scanty as their need for food-stuffs will permit; just sufficient is grown to save the little communities from want, and not a square yard more! The villagers on the river-bank are fishermen, and live greatly on river oysters, as is attested by the enormous heaps of oyster-shells surrounding each hamlet. These oysters are found on the rocks at lowest water, and though we never attempted to eat them, the shells interested us greatly, answering exactly to the description of the *Aetheria semilunata*, having very rough outsides, and the interior showing a very beautiful mother-of-pearl appearance—exquisitely iridescent, with raised

pearly blisters. We cherished visions of discovering ‘Niger pearls,’ but that dream, I fear, will have to be realized by some one else!

Sir Frederick Lugard was perfectly correct in ascribing the invincibility of the Borgus to their reputation for a knowledge of witchcraft and deadly poisons; they are more deeply steeped in ‘Ju-ju’

and superstition of all kinds than any African natives I have come across. One firm article of their faith is the ‘Tsafi’ or ‘speaking of oracles,’

the message being received by a ‘priest’ who, while holding a freshly killed fowl in one hand and rattling a calabash full of seeds in the other, announces that the ‘god’ speaks to him in these sounds. A curious test for ‘false witness’—a matter of very frequent occurrence—is for the two people concerned to mix a handful of earth taken from in front of the Sariki’s compound in a bowl of water: a portion of this mixture is drunk by the disputants, and also by the Sariki himself, to prove that it is not poisoned. Shortly, very shortly, he who has sworn falsely swells up to an enormous size and dies in torment! Such implicit faith is placed in this method of ascertaining the truth that my husband was frequently implored to make use of it, for it is said that no man who has not a clear conscience would dare to submit to it—and this I quite believe.

On one occasion while we were at Bussa, a prisoner was brought in with terrible festering wounds on his arms and wrists, the explanation—quite placidly given—being that his captors (the inhabitants of a remote village) having secured him with ropes, and so cut into the flesh, became aware that he was a ‘witch’ and *would fly away*; to avoid which disaster they had ‘made medicine’—some unspeakable compound—and poured it over the prisoner’s head and shoulders. This treatment had produced appalling blood-poisoning, and though I cannot vouch for what he can do from a flying point of view, the poor witch will never use his hand and arm again.

The most precious and sacred possession of the Bussa people is a couple of drums said to have been brought by Kishra from Mecca and treasured ever since. These drums are kept in a small house built for the purpose, and watched over day and night by their own keepers, rigorously and jealously guarded; and, but for a lucky accident, we might have left Bussa without obtaining a glimpse of them.

Most fortunately a festival occurred, when the drums were exhibited in the open, and we seized the opportunity of inspecting them. Their antiquity was undoubted, and we decided that they had a distinctly Egyptian appearance, being, in reality, I think, great water basins; they were made of solid brass, and were about the size of large wash-tubs, covered roughly with ox-hide, to convert them into drums. We hunted eagerly for inscriptions or hieroglyphics, of which there were none whatever, and one of us ventured to photograph them, but owing to the crowd and the dust, and the universal reluctance to have their 'Ju-ju' submitted to the higher Ju-ju of the camera, we felt obliged to respect the people's feelings and make no insistence on obtaining a successful photograph.

On the morning of October 4, while we sat at breakfast in the verandah, appeared a ragged, scantily-clothed native, with a sheepish smile, holding in his hand a tiny bunch of long, soft, pale fawn-coloured fluff—a 'bush' kitten of some kind evidently, scarcely a week old, blind and helpless, chiefly remarkable for his large round ears, conspicuously barred with black and cream-colour.

Delightedly, I seized him, and overwhelmed the bringer with streams of eager questions, which he, good man, was quite unable to answer, and, having rewarded him with the sum of eighteenpence (which produced transports of gratitude) we applied ourselves to the task of 'bringing up' our new acquisition. His sole desire, poor mite, was to crawl to warm darkness, so we arranged for him a small wooden box filled with cotton wool, and here he slept away the first week or two of his existence, while we anxiously improvised for him a feeding-bottle out of an empty eau-de-Cologne bottle, fitted with a piece of rubber tubing! This device proved brilliantly successful, and 'Balu,' as we called him on account of his woolly, bear-like appearance, throve and grew, gaining strength and spirits daily. His education was confided to an orange-coloured domestic cat, who had been presented to the household, and though the latter laboured under the disadvantage of being a kitten himself—and a male kitten, too, and presumably unacquainted with nursery customs—he devoted himself absolutely to the new-comer, and would spend hours licking the long pale fur, which puzzled and concerned him sorely. But he stuck manfully to his task, and we usually had to rescue Balu, a miserable little object like a drowned rat, with wet hair clogged all over his shivering body. We

discovered him to be the Serval or Tiger cat (*Felis Serval*), and he speedily proved himself the most fascinating and playful of pets. He showed the most furious antipathy to natives—in his earlier days fleeing at the sight of one, and later, standing his ground, spitting and growling, his ears flat on his head, and a relentless little paw ready to strike at the intruder. But of white people he had no fear, and would walk up to any stranger to inspect and sniff him, and usually began inconsequently to play with him or sharpen his claws in his putties!

He showed high intelligence when quite tiny, and when hungry he would trot off and try to fish his ‘bottle’ out of the water-cooler, where it was kept, which effort usually ended in over-balancing and an impromptu bath!

To assure ourselves of his whereabouts and safety, we had a couple of shillings beaten out into tiny silver bells, which were tied round his neck, and greatly assisted us to find him when he was leading us wild dances, hiding under bushes, tearing up and down the borders and in and out of the sunflowers.

His first essays towards solid food were somewhat disastrous, taking the form of catching and eating large locusts, with an accompaniment of furious growls. Doubtless he found some which were not wholesome, for we rescued him twice when almost dead—the result of nocturnal expeditions, followed by violent sickness and exhaustion. This decided us to ‘wean the infant,’ which we accomplished by means of tiny spoonfuls of porridge, gradually progressing to scraps of lightly cooked chicken. Once he commenced to lap milk and eagerly eat cooked meat and eggs we heaved a gigantic sigh of relief, for our rearing troubles were ended, and Balu fattened and grew—almost visibly—his kitten fluff gradually disappeared, and he emerged a most beautiful little animal, bearing a magnificent coat of tawny colour, striped and marked with black, the chest and stomach being pure white with black spots and stripes.

I have thought it worth while to describe our pet at this length as his kind is, I believe, extremely rarely seen, and is considered absolutely untameable.

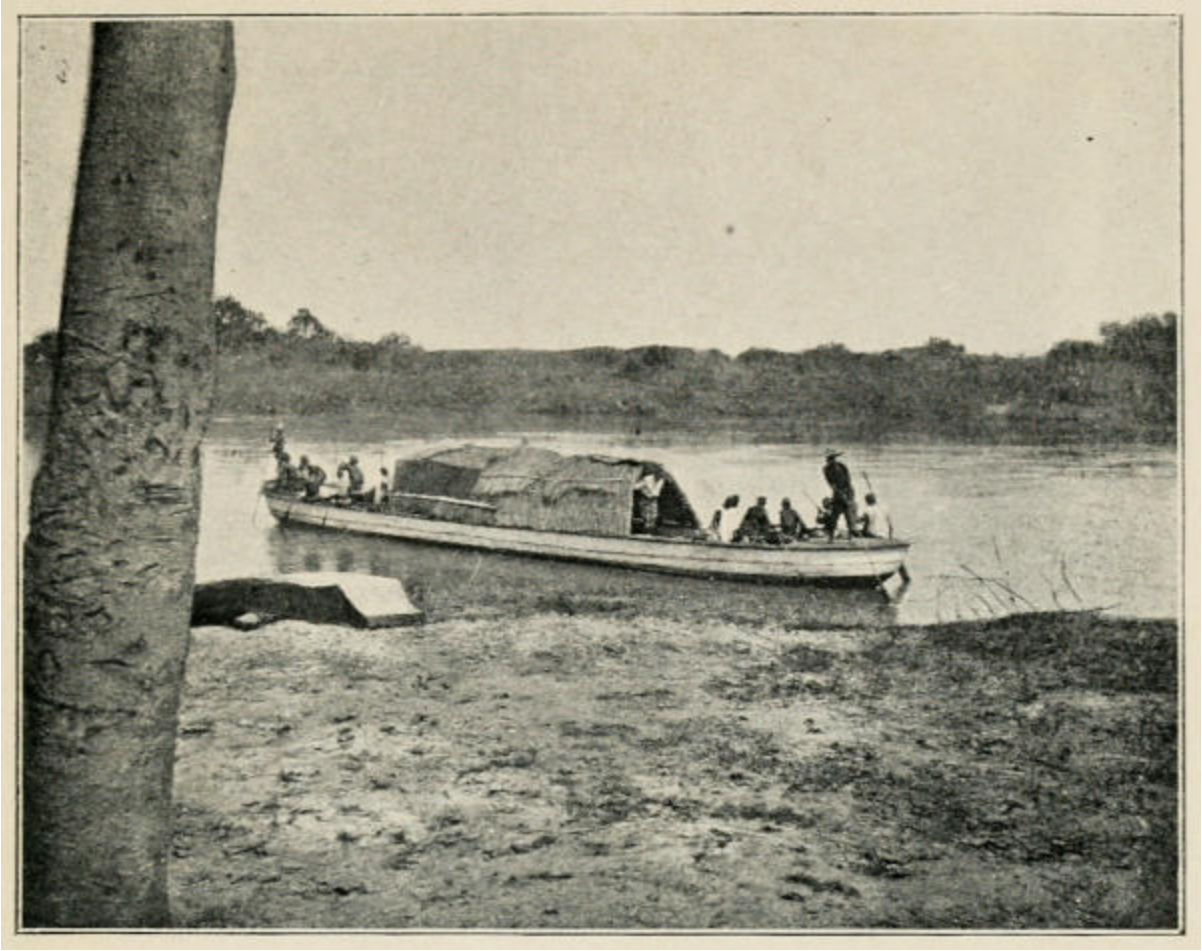
Our success in this direction we owe, no doubt, to the fact that, by a most lucky accident, we obtained him so extraordinarily young, and, with

unremitting care, were fortunate enough to bring him safely through his babyhood.

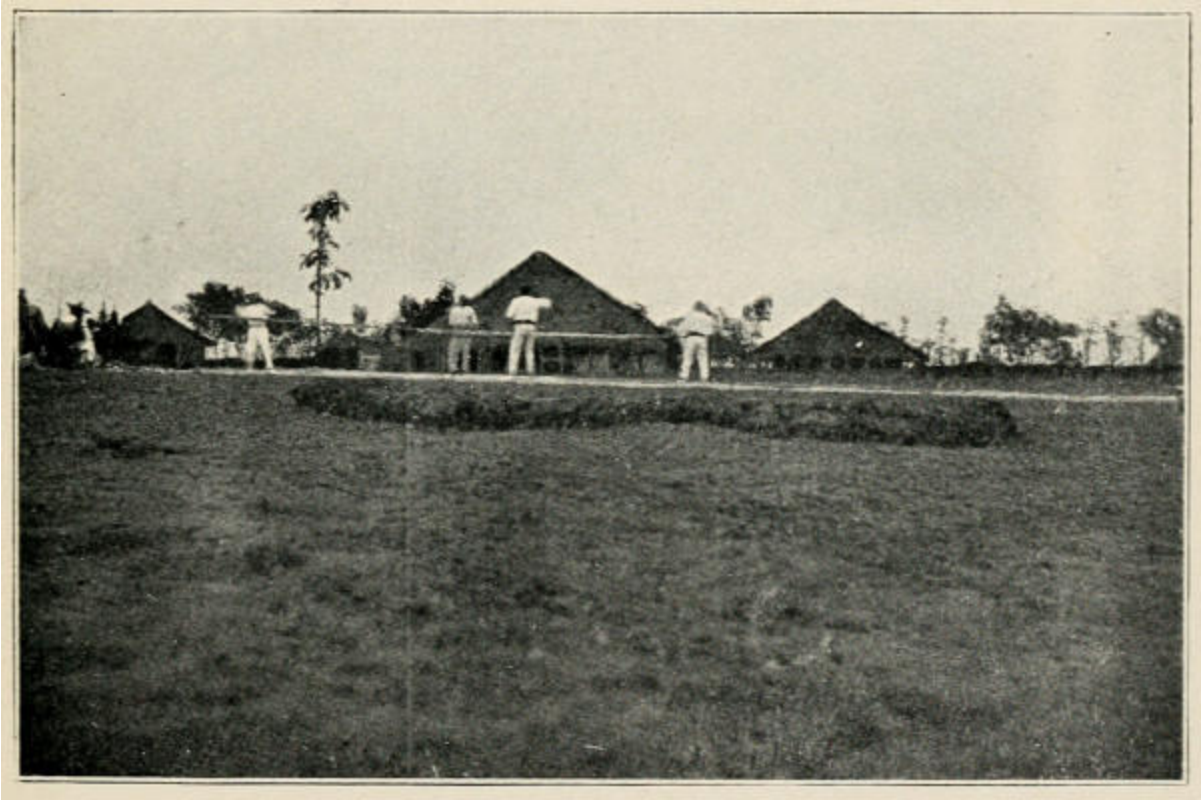
As he grew older his play naturally became rather fierce, as his teeth and claws developed; but his temper was always perfectly sweet, and the manifold scratches with which we were both adorned were all the results of the glorious games he would play by the hour, and regularly, each night, little paws would scratch at my mosquito net, and urgent demands for admission would be made, when a tired happy kitten would creep in, curl himself on the blanket at my feet, and sleep blissfully, till ‘early tea’ brought milk and more play-times!

At this time we were greatly cheered and enlivened by the arrival of the British Commissioners of the Anglo-French Boundary Commission, on their way up river. They spent two days with us—on their part, I think, rather glad to ‘spread’ themselves after their cramped journey up the river, and for us it was a ‘whole holiday’ and one we thoroughly enjoyed, so that it was with real regret that we speeded them on the next stage of their travels.

But we had no chance of further stagnation, as, to our great delight, orders had even then arrived transferring my husband to the Nupe Province, and the prospect of making a home for ourselves at Bida was as pleasant an undertaking as we could possibly have desired. In December Mr. Fremantle arrived, and, after handing the Province over to him, we left Bussa on the 21st, and, as we dropped down the swift stream, we forgot, as one always does, all the disappointments and drawbacks of Borgu, and remembered most distinctly all its charms and the kindly friendships we had formed there.



THE STEEL CANOE IN WHICH WE DESCENDED THE BUSSA RAPIDS. (p. 184)



THE TENNIS COURT, BIDA. (p. 188)

CHAPTER X
Bida

The journey down river was less eventful than the one we had made the previous January; it commenced with an eight mile walk round the Mullale Rapid, while the steel barge, emptied of most of its contents, plunged and tossed like a small Noah's Ark on the rushing river. The rest of the 'bad water' we negotiated in the barge ourselves, and some of it was quite exciting, the fall of the water being quite appreciable.

Christmas Day was spent on the river below Jebba, and on the 27th the familiar outline of the hulk at Mureji loomed large ahead, and we found ourselves among our old friends. We met Captain Mercadier, one of the French Commissioners of the Anglo-French Boundary Commission, on his way up to

Bussa, which meeting was fortunate, as we were able to give him all necessary information about his journey and the transport arrangements made for him before we left. For this he expressed his gratitude with all the delightful courtesy so characteristic of our French neighbours, a courtesy we had more than once experienced in Borgu, where our Province marched with part of French Dahomey.

We paddled up the Kaduna in a steel canoe, slept at Dakmon, and in the morning mounted the horses sent for us and rode along the shady road winding away from the river and over the low hills to Bida.

The first instalment of our 'welcome' was a dainty breakfast on the road spread under the shady trees and greatly appreciated after a ten mile ride, and that disposed of, Mr. Lafone, the junior Resident, who had been in charge of the Province, arrived, escorting the Emir, accompanied by his 'Court' and, it seemed to us, most of the inhabitants of the city. It was an interesting meeting; one's mind went instinctively back to the occasion of our last visit to Bida, when something of the same sort had happened, and one

realized that five years in the placid lives of these simple people make little or no mark. But the Emir himself had aged very remarkably, having

passed, seemingly, out of vigorous manhood into more than middle age, but his proportions were, if anything, more generous than ever, and his emotion and pleasure at seeing us was touching and sincere.

While ‘the Sahib,’ with his unerring memory for faces, that most precious gift, recognized and saluted the various officials of the Emir’s Court, I noticed unmistakable surprise mixed with the cordiality of the greeting offered to me. I suppose the dear souls had expected me to have been divorced or sold long ago!

After a few minutes’ chat with the European officers who had so kindly come out to welcome us, we all remounted and commenced the hot dusty ride to Bida, drums banging, horns braying, ‘praises’ shouted in hoarse stentorian tones, the usual dashing about of horsemen, and breathless rushing to and fro of the crowd on foot, a curious kaleidoscope of varied colours appearing and disappearing in the glittering haze of dust.

Though we both felt the sincerest pleasure and contentment with all things, it was a relief to all of us when the police guard of honour had been inspected, we had passed through the Residency Gateway and the gay crowd was wending light-heartedly towards the city, and we six white folks sat down in the cool bungalow, and gaily drank to ‘Bida and the New Year’ in cool and delicious champagne cup which our hosts had provided in honour of our arrival and the festive season.

We settled down at once in our new and comfortable quarters, which seemed actually luxurious after the mud houses of Borgu, and, when we had time to inspect the compound, found a great interest in noting the changes and improvements since our last visit. It was charmingly laid out and thoroughly well planted with orange, lime, and mango

trees, showing every sign of care and interest, a thing extremely comforting to a gardener who had always struggled against ‘fearful odds’; an excellent lawn tennis court had been made of ‘native cement,’

formed in the first instance of mud patted and beaten to the solidity almost of stone, then washed over with a solution of locust beans, soaked in water for forty-eight hours, a dark-coloured evil-smelling mixture which served to bind all the loose particles on the court and gave it a black metallic shine. I, of course, found endless occupations in a field so desirable

as my new home, while my husband bent all his energies to studying the different conditions of a new Province; in this work he had the most loyal help from every one, and I fancy that we shall always look back on our four months at Bida as a time instinct with warm friendship and good feeling.

The Residency stood considerably higher than the surrounding country, and I never tired of the picture from our verandah, where the city lay, about a mile distant, in a gentle hollow outlined by the pink wall, and crowded inside with dense and luxuriant trees and clusters of closely-set thatched roofs with, here and there, the more imposing buildings rising rosy-red among the humbler grass roofs.

We made close acquaintance with the market, which, in its way, interested me even more than that of Kano, being less extensive and so more accessible.

It was always a pretty and animated scene, the open squares and spaces crowded at sunset with a dense throng of happy folks, selling, buying, chattering, shouting, and laughing, moving in a haze of dust, all apparently giving far greater heed to the social aspect of the gathering than any serious commercial enterprise. The market continued until

long after dark, and the flares and native lamps made a weird and fascinating effect. The goods offered were of the most varied description, articles of brass and leather work, grass mats, fishing nets, cloth, beads, sugar-cane, and food-stuffs of all kinds—even wooden doors were for sale, ready to be fitted to any clay hut, in fact a highly representative collection of the heterogeneous miscellany presented in any West African market.

On January 25 occurred the ‘Great Sallah,’

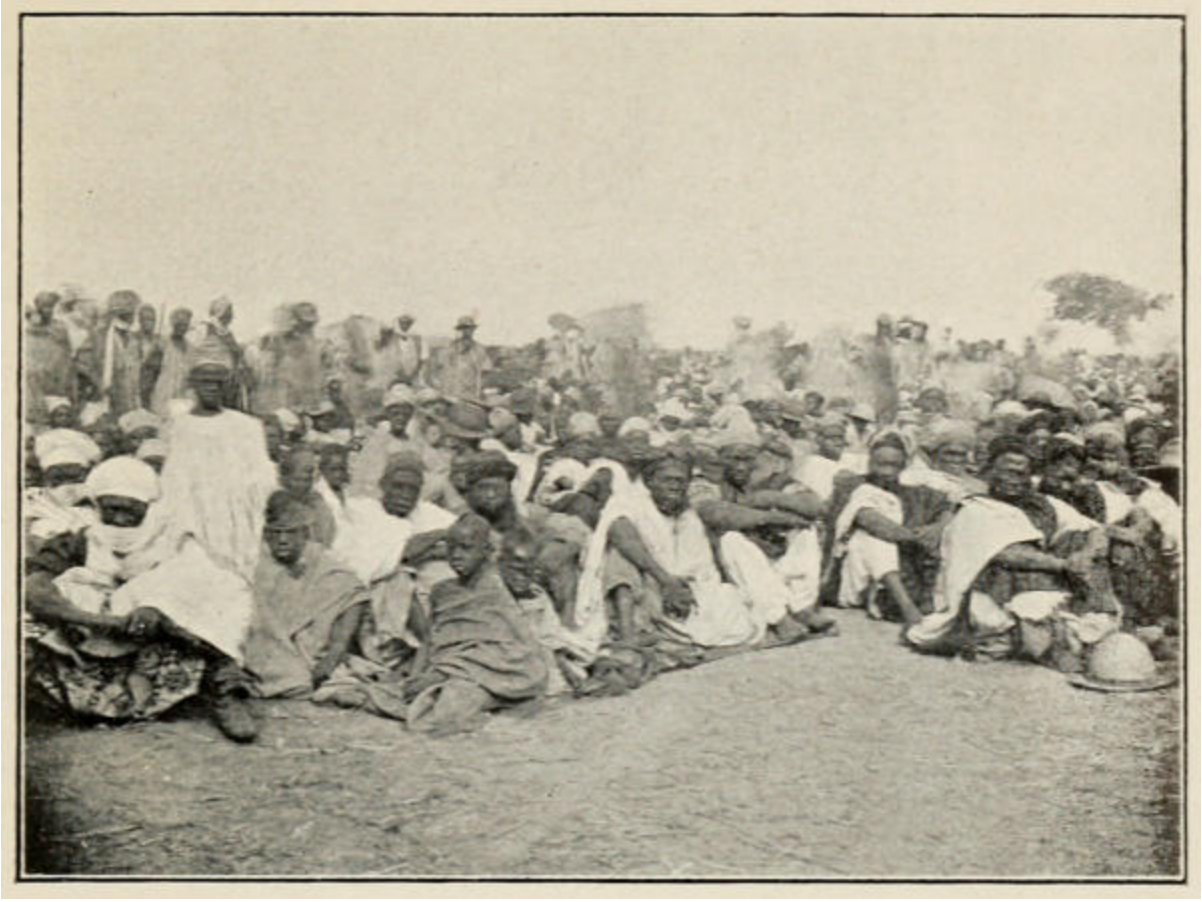
a Mahomedan festival which appears to commemorate the Sacrifice of Isaac—a sheep being

killed ceremonially on the occasion. We assembled ourselves outside the city wall, and, sitting under an improvised shelter, watching the seated thousands waiting patiently in the sunshine, it would not have seemed strange to me to see the Disciples passing down the irregular lines, distributing the loaves and fishes to the hungry listeners.

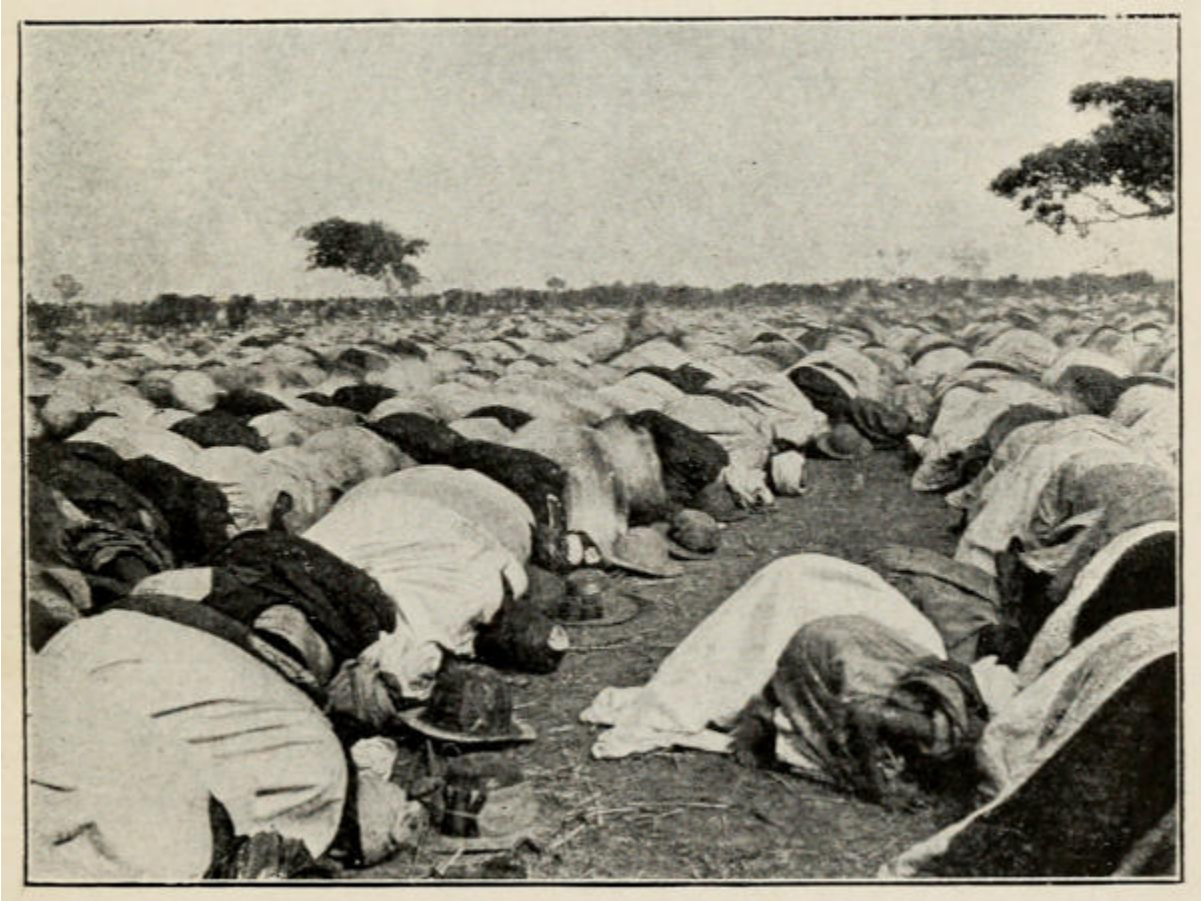
Presently the Limam’s voice rose clear and shrill, away in the distance, under the shade of a mighty tree where the Emir and his court had their

places; the thousands rose to their feet, and as the sonorous Arabic pealed out on the hot still air, the prayers began. It was a wonderful and moving spectacle; the reverent responses rose from the assemblage like a muffled roar, but perhaps the most astonishing feature of all was the prostration when the huge throng fell on their faces as one man, reminding us of a vast field of corn swept by a sudden gust.

The prayers finished, we were conducted to the Emir’s seat, where special prayers were offered for us all, each being named in turn, strictly in order of precedence, not forgetting the High Commissioner and the two former Residents of the Province, Major Burdon and Mr. Goldsmith, both dearly loved and remembered.



THE GREAT SALLA. (p. 189)



THE PROSTRATION. (p. 190)

Shortly after this festival our little community was reinforced by Mr. and Mrs. Bargery of the C.M.S.

They occupied a large compound outside the city, and we all admired the business-like energy with which they settled down and ‘got square,’ turning two unattractive mud houses into a bright pretty home in an incredibly short time. The days slipped away, February drifted into March, and March into April, clouds began to gather in the hard blue sky, and lightning and distant thunder proclaimed the approaching rains; our thoughts turned towards ‘leave,’ and only one event, but that an important one for us, remained before we left Nigeria—the arrival of our new High Commissioner, Sir Percy Girouard, who had succeeded Sir Frederick Lugard.

He arrived at Katcha on the Niger on April 13, where my husband was ready with two members of his staff, to receive him. About twenty of the highest officials of the Bida Court and their followers had been despatched also by the Emir as a mark of his fealty and loyalty to the Government. By

all these, the High Commissioner was escorted to within ten miles of Bida, where the remainder of the European staff and the police guard of honour had assembled. The Emir, with the rest of his Court and five or six thousand followers, mounted and on foot, was also waiting to receive him, and accompany him triumphantly to the Residency.

The cloud of dust raised by the horsemen was visible for three or four miles as they approached, so the High Commissioner must have had a choky time, to say the least of it! We did our best to induce him to remain for the night, but with his characteristic energy he determined to push on the same evening, and camp five or six miles further on, to the north of the town, towards Zungeru.

My husband's leave had already been sanctioned, and, on mentioning the fact, his dismay can be imagined when Sir Percy Girouard apparently demurred, saying that all the senior officers appeared to be proceeding on leave directly he arrived! I need hardly say, however, that he would not hear of our remaining longer, as we had already completed eighteen months, and we therefore left Bida, as we had arranged on April 20.

It was, in truth, disappointing to have to come away at such an interesting stage in Nigeria's development; a page was being turned in its history, the old order was changing, and the long projected railway was to become a solid fact, a change that could not fail to prove an immense advantage.

Caravan trading, so far, had attracted all the energies of many thousands of the inhabitants, who had employed their time in lengthy journeys from the interior to the coast and back; with the railway in operation this anachronism would lose its *raison d'être* and gradually cease to exist; much greater numbers would then be available for cultivation, a gain of the highest importance, as the future prosperity of the country must depend greatly on its agricultural success, especially in the direction of cotton. As one who has watched its growth and steady advance during the last five years, I should like to close my book with the heartiest good wishes for the future success and advancement of the country we both love so well.

Part II
HOUSEHOLD HINTS

CHAPTER I
The Home

This chapter is, of necessity, addressed chiefly to those who are permanently settled at headquarters, either Lokoja or Zungeru, as the Political Officer and his wife will, naturally, have to abandon all hopes of conveying household furniture, etc., to a far distant objective, owing to the great difficulty and expense of transport; the chapter on Camp Life will be found more useful by them.

The house itself is a wooden bungalow, or, at the out-stations, a native-built clay house; in either case it consists of four walls, a ceiling and a floor —and a wide shady verandah. In the distant out-stations, of course, there is no furniture at all, to speak of, except the camp outfit belonging to each official, which he carries with him, and which includes a camp bed, wash-stand, bath, one small table, one chair and a Lord's lantern. But we are 'getting on' in Nigeria, and it is now found possible to do a little more for every one in the way of plain furniture at headquarters, so that I do not think any one need walk into an utterly empty bungalow nowadays. However, it is obvious that anything in

the way of 'home comforts' must be brought out independently from England, as there is not even the opportunity, which occurs constantly in India, of buying second-hand furniture from neighbours on the move.

Fortunately, very little is needed: I should advise investing in a few wicker chairs and light tables either at Madeira, or at home; they are no trouble to bring and are very cheap. It is worth noting that the faster line of steamers do not always call at Madeira now, so that, unless one is certain of calling at the Canaries, it is wisest to bring wicker furniture direct from England.

A few yards of a pretty, light chintz or cretonne can be converted into chair cushions, stuffed with native cotton, and will furnish a room amazingly.

It is well, too, to bring out some lengths of cheap muslin, coloured or white, as fancy dictates, for curtains, etc. A coarse kind of muslin can be

bought locally, and, when faintly dyed with indigo, it becomes quite a pretty pale blue, very cool-looking, and can be constantly renewed when faded.

A barrel, containing a small outfit of crockery and glass, makes one quite independent of the local stores, which, at most, may be able to replace breakages—after a fashion! A supply of enamel paint will enable you to give quite an ‘air’ to the rough shelves which can be made locally, beside lengthening their lives considerably. For the floor, nothing is nicer or cheaper than an Indian *dhurri* or cotton carpet, but, as the bungalows are all fitted with linoleum, no more is really needed than a few of the artistically coloured grass mats, made chiefly at Bida, and found almost everywhere; they cost about three shillings each, rising to six shillings, according to the distance from Bida, and are quite delightful. No one could fail to be pleased with the brightly coloured native cloths, or to find them useful for covering rough ugly tables and unsightly deck-chairs, and for making portierés, etc. You will also find Bida brass-work of a highly decorative sort, charming, quaintly-shaped little burnt earthenware jugs from Ilorin, carved wooden stools, boasting of from ten to twenty legs—cut from one solid block of wood—from Ibi, queer carvings from away down south of Kabba, the brilliantly tinted Hausa leather work, fashioned into cushion covers, bags, purses, and an endless variety of articles, and carved and ‘poker-worked’ calabashes, etc., all of which will help to cover the walls and give the room a home-like, or, at least, an occupied look.

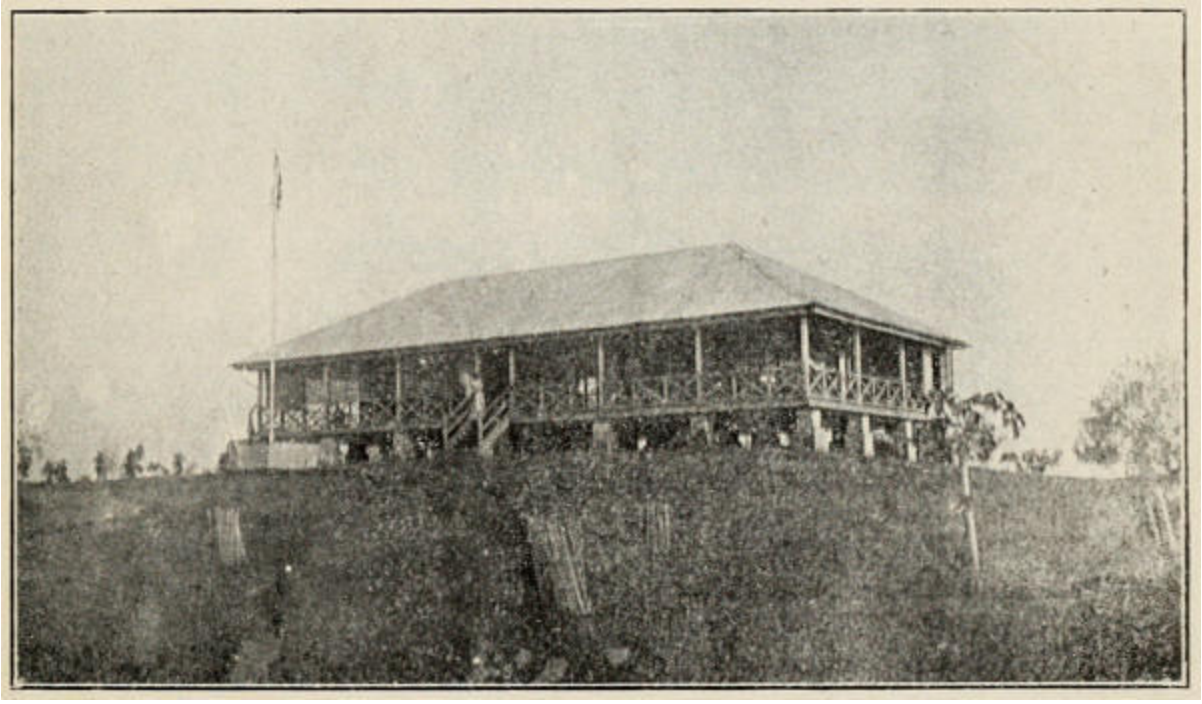
At Kano, we lived in a great vault-like apartment in the Residency (formerly the Emir’s summer palace), and though, at first, it presented an appearance of utter gloom and desolation, an extraordinary improvement was effected in a couple of hours by an improvised sideboard, boxes piled up to serve as tables, and covered with gaily-coloured cloths, the pinky-red walls decorated with sketches and prints, a few gorgeously hued Japanese paper wall hangings scattered about, and the clay floor covered with grass mats.

The walls of a wooden bungalow are usually of boarding, either painted white or a horrible ‘duck’s egg’ blue, or else varnished a rather dark and monotonous brown, so the whole room will need colour as much as possible. A few pictures are an immense help in decorating, and, nowadays, such beautiful and artistic framed prints can be bought so cheap, it would be well worth while to bring out half a dozen. Of course, if you sketch yourself

the problem of wall decoration is solved; polished brown boards make a perfect background for water-colour sketches, unframed, but placed in gilt mounts, so that all you need is a packet of tacks and a hammer.

If you cannot do your own sketching, make a point, before leaving England, of pillaging those among your friends who do; no one, I think, could resist a pathetic appeal for a pretty sketch to carry away into far Africa! And, indeed, it is a joy sometimes, when the temperature is unpleasantly high, little worries abounding, and *Africa* asserting itself unduly, to be able to glance occasionally at a sketch of some English woodland, or a corner of a picturesque village.

MY WRITING TABLE. (p. 198)



THE RESIDENCY, BIDA. (p. 200)

Whilst we were in India, we had, among our treasures, a most beautifully executed water-colour sketch of one or two deodars, standing out from a cool, wet, grey mist on some hill-side in Kashmir, and we used to consider this picture as a most valuable tonic during a Punjaub ‘hot weather.’ While on this subject, let me add, from personal experience, that sketch-books and blocks will be ruined during the rainy season, unless carefully wrapped in waterproof paper, and the best kind of paints for standing the climate are the ‘slow-drying’ kind, in tubes, sold by Windsor & Newton.

If lamps are brought out, they should be plain metal ones, with punkah tops; extra wicks must not be forgotten, and at least a dozen spare chimneys are quite necessary, on account of breakages—the simple plan of boiling the chimneys before using them should never be neglected, as they do not break nearly so easily. A folding wire frame with three or four simple paper shades is a more simple arrangement than a globe, and far more serviceable. The servants will be found absolutely omnivorous over kerosene oil; they spill it, they light the kitchen fire with it, and I have heard a despairing bachelor housekeeper declare that they *drink* it, so rapidly does it disappear! Kerosene is, of course, very dear, and more so up country than in Lokoja; I have often found it a distinct economy to insist on the pantries and kitchen

burning native oil in native lamps when far away from headquarters; these little lamps give quite a bright light and do not smoke—they are also most useful for night-lights.

It will be found better and far cheaper in the end to bring out all house and table linen from home, even dusters and chamois leathers, though the coarsest sort of native cloth makes excellent kitchen cloths and stable rubbers. Plate powder is still, I think, practically an unknown luxury in Northern Nigeria, and silver is usually cleaned with bath-brick!

A process which may well be substituted

is to wash the silver well in hot water, containing a little Scrubb's Ammonia, and then polish it with a chamois leather; nothing keeps it in such good order, and the average 'boy,' though untiring in putting *on* the plate powder, feels no inducement to take it *off*. But, alas! the friendly 'Scrubb's'

is not always available, so that, as far as possible, articles of real silver should be confined to toilet things and tea-spoons. A plated tea-spoon is a horror, but I once had the pleasure of seeing four of my silver ones light-heartedly thrown into the Niger, along with a basin of soapy water!

A set of carpenter's tools, and a collection of hooks, screws, nails and tacks will be found perfectly invaluable; armed with these, and, I hope, the help of the foregoing hints, the little bare room can be transformed into a bright pretty sitting-room where every one will enjoy coming, and will feel it more 'like home.' Sometimes space does not admit of a separate dining-room, but this need not necessarily spoil the appearance of the sitting-room.

The dinner-table, when not in use, can wear a gaily coloured native cloth, a few books, photographs, etc., and a well-polished, neatly arranged sideboard is no eyesore. This latter, by the way, must have its legs placed in saucers or tins fitted with water, with a little kerosene added, to save the sugar, jam, cake, etc., from the incursions of millions of hungry ants.

Let the filter stand on a box or table on the breeziest side of the verandah; almost every one has a special plan, or a pet filter, so that no rule can be laid down to suit everybody. I think that, perhaps, the evolving of cool drinks is more a matter of personal endeavour and experience than almost any other department of housekeeping: it is an attainment so very necessary that it is

attempted by every one, more or less, and the best advice I can give is to seize upon the host who provides you with really cold soda or sparklets, and find out how he arrives at them! In Lokoja and Zungeru there is a supply of water condensed from the river; this we have poured at once into a Berkefeld drip filter, merely with a view to getting rid of the ‘condensed’ taste, though this can also be accomplished as well by pouring the water from a good height several times from one vessel to another. Ordinary water can be boiled, then pumped rapidly through the large foot-pump Berkefeld filter into the drip filter; this first filtering saving much wear and tear to the candles of the latter. The water is then drawn off into bottles and placed in native earthenware coolers, which, being porous, keep it delightfully cool. These coolers are extremely cheap; they can and must be frequently renewed to ensure perfect cleanliness, and can be employed most usefully for cooling butter and cream as well as soda-water.

In one’s bedroom, little furniture is needed; in fact, I think the less one has the better. This is distinctly fortunate, as there is none forthcoming!

In Nigeria, we have not yet arrived at the stage of walnut wardrobes and pier-glasses, and a new-comer may be appalled at the lack of accommodation for stowing clothes. I have found that clothing is much better not shut up in boxes, unless they are damp-proof tin ones, and even these must be carried out into the sunshine, and the contents sunned nearly every day in the rainy season. It is almost incredible how quickly clothes will acquire a mouldy smell, and appearance of mildew, unless they are constantly looked at and aired. Any native carpenter will be able to make rows of stout wooden pegs for hanging clothes, and it is far better to have them so, as, when disturbed daily, and hung out in the sun for an hour or so, they will not harbour mosquitoes to any great extent. Where one is dealing with a clay wall, it answers well to stretch a length of native cloth tightly along the wall, immediately below the nails or pegs, to protect light coloured clothes from the reddish dust, always rubbing off. All boxes should be placed on blocks of wood or bricks, on account of white ants, and all boots and shoes on shelves, *never* on the floor; foot-gear must be kept in constant wear, and also be inspected carefully and polished daily. Insects of all kinds abound; there is one whose special aim in life is to build little mud palaces in any quiet spot, boots, shoes, folds of gowns, keyholes—even in the bowl of a pipe, unused for a day or two.

No corner of any room can be left undisturbed even for a few days, and it is advisable to have each room completely cleared once a week, and the floors washed with a weak solution of creolin. It has a pleasant tarry smell, and acts as an excellent deterrent to mosquitoes and sandflies.

While on the subject of mosquitoes, I should like to mention (what I imagine to be a small discovery of our own five years ago) that it is an excellent plan to sew a strip of calico or nankeen, about eighteen inches deep, all round the mosquito net, just above where it tucks in under the mattress. This greatly protects one's hands and feet, should they touch the net during the night, otherwise they will be devoured. Moreover, the strip is not wide enough to keep away any air or make one feel 'stuffy.' An air-cushion is a most useful possession, being so easy to stow away in a bedding valise; ours, we found, were greatly coveted by the boys, who regarded them with some awe, and designated them as 'breeze pillows'!

The whole subject of small comforts and house decoration is a most fascinating one, but it is so much a matter of personal taste and activity that it does not seem to me to be necessary to add more to these very general hints than to express the conviction that no English housewife in West Africa—if she is 'worth her salt'—will spare herself in the endeavour to, at least, turn 'quarters' into 'home,' even if only for a few months.

CHAPTER II
The Household

The household in Nigeria, and indeed, all over West Africa, is by no means the complicated affair that one has to cope with in India, and housekeeping is reduced to the greatest simplicity.

The staff consists of a cook, with an attendant satellite, called a ‘cook’s mate,’ a steward, or ‘boy,’

with usually, in a married household at least, an under steward, or perhaps a couple of small boys to assist generally in the housework and table service. There may be an orderly attached, but his duties consist rather in the airing of clothes and boxes, cleaning of guns and boots, and carrying of letters, etc.

Each pony has his own ‘doki-boy,’ whose duties are fully described in the chapter on the stable, and the mistress may, in her enthusiasm, decide to employ a regular gardener. All these good people live in the compound, the only outside servant being the laundress. This lady is only to be found at headquarters (she is usually a Coast woman), in out-stations, and in the bush the washing is done—generally with inconspicuous success—by one’s

own boys, or the wife of a doki-boy. It is distinctly useful to bring out from home one or two flat-irons, and make a point of ‘getting up’ one’s most cherished muslin blouses, etc., oneself.

Wages are high, absurdly so, but the demand for fairly capable servants is so great, and the supply so small, that there is little prospect of the present scale of pay being reasonably reduced. Also, alas!

in many bachelor establishments, the standard of excellence in service is not high enough to produce a really good class of servants, and I am quite certain that any Englishwoman who has kept house in India would absolutely *gasp* at the quality and quantity of work done by a highly paid ‘boy,’

in possession of most eulogistic testimonials from previous masters. The following is a fair average of wages paid, per month, all over the country: in

some cases, servants of an undesirable kind may be engaged for less, but this is no real economy, while in some other cases even higher wages are paid.

	£	*s.*	*d.*
Cook	2	0	0
(If an Accra boy £3 or £3 10s.)			
Cook’s Mate	0	15	0
Head Steward	2	0	0
Under Steward	1	0	0
Laundress	1	0	0
Doki-boy	1	0	0
Gardener	1	0	0

Roughly £100 a year, for the services of seven people, all lazy and stupid, mostly untruthful, and frequently dishonest, ignorant of the first principles of order and cleanliness, and, unmistakably, considering Missis rather a bore when she insists on trying to inculcate these.

My personal experience with house servants is not a very varied one, as we still have some of those we engaged on first coming to West Africa five years ago; but, in fairness to them, I must not omit to say that I have only *very rarely* found any one of them in the least degree untruthful, and that I know them to be absolutely honest; they have never stolen a single article or a halfpenny from either of us during these years.

Servants may be of all languages and tribes, and they have no ‘caste.’ Some are Mahomedans, some Pagans, some professing Christianity, but their religious convictions do not appear to affect any of them very seriously. One important point for the new-comer is, that one servant, at least—the head steward for choice—should speak

good, intelligible English; most of the Coast boys, and those trained by the Roman Catholic missionaries at Onitsha, can do so.

With the exception of the cook and steward, our household is required absolutely to speak Hausa, and nothing else, to us and each other, which

saves endless confusion, and gives a comfortable sense of security that one's orders are correctly transmitted to doki-boys, gardener, etc.

It is the custom to pay a certain percentage of the wages weekly, usually two shillings per head, for 'chop money' (subsistence allowance), and the balance at the end of each month, which arrangement shows ingenuously what a solid, clear profit the household makes. This balance of pay is generally expended, on the spot, in the acquiring of such luxuries as a gaily striped umbrella, or a smart pair of 'English' boots.

The majority of servants are reckless gamblers, and a perfect network of lending, borrowing, and extorting of an exorbitant rate of interest, prevails amongst them, in spite of strictest prohibitions on the subject.

The Cook and His Kitchen

The Nigerian kitchen is arranged on the Indian plan—apart from the house, and just as much inspection and supervision will have to be exercised.

Kitchen appliances of a rough-and-ready kind can be bought at the local stores, but it is far more satisfactory to bring most of them direct from England, especially a nest of aluminium saucepans, their lightness being a great advantage while marching.

At headquarters, a kitchen table, some rough shelves and pegs will be available, and a meat-safe, which, however, has to be accommodated on the breeziest corner of the verandah.

The mistress will do well to walk into the kitchen, as a matter of course, at any hour of the day: the cook and his mate will, possibly, like to sleep there, and if the visit is made regularly, after breakfast, the beds or mats can be whisked out of sight, for the time being, and the malpractice never discovered.

In Lokoja and Zungeru the kitchens are now fitted with very good little ranges, which are a great improvement on the open, brick fireplaces of earlier days. I remember well, the day that mine was first put in, going to the kitchen to see how it worked, and finding the cook, radiant with pride

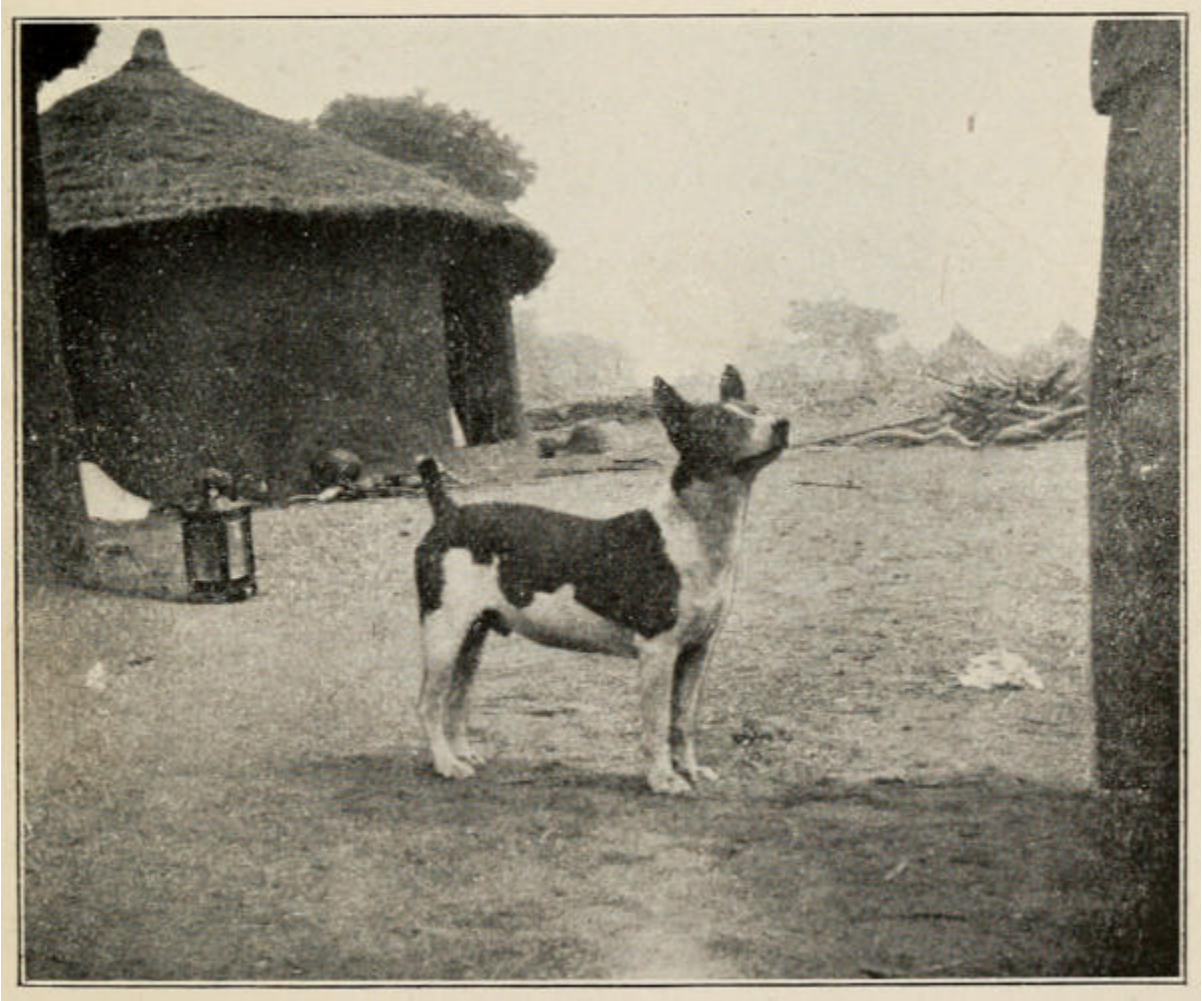
and pleasure, lighting the fire *in the oven*. The fuel consists entirely of wood. In out stations, the poor *chef* has a good deal to contend with, usually an open fire for ordinary cooking (on the floor) and for an oven, an ingenious arrangement of a large country pot half buried in the ground; into this, blazing wood is thrust until the interior is quite hot, when the fuel is hauled out, the cake or bread popped in, a flat piece of tin or iron laid on the top, and piled up with burning wood. It can be readily understood that an oven of this description makes successful baking a matter of some uncertainty.

The kitchen table must be scrubbed with soap and water daily, the pans and utensils scoured, and the walls occasionally whitewashed. You will find your cook slightly bored with your insistence on these small details, but always polite, cheerful and amenable. He is a teachable person, too, and takes a kindly interest in one's making of cakes, sweets, etc., but his knowledge of cookery is strictly limited—the veriest tyro in India earning ten rupees a month is a *cordon bleu* compared with him.

Housekeeping in his department is of the utmost simplicity: he turns up immediately after breakfast, smiling genially, usually arrayed in a spotless white suit, or a suit of pyjamas of striking pattern and colouring, a jaunty straw hat in his hand, and immaculate white shoes on his feet. He gives you the account of the previous day's marketing, you reproach him for the toughness of the mutton, the heaviness of the bread, and the total absence of the savoury; all of which he takes most philosophically, and explains glibly, to his own entire exoneration. You then give him half-a-crown (or, to save trouble, ten shillings twice a week), and indicate tentatively what you would prefer for luncheon and dinner. It is no use ordering dishes definitely; they never appear, and when you indignantly demand the devilled kidneys arranged for, the tranquil answer: 'Cook say, kidney no live for market to-day,' defeats without soothing you.

So you let him depart, to work his wicked will, stalking off under a patriotic sun umbrella, striped in sections of red, white and blue cotton, followed by the satellite, bearing the market basket, while you, the anxious housewife, must simply put your trust in Providence and hope for the best.

‘AMELIA,’ A YOUNG GIRAFFE BROUGHT HOME BY THE LATE CAPTAIN PHILLIPS, D.S.O. (p. 210)



‘CHUKU,’ A NATIVE DOG—RESCUED DURING THE ARO-CHUKU EXPEDITION. (P. 223)

The average cook has little or no discrimination, if the menu is left entirely to him: we once found ourselves guests at a bachelor dinner-party, where the feast commenced with chicken soup, followed by stewed chicken, which was, in its turn, succeeded by minced chicken; finally, to our despair, the board was graced by a couple of roast chickens—and this with an unlimited supply of mutton and beef in the market.

You must be prepared to get very indifferent meat; the animals are badly slaughtered, and cut up without any regard to joints, etc., so that beef is really useless, except for making soup or mince, so tough is it. The mutton usually grows on a goat, and is also tough, which, I suppose, accounts in part for the eternal chicken taking so prominent a place in the day’s menu. Tough meat, by the way, can be much improved by wrapping the joint in paw-paw leaves for an hour or two; if left too long it will decay altogether,

so personal supervision is necessary—the cook does not profess to understand such faddy nonsense! Turkeys can be reared in the compound quite easily, also ducks; both are excellent, and there is always a pleasant possibility of occasional additions to the larder, in the shape of guinea fowl, bush fowl, pigeons, and venison, which, when hung for twenty-four to forty-eight hours (according to the temperature), is absolutely delicious. The menu can always be kept from monotony by small dishes, such as sheep and ox tongues, brain cutlets, stuffed paw-paws—an excellent substitute for vegetable marrow—tomatoes, 'farcies,' or garden eggs, treated in the same way.

Personally, I do not care for native dishes, and 'palm-oil chop' is, to my mind, an abomination; but ground-nut soup is very good indeed, and should not be overlooked, especially as it is a delicacy that every cook understands how to make. Fish can nearly always be had, so that once one has taught the cook how to make real curries—as they are made in India—a fair variety can easily be had, with little or no assistance from odious and unwholesome tinned food.

I fear the *chef* will not be found a great hand at puddings: his inspirations do not soar much higher than banana fritters and cornflour mould. I remember a painful incident which occurred at the commencement of my career as a West African housekeeper, when the appearance of an unexpected guest caused me to order an impromptu pudding, a sweet omelette. When, in due course, the pudding appeared, looking deliciously light and frizzling hot, a curious smell accompanied it, and the first mouthful revealed it as a savoury omelette, highly seasoned with onions and fresh chilis, filled with apricot jam! I have since heard of an enterprising cook, who artistically tinted a cornflour mould bright blue, with indigo. He can be taught to make very fair tart pastry, but, as a rule, it is safer to confine oneself to fruit salads, trifles, and other cold sweets, which one can prepare oneself.

The impossibility of getting fresh milk is, naturally, a great handicap in cooking, but 'Ideal'

milk is quite useful in preparing mayonnaise and many other sauces, and the tinned cream (Golden Butterfly brand) sold by the Niger Company is

almost as good as the fresh article, as it can be whipped quite stiff if kept in cold water for a few hours before opening.

Vegetables cannot be had regularly, unless the housekeeper is also a gardener, and grows them herself. There is, however, a native spinach, which is quite as good as the English kind, and grows like a weed. Country tomatoes, garden eggs, okros, sweet potatoes, green paw-paws, and yams are all of great use in supplying the table with the necessary green food; but I feel sure that the housekeeper who reads the chapter on Gardening will instantly decide to do better than tamely submit to limiting her household to country produce of this kind.

At a pinch (when touring in forest country) we have found young Indian corn, or maize, well boiled, not at all a bad substitute for other vegetables, and, when the corns are boiled, then lightly browned over the fire, they are excellent, eaten with butter, pepper and salt.

In the way of fruit, there are usually bananas to be had, pineapples in the spring and summer, and occasionally oranges. In Lokoja the mangoes are quite good, and I have had guavas and custard apples. The country abounds in tiny limes, which are sold in great quantities, very cheap, and make most delicious lemon squashes.

The Steward and his Duties

The head steward, or ‘boy,’ must be carefully chosen, and is worth training, for in his hands lies the greater part of your daily comfort, and to his shortcomings can be traced most of the irritability which is recognized as a natural weakness of the dweller in West Africa.

He will require endless patience, and daily insistence on small details of cleanliness and order, for he has a happy knack of carrying out an order for five or six days, then quietly discontinuing it, and trusting to his mistress’ preoccupation not to observe the omission. Never flatter yourself that any system you have introduced, with apparent success, will continue to work for a week without some supervision and inspection. The genus ‘head boy’ is a light-hearted, easy-going, tractable sort of creature; some are masterful and quarrelsome, some are placid and lazy, but all of them like to have one

or two small boys about the house, to whom they can relegate most of their work, while they are swaggering in the market, in spotless raiment, with redundant watch-chain and a sun umbrella. Some, I am sorry to say, are bad, very, very bad, and I cannot help feeling most strongly that more than one vigorous, valuable young life has succumbed out here to sickness and death, mainly for the want of proper attendance—better cooking and the small comforts and niceties that every man requires, but is, usually, helpless to obtain and insist upon for himself. I have seen unspeakable habits of dirt and slovenliness prevailing amongst bachelors' boys—yes, and dangerous ones too, tinned food kept for days in open tins, and served up again to the unfortunate master, cups and plates washed and wiped—well, it serves no purpose of mine to recount these horrors, and it is only fair to add that I have known boys whose skilful care, devotion and unselfishness towards sick masters could hardly be excelled. I only hope that every Englishwoman who spends even a few months in Nigeria will leave behind her two or three servants inoculated with habits of scrupulous cleanliness, thoughtfulness and common sense, to lighten the lot of some lonely man who now feels uncomfortably that in his mother's house at home the table-cloth is *not* hideously grubby and crooked, the milk and jam served in messy tins, the glasses cloudy, and the forks and spoons more than doubtful, but vaguely supposes all this is necessary in West Africa—*it isn't!*

As a rule, I suppose the Coast boy makes the best head steward: he speaks English, and has usually served a white master before. He acts as housemaid and parlourmaid in one, starts his day with energetic sweeping and some sketchy dusting, waits at table, cuts his master's hair, acts as valet generally, and is the spokesman and middle man between his mistress and the rest of the household.

He is responsible for the existence and condition, good or otherwise, of nearly all of your possessions; therefore, it really answers best to have the actual work of laying tables, cleaning knives, lamps, etc., performed by the under steward, so as to leave your major-domo free to superintend and investigate the working of the whole establishment, down to the stable, and report on it to his mistress; he should be taught to do this without fear or prejudice, or any suspicion of sneaking or mischief-making: obviously he cannot, with any show of dignity, rebuke the misdeeds of the cook or orderly; if he has to wash plates and scrub out the pantry, equally obviously

he *must* be honest and, as far as possible, superior to bribery. Not being embarrassed with caste prejudices, he will concern himself with the feeding and washing of the dogs, the care of the poultry-yard, and our faithful head boy has, more than once, been employed to shoot a hopelessly sick pony.

There is little more to add on the subject of the household staff. The cook's mate is but an embryo cook, who presently emerges from his modest position and blossoms into a cook, with a satellite of his own.

I believe that, as a matter of fact, the cook's mate does a fair share of the cooking: this will be readily ascertained when the cook gets helplessly drunk and dinner is forthcoming all the same!

The small house boys are equally budding stewards, and, if well looked after, it is amazing how they sprout, physically and mentally, and how soon they find out that a rise in pay is merited.

One word of advice to housekeepers, masculine and feminine—*don't* beat the boys. There is still a prevailing idea that the master who wields the *bulala* (whip) with most vigour gets best served.

But this I beg leave to doubt. For the time being, fear may make them move faster and remember longer, but there is, deeply implanted under every woolly, black scalp, the sacred duty of reprisals, and the boy who is frequently flogged will take it out somehow, sooner or later—be sure of that.

Moreover, the servant who really needs constant hitting is not worth keeping; and, indeed, were he, through such a process, to be evolved into a perfect treasure, he would be bought too dear, at the cost of so much irritation and mental stress.

For, it must be admitted, that for one occasion when a boy really deserves a flogging he gets *bulala* ten times, because Master is feverish or worried, or 'jumpy'; and poor Master seldom thinks, till afterwards, of the spectacle he presents, pursuing a fleeing boy, and vociferating—because he cannot find his shirt-stud. Alas, for 'British prestige'!

I was told, a short time ago, by one such master, whose naturally sweet disposition had doubtless been tried by time and circumstances, that he had had his boy severely flogged ('six dozen'), *because the salt on his dinner table was damp*. As a rule, a little mild sarcasm, or a ridiculous nick-name

bestowed is far more efficacious than a scolding, and if a severe reminder is necessary, judicious fining has the greatest effect, for the most sensitive bit of a house boy's soul lives just underneath his belt: when this is done, the culprit must *see* the fine, in money, thrown into the river, or placed in the kitchen fire, and know that it is gone beyond recall, or else he merely credits you with making money out of him, and is rather shocked at your meanness.

We want, do we not, to raise their standard, not to lower our own, and though, of course, there are black sheep, many of them, I do believe that good treatment evokes good service. The householder who, remembering how comparatively new to the country the art of domestic service is, shows a little consideration, never breaks a promise, and does not scold or whack all round, because it happens to be a hot morning, will probably fare best, after all; moreover, on returning from leave, he or she will be sure to find 'Audu' or 'Ibrahim' smiling a welcome at Burutu, all anxious to take up service again with such a desirable Master or 'Missis.'

CHAPTER III
Dogs, Poultry and Cows

DOGS

This collection of notes, which aims at giving assistance to English men and women in Nigeria, would, to my mind, fall miserably short of the mark if it failed to include within its scope some practical suggestions for the provision of comfort and the preservation of health of their dogs.

That West Africa is *not* a healthy country for English dogs is only too sadly certain, but it is equally certain that they will continue to come as long as Englishmen do, therefore it is not worth while giving sage advice as to the wisdom and true kindness of bringing or not bringing them—especially as I like to try and be consistent, and I cannot picture myself taking ship at Liverpool without one, or even two of my own!

I have met a variety of English dogs out here, from massive bull-terriers down to the most fascinating little person, a tiny Yorkshire terrier; but, to those who, coming out for the first time, are puzzled in the selection of a dog, I would like to say:—let him be a young dog and a small one. A puppy, well over distemper, aged from six to twelve months, will suffer far less from the change of climate, food, etc., than an older dog, and, when he does not weigh more than twenty or thirty pounds, his lightness makes it a simple matter for him to be carried on the march—for no dog should ever be allowed to run all through the hot hours of a long march. We, who are a long way off the ground, on horseback, occasionally grumble at the heat; what must be the sensations of the faithful little follower padding wearily along, close to the baking earth, all chance of breeze kept from him, as a rule, by high grass on either side, and a pitiless sun scorching his spine all the time?

We learnt this lesson through sad experience, the loss of a dearly loved little Irish terrier, who marched always on his own feet. He had lived in

perfect health for four years in India, and had even weathered eight months in Sierra Leone, but died in Lokoja, after three months almost continuous touring in the bush.

Since then our dogs have never been allowed to run; we have had two carried all the way from Zungeru to Katāgum and back, a distance of eight hundred miles. They very soon got accustomed to the confinement; one was usually carried on the saddle of one of our mounted servants, and, after a few days, he learnt to appreciate the arrangement and to jump up at the pony, begging to be picked up as soon as the sun got hot. The other dog, a bull-terrier, had an ordinary square provision box filled with grass, its cover, a native-made wicker basket, having a small goat-skin fastened just on the top to keep off the sun. The cover fitted loosely, admitting plenty of air and was easily secured to the box by a few strings. After the dog had run three or four miles in the fresh early morning, and hunted and amused himself to his heart's content, he was usually very ready to pack himself into his box, especially as there were invariably a few toothsome bones to be found there, and he then slept peacefully in it, until his carrier dumped him down in camp.

The feeding of dogs is naturally a great factor in the preservation of their health, and it will require supervision. The main difficulty is to give them sufficient bulk of food without including too much meat; here, we have no fresh potatoes, etc., and porridge becomes rather an expensive article of dietary, as oatmeal costs a shilling for a small tin, which disappears at once! I have been told that two large dogs required a tin of oatmeal and a tin of army rations daily to feed them. I think they must have become very bilious bull-terriers, and a serious item of expense to their owner! We allow threepence a day per dog; this buys a piece of meat and some bone, also a fair quantity of 'gari' (native flour). The gari is well boiled with the meat, and appears looking like a brownish sago pudding. The mixture is then flooded with milk and much appreciated by the dogs. Every few days a little powdered sulphur is mixed up with the feed, and is highly beneficial. Afterwards, they get their bones, and the fare seems to suit them admirably. We always make a point of giving our dogs, especially young puppies, weak tea if they will drink it. In India I was told that it would prevent distemper altogether, and, though I cannot vouch for the truth of this, it

seems to be a harmless little indulgence, and every mistress will, I expect, like to see the little wistful faces asking ever so plainly for a saucer of tea.

Dogs are all the better for a dose of castor oil about once a week; it improves their appearance and condition immensely, and it is a perfectly simple matter administering it—when one knows how—so a short explanation of the process may not be misplaced here. One person, kneeling down, holds the dog's body firmly between his knees to prevent him from backing, and, putting his left forefinger gently into the corner of the dog's lips, pulls out his cheek, forming a sort of pocket into which the oil is gently poured by another person, thus avoiding all forcing open of the teeth and the consequent struggle and horrors of spilt oil. As a rule the patient does not object in the least; the oil quietly filters through his teeth, and down his throat; if he does not seem to be swallowing it readily a little pressure on his nostrils closes them, and compels him to open his throat. When a dog's coat becomes 'staring,' his eyes lustreless, and he appears generally spiritless and feverish, castor oil is indicated, after which quinine must be given—five grains daily is not too much—until he recovers.

One of our dogs swallowed a tabloid of quinine, wrapped in a slice of meat, every day, without detecting its presence; but some are tiresome in this respect, and the only alternative is to open their mouths and drop in a salt-spoonful of sulphate of quinine. This they cannot get rid of except by swallowing it, and the bitter taste is soon forgotten in the joy of a rewarding tit-bit of some sort. We had a small fox-terrier who knew the very sight of the quinine bottle, and bolted at once out of the room!

The foregoing suggestions, however, are intended only for occasions when the dog's owner is quite convinced that treatment of this kind is absolutely necessary; failing that, I would most earnestly say, leave drugs alone, merely permit no neglect, for, assuredly, a comfortable dog will be a healthy dog!

Another point of the utmost importance to a dog's well-being and comfort, is to keep him, as far as possible, free from fleas and ticks. Fleas, I suppose, dogs *will* have for all time, no matter how carefully they are washed and brushed; the great enemy in Nigeria is the tick. During the rains the grass swarms with them, and, as one cannot walk along a bush path for a hundred yards without finding several of them on one's skirts, the number

acquired by the dogs on a ten minutes' hunt after a mouse or a lizard can be well imagined. Each dog must be most carefully searched and the pests removed at least twice a day, special care being taken to inspect the inside of his ears, the little 'pocket' on them, between his toes, and underneath his collar. There is none so wily as the dog tick in choosing secluded nooks in which to suck his victim's blood. The inside of the dog's ears should be smeared over with carbolic or sulphur ointment applied with a feather; both are abhorrent to ticks, and it is really a kindness to rub his whole body lightly with these ointments or a very weak solution of creolin or 'Jeyes' Fluid.' It will be found that flies attack and bite dogs' ears to a quite serious extent; I have seen native dogs with their ears positively eaten away, but this can, of course, be prevented by persistent care and perseverance. Carbolic or sulphur ointment must be rubbed on thickly, daily, and at night-time, but unless notice is taken of the very first few bites, it is most difficult to effect a cure.

POULTRY

The keeping of poultry is certain to become, in the near future, a feature of every English household in Nigeria, therefore the subject may as well have its place in this chapter, though I do not, in the least, feel qualified to offer any 'counsels of perfection,'

as, so far, we have been able to make only two efforts to introduce English fowls into this country, and I must frankly confess that there are many difficulties in the way of a complete success.

However, the class of fowl bred in the country is such a wretched one, the birds are small, skinny and tasteless, and the eggs no larger than bantams', that the importation of good breeds is a very real necessity. Here, as in other matters, the periodical leave to England after twelve or eighteen months has prevented the rearing of chickens from being very seriously undertaken, but I have a strong impression that if every one will, at all events, 'make a start,'

the good work will be carried on, and it will not be long before the miserable 'country fowl' is a thing of the past.

My personal experience on the subject of English fowls is as follows:—Five years ago, we brought out four Black Minorca hens and one cock; the latter died shortly after his arrival in Nigeria, but, on our way up country, we had the good luck to be presented with a very fine Plymouth Rock cock. The hens behaved beautifully; they travelled in a large wicker basket, and regularly laid eggs in it during the daily march. A fortnight later, alas!

the Plymouth Rock died, and two hens succumbed also, all dying from the same complaint, dysentery.

After six months, we brought our remaining two hens back to Lokoja, and they survived for the rest of the tour, but they greatly deteriorated, both in their appearance and in their laying, the eggs diminished in size and lost their flavour.

On our return from leave, we brought a fresh consignment of fowls, and if I call them ‘a mixed lot’ it is not intended altogether as a term of disparagement, for we had purposely selected mixed

breeds. A fine Buff Orpington cock with a slight Black Minorca strain, two Black Minorca hens, a handsome Houdan hen, and two highly indiscriminate ‘would-be’ Orpington hens made up the party.

Further fortified by an incubator, a kindly gift of Sir Alfred Jones, we fared forth to Bussa, firmly intent on poultry rearing.

This time, our efforts were distinctly successful; in six months our stock of six had increased to twenty-three, and had it not been for the persistent and endless depredations of hawks, we should have reared a far greater number. We found the Houdan an admirable and devoted mother, and her progeny were our delight, so handsome were they, with a slight Orpington strain added to their own beautiful spangles and jet-black crest. Before a year was out all the original hens except one died, quite suddenly and mysteriously, pointing to poisonous food or snake-bite; but still, to-day, I am glad to think that we have distributed four fine English cocks in different parts of the country, and have, at all events, contributed our mite to the all-important task of improving the food supply in this country.

It is not in the least sublime to say that empires are built on men’s stomachs, but, indeed, they form a surer foundation than their gravestones to my un-soaring mind!

The incubator—owing to our peculiar circumstances—but to no fault of its own, was not a great success. Our manner of living was, however, exceptional, and did not give the incubator a ghost of a chance. During the day the lamp could not be lighted at all, and in spite of all ventilation, etc., the atmospheric heat in the room itself ran the thermometer higher than it should be. Almost every night violent gusts of wind, sweeping through the house, extinguished the lamp two or three times, thoroughly chilling the eggs. Another difficulty was the obtaining of really fresh eggs; the only successful hatchings I accomplished were with guinea-fowls and eggs obtained from our own hens: but, as the action of the incubator was so uncertain, we were reluctant to risk many eggs, when the hens were ready and willing to sit. It was, however, a great amusement and delight to us, and the hatching process was one of absorbing interest—to our native friends it appeared a piece of paralyzing Ju-ju—the newly born chick gracefully dropping from the tray above to the softer floor below with a comical air of bewilderment and surprise! Under more normal circumstances I am certain that incubators (which can now be bought very cheap)

would be of the greatest value in chicken rearing out here: a ‘foster-mother’ or ‘breeder’ is *quite* necessary to avoid the terrible infant mortality resulting from careless mothers and prowling hawks.

Far the easiest and most paying is the rearing of ducks; they give no trouble, and seem to require none of the coaxing and attention apparently necessary for the hens; quite quietly they appear to make their own arrangements, and in due time emerge with an eminently attractive and satisfactory family of sixteen or thereabouts. Except for a tendency to walk the babies off their legs, ducks are devoted and excellent mothers.

An extremely useful scrap of knowledge we have picked up, is, when the hatch is due, or nearly so, to seize the opportunity, when the hen or duck is off the nest, to immerse the eggs gently in hot water (105°); almost immediately the ‘live’ eggs begin to roll about and dance in the most exciting fashion, and those which, after a few minutes, make no movement at all may be safely considered as ‘wrong’ and removed from the hatch, as their presence is injurious to the hatching chicks, and embarrassing to the mother.

I have found that the chief difficulty lies in finding enough *boiled* food for the fowls; the victims of dysentery undoubtedly got the disease from eating too much whole grain, but it is a grave problem to give them enough of anything else. There is, at present, in this country, nothing available to answer to the regular ‘chicken’s food’ mixture, provided at home, consisting of boiled turnip cuttings, potato peelings, cabbage leaves, sharps, etc. Perhaps when our vegetable gardens are on a firmer basis we shall be able to lavish green food on our fowls; at present, there are but boiled yams and sweet potatoes to be had, but the fowls do not take kindly to them, nor to boiled rice, which, by the way, does not agree with them. On the whole, I think they prefer boiled *gari* to any other cooked food; I have seen them enthusiastic over *aggidi* (a native food) mixed up with maize and a few odds and ends from the breakfast table. Guinea-corn thus becomes their staple article of diet, and it is only by giving them full liberty all day long, and allowing them to procure their own grass and insect food, that the enemy, dysentery, is avoided.

We were wrong, I suppose, in selecting Black Minorcas, from a sitting point of view, as I believe that, even at home, they are non-sitters, and they certainly are in Nigeria! However, with an incubator this is a matter of no importance, and it would be difficult to find a more satisfactory breed from a laying point of view. I should say, most decidedly, that Dorkings or Plymouth Rocks would be found excellent breeds to bring to this country, the latter being good sitters and a hardy breed; but they must be kept free from damp, which is, I fancy, the cause of their frequently contracting disease in the legs and feet. I have also heard an authority on different sorts of poultry describe Dorkings as ‘the very best breed for amateur poultry keepers,’ they are excellent mothers, and quite the best kind for table purposes.

I cannot feel that I am able to give any very practical advice on this subject; my own experience has been too limited to build a theory on, but as the chicken, in one guise or another, is bound to appear so frequently on our tables, it is more than advisable, it becomes a positive duty, to endeavour to encourage all newcomers to help, by importing fowls from England, to improve the Nigerian species. When next I come out I shall certainly bring a collection of Dorkings and another incubator, for it is worth remembering

that the hen of the country is such a tiny creature that she cannot possibly cover more than three or four good-sized eggs.

I also cherish golden dreams of bringing out English geese, as I believe they would succeed, and repay, a hundred-fold, the trouble of bringing them. Geese are less troublesome to feed than fowls, as they find so much for themselves roaming about; they are also good sitters (I am speaking of the white Embden geese), and, of course, a great delicacy for the table.

They should be brought out in the proportion of two geese to one gander.

It is, perhaps, worth mentioning that bringing out live stock entails little or no trouble; any large dealer will ship the birds in strong coops with a supply of grain for the voyage, and their owner will find them established on deck, and requiring nothing more than a daily visit, and a little arrangement with the ship's cook or butcher, as to their cleanliness and a small supply of boiled food. These good folks are so accustomed to the care of all kinds of live stock, domestic and wild, being carried to and from West Africa, from a full-grown giraffe to tiny gazelles, no larger than a rabbit, that they are invariably most ready and willing to supervise anything of the sort.

All this considered, I am sure that every one will agree with me that it is worth while giving a trial to imported live stock for the farm-yard; my ambition even soars—in secret, and in fear and trembling—to the importation of a few rabbits, for experimental purposes. I am aware that the indiscriminate introduction of rabbits has caused unpopularity elsewhere before now, but I should suggest their being kept in confinement at first, and I should not think that the provision of green food need be a difficulty, as they would almost certainly enjoy the young leaves of Indian Corn, which can be grown anywhere. I will venture, finally, to say, that, in my opinion, the humble bunny would prove a most welcome addition to the Nigerian menu!

Cows

To mention the subject of dairy management may seem rather unnecessary, and cause a smile when it is realized that cows cannot be

persuaded to live and flourish in Lokoja, or any of the southern districts of Nigeria, and that for the most part one's sole anxiety, as a dairy expert, consists in the selection of sound tins of preserved milk! But, as the joys of possessing one's own cows, and obtaining a sufficiency of milk, cream, and butter, can be realized by those whom kindly Fortune allows to live in the Hausa States, far removed from the deadly Coast, and further north still, it seems to me as well to set forth my own very small experience in the matter.

My first step towards keeping cows—and that a veritable step in the dark—was the selection of a churn. At this point, the eternal difficulty of transport loomed into view as uncompromisingly as usual, and I decided on a small tin, plunge churn.

It consisted of a tin cylinder about eighteen inches long, and four inches in diameter, with a cover, through which passed a tin plunger, with flanges at the lower end. This churn has the advantage of being very light and portable, and we found it a complete success; it was perfectly easy to clean, and did its work most rapidly, turning out a pound of butter in fifteen minutes.

The next necessary point is to possess *your own* cows; the usual plan of receiving a daily dole of a bottle full of milk, Heaven knows how or where obtained, cannot be sufficiently condemned. Out of my own experience I have known the simple Fulani cow-keeper to half fill the basin before milking with extremely dirty water, and this I only discovered by the merest accident. One would hardly expect to find such up-to-date practices as 'watering the milk' in Nigeria, but it is done!

I know that milch cows are not at all easy to come by out here; the Fulani, the only herdsman in the country, knows the value of his stock, and will not sell, for there is a tremendous trade done in the markets in sour milk and rancid butter.

I started with a stock of five cows, each with a small calf, and in full milk: I then, with a lamentable want of foresight and proper humility, decided on, and attempted to carry out all kinds of innovations and dairy principles, such as separating the calves from the cows, endeavouring to pacify the former with milk mixed with *dusa* (bran)—which I could never induce them to touch—and treating in a high-handed manner the

remonstrances of the *mai-sanu* (cowman or head dairymaid). I may say at once it was a dead failure; the cows went off their milk immediately, and from all of them I did not get more than a quart twice daily, and the mai-sanu ran away, appalled at my wicked violation of immemorial customs! My courage, born of ignorance, ran into the soles of my shoes, I obtained a new mai-sanu, and, bowing my head in chastened submission, I resigned into his hands the whole outside arrangements of the ‘dairy,’ only stipulating that his hands should be scrupulously clean before milking, and the udders wiped with a damp clean cloth—also that he should produce a large basin full of milk morning and evening. This was done; how and when the calves were tied or separated, I did not inquire. I am quite sure that, one day, a more strong-minded and conscientious fellow-country-woman will know all about it, and reform

things magnificently; meantime—cleanliness and purity assured—I was content to leave ‘pretty well’ alone, and let the mai-sanu make his own arrangements.

The cows of Northern Nigeria are splendid animals, of great size, with enormous branching horns, but their udders are very small, and English dairy folks would doubtless smile at the idea of extracting milk at the rate of one quart only, daily, per cow! But so it was, and when due allowance is made for inferior grazing and the dry season, perhaps it was not so astonishing. At any rate, the supply proved ample for our requirements, so I felt it would be both ungracious and foolish to grumble. I found the milk very rich and delicious, and from the special pan set aside each evening for cream to set, a good pint and a half of thick cream was forthcoming the next morning, yielding roughly a pound of excellent butter. There was always cream for the porridge at breakfast, plenty for puddings and mayonnaises, and even for cream cheeses, which I made every few days.

OUR ENERGETIC D.S.C. (CAPTAIN BURNSIDE) TRAINING BULLOCKS. (p. 236)

GIANT SUNFLOWERS AT BUSSA. (p. 243)

We marched our cows down country from Katāgum on our return, and they gave us a capital supply of milk on the road; but, once established in Lokoja, they fell off in appearance and milk. The calves sickened and died, as well as the cows, and, much to our sorrow, we had to recognize that, obviously, the only thing to do was to dispose of the remainder, alas! to become tough beef in the market. It was, I suppose, inevitable, owing to the total change of diet to green, luxurious grass, which the cows devoured eagerly, to their own undoing; but I parted very sadly from my philanthropic dream of providing the English community in Lokoja with a regular supply of fresh milk, etc. It was a plan I had very much at heart, and

I have not altogether forsaken it, but I quite recognize that it cannot be done with the Hausa cow.

It is a matter for great regret, this difficulty of keeping cows alive in Lokoja; many a ‘bad case’ in hospital longs for fresh milk—as unobtainable, unfortunately, as ripe strawberries or blocks of ice.

Possibly, one fine, *very* fine day, when, in our wisdom, we remove our cantonment to the breezy heights of the Patti plateau (six hundred feet above, and perfectly accessible), all these good things may be ours. Meantime, unless you are going to the Hausa States, and away north, the only dairy equipment you will need to bring is—a tin-opener!

CHAPTER IV
The Garden

I remember that my opinion of the possibilities of gardening successfully in Northern Nigeria expressed itself in three stages: first, on arrival, with joyful confidence: ‘I am certain *anything* will grow out here!’ Secondly, after six months, in despair: ‘*Nothing* will grow out here!’ Thirdly, after a year, with renewed but chastened cheerfulness: ‘*Some* things will do all right!’

The subject was more or less unexplored ground when I arrived in the country five years ago; I could get little or no gardening information, except that one or two enterprising spirits had tried—and failed.

Perhaps the chief reason for this was that the amount of work to be got through in each day makes it practically impossible for any Government official to give the personal attention absolutely necessary to the making of a garden.

The country produces no native gardeners, similar to the *mali* of India; the utmost one can extract from the local artist is that he will scratch up weeds and grass, and faithfully water everything daily in the dry season. The tour of service of from twelve to eighteen months, followed by leave home and an uncertain prospect of returning to the same station, has, I suppose, prevented any attempt at all being made in the majority of cases, and the very few spots that have been started as gardens seem to have flourished until their owners left, when they were utterly neglected, the bush claimed its own, and all traces of cultivation vanished far quicker than they had appeared.

But now that things are progressing generally in Nigeria, life conditions improving somewhat, and each station containing a larger number of white men, willing to carry on each others’ labours in this line, the gardening problem comes nearer solution, though I fancy that, for all time, it will need a stout heart and endless perseverance.

The Flower Garden

The first ‘don’t’ that occurs to me under this heading is on the subject of English out-door flowers. One’s natural instinct is to try and surround oneself with the old favourites, sweet-peas, mignonette, poppies and pinks, but the attempt, I fear, is sheer waste of time and trouble; hardly any will come to maturity and blossom in the verandah; they will grow up cheerfully to a certain point, then wither off, and transplanting seedlings in the open is out of the question, unless permanent shade can be given.

I think I can claim to have given them a fair trial—I brought out the usual ‘collection’ from England, made experimental sowings in boxes on the verandah, nursed and watched them tenderly, but I got no results in the blossom line except from the convolvulus. I then tried a collection from a French firm, and from these seeds, I succeeded in coaxing blossoms, from zinnias, marigolds, nasturtiums, balsams and petunias—the rest were a

complete failure.

My third experiment was with acclimatized seeds from India, and these gave far the best results. The first success was a splendid bed of portulacca, blazing with crimson, white, mauve and gold, rejoicing in the sun which shrivelled everything else. I should like every one to make a point of raising this beautiful little flower, for it is easily grown, and gives a real reward for very little trouble. It should be sown at the end of the rains, in boxes on the verandah, sheltered until the little plants look sturdy and fleshy, then planted out in bed or border, and shaded from the sun for a day or two, until growth is started, the plants will then begin to spread and blossom into a carpet of glowing colour.

Balsams, marigolds, sunflowers, vinca and zinnias will do well sown out in the open, under moderate shade, especially the last-named; the finest zinnias I have ever seen were a bunch presented to me out of a bachelor’s little garden at Zaria. Sunflowers attain an immense height and blossom

magnificently; I had huge plants, almost trees, at Bussa, fourteen and sixteen feet high, bearing masses of flowers. Balsams I have always been a little contemptuous over, but the best double kinds are well worth while cultivating. A special packet from Sutton, called, I think, ‘Rose,’ gave splendid results, thick clusters of delicate rosy pink blossoms, resembling

pink carnations or rosettes of chiffon, flowered in one bed continuously from July to December, and established themselves on the firmest basis in my affections. All varieties of convolvulus can be sown outside, and will climb and twine and riot delightfully everywhere, clothing hideous walls and bare fences. In Lokoja I have taken great pains to cultivate freely that most charming creeper, the sapphire blue Clitoria, a climbing pea of the greatest beauty, and a free grower, bringing, in the first instance, *twenty seeds* from Government House in Sierra Leone! It has rewarded my efforts so well that now no one need want for quantities of seed; there is also a white variety which is just as beautiful and satisfactory.

Cannas flourish, and make capital patches of colour, the finer kinds, some of which are very gorgeous, doing just as well as the ordinary scarlet sort, which grows all over the country, and from the seeds of which Mahomedan rosaries are made. Phloxes, nasturtiums and asters can be induced to flower with a good deal of preliminary care and watering; but those who, not unnaturally, desire to achieve the maximum result with the minimum effort, will do well to concentrate their endeavours on zinnias and sunflowers, especially the single Japanese sunflowers, as they are eminently decorative. Vinca

is a flower which might be dubbed uninteresting, but it has a special virtue, that of blossoming practically all the year round, and being available, when everything else is shrivelled and dead, in the dryest season.

Another public benefactor is salpiglossis, an exquisite plant with velvety glowing flowers of all shades—no well-regulated Nigerian garden should be without it.

To my mind the wild flowers of the country are by no means to be despised in the garden, many are really extremely beautiful; all are indigenous to the soil and therefore no trouble to grow, and I believe that the main reason that they are not more frequently seen in gardens is that the gardeners have never had the opportunity of noticing them in the ‘bush.’

There is a splendid coreopsis with golden daisy-like blossoms some three or four inches in diameter, the seed of which I gathered on the march a year ago, and subsequently sowed in large round beds.

The result was a perfectly glorious blaze of brilliant yellow blossoms for weeks together, when the rains had finished. Terrestrial orchids in their mauve, purple, yellow and green beauty would be exquisite dotting the grass, as would the crimson and white striped lilies, fragile babianas, and the lesser gloriosa, which is not a creeper. A tiny scarlet salvia has often appealed to me and the little plant, *Striga Senegalensis*, would form a carpet of deep cool mauve, delightful to see.

The Lawn

It is said to be very dear to the heart of every Englishman to own a lawn, and it certainly should be doubly so to John Bull in exile; in a tropical country well-kept turf is much to be desired, there is nothing so cool and refreshing to tired eyes dazzled with the glare of sunshine and baked earth, and, perhaps, nothing that gives such a home-like and cared-for look to a West African compound. This demesne is usually reclaimed bush, which in nature grows rank, reed-like, coarse grass, and the ground destined for a lawn must be thoroughly and deeply *dug up*. It is worse than useless to attempt to remove it by merely pulling up the grass.

After digging and turning, all the roots must be picked out most carefully, for it is indeed heartbreaking to see the enemy reappearing all over your infant lawn.

If the fine short grass, called in India ‘dhoob’

grass, can be found in the neighbourhood, and it usually can be, especially along the edges of roads, it should be brought in quantities (with its roots), planted closely in tiny bunches all over the prepared ground, watered daily, patted down to encourage spreading, and your lawn will be fairly started.

Another method is to chop up the grass in lengths of about four inches, mix it with good soil and water, and spread the mixture all over the lawn, but, on the whole, I think the planting will be found most satisfactory. If ‘dhoob’ grass is not to be had, English grass seed must be sown, but this is an experiment I have never had occasion to make.

I have seen what is called Bahama grass grown with great success in Sierra Leone, and fashioned into lovely velvety croquet lawns.

Trees and Shrubs

The planting of useful and ornamental trees is no less than a positive duty incumbent on every householder in West Africa; they are infinitely less trouble, and give far more lasting satisfaction than flower growing; besides, even in this most selfish of all selfish countries, it behoves us all to think of those who will come after us, and not neglect to plant a mango stone because we ourselves may scarcely hope to gather fruit from the tree that will result. I do not think I am exaggerating when I say that I suppose that every flowering tree and shrub in Lokoja, and many in Zungeru, owes its existence to the wise labours of those ‘old hands’

who, years ago, planted out the ground around the old Preparanda with trees, from which innumerable cuttings have been obtained; at all events, I have never forgotten to feel grateful to them.

Orange and lime trees grow readily from pips, mangoes and date palms from stones, pineapples can be raised from the leafy crowns on the fruit, paw-paws spring up wherever the seeds are scattered, but they, like bananas, are not ornamental, and should be relegated to the back garden.

During the rainy season slips of flowering trees and shrubs never fail to strike; ‘frangipani’ with rosy blossoms and delicious scent, *Poinciana Regia,* better known as ‘flamboyant’ on account of its regal scarlet flowers, three kinds of acacias, red, yellow and white, fragrant rose-coloured oleanders, and many others, can be put in wherever your fancy dictates, and will certainly reward your patience—usually by endeavouring to flower before putting out a single leaf!

There is a delightful, sweet-scented golden allamanda, growing in sturdy bushes, and forming an ideal hedge, as it is loaded with blossom for more than half the year. Another somewhat similar flower is *Thevetia*, which sows itself pertinaciously from its poisonous seeds, and *Tabernaemontana* is another most decorative shrubby plant, with shining dark foliage, and a flower resembling a gardenia.

Nigeria abounds in indigenous blossoming trees and creepers, all beautiful, and mostly sweet-scented, from the gorgeous *Spathodea Nilotica*, *Erythrina* and *Kigelia Africana* downwards; indeed, no one who travels about with open eyes can fail to acquire enough seeds, pods and stones to plant acres with beauty and fragrance; day after day, on the march, I have filled my pockets.

The bush, too, is full of flowers well worth cultivating, as I have before remarked. There are creepers and climbing plants innumerable, including *Mussaenda elegans*, bearing handsome flame-coloured blossoms, crimson *Caconia paniculata*, Strophanthus with its fantastic, trailing creamy petals, delicate asparagus fern, and *Landolphia owariensis* (the rubber vine), queen of climbers, a sheet of snow-white, intensely fragrant flowers. And if Landolphia is the queen of climbers, surely the king is a gorgeous apricot-hued *Gloriosa Superba*, which fastens its delicate persistent tendrils round every available support, and when the flowering season is over is beautiful still with bursting pods full of scarlet seeds. In the forest, beside the river one finds clerodendron, bryophyllum, quisqualis, and a thousand others; indeed, I only wish I had enough botanical knowledge to name half the native flowers and trees I have raised from seed collected casually on the march.

THE VERANDAH GARDEN

Perhaps the verandah garden is one’s dearest and closest interest; wise people may shake their heads, and mutter about the number of mosquitoes attracted by the watering of ferns and flowers, but, after all, when there are at least two millions of mosquitoes about, a thousand more or less makes very little difference, and I am certain no Englishwoman in Africa will forgo her verandah garden for so trifling a reason!

I have had orchids and ferns, all varieties of so-called crotons, for they are really codeums, hundreds of sturdy little orange trees, raised from pips collected at the luncheon table, cannas and caladiums, and tubs of the invaluable aromatic-scented occimum viride, whose virtues saved us

endless annoyance from mosquitoes. Here a few English flowers blossomed, one tiny rose bush, petunias, balsams, Japanese sunflowers, etc., creepers of all kinds flourished, sky-blue, rose-coloured and yellow convolvuli climbing and clasping the verandah posts, sapphire blue clitoria twisting and twining in beautiful confusion, mingled with a brilliant scarlet convolvulus-like climber, while tiny, starry *Ipomea quamoclit*, crimson and white, wound slender feathery arms round every available twig and stem.

The bath-water must be kept every morning to water the verandah garden, the soapiness and especially the suspicion of Scrubbs ammonia, if that is used, are most beneficial, and by doing the watering yourself you can ensure a due proportion and see that ferns are not starved while seedlings are drowned.

I have always longed to have *real* roses in my verandah garden, but I fear they would but add one more to the long list of disappointments. Though they do well in Southern Nigeria, I have so far seen only one rose tree here at Zungeru; it was growing an immense height, full of green leaves and long stalks, an infallible sign that the general temperature is too high, and its blossoms have been few and poor. Still, I believe with much care and pruning the more delicate kinds might succeed; I hope to try one day. Last year I devoted my energies to the cultivation of geraniums and pelargoniums, which were only a partial success, but were handicapped by being carried about the country. I also experimented with tuberoses, which were an immense success, growing freely as if they really liked the soil and temperature. I *have* great hopes that the more delicate bulbous plants *will* flourish in Nigeria during the rains, therefore I have included a few of them in the list at the end of this chapter.

The Vegetable Garden

It seems to me a matter for the gravest regret that the culture of vegetables is not more seriously undertaken in this country where fresh vegetables are so essential to health, and such a priceless addition to the daily menu of tough and tasteless meat. To any one who has lived in the tiniest Indian station, and seen the Government garden supplying each

household with an enormous basket of vegetables for the noble sum of 1*s.* 6*d.* per month, it seems as incredible as it is almost criminal that West Africa is not as well catered for; it *could* be done, as many private gardens in the country have amply proved, but—it is *not* done! To quote Major Ronald Ross:—‘Government sometimes maintains, at considerable cost, botanical gardens for various economical purposes. I was told that these gardens used to grow vegetables for the Europeans, until stopped by a mandate from England, on the ground that a Government botanist is not a market gardener!’ Comment is quite needless, but there is some comfort in reflecting that if we cannot all soar to the giddy eminence of a ‘Government botanist’ we may yet emulate, more or less, the humble market gardener, and to this end I am offering my small experience in this line.

OUR GARDENER AT PLAY. (p. 250)

‘JEWEL’ AND ‘BROWN MOUSE.’ (p. 258)

Growing vegetables is, to my mind, the most satisfactory part of garden work in West Africa; the percentage of failures is certainly smaller, and the results so entirely to be desired. But, like the rest of your garden, it will have to be *made* before you can set to work to grow vegetables.

Divide the ground into beds as long as space will allow, and not more than three feet wide, with paths between. Every bed must have a roof or shelter, consisting of matting or palm branches, fastened to uprights four or five feet high, and the earth must be well banked up so as to be quite a foot above the ground level.

Vegetables do best when sown in September, when the heaviest rains are over, though a few kinds can be sown even in the dry season with some success if care and regular watering are given to them; I have sown vegetables in May, August and December, always with satisfactory results, my object being to secure fresh vegetables nearly all the year round.

The most important factor in the success of the vegetable garden (and, indeed, amongst the flowers too) is that the seed should be quite fresh from England.

A small quantity arriving twice a year will give far better results than one of the large ‘collections’

which, moreover, invariably contain many items that are quite useless in this country. I had a huge tin of vegetable seeds given me last year—a precious prize—only to find, to my dismay, that it consisted mainly of strawberries and peas! I have heard of English peas being grown and eaten in the Bornu country; my own experience has been that they grow most hopefully until they are about two feet high, they then begin to wither off and disappear.

Tomatoes will be found to succeed admirably; if they are inclined to grow too luxuriantly and to run to leaf rather than to fruit, this can be checked by cutting off half the leaves and snipping away many of the flowers. I have never seen better tomatoes than those grown in Nigeria.

French beans and scarlet runners are most successful; the young plants of the latter shoot up

in the most amazing ‘Jack and the Beanstalk’

fashion, and the dwarf beans are quite loaded with beans six weeks after sowing.

Cucumbers give excellent results, also vegetable marrows. These should be sown in boxes on the verandah, and planted out when they attain the dignity of four leaves. Let them be planted close to the uprights so that they can commence climbing at once instead of sprawling along the ground. I found it quite a good plan at Bussa to plant these vegetables out beside a low clay wall, and, after assisting them to reach the top, to leave them to their own devices; it was always an amusement to hunt for and happen upon unexpected ripe cucumbers!

Lettuces, radishes and cress may all be relied upon, also spinach (the native sort) and carrots; kohl rabi, the turnip-rooted cabbage, is a most excellent and useful vegetable eaten quite young; we found it one of our best crops, and beyond the thinning out required no attention at all. My beet-root, cabbages, Brussels sprouts and rhubarb all failed, but that I strongly suspect was in some degree due to the incursions of greedy fowls. In this connexion, I may mention that a low close railing, made even of guinea-corn stalks, is most useful to fence in each bed if there is a farm-yard loose in the compound.

English potatoes have been grown at Zungeru, I believe, but rather as an interesting experiment than as an article of diet. Onions are so extensively grown by the natives that they are hardly required in the garden, except the tiny spring onions for use in a salad.

I do not think it is widely enough known that, when English vegetables are ‘out’ the native bean (*wake*) if gathered very, very young, is practically indistinguishable from French beans, and a tuber (*tumuku*) in appearance and taste closely resembles new potatoes; both plants grow like weeds and are immensely prolific; I have seen fifty pounds of tumukus gathered from *seven plants*!

I should say, from my study of the climatic effect on plants generally, that hardly any of the really hardy English vegetables would ever reward one for the trouble of growing them in Nigeria, such as cauliflower, turnips, etc. Sea kale might do well, and such a delicacy would be well worth striving after. A valiant effort has been made to grow mushrooms from imported spawn, but the process entailed a good deal of rather elaborate arrangement, and the result was nil. But I see no reason why they should not be cultivated in grass; I have eaten quite delicious tiny mushrooms which I gathered myself on the polo-ground at Lokoja. It seems to me that if a crisp fresh salad and cucumber can be produced daily, with a dish of tomatoes and another of French beans, one may well be grateful for small mercies, and concentrate attention on growing these, experimenting meanwhile with everything and anything that comes to hand.

I am specially anxious to see the Avocada pear grown freely in Northern Nigeria; it flourishes on the coast, and a more delicious fruit could hardly be desired. I raised four strong little trees in Lokoja, which, alas, went the

way of all things in my absence, and I believe there are a few at Zungeru. It is a very easy matter to bring a quantity of the large seeds from Sierra Leone, or from off the ship, where they usually appear at table.

In conclusion, I am appending a list of flower and vegetable seeds which I hope will find their way into every one’s baggage, for they will, according to my small experience, reward the amateur gardener best; also a few of the flowering shrubs and creepers which ought to have a place in the garden, and which would, I feel sure, flourish in Nigeria.

Flower Seeds

Convolvulus, of all kinds.

Zinnias.

Sunflowers.

Portulacca.

Marigolds.

Balsams.

Phlox.

Vinca.

Petunias.

Cannas.

Dahlias.

Sweet-scented Tobacco.

Cinerarias.

Aquilegia.

Heliotrope.

Asters.

Coleus.

Pelargoniums.

Carnations.

Nasturtiums.

Sweet Sultans.

Gaillardias.

Salpiglossis.

Geraniums.

It will be observed that many familiar garden flowers are omitted from this list; this is not an oversight, simply—they will not thrive. I am, moreover, drawing on my own limited experience only, and that not merely of successes, but also of failures and disappointments.

Bulbs, etc.

Tuberoses.

Achimenes.

Eucharis, and various hot-house lilies.

Freesia.

Agapanthus.

Monbretia.

Ixia.

Amaryllis.

Flowering Shrubs, Climbers, etc.

Poinsettias.

Hibiscus.

Stephanotis.

Tacsonia, and other Passion flowers.

Lapageria.

Roses

Princess Alice of Monaco.

Comtesse Riza du Parc.

Ma Surprise.

Comtesse d’Auerstadt.

VEGETABLES

French Beans.

Scarlet Runners.

Broad Beans.

Cucumbers.

Melons.

Sea Kale.

Spinach.

Egg Plant.

Tomatoes.

Cress.

Lettuces.

Radishes.

Marrows.

Carrots.

Parsley.

Spring Onions.

CHAPTER V
The Stable

My feminine readers may feel inclined to ‘skip’

this chapter with the remark: ‘Well, the stables are not in my department’; but I think the wife of an official in Nigeria will usually find that her husband has more work of his own to do than he can well squeeze into each day, and, however slight her previous knowledge on the subject may be, the certainty that, unless she bestirs herself and gives personal attention and supervision, the ponies will be neglected, ill-fed and uncleanly, will, I feel sure, be sufficient stimulus to any true Englishwoman.

For she naturally loves horses, and cannot but be fond of her wiry little thirteen-hand ponies in Nigeria; because they are, as a rule, sweet-tempered, willing, honest little souls, whose mistress will, in almost every case, have reason to remember how gallantly they carried her on such and such a march, and how cleverly they climbed and negotiated the nasty places, and forded uncertain-looking rivers.

This alone will give them a strong claim on her loving care, and she will admit, after a time at all events, that it is worth while to learn all she can on the subject, and to spend half an hour every morning at the stables, inspecting each pony and his house, and another half-hour after the evening ride to see them dried, rubbed down and fed. For ourselves, I hardly think we could sleep in peace unless we had paid our usual visit to the stables to satisfy ourselves that all was well there, the ponies comfortable and well supplied with grass.

The morning visit may well be spent in what would appear to the new-comer to be childish reiteration of most elementary instruction to the man who makes a profession of looking after your horse. For instance, it is quite necessary to demand to be shown the inside of your ponies’ feet every day: your horse-boy—until trained—takes no personal interest in

them, and assuredly will not clean them out on his own initiative, so, without your daily examination, a tiresome attack of thrush may lay your pony up for weeks or months, or a painful little stone, picked up perhaps in

the last canter home, may remain there all night to his great discomfort. At present the ponies are not shod in this country, and though we may advance to metalled roads I hope for the sake of their owners and themselves they will never require it, for I can see heavy additional trials in store for them both, when the shoeing art is imperfectly learned and slovenly applied.

Each horse has his own attendant, but the grass-cutter of India is not kept, as the grass is so near and in such quantities that it can usually be cut from one's own compound, or at least from a few yards off. Here the watchful eye is necessary; the '*doki* (horse) boy' (who, as a rule, is a combination of utter incapacity, laziness and complete ignorance) likes immensely to be left at home when you go for a ride. He will then cut a bundle of the coarsest and wettest marsh grass he can find—naturally—as ten minutes' work will produce a bigger bundle than half an hour's cutting of the fine, short grass which is so infinitely better. He will then squat down on the ground and engage in a process that is absolutely blood-curdling to the unaccustomed onlooker; the grass is taken in small bundles, grasped by his left hand, while his right foot is firmly planted on the ends of the stalks; he then chops up the grass, a most murderous-looking weapon falling rapidly, and without, apparently, any special aim, within half an inch of his foot at each blow. I used to feel quite sick with apprehension, and even now I always expect to see five brown toes fly up into the air! The doki-boy forthwith conveys this mass of wet stuff into the pony's stable for his consumption during the night, thus forming a sound basis for colic in the morning.

Don't let him do it. Even if dhoob grass is not to be had, make him cut the grass before midday, and have it well spread out in the sun, so that the pony gets it thoroughly dried. Remember, he does not want real *food* at night, only something comforting to munch, that will employ his mind harmlessly and happily, and divert his attention from trying to break loose and go off to fight any other pony he can find near at hand.

The main horse food out here is guinea-corn simply shredded off the large stalk, the little stems being left, to ensure the pony eating slowly, and thus digesting his meal. It is not easy to lay down a rule for quantity, as ponies vary, and the size of stalks of guinea-corn also varies; the best thing for the pony's owner to do is to ask the advice of the neighbour who appears to have the best-kept ponies, or, if there are no neighbours, let him or her ask the ponies themselves by watching them feed. It soon becomes

easy to determine whether they are getting enough; that is the main point, for I believe that a pony can scarcely be over-fed in this country.

Try them with twelve large stalks of guinea-corn for each feed, i.e. about half a bundle per day to each pony. The guinea-corn is sold in bundles, varying a little in size and price, according to whether the district is a corn country or not; as a rule a fair-sized bundle costs, roughly, a shilling.

On tour, in places where guinea-corn was not to be had, and the ponies doing hard work, we have given them crushed Indian corn (maize); they liked it and throve on it. *Dusa* (bran) should invariably be mixed with the feeds, be they of maize or guinea-corn, three large handfuls to each feed; the ponies are fond of it, nothing is better for them, and it can always be obtained easily. The majority, too, will drink far more readily and copiously if a handful of dusa is stirred into the water.

Country potash (*konwa*) is a daily article of diet with the Nigerian pony. He has it, a piece about the size of a walnut, thoroughly dissolved in his water, and he thinks so much of it that often he will not drink without it. N.B.—Keep the konwa yourself and give it out every day, for it is also an article of diet for the doki-boy!

I expect the ponies would much enjoy lucerne if the garden could be made to produce it, but I am sorrowfully compelled to admit that after growing a crop of carrots with infinite care, and triumphantly bearing them off to the stables as a wonderful treat, the ungrateful ponies spit them out contemptuously and would have none of them!

The stables themselves must be rather a shock to an English mind: they are just circular huts—one for each pony—either with mud walls and a conical thatched roof, or else with walls of grass matting.

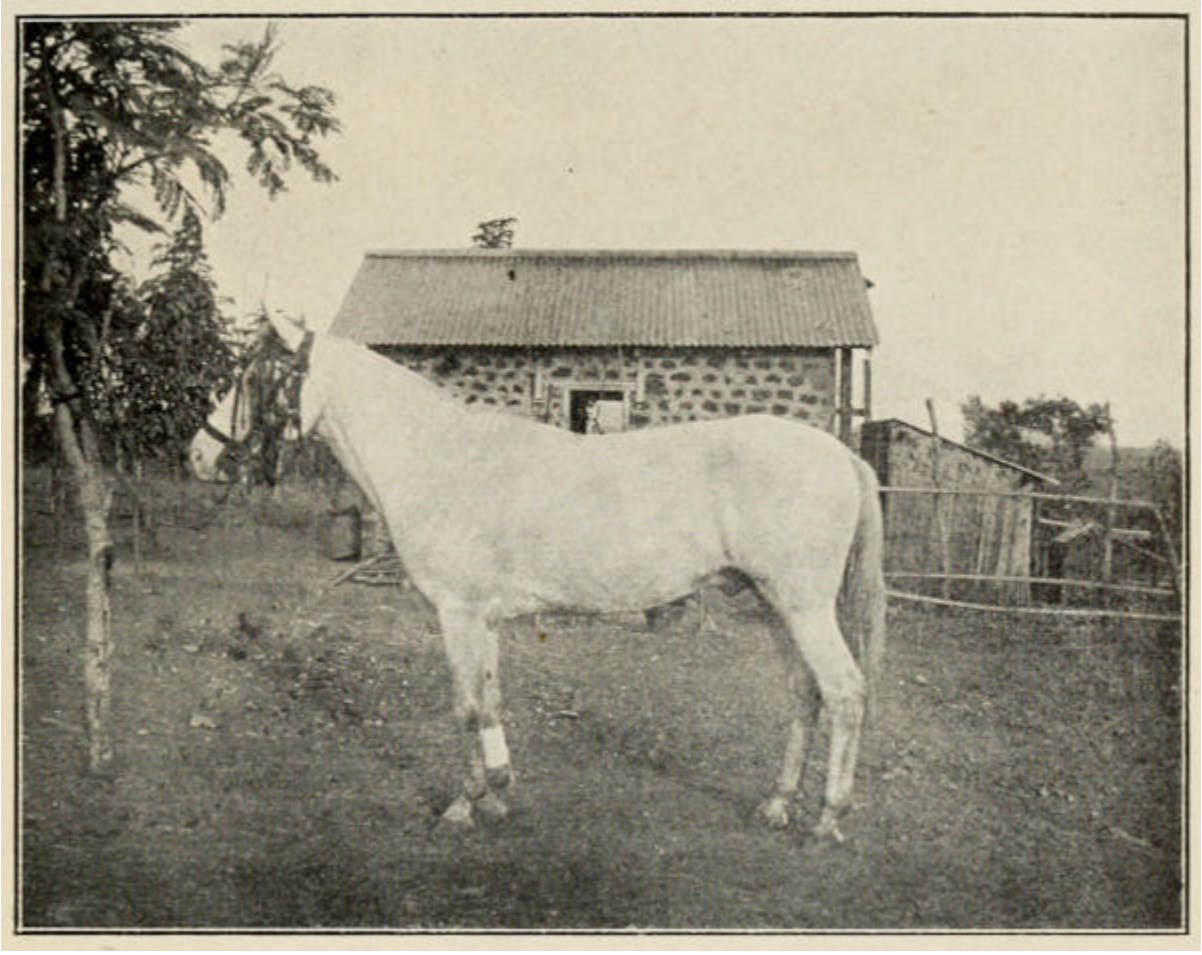
Mud walls have the advantage of windows, which give a breeze, but bring possibilities of flies and wasps at the same time. Doors are usually wanting; the pony is picketed by one of his feet to a wooden post about two feet high, round which he can circle by means of a ring upon it. The post is driven into the ground in the middle of his stable. The ponies are quite accustomed to this method; they have their heads free, and they can lie down or walk around as they feel inclined. We always prefer the plan of fixing three bars firmly in the doorway, dispensing with the picketing

arrangement, and thus giving the ponies the luxury of a loose box. The stable floor is of ordinary hardened mud, and should be freshly sanded every day. Bedding is not required.

A few words as to the doki-boy. He is lazy, and utterly ignorant of his job, usually downright frightened of his pony, and at every whisk of the latter's tail, will make agonized appeals to his better feelings, uttering apprehensive clucks the while.

Still, even the raw material, if he is docile and willing, is quite teachable, and he is, I think, invariably kind to his pony. His sins are mostly those of omission.

You will have to begin from the very beginning in your education of him, and see all his work, for your own sake and the pony's. For instance, I remember one evening, when a pony came in much heated after polo, we stood by while our horse-boy, quite our best and most intelligent, proceeded to rub him down as usual, after which, to our horror, he shook out a clean rubber and began to fan the sweating pony with it! This, on a distinctly chilly evening after sunset!



MR LAFONE'S 'WHITE MOUSE.' (p. 261)

RIDING ASTRIDE—A LOCALLY MADE SKIRT! (p. 265)

Hand-rubbing is quite unknown, and will be most unwillingly adopted, but it is worth any amount of tiresome teaching and repetition of the same order; there is absolutely nothing that will so quickly improve the looks and condition of ponies. We have them tethered close to the verandah each morning and afternoon, and superintend the hand-rubbing ourselves, no pony's toilet being considered complete till his doki-boy is himself in a healthy perspiration. The ponies, too, enjoy the process, especially if they are rewarded for steadiness and patience by many pieces of juicy sugar-cane, which, by the way, is most useful for fattening up a thin pony, as well as being a handy little delicacy to carry on one's visits to the stables.

It should be peeled and cut in small pieces three inches long.

The new doki-boy, too, has no idea how to put on a saddle and bridle, and for many days I fear you will have to take them off, as every strap will be united to the wrong buckle, and put them on yourself before him, which

usually ends in broken nails, dirty hands, much heat and a lost temper. But never trust the doki-boy's powers until you are quite sure of them, as it is really dangerous to life and limb; you can hardly imagine how many subtle ways he can invent of putting on a bridle the wrong way.

He also prefers to drag it off without undoing the curb-chain or throat-lash, a most reprehensible piece of laziness that has to answer for many a docile pony showing temper and refusing to be bridled without an unpleasant struggle. It is an excellent thing to cultivate an unforgettable habit of loosening girths, curb-chain and throat-lash oneself on dismounting.

One word more of warning: water must *not* be given after food. It seems an absurdly superfluous caution, but I can assure you it has been done, is done to-day, and will be done as long as the pony's welfare is not cared for personally by his owner. It is, as every one knows, most dangerous, on account of colic and indigestion, and may frequently account for the ingenuous statement of the doki-boy that 'Allah has given the doki a pain in his stomach!'

Water should be given quite half an hour before the corn, the latter being well spread out on the ground to ensure slow feeding and thorough digestion.

Saddlery must, of course, be brought out from England, and should be selected with the greatest care; all metal work must be non-rusting, and head-stalls and girths chosen to fit ponies from thirteen to fourteen hands. I have found it a very satisfactory plan to adopt the Richards' numdah (I believe the patent is called the 'Wykeham'); the saddle itself has no stuffing and fits on to the numdah, which, being specially soft, adapts itself to the shape of the pony, and thus avoids the only too frequent cause of a sore back or wither. It is about three inches in thickness and, having absorbed all the perspiration, can be easily dried in the sun, the under surface being well beaten and brushed to prevent it from getting hard or caked. I have ridden over two thousand miles on one of these numdahs, and I will venture to say that it is practically impossible to give a pony a sore back. It can be imagined what a blessing that is on the march, when it is so difficult to lay him up for a few days even; besides, all the bother of continually re-stuffing

a saddle is done away with. Any saddle can be fitted with a ‘Wykeham’ numdah by Messrs.

Richards, at Winchester, for a guinea.

When choosing a saddle, take care to select one (with a cut-back tree, of course) that is not longer than necessary; the Nigerian ponies are much shorter in the barrel than English horses, and are apt to get their backs rubbed with a long saddle.

As the result of my own experience, I *most* strongly advise every woman who intends to do much riding out here, especially in the way of marching, to abandon her side-saddle altogether, and adopt the ‘astride’ position. In the first place, it is far more comfortable and less tiring on a long march; secondly, it does away with the necessity of bringing out special saddlery for oneself, it makes one quite independent of being ‘put up,’ and also enables one to march in the most comfortable of clothes, a short divided skirt or bloomers, putties and shooting boots; thirdly, and most important of all, it is the greatest blessing to the pony. No matter how straight you sit, sooner or later the strain of a side-saddle begins to tell on a pony, from the mere fact that the weight of the rider’s two legs is on one side of him! I noticed this especially at Katāgum when riding horses which had never carried a side-saddle before, and so sensitive were they to the innovation that it was almost impossible to keep them in the road at all—they bored so badly to the near side.

Bring out also picketing gear; it is much more durable than country rope, and does not rub the hair off the ponies’ feet. It consists of a stout iron ring, with a short chain, attached to a wide padded leather bracelet, buckling round the pony’s fetlock.

You will have to teach the horse-boys how to clean saddlery; I think there is nothing better than beeswax and soft soap, but saddle soap can usually be bought. The mai-doki’s incorrigible laziness comes out here; unless frequently watched and stood over, he confines himself to giving the seat of one’s saddle a polish like a mirror, and never touches one of the out-of-sight straps and parts, which need far the most care and softening. Bits must be well dried and wiped directly they are taken out of the pony’s mouth, and the whole of the saddlery should be kept *in the house*. A saddle stand is

easily made by any native carpenter, and is by no means an eyesore in the verandah, if the saddles are well polished and the bridles shining.

Only on one occasion on the march I lost sight of my saddle, which was carried off to the doki-boys'

quarters, and to what use it was put I cannot fathom; I only know that, the next morning, it appeared with the seat deeply scratched and scored, and looking five years older! The African servant is utterly devoid of respect for valuable belongings; he possesses nothing himself that is worth taking care of, and he listens with polite but bored submission while you very forcibly point out his crimes of destruction, but he is obviously indifferent, really, to the damage done, and thinks it all rather a silly fuss. 'Is not a saddle still a saddle even if it is hideously scratched and ill-treated?' When removing a saddle from a pony, he delights to dump it down on the ground, *anywhere*, in sand, dust or mud, the side flaps crushed underneath anyhow, although there may be half a dozen people standing by, ready to carry it off to its proper place.

I fear these pages may seem full of dismal discouragement and gloomy warnings, so, before leaving

the subject, I will repeat once more that the doki-boy is a criminal only from ignorance, that he is teachable, and that, possibly, he appears a greater sinner because his evil deeds, as a rule, are—or should be—committed before his master's eyes, which is, in itself, some little comfort!

The rainy season, from June till November, is the most unhealthy time for ponies, especially in the Niger valley. They are very subject to colic and to the peculiar form of horse-sickness which is attracting so much attention from the medical and veterinary officers. It shows itself in fever, weakness of the loins, swollen glands, and wasting away, accompanied by a voracious appetite, and, so far, has not been definitely diagnosed, though every effort is being made to understand its nature by examining specimens of blood, etc. Arsenic has been suggested as a cure, but at present it seems to me that, once the doctor or veterinary surgeon has discovered the peculiar bacillus in the blood, there is little or no hope of the pony's complete recovery, and the best thing for the unfortunate owner to do is to sell him for what he will fetch, or give him away to a native. The native can frequently patch up a

sick pony till he is quite fit enough for the light work they give him, though he would be quite useless for polo or hard marching.

I have seen only too many good little ponies die, and, once they sicken, I always feel that the dosing and nursing is rather hopeless work, and the sure bullet the kinder way; though, if it is determined to make a fight for the pony's life, the only way is to employ a native horse-doctor—he *may* know more about it than we do, and he certainly cannot well know less!

There are very few other ills that the West African stable is heir to, if ordinary care and supervision are given. It is worth mentioning that the mai-doki will ascribe everything that he cannot account for as the result of cold, from a mosquito bite up to a serious sprain, and 'Sainye ya kamma shi!'

('he has caught cold') will become a familiar sounding phrase, and will have to be politely but firmly discouraged.

CHAPTER VI
Camp Life

After a year spent in Nigeria, I am sure you will agree with me, on looking back, that the time spent ‘on tour’ was the happiest and most enjoyable of all. The life in the open air, the constant change and variety of scenery, the daily march that makes one so hungry at meal-times and so sleepy long before recognized bed-time, the incessant items of interest, among people, animals, birds, butterflies and plants—all combine to make one think it an ideal existence, and one where it is almost impossible to be cross, bored, or grumbly, in the clear sunlight, and amongst some of the loveliest surroundings imaginable. But this charming state of things is not to be reached all at once. To begin with, you must start with a firm determination to make the best of everything and anything: your unselfishness must be untiring and your cheerfulness infectious; your husband is certain to have a little leaven of difficult and possibly tiresome work mixed with his share of the picnic, so at these times, at least, the give and take of daily life may well be enhanced by lavish giving on your part. Here, no one can help you but yourself; but I can do something else for you, and that is, to supply you with a few hints, gathered from our own experience, which will make the camp arrangements run smoothly, and ensure your comfort in the remotest ‘bush.’ For it is not a sound argument to say, ‘If we get so hungry, we shan’t be particular what we eat’—it is just when one is famished that one wants a good, simple, well-cooked meal, not tough meat and eggs of doubtful freshness. Do not be discouraged at the start; it seems a colossal undertaking to calculate full provisions for some weeks, but it is really a simple matter after a little practice.

At the end of this chapter you will find a list of stores necessary for the use of two people going to camp, and out of reach of European stores, for a month.

The quantities are of necessity rather approximate, depending, as they must in some cases, on individual taste. Wherever you go, the villages can usually supply sheep, fowls, eggs, maize and yams, sweet potatoes and fruit and guinea-corn, and in many places there is excellent bush-fowl and

guinea-fowl shooting to be had, thus adding the best of all dishes, game, to the larder.

Stores are carried in ‘chop-boxes,’ i.e. deal boxes, with hinged lids, hasps and padlocks, and with handles. For size, 18 in. × 10 in. × 8 in. is about right, for they must be considered as loads, and it is no use having them larger, as you will only have to leave them half empty, on account of the weight, and things will tumble about and bottles get broken.

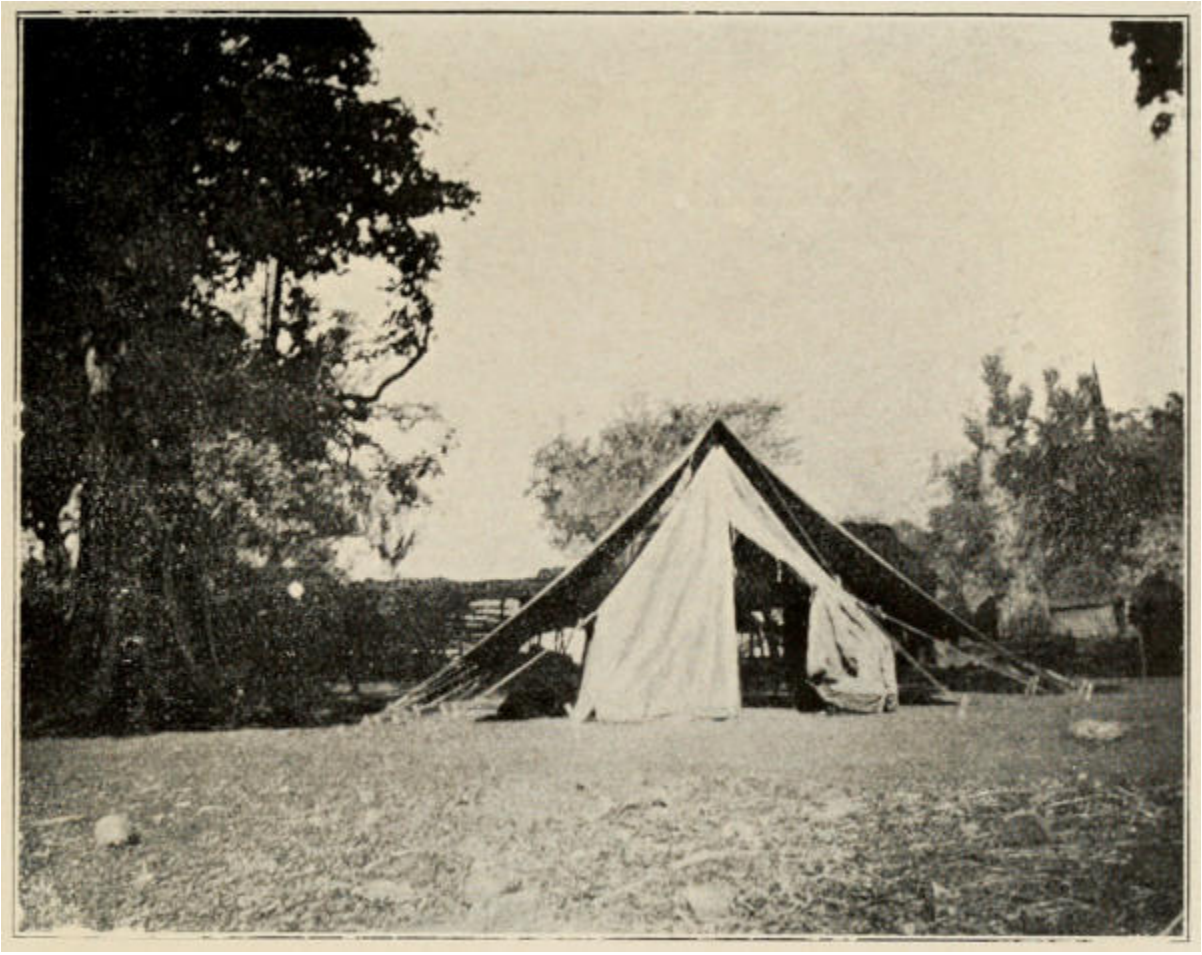
Even the size I have just mentioned cannot be packed full, but when one wants to carry fruit, or any light addition, the space comes in handy. We have found it useful, when bringing stores out from England (a proceeding much to be recommended to the economical housekeeper), to have a few of the cases made as described above, so as to have them ready for touring after their contents have been removed. Three should be enough, and one may usefully be devoted to rice alone, unless you are satisfied with and sure of being able to obtain the native sort: a 50 lb. bag of rice just fits in, and is invaluable, as fresh vegetables are almost impossible to come by. We have a fitted chop-box, made to our own design, containing a tray, and divers divisions, to accommodate china and glass. Below,

there is one space which holds the plates and dishes, another that just fits two sparklet bottles, and a third which usually carries the day’s supply of bread or biscuits. The tray contains the teapot, four cups and saucers, milk-jug and sugar-basin (all china), and four tumblers, all in their own partitions; the cruet-stand has also a little corner to itself, where nothing ever upsets, and we are saved the eternal worry of unscrewing patent receptacles to get at the salt, etc. This leaves an empty space in the middle of the tray, where the small tins of tea, sugar, milk, tea-cloth, etc., live, the idea being that breakfast, luncheon, or tea, can be prepared at once, without touching the other chop-boxes, if so desired.

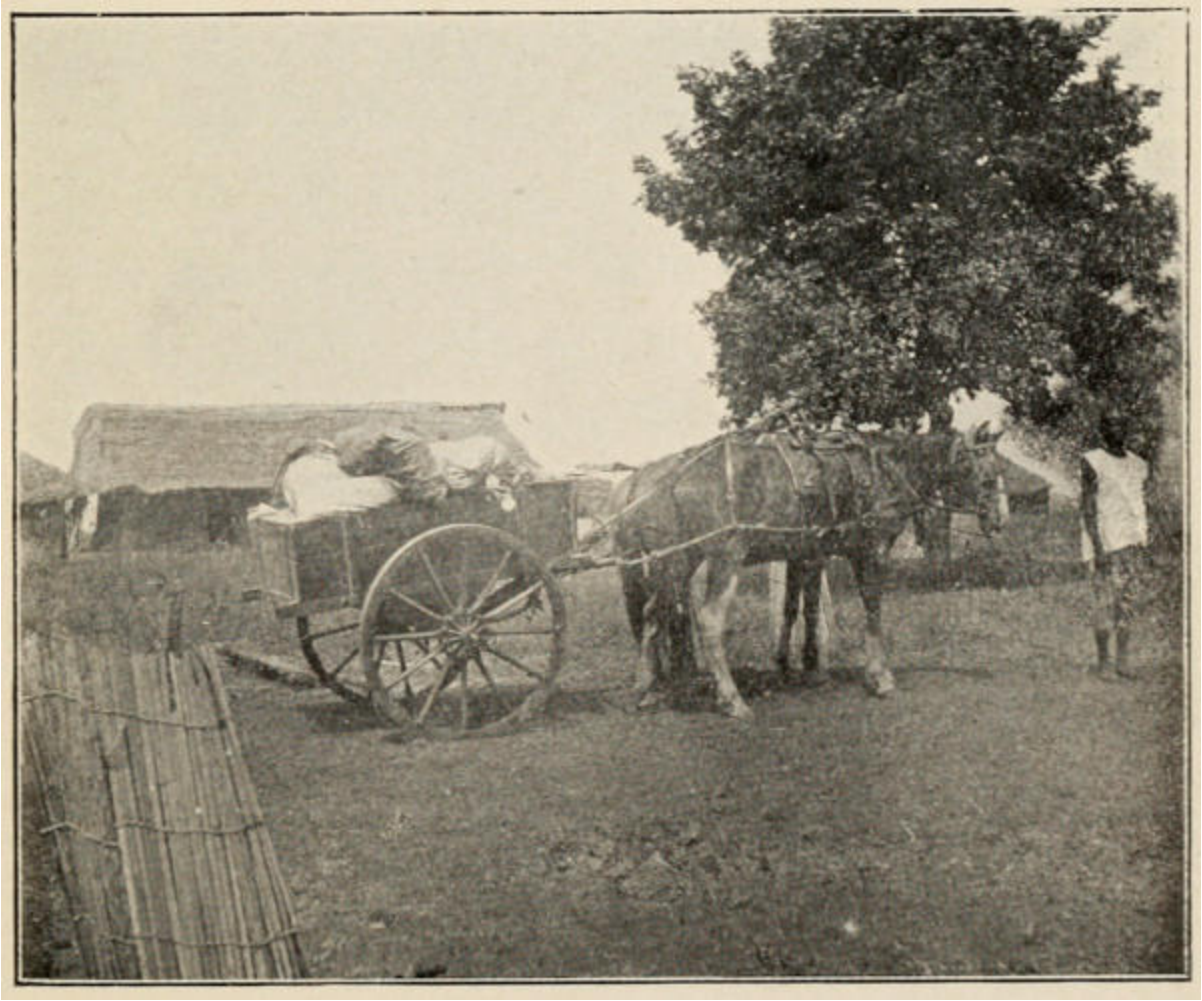
Knives, forks and spoons all have their own separate spaces, a better arrangement than the usual leather straps in the lid. The divisions are lined with felt, so that china tea-things and glass tumblers (all of thickish material, of course), which, to my mind, are so infinitely preferable to ironware as to make ‘all the difference,’ can be carried in safety for many months, even allowing for unlikely accidents, such as a carrier slipping on a stone while fording a river, etc.

On coming out here, we had ordered a costly luncheon basket from England but, before it arrived we had done our first tour of some weeks’

duration with the chop-box I have just described, and instantly decided that we could not be bothered with the dainty, but much less serviceable little arrangement of wicker, etc., so we rifled it of its least complicated fittings, and wrote it down under the heading of ‘Experientia docet’ in the household accounts.



One of our Camps. (p. 275)



THE MAIL-CART, BIDA. (p. 280)

I will make no apology for having discussed this subject at such length, for I know, from personal experience, what an immense difference to one's comfort a really practical chop-box makes; it is, therefore, worth describing in detail, as such an article cannot be bought ready-made. It is only necessary to add that the dimensions should be about 32 in. × 14 in. × 14 in., and the weight should not exceed 50 to 55 lb.

Don't forget to take the indispensable mincing-machine; if necessary at headquarters, it is doubly so in the bush, where you frequently have to eat meat an hour or so after it has been killed. A Berkefeld filter is the best, easily carried, simple and quick to work, beside being simplicity itself to clean and fix up: there is another, on the foot-pump principle, which saves labour, or at least exertion, but its extra weight is a great drawback.

We will suppose, you are able to provide yourselves with two 80 lb. Regulation Officer's tents; Government supplies one, and you would do well to bring a second as a private possession: one tent is quite too small for two people, and it is a pity to lose so much comfort for a detail so easily carried out.

Have them pitched one behind the other, the front one to serve for meals and daily occupation, the back one as sleeping quarters. You can always get a small, roofless attachment, with matting walls, erected in a few minutes, at the back of the sleeping tent, to act as a bathroom. At times, when we felt fairly secure from possible rain, we pitched the outer fly of the front tent in front again; it is quite a simple matter, with the aid of a few extra poles, supplied from the village, and extends one's quarters delightfully, for a stay of any length, if the camp is in a shady spot—otherwise, of course, it makes the tents warm.

For camp furniture, none is better than the 'X'

patent. The beds are most comfortable, and are by no means the Japanese puzzle that some camp beds are: there are excellent little tables, that can be put together in a couple of minutes, and a canvas basin and bath of the same pattern. With reference to the bath, I may say, that we have found it more convenient to carry with us a regular tin, travelling bath, with cover and strap, containing a wicker lining; it is so immensely useful for holding all kinds of odd things: an enamelled washing-basin, fitted with a canvas or leather cover and a strap, is also a great comfort, as, inside it, the whole of your washing paraphernalia travels, and it is such a joy to find everything you want under your hand, when your bath is temptingly ready—the towels having been thrown over the bathroom wall to sun themselves till you are ready for them.

Two really comfortable chairs of the ordinary, canvas, deck-chair pattern are most desirable, in addition to the regulation, little sit-up armchair affairs; a *lounge* is what one wants after a long, hot march. We have found it very useful to bring out, 'on our own,' an extra, small 'X' table, and a second armchair; the table being precious to a degree as a dressing-table.

When the chop boxes are neatly ranged round the sides of your tent, and the furniture, above mentioned, opened out, you will not care to fill up any more space with unnecessary articles. But never allow yourself to be

uncomfortable for the want of things you are certain to miss every day: it will spoil half your pleasure, and it is well worth the cost of an extra carrier, if necessary, for the purpose.

I fancy that every one, after one tour in the bush, will find that experience teaches that a few things taken, were useless, and some left behind were sorely wanted, and a little judicious sorting and arrangement will ensure the second trip being far more comfortable, without in the least increasing the bulk of your *personnel*.

Personal clothing can be carried in tin uniform cases, and it should be reduced as far as is compatible with the foregoing axiom. I have found

that a touring wardrobe, consisting of a habit skirt, boots, etc., two coats, one short holland skirt, a plain tea-gown, two changes of underclothing, a few muslin stocks, one pair of thick boots, and, instead of slippers, long, loose, Hausa boots, can be easily packed into a fair-sized uniform case. I always take, too, a folding Panama hat, for wearing in camp (one marches, of course, in a solar topee); a very small dressing-case, which is a great comfort, as it keeps all one's toilet necessaries together; a writing-case, tiny work-box, and sketching materials, all packed in the one box.

The servants do the washing, in a rough and ready fashion, so that many changes are absolutely unnecessary, especially as the items are not "got up"

at all, and can be washed and dried in an hour or two.

It is useful to have one extra tin case, not dedicated to any special purpose: it acts as a sort of overflow box, and, indeed, one usually finds it overflowing.

One or two favourite books, sketching,

or photography, butterfly catching, and a small but "lasting" piece of needlework, will amply fill up your leisure hours in camp. I remember a friend of mine in India worked a quantity of very beautiful point lace during a shooting trip in Kashmir; she used to sit on a box and stitch, while the camp was being pitched and struck. Personally, I find, as a rule, that after the inevitable preliminary arrangements and luncheon, a change and a rest, a

couple of sketches, and a stroll through the village, tea-time and twilight come long before I am ready for them.

The camp kitchen requires a little special arrangement, and both mistress and cook will have to employ their utmost ingenuity to prevent all the culinary operations from being conducted on the bare ground.

The cook will not grumble, he rather enjoys squatting on his heels, balancing pots and pans on a pile of blazing wood, and surrounding himself with a charmed circle of feathers, egg-shells and onions. But as long as he sees that all his implements are thoroughly cleansed and scrubbed—and one need not go far to find sand in Africa—there need be no real uncleanliness, however primitive the conditions; indeed, I always find my camp kitchen far more accessible than the one at headquarters, where a dash has to be made across a scorching compound at each visit. Many a simple cooking lesson have we jointly given, in the open air, under some shady tree, seated on boxes, wrestling with a wood fire in a light breeze.

A wide smooth board, scrubbed spotless every day, makes quite a useful kitchen table, placed across two provision boxes; one side being kept, scrupulously, for bread-making, etc., the other used for operations involving meat, onions, etc. Another detail that requires the mistress' assistance is a camp meat-safe—a few yards of mosquito netting or muslin, and the frame of an old umbrella, will solve the difficulty at once. The muslin must have a drawstring at the top and bottom, and the birds or joints hung on to the ribs of the open umbrella, which swings gracefully from the nearest tree.

For light, you cannot improve on the "Lord's"

lantern, issued by Government: it gives a splendid light, and travels in its own case, which also contains a canister, holding kerosene; this latter, however only carries enough oil for about a fortnight, so it is necessary to take a tin of kerosene as well. It is not wise to economize much over oil, for a light should be kept burning all night where you sleep. We usually carry also an excellent little lantern, fitted for candle or lamp, and are therefore never condemned to that 'dim, religious light' which is so conducive to most irreligious exclamations, when the master falls over a gun-case in the dark, or wants to read a paper.

During our last leave we had made, to our own design, a small arrangement, which, from personal experience, we can recommend most strongly. It is a light wooden box, measuring about 18 in. × 14 in.

× 7 in.; with a hinged lid, lock and key. Inside it is lined with padded baize, and divided into compartments, containing, respectively, a pair of candle lamps, four glass globes, two punkah tops, and a box of candles. This box travels everywhere in perfect safety, and is an endless comfort: amongst other advantages, it saves the inconvenience of placing a heavy "Lord's" lantern on a small camp dinner-table, which always seems to attract instantly every flying pest for a radius of fifty miles at least.

Moreover, during more than six months of almost incessant travelling, only one globe has been broken.

The actual marching will, of necessity, and from choice too, be done in the early morning, but if possible, when making the first start, let it be in the afternoon, a short march of only an hour or two (this is nearly always possible from any large centre), getting to your camp well by daylight. This is essential; the carriers will not be accustomed to their loads, they will all squabble and fight for the lightest ones, and, even did you purpose a morning start, an early one would be an impossibility. Then, on arrival in camp, no one knows where to put anything, and there is certain to be much to arrange and alter, for the West African servitor will, for the whole of your trip, place each chair and box exactly where he planted them that first evening, so be warned and, on that momentous occasion, insist upon having everything placed exactly where you hope to find it every day for the next few weeks—so much comfort depends on this. If you are accompanied by a military or police escort, the tents will be pitched without any difficulty; but otherwise, I fear that a little trouble and patience must be expended in teaching the carriers this most important accomplishment.

But do not lose heart, and feel miserable and disappointed, if things are rather in a muddle, the servants slow and unmethodical, the carriers disposed to dump down their loads anywhere, and

disappear into the village. Take the word of a fairly old camping hand, things will be better to-morrow, and better still the day after. Meantime, a kettle can be boiled in a few minutes, and, though you are probably fatigued, yourself, after much packing, and perhaps a longer ride than you

have taken for some time, a cup of tea will make a wonderful difference. The mistress, who, after half an hour's rest for every one, gets up cheerfully from her comfortable chair, saying brightly, 'Now then, Suli, or Mohammadu, I am going to help you,' can reduce chaos to order and comfort in no time, and will find her servants willing to assist; for, as I have said before in this chapter, cheerfulness is infectious, and nowhere more so than amongst Africans. I have often seen a crowd of sullen, angry faces suddenly break into happy, childish laughter, moved by one well-timed joke.

Speaking from my own experience, I can only say that I consider the carriers to be a much maligned set of folks; they are very easy to deal with, and after the first march, there is never a dispute—except, of course, over 'chop'—the carrier fraternity would wrangle in Paradise over the possession of half a yam. I have known most of them by name; on one long tour they used to come and say 'Good-morning'

with broadest smiles, and, even after long and trying marches, they would go out into the bush, entirely on their own initiative, and collect bunches of flowers for 'Missis' to decorate her tent and dinner-table with. Their affectionate impulses went so far as to induce them to rifle birds' nests and bring me the fledglings, until I had to be severe about it.

A little sympathetic attention to their various ailments and wounds, makes them consider one as a valuable ally and friend.

Once shaken down into the routine of marching, you will elect to get up at dawn, your toilet will take about twenty minutes, and a simple breakfast, consisting of coffee and eggs, or grilled chicken, should then be ready. During breakfast, the carriers will pounce upon, and whisk away, the whole contents of the camp, and in less than an hour from the time you woke the long line will have streamed away into the distance, the head-man having instructions where to pitch the next camp, and to have a good supply of water and fire-wood ready.

Your better half will probably have a little work to do, in the shape of a final interview with the Chief of the place, so the carriers can always get a good half-hour's start.

You will then begin your march, walking in the fresh, cool, morning air, through the loveliest, greenest, dew-soaked country possible to find, along the tiny footpaths, which constitute the ‘high roads’ in Nigeria. I believe some people never walk a yard on the march, but I always thoroughly enjoy it; it breaks the monotony of many hours in the saddle, and, I think, must be good for one, as riding at a snail’s pace is not, after all, very violent exercise.

If a march is extremely long, it is quite easy to keep the cook and a few carriers, with table, chairs, etc., behind the others, have a cold luncheon prepared the day before, and select a shady spot near water, about half-way, for luncheon and a rest—as a rule, you will find that the carriers have already selected it with some discrimination. The ordinary day’s march occupies five or six hours, and averages from fifteen to eighteen miles. This sounds very little, but it is as much as your carriers and ponies (and yourself) are able for, without distress, and, unless time is a serious consideration, I do not advocate marching again in the afternoon. A Political Officer will usually have ample work at each halting-place to occupy the hours of daylight. I have done seven and eight hours in the saddle many a time, but it is tiring, hard work for every one, and makes the whole thing a weariness, instead of a pleasure.

You will, I think, find, when you ride in, that tents have been pitched, everything unpacked and made ready for you, the servants will have rested, the cook will be hard at work, preparing luncheon, and the staff will assure you, with smiling faces, that the march has been ‘not far too much at all.’ If one anticipates several weeks of hard marching, it is a good thing to hire small ponies for the cook and head steward, as it ensures their arriving first, and arriving fresh.

The evening stroll at sunset is always full of interest for me. There is the village to inspect, cloth-making and cotton-spinning to admire, and, perhaps, many little trifles of Hausa leather work, etc., to buy. In places where a white woman has never been seen before, she may cause a panic among the simple souls. In one remote little Pagan village, I remember, the men came, as usual, headed by their Chief, to the ‘palaver,’ and, at sight of me, they fell prostrate, covered their heads with their flowing garments, lay on the ground and *moaned* in fear, refusing to be comforted till I retreated from the scene. I have since discovered that an occasional albino negress

(truly, a fearsome sight) is held by them in great reverence, and practically worshipped!

In another village the people fled at the sight of me, the only person holding his ground being a man, nursing a sick baby, who had high fever, from teething pain. We prescribed, and supplied, for the poor mite, a remedy so old-fashioned, that I almost blush to record it—a nicely smoothed and rounded chicken bone! And, when the incessant wail of pain died away, and the baby chewed contentedly at its ‘comforter,’ the frightened women and children crept back and smiled, and told each other, doubtless, that we were physicians of a very high order!

One can always, I find, gain the confidence of the women-kind, by taking notice of the ‘pikkins,’

or by a little care and solicitude for a wound or sore.

Merely the applying of a clean bandage, personally, establishes your position in the village as the ‘Godsent,’

and, which matters more, as the friend of the ladies—for I have a strong conviction that (in spite of the laments indulged in by good people at home, over the sad position of the down-trodden woman of Africa) the ladies rule the villages and set the public tone: I have seen most lively rows and free fights started by one lady’s uncontrolled tongue, or quarrelsome temper.

You will, of course, like to see that your ponies are properly housed, well-fed, and comfortable for the night. It is as well to take blankets for them, in case they have to sleep in the open, or stand in the rain. When possible, it is a great comfort to have an extra pony, to march along with you—one of them may go sick or lame, on a rough road, and have to be put out of work. Ponies usually fatten and thrive well on the march, possibly because guinea-corn, etc., is so much more plentiful in the bush than at headquarters; but it is decidedly anxious work, taking horses one values into thick, forest country, where guinea-corn is not obtainable and grass rank and scarce. Great care should be exercised over the ponies’ drinking water, and they should *by no means* be allowed to drink at any pool or stream they may cross. I firmly believe that bad water is one of the causes of much of the horse sickness so prevalent here, and unless I can see clearly up and down stream for some distance, and satisfy myself that the water is

not full of decaying vegetation, nor stagnating under overhanging branches, my pony has to wait for his drink until a healthier state of things can be found.

Where roads are rough and stony, extra care is, of course, needed in searching the ponies' feet for stones—it may not occur to the doki-boys.

In some parts of the country tents are seldom necessary, as there are rest-houses at all the halting-places on the main roads, and very delightful they are to spend a day or two in, when they are watertight and in good repair—simply shelters, with a very deep, low, thatched roof coming to within four feet of the ground, no walls (grass ones can be added by the villagers in half an hour, if desired), cosy, yet airy from their great height, very roomy, and usually watertight; though, to ensure this, when there is rain about, it is a good thing to pitch the outer fly of a tent over your bed, thus securing a dry, comfortable night, even in a tornado. In a few places, where the rest-house is placed in a forest clearing, outside the village, it seems rather confiding to sleep so insecurely, but I have been told that a lamp and mosquito curtains will daunt any but the hungriest lion.

I have only one or two more suggestions to offer before closing this chapter: the first and most important may not sound attractive, but it is absolutely necessary—to put all the clothing you intend wearing the next day *under your pillow at night*.

Indeed, it is the only way to ensure its being dry, the damp penetrates everywhere, and at 5 a.m. one does not feel disposed to walk about, lightly clothed, unlocking boxes, and extracting one's garments.

Another small point, which is useful to know and act upon, is, that a very small quantity of powdered alum will clear dirty, brackish water very quickly; all the solid matter sinks to the bottom, and the clear water can be poured off, thus saving the unpleasant necessity for a muddy-looking, uninviting bath: a few crystals of permanganate of potash are rather nice in a bath, too, when the water is unpleasant to smell and look at.

On long marches it is worth while trying to cultivate a taste for Kola nuts: they are marvellously refreshing and stimulating, and the clean, bitter flavour is rather delightful once one is accustomed to it. I have, often and

often, staved off the pangs of hunger, thirst and fatigue, with a Kola nut, the sharpness tempered by a piece of chocolate munched along with it.

For the benefit of your servants and carriers, a few simple remedies, easily obtained from the medical officers, should be taken into the bush; they are tabulated below, with a list of stores. This last, it must be remembered, is confined severely to necessaries; it can be supplemented by all kinds of luxuries, such as tinned sardines, cheese, butter, potted meat, etc., always bearing in mind that the total transport allowed by Government, at present to each official on the march, is an average of twelve to fourteen loads of fifty-six pounds each.

Provisions necessary for Two People for One Month

4 lb. sugar.

4 lb. tea.

14 lb. flour.

4 tins biscuits.

18 tins milk.

6 tins lard.

6 tins jam.

2 tins baking-powder.

2 tins coffee.

2 packets candles.

1 packet matches.

1 tin kerosene.

12 boxes sparklets.

2 bars soap.

1 bottle curry-powder.

12 soup squares.

1 case whisky.

1 case limejuice.

salt, pepper, mustard, etc.

Medical Stores

1 roll lint.

1 roll cotton-wool.

1 packet bandages.

1 tin Epsom salts.

1 tin boracic powder.

1 tin sulphur ointment.

2 bottles liniment.

1 bottle chlorodyne.

A small quantity of iodoform ointment.

CHAPTER VII
What to Wear

I approach this subject with some diffidence, as it is one so differently regarded by different individuals.

No two people ever seem to agree about clothing for the tropics, so I shall not attempt to offer opinions on the merits or demerits of ‘flannel next the skin,’

etc., but shall confine myself to a few general hints, which, I hope, may be equally useful to the disciple of Jaeger and Viyella, and to the advocate of muslin and cambric.

One broad axiom that none will dispute, I may give safely: in all kinds of clothes, aim at variety rather than at super-excellence of quality and delicacy of trimming. Remember that you have to wear washing gowns all the year round, and their constant attendance at the wash-tub will destroy them very quickly if you have only three or four to ring the changes on. This applies especially to white gowns, which, cool and dainty as they are, I do not recommend very strongly, as a dusty path or a shower of rain will make them unwearable after half an hour, and back they must go to the washerman, who proceeds to forcibly illustrate the meaning of ‘wear and tear.’

Linen skirts of any colour that is not too delicate are invaluable; half a dozen of them, one or two holland, and a couple of simple muslins or cool cottons, should carry you triumphantly through your time. The woman endowed with clever fingers can, of course, add to her stock, armed with good paper patterns, lengths of unmade material, and, if she is lucky, a sewing-machine, and she will probably be very glad of the occupation for her spare time. Shirts and blouses of thin flannel, washing silk and muslin can be brought in any number that space allows—the more the better, but the local laundry cannot goffer frills and almost always tears lace! Cambric and muslin blouses of the ‘shirt’ order are the most useful kind, as silk rots almost at once. For this reason let your smarter blouses be of *crêpe de chine* rather than silk.

Evening gowns you will scarcely want; one, or at most two simple dinner frocks, and a tea-gown to wear for dinner at home, will be ample. For the benefit of those who may have to spend some time on tour, I may mention that I derive the greatest comfort from a very thin cashmere or nun's veiling tea-gown, or rather an elaborate dressing-gown for dinner in camp, and also find it useful as a dressing-gown during the colder part of the voyage. You will want one warm dress of the coat-and-skirt description to start your voyage in, for it is usually quite cold from Liverpool to the Canaries. It should be of the plainest tailor-made sort; once arrived in Africa you will not wear it again, probably, until you reach the same point on your way home. The same may be said of what was once described to me as a 'human' hat, unless it is of the very plainest; for some reason which I cannot quite define, but can nevertheless thoroughly appreciate, a 'smart' hat looks absolutely ludicrous out here: in fact, any tendency to over-dressing has only one effect, that of making your company, usually a few hard-working men, feel thoroughly uncomfortable. All one wants, after all, is to appear fresh, spotless and dainty, which can be best accomplished by a clean linen frock, a shady simple straw hat, a sensible sunshade and garden gloves.

If it will not quite break your heart, be advised and brush back your fringe, if you have one; it is quite impossible to keep it in curl or tidy, and the peace and comfort you will get from the absence of clammy dank wisps of short hair will amply repay you for what you may think an unbecoming change.

May I also whisper that no one should allow her friends at home to persuade her to invest in an 'artistic and invisible' 'transformation'; they are all too visible, and, for this country, are simply waste of money.

In Nigeria there is nearly always a breeze modifying the damp heat, which reminds me that a light cloth or flannel coat is rather indispensable for sitting outside after tennis, on cool evenings; and, when it sets to work to rain after a sultry day, one finds it very chilly in muslin, the temperature drops so suddenly and considerably, that a thin serge or flannel skirt is exceedingly comfortable.

Your riding-habit should consist of a very short skirt of moderate thickness; I am no believer in what tailors call 'Colonial' habits, they very

seldom set so comfortably, and never wear so well as a good solid cloth; moreover, the gain in coolness is not perceptible: at least, that has been my experience, after some years in India. For underneath you will find rather loose knickers most comfortable, made of dark coloured washing material; the best is called ‘moleskin’ by breeches-makers, and is used for the thinnest kind of riding-breeches for men. Don’t have your knickers made by a habit-maker, simply have a good pattern of bicycling knickers copied; two pairs should be quite enough.

A cloth coat is unnecessary; a few holland and white drill loose coats will answer much better, and, as starched collars are somewhat at a discount, soft white muslin scarves, worn like a hunting-stock, look neat and are comfortable. I think it is a considerable advantage to have your habit very short indeed, as, while touring, it is a great pleasure and variety to walk the first few miles of the march, a pleasure which is completely spoilt if you have to hold up a heavy habit skirt. Riding on tour is such crawling work, that, if you prefer it, you could quite well ride your marches in an ordinary short walking skirt, though personally I think there is no garb so entirely comfortable as well-fitting riding garments.

For those wise women who adopt the ‘astride’

position, a divided skirt is, of course, necessary.

The very best is, I believe, made by Ross of Bond Street, but that, being the perfection of cut and smartness, is, naturally, an expensive investment, and for rough work in this country an ordinary divided bicycling skirt would answer perfectly, or else full bloomers worn with shooting boots and putties and a rather long-skirted coat—personally, I should advocate the latter.

Bear well in mind, there must be no trifling with your mackintosh! When it rains in West Africa, it *does* rain, and you want the most serious and really waterproof mackintosh obtainable. I have found that the essential point is to have it of a light weight, loose and easy to slip into, at a moment’s notice, even on a plunging frightened pony, when the tornado catches one on the march. *The* firm of all others for this purpose is Burberry, in the Haymarket. I doubt whether any umbrella really keeps out the rain; for ordinary use, I should advise a strong silk *en-tout-cas* of a dark colour that will serve equally well for sun or shower. You will also want a

really big cotton umbrella, lined with green—in fact, it would be a graceful attention to bring a second one for your better half, as they are quite necessary for and constantly used by men who have to go out in the sun in the middle of the day.

It will be wise to stock yourself before leaving home with all small etceteras, such as ribbons, laces, buttons, thread, needles, etc. We cannot yet buy ‘chiffons’ in Nigeria, and, unless you bring them all with you, it entails writing home, and waiting two months for a reel of silk or a packet of needles. I remember well being utterly unable to get from market or stores a single reel of white cotton, for weeks, and my husband being reduced to wearing a highly decorative but somewhat unusual pair of amateur boot-laces made of bright crimson Hausa leather!

Boots must be fairly solid as to soles; the soil of West Africa seems to have a specially destructive effect on English leather. In Sierra Leone, for instance, the soles are worn out in a few weeks, though in Nigeria things are not so bad; for while in Sierra Leone, I walked because I loathed crawling in a hammock, here, with ponies, walking is not a bit necessary. Still, it is impossible to get boots resoled, so as to be wearable, therefore do not economize in this direction, only remember that all your foot-gear must be constantly worn or it will spoil. Blacking boots are only a vexation, they always seem sticky, and dirty one’s hands and skirts; I should recommend a stout, *really* stout, pair of tan laced boots for heavy walking, about half a size larger than usual, a lighter pair for ordinary wear (tan buckskin is delightfully cool and soft for the dry weather), and a couple of pairs of walking-shoes of tan or black glacé kid. It is useless to lay down anything definite, as people use their feet so differently; some are hard on boots, while others can wear them for years apparently. Of course, boot-trees have a good deal to say to the longevity of foot-gear, and, now that such light ones are to be had, three or four pairs would not be too many. I have heard it said that walking-shoes are dangerous on account of snakes, but they are far cooler than boots, and one really does not have to pick one’s way among snakes as a rule, and I have always found them a pleasant variety. About indoor shoes you will, of course, decide for yourself; I think perhaps they wear out quicker than at home—mine do, at all events, but my incessant perambulations in the garden, stables, etc., may have something to do with that! They should be glacé kid, not patent leather, on account of coolness.

Riding-boots ought to be tan, and a very easy fit; I have been told that stiffened canvas uppers and tan-leather feet constitute delightfully cool riding-boots, but I have no personal experience of them, and think one can hardly improve on good tan leather: I have never desired anything cooler, even in a Punjab hot weather. A little toilet powder sprinkled inside makes them much easier to pull on.

Mosquitoes do not deal more gently with us here than they do elsewhere; all the men wear long loose boots, made in this country, of Hausa leather; they are an absolute protection, and, if somewhat too clumsy for a lady's wear, as a rule, they are exceedingly useful in camp. For ordinary use, a pair of black canvas gaiters, buttoned and reaching to the knee, can be worn over ordinary evening slippers. They are so neat as not to be noticeable at all, and are an absolute protection when mosquitoes are numerous and hungry.

So much for your outer woman. At the end of this chapter, I am giving a list of what appears to me the least possible supply of clothes to make you comfortable, and, bearing in mind that it takes two months to get additions out from Home, even to Lokoja, and much longer up country, you will doubtless agree that it is best to be independent.

You will want a large quantity of underclothing, and, first of all, you must decide for yourself about the solidity of vests, etc. I cannot suggest hygienic principles, as I never practise them; do as you are accustomed to do, as that appears to make for comfort.

I met one lady in Africa, who told me she wore *merino combinations*, because, having worn them always in England, she felt cold without them—and this in a mean temperature of eighty or ninety degrees!

I think perfect comfort and happiness can be found in fine cambric or nainsook combinations, or spun-silk vests and cambric knickers. I rather doubt the desirability of washing-silk under-garments, chiefly because the art of laundry work is in its infancy, and the silk shirts that I have had washed have returned distinctly hard and harsh.

But the main point, in a climate like this, is to have enough of whatever you decide to wear; you will probably change everything two or three times a day, and washing is not done here in a day or two, as it is in India. Let

everything be of the thinnest texture, compatible with bad washing. The Lahman underwear is excellent in its thinnest qualities, and is invariably praised by those who wear it.

A supply of old underlinen to wear on the voyage and throw overboard is invaluable; I dislike nothing more than arriving at one's destination with a bulging soiled-linen bag, and an uncertain prospect of getting it converted into clean clothes. On the way home this is quite a simple matter; after twelve months in the hands of the gentle African laundry folk, most of your underlinen will be fit for nothing else!

At least six pairs of corsets are necessary, the coolest kind obtainable, certainly, but I can assure you that to leave off wearing them at any time for the sake of coolness is a huge mistake: there is nothing so fatiguing as to lose one's ordinary support even with a view to being 'comfy,' *Always* wear corsets, even for *tête-à-tête* home dinner on the warmest evenings; there is something about their absence almost as demoralizing as hair in curling-pins!

I should avoid expensive and 'faddy' varieties of underclothing. I remember when I first went to India, I was induced to buy, at a guinea each, four night-dresses of some special mixture of silk and wool, which, I was told, would be 'ideal wear' for the Red Sea and other warm localities. Perhaps I am hopelessly prejudiced against anything resembling flannel, but I thought them *horrible*, and after enduring one for half an hour, they were all stowed away, to be presented to my 'ayah' at the first opportunity.

If you think fit to wear a kamerband at night (a distinctly prudent proceeding), a yard or two of white flannel, simply torn into lengths about eighteen inches wide, and worn outside the nightdress, answers the purpose better than anything else; the nights are almost invariably cool, and usually breezy towards dawn.

With these few hints, aided by your own common sense, I think your outfit is sure to be successful and satisfactory, and your comfort and dainty appearance assured; so I need say no more, except a word or two on the subject of a sun-hat, which you *must* have, no matter how much your artistic feelings may rebel against it. Be sure it is large enough, for the part that needs most protection is the back of the neck, and no helmet-shaped 'topi' will give you real shade there. I like best the spreading, mushroom

shaped wide-brimmed hat, which will fit well down over back hair and all, so that hat-pins and chin-strap can be dispensed with. A grey hat, with a grey silk puggaree looks—well, as nice as a solar topi can be made to look! With this and a couple of simple straw or Panama hats, you will need no more; the appearance of the latter can be varied by different ribbons and scarves to relieve the monotony.

If you have any favourite kinds of scent, soap or powder, bring them with you; scent and powder are not to be bought here, of course, and one's 'very own' soap is a delightful small luxury everywhere.

I should like to say a word for 'Papier poudre.' It is the greatest boon in a hot damp climate, which gives a tendency to greasiness to the best complexions, and does far less harm than the use of powder; moreover, it never leaves white streaks on nose or cheeks, even if you pass the little, scented, absorbent leaf over your face without a mirror.

Now as to boxes, and I have done.

I should strongly advise against the usual leather cabin trunks; they are so heavy that, although it is true that they fit under a berth, it is a herculean task to pull them out for anything you may happen to want. They are likewise too heavy and too large for one carrier's load, and so are useless for camp travelling; they wear badly too under rough usage, which they are quite certain to get. Use regulation tin 'uniform cases,' sized approximately 36 in. ×

12 in. × 15 in. This is the ideal size for a carrier's load, which he carries on his head, steadied with one hand, so you can imagine that anything much wider than the above dimensions is a great sorrow to him.

But I think, for the sake of your skirts, you might be allowed one box a little longer, say 42 in., or just long enough to take a skirt without folding; for the average carrier will make no objection as to length, so long as you consider his feelings as to width.

You will find these boxes handier too in the cabin; you can put a couple of them under the sofa-berth, and feel fairly independent of the sea that comes in once or twice on every voyage. On the journey up river, on the little stern-wheelers, space is a great consideration, and a big trunk quite un-get-at-able; one feels less compunction in improvising a seat out of a tin

box than out of a leather one, and seats have to be improvised very often on these occasions!

The following list is only intended as a basis to work on, and to be added to as your fancy dictates and your purse allows:—

Six cambric night-dresses.

Two flannel night-dresses.

Twelve cambric combinations.

Six pairs cambric knickers.

Twelve spun silk vests.

Six pairs tan thread stockings.

Six pairs black thread stockings.

Three white petticoats.

Two silk moirette petticoats (wears much better than silk).

Two dozen handkerchiefs.

Six pairs corsets.

Twelve camisoles.

One white (washing) dressing-gown.

One woollen dressing-gown.

Four linen skirts.

Two holland or drill skirts.

Two muslin dresses.

One cloth gown.

One tea-gown.

Two evening gowns.

Blouses *ad. lib.*

One habit skirt.

Four riding coats.

Two pairs riding breeches.

Two Panama hats.

One solar topi.

One light coat.

One *en-tout-cas*.

One sunshade.

One mackintosh.

One pair thick tan boots.

One pair tan walking boots.

One pair tan glacé walking shoes.

One pair black glacé walking shoes.

Six pairs house slippers.

One pair tan riding boots.

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