

Savage Africa, the Niger, and the Binne.

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Wishing to visit the valley of the Niger, and to learn what I could of its climate and inhabitants, and the best mode of getting to them, with a view to future missionary operations, I took passage at Monrovia, Liberia, on the *Corisco*, September 17th.

We anchored in Bonny Bay, at the mouth of the Bonny River, the lower mouth of the Niger, September 30th. Bonny lies very low; consequently it is almost certain death to Europeans. The traders all live in hulks of old vessels, anchored in the bay. The great receiving hulk was once the magnificent steamer *Adriatic*. But oh! what bad business she is in, in her old age. The cargo she receives consists largely of rum and gin; articles of traffic on the African coast which make the degraded heathen still more degraded.

At Bonny I took passage in one of the small "Branch Steamers" for Akassa, on the Niger, the headquarters of the great African Trading Company. They own all the steamers, except the *Henry Venn*, plying up and down the river from this point, and monopolize the entire trade of the Niger, consisting of palm oil, palm kernels, shea butter, and ivory. The palm oil of trade in Africa is obtained from the outside or husk of the nut, by boiling. The kernel is then dried and forms the article of export, palm kernel. The oil from the kernels has to be expressed by machinery. Shea butter is made from the fruit of a tree.

At Asaba, about 200 miles from the coast, the land becomes more elevated, "Mount Victoria" reaching an altitude of 700 feet. Here, and also at Onitsha, the Company spoken of have "factories," as the trading stations are called. At the latter place a trader told me that he had often seen human flesh carried around in baskets for sale. Bishop Crowther also informed me that at a town about seven miles distant they usually had to guard the graves six or seven days, to prevent the dead being taken for food. The people of a town never eat any of their own townspeople. Here the British consul, the Hon. H. E. Hewett, whom I met on the river, tried to persuade them to abolish the practice of burying the living with the dead, as a case had occurred but a few days before of three persons being buried with a free man, who had died—two buried alive with him to wait on him whither he was going; the other, killed first, as a sacrifice. "If you pay us, we will give it up," said the head man. "How much do you want?" asked the consul. "Three bullocks," "No," he replied; "I'll not pay you anything to induce you to do right." While there, he tried to settle an old feud that had lasted ten years between two chiefs, Omani and Odo. Omani said it could be settled but in one way, and that was: his brother, who had left him, and joined Odo, must be killed. The consul asked if his brother would leave his country and go to some other and live, whether that would satisfy him. To this he consented; but the brother could not be induced to go. He was a free man, he said, and had done nothing worthy of death or banishment; therefore he would not leave his town. At this, as in other places, they have an annual cleansing of the town, to prevent war and pestilence, etc. It consists in tying the feet and hands of a girl, 15 or 16 years old, passing a rope under her arms, and dragging her all through and around the town, and then to the river, where they take her in a canoe to the middle of the river and throw her in, giving her two or three smart blows. Twins are taken out and thrown into the bush; but, unlike other places further south, they do not kill the

mother. She is taken to the bush, and is obliged to stay there seven days. If any one conveys her food and she lives at the expiration of seven days, she can return. Further west, in the Yoruba Country, twins are held as sacred.

This is the darkest belt of the Dark Continent, broken in a few places here and there by Gospel light, reflected from the too few mission stations. Some are hearing of the "Book Saba" and wonderful "God palaver," that pass all Juju and all our country's fash. A prominent chief, living back from Bonny thirty miles and coming there frequently to trade, attended the mission church. He finally built a large country church, and invited the missionary, Archdeacon Crowther, to come and show his people "God palaver." Last month he went. A chief of another town was present. This chief listened very attentively, and at the close of the preaching he rose up and asked: "Palaver done set? I go. I come next sun and hear more palaver." Next day he came, bringing two boxes in his canoe. These contained his and his family's Jujus, with his big war Juju. To this he said he had offered over fifteen puncheons of oil. "I no want him any more. Take him all!" he said. The Archdeacon saved some from destruction, two of which he promised to send me.

As one ascends the Niger, the air becomes drier and more salubrious, the people less barbarous. Mohammedan influence is felt and seen by the abolition of human sacrifices and other atrocities. At Lukuja, a distance of between 400 and 500 miles from the coast, and at the confluence of the Binne, from the east, and the Kwarva, from the west, the face of the country is quite broken, some of the hills rising to 1,200 and 1,400 feet.

Here not only great rivers converge, but it seems to be a point of the converging of various tribes and tongues. More than eight different tribes, speaking various dialects, are here represented. The Hausa is spoken the most, and this has been reduced to writing. The people are friendly and hospitable to strangers, and many have large herds of cattle, goats, etc. Horses, too, thrive; but are not as numerous as further up the river. The Binne, or Tehadda, as it is usually down on our school maps, but called Binne here, was ascended last year to the distance of 600 miles by Mr. Ashcroft, in the *Henry Venn*, the C. M. S.'s steamer. They went to within three and a half days' journey by canoe to the confluence of the Mayo Kebbi with the Binne. That river is supposed to receive the great bulk of its waters from the overflow of the Shary, in some such way, perhaps, as the Amazon receives, sometimes, water from the Orinoco. If so, the heart of Africa can be reached by direct water communication. In all this distance no trading post, nor even a mission station; yet it is quite easy of access and, except in some low places by the river, is comparatively healthy. At Egga, on the west side of the Niger, cattle and horses are numerous, also turkeys; ducks, even the vegetables we are accustomed to seeing in America. Here the Mohammedans are a large body. The English Wesleyans have begun a work at this point, under very favorable circumstances. The man in charge is from the region of Lake Tchad. He is a recaptured slave and is very highly spoken of for zeal and piety. One can live at a very small outlay here. The highest point to which the Company's steamers run is Rabba, a distance of about 900 miles from the coast.

Oct. 21st found me back at Bonny. When there, and if a steamer is in, one must take passage, no matter whether outward or homeward bound, as there are no convenient stopping places. I found the *Nubia*, which had to make her trip to Old Calabar and down to Victoria before

returning. So on to Old Calabar, which we reached Saturday, at dark. That is, we reached the mouth of the river or estuary. Not many years since, they, as well as the Bonny people, annually sacrificed an Albino woman on the bar, to appease the wrath of the demon of the angry waters. Slowly we wended our way up the river, under the brilliant starlight of the tropical skies, running so near the bank, in following the channel, that in some places the overhanging branches of the trees scraped the ship's ropes. Duke Town, 44 miles up the river, was reached at 10 P. M. Next morning a Sabbath stillness reigned over all. Quite early the bell from the Scotch "kirk" on the hill rang out sweet and clear over the hills and over the water. Never did church-bells sound so musical, so deliciously heavenly before! Nothing for weeks, in a heathen land and on the rivers, to remind one of Holy Day.

Here are heroes and heroines of whom the world is ignorant, toiling on, year after year, till this moral wilderness is beginning to blossom as the rose. I went to a town called Qus, where one service was held. A pole in the center of the town, surrounded by small platforms, raised about five feet high. In these were dishes of pottery, containing "medicine." "Medicine" is to make them successful in war, guard the town from evil powers, and so on. The principal ingredients are human skulls and bones of peculiar birds and animals. On one side of the public square was the "Juju" house. Near the front entrance was the raised altar where hundreds of human victims had been offered. Now that is abolished; but they offer goats and white fowl. Human skulls were at the base of the altar, as they are also to be found in nearly every yard or at every door-step. They are considered excellent to keep "witch" away. They no longer put twins and their mother to death; but on the birth of twins every one flees the house. But they will send word to the missionaries, who send and have them brought to the mission. They have a practice of confining young girls of eleven or twelve to the house for two or three years, and some have been kept longer, and forcing them to eat, eat, till the poor things, with their bodies chalked, to prevent perspiration, just become one stupid heap of fat. Many die in the process of fattening. They are not considered marriageable until "fattened."—N. Y. *Independent*.

—A young Hindoo woman died two years ago whom English critics praise in extravagant terms. Though at her death she was only twenty-two years old, yet the *Saturday Review* had pronounced her "the most promising living woman of letters." It compared her to George Eliot, who, at twenty, had only written a few essays; with George Sand, who at that age, had written nothing; with Madame de Staël, who at the same age, was known only as a brilliant talker; with Mrs. Browning, who, was, at twenty, only a promising writer. "This Hindoo girl, at twenty, had not only done good work, but had done an immense quantity of it, and in four languages." She wrote in English and French as well as in her native tongue, and had translated from the Sanscrit into English one of the most famous religious books of the Hindoos. Her name was Toru Diutt, and she showed more original powers combined with broad, thorough learning than any native with whom the English have come in contact. She died early, a victim to excessive mental work.

—If a newspaper should contain all the things that all its readers want it to print, it would have to be bigger than a bed-spread. If it should leave out all that each of its readers does not wish to read, it would be blank paper.

Christian Statesmanship in France.

BY GEO. MAY POWELL.

Some of the ablest statesmen and writers in France have evidently discerned that Christianity is at once the only foundation of permanent political prosperity; and also the keystone in the grand arch of the Superstructure. This was very plainly discernable by any attentive listener of even average comprehension who was present at the recent address of the Rev. M. Reveillaud at Chambers Presbyterian church. This address—translated by the Rev. Mr. Dods, first assistant to the Rev. Dr. McAll, in Paris—was of thrilling interest. The meeting was presided over by the Rev. Dr. Breed. The pastor, Rev. Dr. Otts, also, spoke words of warm welcome. M. Reveillaud was appropriately introduced as "the Luther of the Evangelical work in France." He said in substance that an eminent journalist recently wrote of the work, that Protestantism was in the air. French statesmen, in their speeches and writings, had filled the minds of the masses with the idea that Romanism has been the cause of their national weakness, and that of all other nations just in proportion as it controlled, also, that the strong nations were, and in the nature of the case were bound to be, Protestant. Gambetta often and emphatically tells the people that Rome is the great enemy of France. Victor Hugo as we all know is famous for similar sayings. The people see the parish priests actively hostile to the Republic. At one place where there were religious services as part of the celebration of the birth-day of the Republic, a Protestant pastor was engaged because they knew the priest would not pray for a free country. One of the State Secretaries said France would be Protestant in forty years if laborers were sent now into the whited harvest. Never since the days of Louis XIV. till after the fall of Napoleon III. has there been such an opportunity to push evangelical work as now. If the field is occupied France may become the center of a grand work not only for herself, but for Europe. In other days she furnished more martyrs than all the rest of the surrounding countries. On her soil the terrible tide of Saracenic invasion was arrested by Charles Martel at the battle of Tours. That battle was only a type of one now waging there under the Prince of Peace. France helped our country in the struggle for civil and religious freedom, and we should be more than willing to make return by financial aid to her present need. Very likely future generations in the land of the Puritans would thus at the same time be greatly benefitted. Thus may we strengthen the hands of those we are likely to sorely need as allies in future struggles with the Harlot of the Seven Hill City. Many interesting incidents and facts were cited to show the ripeness of France for evangelization. The speaker had preached in many cities and towns, and only once, at Lyon, had there been disturbance. This was by members of a Catholic club sent there for that purpose; and by his pleading in their behalf were the populace prevented from punishing the disturbers with personal violence. At another place the people requested the use of a fine Catholic church for his service. The magistrates seconded and the trustees cordially consented to the request. On the bodies of people washed ashore from a wreck off the coast near Cherbourg, were proofs that some were Papists and some Protestant. The priest declined to conduct a union funeral service and the people united in inviting a Protestant pastor to officiate. The present work aims: 1st, to strengthen the Huguenot church; 2d, to start new churches. It is in the form of a Home Mission Society. Evangelists take theatres in which to hold meet-

ings, and aim to rid the services of church-like form or surroundings. To make them, in other words, thoroughly practical and matter of fact. Men often weep at these meetings while a primitive Christianity is preached to them, and say: "This is what France wants." Religious liberty has now roused a spirit of revival in the bosom of the Roman church. The Protestant church is relatively small, but it numbers a million, most of whom are poor. State support having been withdrawn from the former, it totters and will fall if the Protestants are supported. In two meetings held by M. Reveillaud at one point 300 Catholic men, heads of families, united to form a Protestant church. They have added seventy stations, and Bibles and tracts are eagerly bought in great quantities in Paris and the large cities and towns as well as in the country.

A permanent organization has been effected in Philadelphia to aid this work.—*Christian Statesman*.

Words Deceive Conscience.

BY CHARLES T. THURING

Words—deceive—the conscience. "Men believe," remarks Bacon, "that their reason is lord over their words; but it happens, too, that words exercise a reciprocal and reactionary power over the intellect. Words, as a Tartar's bow, do shoot back upon the understanding of the wisest, and mightily entangle and pervert the judgment." In the same way words act upon the moral faculty of man. Words juggle conscience into deciding that a wrong deed is right. Words wheedle conscience into judging that a thing bearing a fair name cannot be foul. Words cajole conscience into believing that an act which is called merely an indiscretion cannot deserve severe censure. A clergyman was arrested for stealing books. The head-lines of a newspaper chronicling the crime were, "A Peculiar Misfortune." A clerk absconded with the available funds of his house. Pursued, captured, and returned, he was spoken of as the young gentleman who had "lately met with an accident." A member of a legislature declared he had been offered "five hundred reasons for his vote." When stealing books is called a "peculiar misfortune," absconding and a deserved arrest "meeting with an accident," and a bribe a "reason," the conscience is liable to be deceived. At the base and frivolous court of Louis XIV. gambling was hardly less common than eating. Ladies took a hand at cards; but they were somewhat scrupulous about receiving the stakes won, in the open way of the men. As soon as a game closed the winner handed over her stakes to a friend, who would in due time repay her with a similar gift. The arrangement was called an "interchange of winnings," and by the name the conscience of the fair gambler was quieted. Is not conscience duller to sin by calling the vices of youth the sowing of wild oats? Is not conscience seared to drunkenness by recognizing death by *delirium tremens* as death by heart disease? Is not conscience made callous as to the sacredness of human life by styling a duel an affair of honor? We have improved upon the Greeks. They named a general abolition of debt by statute "a disburdening ordinance." We call it a "readjustment," and those who thus put in order what was out of order, "readjusters." A prurient curiosity loses its shamefulness when it is known as the desire for knowledge. A slander is robbed of its sting when it is called, as it frequently is, the frank expression of opinion about one's neighbor. Stock gambling approaches the line of legitimate business when it is recognized as speculation. By calling the impure pure, and the pure impure, the shameful respectable, and the respectable shameful, the wrong right, and the right wrong, the conscience is deceived.—S. S. *Times*.