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THE SCOTTISH GEOGRAPHICAL MAGAZINE.

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TRAVELS ON THE WESTERN COAST OF EQUATORIAL AFRICA.

By Miss M. W. KINGSLEY.

(*Read at a Meeting of the Society in Edinburgh, January* 1896.)

MY aim in visiting West Africa this time was to get together a general collection of fishes from a West African river north of the Congo, for the terrific current of this river makes a great impression on distribution. There is an equally interesting difference in the forms of the native religion in districts north, and districts south, of Calabar; and my own chief interests in West Africa being fetich and native law, I was anxious to go on with local observations on these subjects—observations which I had commenced in 1893. I received the greatest assistance in this from Miss Mary Slessor, that most wonderful and brave lady who lives at Oköyön, and whose guest I was for some part of my visit of five months in Calabar, and whose humble admirer I shall always be. I left Calabar in April and went down to the Congo Français, where I knew, from previous experience in Kacongo, that the influence and advice of my friend Mr. C. G. Hudson would be of great service to me. It was, and I started fishing in the Ogowé, pottering up that lovely river, receiving every hospitality from the Mission Evangélique, to above the Alemba rapid. I then pottered down, and made my way down the Rembo Ongo into the Karkola river. Thence to Lake N'Covi, and then overland through Efuma, Egaja, and Esun to Ndorko, on the river Rembwe. From Ndorko I went up the river to Acondgo, and from there down to Glass, where, well knowing my wanderings through the Fan country would not meet with approval, I said I had done it from scientific motives. "No, Miss Kingsley," said my English friends, "you fell into the hands of those Fans, and they took you touring about their country like a circus."

I admit there is some truth in the statement. After arriving at Glass, I got a small schooner and a native crew through the kindness of the Rev. Dr. Nassau, and sailed to Corisco island, in order to see the annual fishing in the lakes in its interior. This done, we sailed back to Glass, and on our way called—that is to say, were driven ashore —at divers places. I will not dwell on this voyage, for it is fuller of sensational incident than scientific interest, because I was commanding the vessel and the South Atlantic was rough. At the end of September I reached Victoria, per s.s. *Niger*, and owing to the kindness and help given me by Herr Von Lücke, the Vice-Governor, and Herr Liebert, commanding the garrison post at Buëa, I was enabled to ascend Mungo Mah Lobeh, the Great Cameroon. The usual route up this exceedingly beautiful peak of 13,760 feet is from its sea face, at Bibundi. I went up the south-east face, through Buëa, because I was anxious to see the trend of the Rumbi and Umon ranges of mountains. These ranges are practically one and the same, and I believe will be found continuous with, and of the same formation as, the Sierra de Cristal. They are entirely distinct from the Cameroon mountain, whose relations are the volcanic islands of Fernando Po, 10,190 feet, Principe, 3000 feet, San Thome, 6913 feet, and possibly also Ascencion, St. Helena, and the Tristan d'Acunha group—mushrooms as regards age compared with the Rumbi and Sierra de Cristal ranges. From Victoria, on my return from the mountain, I was given a passage on His Imperial Majesty's gunboat *Nachtigal*, which was then going round with the German officer representing the Cameroon colony on the delimitation commission between it and the Niger Coast Protectorate, and thus luxuriously I landed back at Old Calabar, whence I came home in one of my old friends the British African steamers, landing in Liverpool on the 31st of November.

The Ogowé river is certainly the part of my journey that alone deserves your attention, this magnificent river not having been much visited by Englishmen since Du Chaillu made his journeys in its regions. Certainly Du Chaillu is nearly as good an authority on it as he was in 1865, for no one who has any personal acquaintance with the country will dispute his assertions. The only important difference that has been made is, that the Fans are now nearer the coast all along the line from Panavia Bay to Cape Sta. Clara.

This is the largest river that debouches on the west coast between the Congo and the Niger, and it is, strictly speaking, the largest equatorial river in the world, for its course lies mainly on the Line. Its delta terminates at Fernan Vaz, some thirty miles or so below the Equator. That long stretch of it between N'djoli and Boué is about ten miles below the Line, and the region of its source is the inland plateau of the Congo Français (visited in 1878 by M. de Brazza). In some places the sources are not more than 120 miles from the Alima, which is an affluent of the Congo. The basin of the Ogowé is roughly estimated at 130,000 square miles, and during the long wet season its average discharge is about 1,750,000 cubic feet per second. Monsieur Krüger says its main stream is 1300 kilomètres long. Its affluents have been but little explored; the most important among them are the N'guni, falling

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in on the south bank just above Lambarene, the Okana on the north bank, near Kondo Kondo, and the Ivindo on the north bank at Boué.

The river is more similar to the Congo than to the Niger, save that, unlike the Congo, it has an immense delta. This delta commences at Lambarene, 130 miles from the sea. The delta region is exceedingly interesting, both in its flora, fauna, and fetich; it is called Kama country, and is better known in England as Gorilla land. Its main population consists of malarial microbes and mosquitoes, and it is supremely damp. Indeed, the whole of it, save the strange bubble-shaped hills you find in it, is under water from Lambarene to the sea, where the Ogowé comes down during the long wet season. There are a quantity of lakes in connection with the entire course of the river; the most extensive and important of these are those in the Lambarene district, and the largest, as far as is at present known, is the Lake of Islands, Eleziva Zonangué: the next largest is Lake Azingo. The rise of the Ogowé in the wet seasons is great, and remarkable for commencing a month before the rains fall on the river itself.

The rise in the long wet season is from 18 to 20 feet in the Talagouga narrows; in the short wet season from 12 to 15 feet. The river is navigable for small steamers for 206 miles, up to N'djoli; above this place the rapids commence, and you have to take a canoe for the next 500 miles. I will not enter into the subject of those rapids, but confine myself to the new route I followed to the Rembwe, disclaiming any intention either to recommend it, or appropriate any credit to myself for taking it. When I was told no one had been that way before, I said, "Wise men!" I started on it from Kangwe in Lambarene, but I will not go into details about the route as far as the Adjuma town on the Rembo Ongo, called Arewuma. From this town, with divers diversions and disasters on sand-banks, we paddled west to the entrance of the Karkola river, a swift, narrow, but deep stream that leaves the Rembo Ongo on the north side. The Rembo goes on, still to the west, just below the Karkola, dividing up into three streams, one falling into the main Ogowé at Ashuka, one into the Nunghi, and one into the Ngumbi, down in Kama country, the whole series of rivers being made of the divided waters of the Ogowé. Kama country, I should observe, commences at Ashuka, and terminates at the sea.

The Karkola river seems to be formed of the overflow from the Rembo Ongo and from Lake N'Covi, and the stream running west from the district of Lake Azingo, and it most probably falls into the river Nazareth, but it has not been explored. We turned into it from the Rembo Ongo, and, after being carried down at a rapid pace by its current for some distance, turned up into what we should call in Norfolk a straith, which took us into a broad expanse of water, out of which rose sand-banks in every stage of exposure, from the one which had only just come to the surface on the falling of the waters in the dry season, to that which had held its head above water for years, and which, by carefully collecting *débris* from the waters, was pretending not to be a sand-bank at all, but a real island, and so had persuaded trees to grow on it. The majority of the islands and the bank of the river

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all through this district were now covered with the beautiful tender green hippo grass, which springs up annually in the dry season, and which is the favourite food of both the hippopotamus and the manatee, and amongst which the great black hornbills can be seen busily hunting for their favourite food—small snakes and frogs. From my point of view the richness of animal life in this broad stretch of water and sand-bank was almost cloying. We were skirting a long stretch of high hippo grass, my crew cheerily singing their boat song, when an immense hippo rose up in the grass alongside, about six feet from us, stared calmly, and then yawned a yawn a yard wide, and grunted the news of our arrival to his companions, who also rose up, and strolled through the grass with the flowing grace of Pantechnicon vans. Passing by rapidly we came to a big fellow on a bed of crushed-down grass, right on the edge of the bank, with several little black-and-white birds running over him. He lazily deigned to raise his head, and seemed when he had done so to be lazily speculating whether he had not better get the rest of himself up, and put a summary stop to respectable hippopotami being disturbed in their afternoon nap. We left that bank hastily, and crossed to the other just in time to see another monster come dripping and shining up out of the water where our canoe would have been if we had held our course. I have once been upset by a hippo—in fun, I believe—but I was glad not to repeat the experience. We thought it wise to put an island between us and them, and hoped that to the hippo out of sight meant out of mind.

We shot into a narrow channel between a low island and a large sand-bank, and that sand-bank had on it as fine specimens of the West African crocodile as you could wish to see. They also were having their siesta, stretched sprawling on the sand with their mouths wide open; one old lady had a lot of young crocodiles running over her, evidently playing like a lot of kittens, and the heavy musky smell from them was most offensive. We did not, however, complain aloud about this, because we felt hopelessly in the wrong in intruding on these family scenes, and apologetically hurried past. When we were out of earshot, I asked one of my Adjuma crew if there were many gorillas, elephants, leopards, and bush-cow round here? "Plenty too much," said he, and I wished myself in England, at the same time regretfully remembering that the last word a scientific friend had said to me before I left home was, "Always take measurements, Miss Kingsley, and always from the adult male." I had neglected magnificent opportunities of getting record measurements of hippos and crocodiles, and I can only excuse myself by saying I had mislaid my yard measure, and that I felt the crew would not have liked it. The banks all round this expanse of water seemed of light-coloured sandy clay, and we made our way across it into a channel that came into its eastern extremity, without any further misadventure, save that I nearly had the back of my head blown away by one of the crew's guns going off accidentally.

The river we ran up into, zig-zags about, and then lays a course south-east and by east. It is studded with islands, thinly clad with forest. It was a lonely-looking land. In front of us was a low range of mountains, and they were seen in the distance to bend to the

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north-west. We passed out of this channel into a melancholy, but exceedingly beautiful, lake, which my crew told me was Lake N'Covi. I went over the name several times with them before putting it down, because I did not know it; but they were all of a tale, and quite sure it was "Lake N'Covi." I have not, I regret to say, subsequently been able to find the name on a chart or map; but it had been visited, I heard from the natives, by a French officer, a long time ago. The only name I can find down on this map, prepared by the French authorities, that could fit with a traveller passing this way is that of F. Tenaille D'Estais, 1882. The lake he visited is called on the map Ebouko, but that name was not used by either the Adjuma or the resident Fan, nor is it on the map placed sufficiently west of Azingo. So I will confine myself to saying that it is an exceedingly beautiful place to go into, as I did, late in the afternoon. The rich golden sunlight, followed by the short-lived but glorious flushes of colour, played over the scene as we paddled north-north-east, the canoe leaving a long trail of frosted silver behind her on the mirror-like water, and each stroke of the paddle sending down the air with it to come up again in luminous bubbles of silver white, not in swirls of mud as is usual in West African waters. The rim of the lake is wreathed in all directions with nobly forested mountainous hills, indigo and purple in the dying daylight. On the north-north-east and north-east these hills come down directly into the lake; on the north, south-west, and south-east there is a band of level forested ground, behind which the hills rise. There are many beautifully wooded islands and dwarf cliffs, and we made our way to one of these towards the north-east part of the lake.

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There was a large village on the level top, and a steep dwarf cliff overgrown with verdure came down to the small beach, which was covered with grey, waterwashed rocks, and two or three canoes lay on them. There seemed to be some discussion going on in the village that required a deal of shouting. My men, after they had driven the canoe near the beach, stowed their paddles and picked up their guns, slinging on their ammunition bags, and slipping the beautiful covers made of gorilla and antelope skin off the locks of their guns. One of my men, who thought he had a trade friend among the Fans at this town of M'fetta, got on to the beach. By this time the inhabitants had become cognisant of our arrival, and, abandoning what certainly ought to have been a mass meeting to remonstrate with the local authorities on the unsanitary condition of the town, they came swarming down, a semi-naked, brown mass of humanity, to attend to us, evidently regarding us as an imperial question. Things did not look restful; every man among them was armed with a gun with its sheath off the lock, and there were no ladies. They drew up about twenty paces from us in silence. My man, who had first gone ashore, was joined by myself and our head boatman, and the men shouted out the name of the Fan friend they hoped to find, and for some terribly long minutes they shouted in vain, and the rest of the crew became nervous. I did not, for I had been nervous since those hippos. What made us most uncomfortable was that the Fans had not given us, as they should have, a greeting, nor would they answer

my ingratiating salutations save with a grunt. At last the crowd opened, and a fine-looking middle-aged man came to the front, clad in a twist of calico, and a bunch of leopard and wildcat tails hanging from his shoulder by a strip of leopard skin; my man went for him with a rush, as if he were going to clasp him to his ample bosom, but held his hands almost touching the Fan's shoulders, and the Fan, who grunted feelingly, closed his hands and held them so as to all but clasp the Adjuma. Then another of my men made a rush for the crowd and went through great demonstrations of affection with another gentleman, whom he recognised as a trade friend, and whom he had not expected to meet here—and we all breathed again. Peace having been proclaimed, conversation became general, and then we disappeared into a mob of men and a fog of noise, and went up the hill. You would have thought, from the vehemence of the shouting and gesticulation, that we were going to be torn forthwith to shreds; but not a single hand touched me, the crowd opening out in front and closing in behind as I passed up the steep path to the village. The noise redoubled in violence when we reached it, for we fell in with the ladies and children, and the dogs. Each child, as soon as it saw my white face, gave a howl, and fled headlong into the nearest hut, and, I fear from the continuance of the screams, had fits. It was an exceedingly filthy village, built of bark, like all Fan villages. The remains of a crocodile that had been killed the week before last, piles of fish offal, and portions of an elephant, hippo, or manatee—I cannot tell you which, because it was so high—united to make a most impressive stench. Taken all together, I cannot recommend the accommodation at M'fetta, and I will go into no more details about it, which were many, especially as I had to engage some of its inhabitants to act as porters and guides, none of my men ever having crossed from the Ogowé to the Rembwe by this route.

I took three Fans, elephant hunters by profession, with me next morning. They honestly said they could only guide me as far as the big town of Efuma; they had never been beyond, but they would come with me all the way if I would guarantee their safety. This I agreed to, and made the agreement to pay off at a sub-factory of Messrs. Hatton & Cookson, which I knew was on that river in charge of a native trader, and we started off in the canoe again, going across the lake to the upper end, and then into a channel set with manatee traps, and out into a broader bit of river, walled by the lank dark forest apparently in all directions, but really winding through it. This river, the Fans said, came from Lake Azingo, in a valley among the mountains; we ran our canoe into the bank on the south side, among the line of dark foliaged herbs that grew along the water edge, and got out on to, or more strictly, into, a most fitting introduction to the sort of country we were to spend our time on before we saw the Rembwe, namely, knee-deep black slime.

The whole of our path across this piece of country lay through the great gloom of Africa's equatorial forest belt. This forest is a region of great fascination and charm for me. Our first day's march in it was among ebony and giant redwood, no palm-trees showing, save, now and

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again, my old enemy, the climbing palm (*Calamus*), on its long excursions up one tree, down another, and up again; here and there, when it reached the sunlight, bursting into a plume of long fronds, out of whose centre rose the long thin spike of a young frond, and covered all over every part of its cable-like stem with a perfect fur of thorns. After the first day we struck the western spur-hills of the Sierra de Cristal, and the forest became even more interesting. For hours we would pass among an apparently infinite series of columns of uniform height, about 100 feet. At the top of these the great boughs sprang out and interlaced, forming a canopy or ceiling, which dimmed the light, even of the equatorial sun, to such an extent that no undergrowth could thrive in the gloom. In other places, we were among vast buttressed tree stems, and from their far-away summits hung great lines of bush ropes, some as straight as a plumb-line, and others intertwined among each other, like so many struggling serpents which had become, at the height of their combat, fixed by some magic spell, almost all of them as bare of foliage as a ship's wire rigging. These bush ropes, I noticed, were usually carried up with the growing tree, so can hardly be called climbers. The india-rubber vine, however, is a true climber, and it abounds in this region. These stretches of forest were made up of spindle-stemmed trees, among which I often noticed the remains of some forest giant, whose death by lightning, or by his superior height having given the demoniac tornado wind an extra grip on him, had allowed sufficient light to come into the bottom of the forest, so that the young saplings, which had been living a half-starved life for years, when the light came, shot up. They seemed to know that their one chance was getting to the level of the top of the forest without a moment's delay. No time to grow fat in the stem, or send out side branches, or any such vanity; up, up to the light level, and he that reached it first won in this game of life or death—for when he reached it, he spread his crown of upper branches, and shut off again the life-giving light from his competitors, and they paled off and died, or dragged on an attenuated existence, waiting for another chance. Now and again we in the under gloom knew that, far away above us, there was another world—a world of blossom, scent, and beauty—which we saw as little of as the earthworm in a flower-bed; around us the ground would be strewn with cast blooms, sometimes thick, wax-like, glorious cups of orange and crimson, each one of which told us that some of the vast trees were showing a glory of colour to heaven alone; sometimes pure white stephanotis-like flowers telling us the bare, twisted, festooned cables were rubber vines, which had burst into blossom when they had found the sun.

I feel justified in stating that the track was bad, for I consulted the natives, who freely stated it was "bad too much," and "no man fit to pass this way in the rains." This was self-evident, for even in the dry season the swamps were all that could be managed. There were representatives of the three chief classes of West African bog. The broad deep one was the best to tackle, because it made a break in the forest, so that the sun could get down to it and bake a crust over it, on which you could go, if you went quickly—a minute's pause in one place meant

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going through. The next best was the shallow knee or waist-deep affair, through which you could wade. The worst, the most frequent in this region, was the deep narrow one, so shaded that the sun could not form a crust over it; these required great care, and took up a good deal of time. Whichever of us happened to be at the head of his party, when we struck one of these, used to go down into the black, batter-like ooze, and try and find a ford, going on into it carefully until the slime was up to the chin; sometimes we made three or four attempts in vain, and then had to come back to our own bank and go higher up and try again, the other members of the party sitting quietly on the bank until the ford was found. We several times came across stretches of shallow swamp where elephants had been rolling and bathing. I, on one occasion, when going on ahead, came across a party of eight thoroughly enjoying themselves, and lay down and watched them. Passing over these places was difficult, for their great footmarks, in which you could have placed a bamboo arm-chair, were filled with water, and the rest of the ground was rolled hard and slippery; above all, those elephants left their ticks behind them. I will not enlarge on this subject, nor on the leeches, but I shall never forget either, particularly an experience in the great tidal swamp we struck south-west of Ndorko, which connected with the Rembwe. We waded two hours through it, up to our chins all the time, and came out with a sort of astrachan collar of leeches, which we removed with trade salt; indeed, our appearance on entering Ndorko was more striking than beautiful, each of us being encased in mud, which was streaked with blood and bespangled with flies; fortunately there is no white society at Ndorko or anywhere on the Rembwe.

Bad as the swamps were, the hillsides were worse. They were at abrupt angles, and wherever they were exposed to the full force of tornado winds there were terrific falls of timber, ancient and modern, over which we had to climb—terribly scratchy, dangerous work, for when a man missed his hold down he went, sometimes for six or seven feet, sometimes for fifteen or twenty, before he reached the rotten stuff underneath; and, when one got there, there were more snakes and scorpions, etc., than one had any use for—I speak from experience—and then one had to be hauled with bush rope up through the sticks, which had been turned the wrong way by the down journey. Added to this, the sky being open above, the sun came down on us who were hauling or being hauled, and as we were hot enough with our exertions and the steam-laden atmosphere, and heavy with the stench of the swamps between the surrounding hills, this sun heat was an unwelcome addition.

The inhabitants of the region were entirely Fan, with a few scattered communities of pygmies. Of these latter I have little knowledge. Both the Fans and the Adjumas detest them, although they do not molest them much, partly, I fancy, from fear of the pygmies' poisoned arrows. I inquired of my good friend Wiki, the renowned elephant hunter, as to the reason of his dislike of pygmies, and his observations, as usual with Wiki more powerful than select, amounted to, "Oh, they are so low—degraded, you know. Upon my word, one can hardly tell them from monkeys; and then look at the way they live!" I had

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no opportunity of hearing a pygmy's opinion on the Fans. I expect they would have said disagreeable things about cannibalism. The main haunt of these pygmies is, however, not on this northern side of the Ogowé region, but on the southern, round the upper waters of the N'guni above the falls of Samba, where they live on good terms with the Fans' first cousins, the Bakili tribe. Regarding the Fans themselves I could say much, for I made them my chief study while in the Congo Français. From my point of view, they were lamentably common-sense people, and although surrounded on all sides with intensely superstitious tribes, had very few superstitions of their own. One amusing incident I came across: the chief of a Fan town had died, and his fellow-chief—there are usually two or three in a village—in order to do his deceased *confrère* honour, called in the neighbouring tribe of N'comi, who are renowned for their death-dances. He addressed the people of the village, saying, "I have sent for these N'comi, so that our late chief may have due honour paid him. We Fans do not pretend to go in for this sort of thing, or understand it, but our good neighbours thoroughly understand the affair, and how it ought to be managed." So the people formed a ring and watched the weird, complicated N'comi death-dance for an hour or so, and then began one by one to retire to bed, feeling, I fear, bored. When the N'comi noticed the audience getting thin, they remonstrated; they said it was the Fans' chief they were doing it for in a neighbourly way, and the least the Fans could do was to watch them appreciatively; so the chief had the people who had left early turned out again, but it ultimately ended in the N'comi retiring highly disgusted, as usual, with "those Fans."

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The Fans are an immense tribe who have quite recently appeared on the border of the known regions of the Congo Français. Where they have come from no one exactly knows, save that it is from some region to the north-east and by east of the Ogowé. Du Chaillu was, I believe, the first European to come into contact with them, and he perceived that they were in a state of migration. In his day, about 1863-1865, they were still far up in the interior, but now they are in the coast regions all the way along from the Batanga regions to the northern shore of the Gaboon estuary—in some places, as at Cape Esterias, right down on the seashore itself. They are, on the whole, a fine race, and one occasionally sees magnificent specimens of humanity, both male and female, among them. Their colour is light bronze; many of the men have beards, and albinoes are rare among them. The average height of both sexes is 5 ft. 6 in.—5 ft. 8 in. Their countenances are very expressive, and once you have been with them you can never mistake a Fan, and I often amused my white friends by picking out a Fan from a crowd of Benga, Mpongwe, or Galwa. But it is in their mental characteristics that their difference from these lethargic, dying-out tribes is most marked. The Fan is full of fire, temper, intelligence and go, very teachable, rather difficult to manage, quick to take offence; but, I ought to confess, people who know him better than I do say he is a treacherous, thievish, murderous cannibal. I never found him treacherous or thievish, and I like him better than any African, as a

tribe, I have yet met. He is a cannibal, not from superstitious motives like the negro tribes: he just does it in his common-sense way. Man's flesh, he assures me, is very good, and he wishes I would try it; and I must say this for him, he does not buy slaves to kill and eat, as some of the Middle Congo tribes that I know of do. Indeed, with slaves he has nothing to do; he neither keeps them nor sells them, like the Galwa and Mpongwe. He is always very much abused for eating his relations, but he does not really do this : he will eat his next-door neighbour's relation and allows his next-door neighbour to eat his, but even then he always keeps a little something as a memento—a foot or hand, some hair, or eyeballs; unfortunately he keeps them hung up in a pine-apple fibre bag in his living and sleeping rooms, and the odour is not pleasant, particularly if the little something is the record of a recent, or comparatively recent, loss in his family. At one of the Fan towns I passed through, for instance, between Lake N'comi and the Rembwe, I noticed a smell, which I decided had an organic origin, in the room I was occupying for the night. As no one was about, I investigated, and knocking off the hot end of the rush-light on the floor, saw three bags hanging from the roof pole. Carefully noticing how they were tied up, I unfortunately shook out the contents of the first one into my only hat; it was a hand, three big toes, four eyes, two ears, and some other fragments; the hand was quite fresh, the others were in various stages of decay. Bad as no doubt cannibalism is, what I did object to among the Fans was the idea that it was a grand thing for a village to possess a white man's eyeball. I hate superstition in this horrid form; besides, it might have extended, I feared, to white women's eyeballs too. It is almost needless to say that cannibalism is not allowed, nor practised, in districts close to the Government stations. I myself doubt whether there is half as much cannibalism near a station of the Congo Français as there is near stations in the Oil Rivers. Of course it is more difficult to suppress in the Rivers, because it is connected with the secret societies, etc.

I have not space here to tell you of the way I went hunting elephants, and fishing, and rubber collecting, etc. with these Fans—experiences I hope to repeat; but I do hope I may have better ground to go over than that between N'covi and Ndorko, for that piece of country seems to me to have been made as an obstacle race-track for giants of the olden time, and to have fallen into bad repair, and I sincerely hope not to fall down any more game traps; they are most unpleasant, and act not only as traps for leopards, antelopes, and boars, but as fortifications for the villages. Nearly every village in the Fan country is on none but fighting terms with its next-door village, and all the villages we passed through in this bit of country were elaborately guarded with pits, felled trees, and stakes driven into the path, besides being situated close to a river and its attributive swamp. We always knew when we were approaching a village by the person who was leading disappearing with a crash through the path. The rest of the party would then hurry up, slip the skin sheaths from their gun locks, see their powder was all right, loosen the trowel or long leaf-shaped knives in their snakeskin scabbards, and then haul out the victim from the pit and tie him up,

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where necessary, with cool green leaves, for he was pretty sure to be hurt somewhere, because of the ebony spikes fixed in the bottom of the pit. I went down all sorts of pits, and personally prefer elephant pits to fall into, because they are V-shape, and you can get out unaided, and regard the pits constructed entirely for human enemies as the worst, because they have a bed of spiky thorns at the bottom of them. All pits, save the elephant ones, are formed like a bag, small at the top, and larger at the bottom, so getting out of them unaided is almost impossible. My chief method of getting into these and other of the severer forms of affliction and terror was by going on alone in front, while the Fans were sitting down having one of their frequent snacks. I was compelled to do this, otherwise I could never have kept pace with them, for they were infinitely the most rapid walkers of any Africans I have ever come across.

Personally I got on very well with my elephant hunters, and indeed with the Fans in general, but I had no end of trouble with them regarding my canoe men and my three Fans. I fear that M'fetta, the town in which I engaged them, was the worst in the world, and I fear I engaged the three worst characters in it, for there was not a single crime that my three men were not taxed with having committed, and not only they themselves, but their maternal ancestors (paternal do not count) before them. Fan punishment is killing and subsequent eating, and I therefore used to have to stand hour after hour, dead tired with the day's march, wet through with its swamps and rivers, surrounded by sand flies and mosquitoes, pleading and arguing for their lives.

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Nothing but my interest in native law enabled me to live through these word-swamps of palaver, and become the renowned Criminal Court lawyer I am among the Fans; unfortunately, this was an empty honour, for so low in the scale of civilisation were these savages, that they had no idea of paying lawyer's fees. But they had one that, as they had got an able lawyer with them, they had better make the most of the opportunity, and they deliberately led me into a village where one of the three had got an outstanding charge of murder, another a case of fraud over an ivory transaction, and the other a terrible wife palaver, depending on me to pull them through, while they bought indiarubber a leaf a ball cheaper than it could be bought elsewhere. Really, when I found this out, I regretted that I had not allowed the village Fans just to nibble them slightly. But, now I am calmer, I only feel glad that I was able to do something for those men, for they did much for me, teaching me woodcraft as only a Fan can: how to make a fire in the drenching rain, how to do without lucifer matches—this was an awful lesson, by the by, because Keva kept his flint and steel and tinder in one and the same bag as his snuff and gunpowder, and we had a nice little explosion, and came near sneezing our heads off into the bargain. Then they taught me how to track game, and in the course of his instructions Wiki showed me a gorilla family.

It was just on the borders of the Egaja plantations. The party were sitting down having a snack as usual, and Wiki, also as usual, was looking after bush rope. He came to me, and signed to me to be quiet and follow him; we crept through the bush for twenty

yards or so, and then lay down and wormed our way still more cautiously forward—Wiki first, I following in his trail under the koko leaves. After fifty yards of this we stopped, and I saw, about thirty yards off, five gorillas busily employed in pulling down plantains and general depredation. There was one old male, one young, and three females; one female had clinging to her back a young fellow with beautiful wavy black hair with just a kink in it. The big male was crouching on his heels, with his long strong arms hanging down, resting the back of his hands on the ground. An old lady was tearing to pieces and eating a pineapple, while the rest of the party were pulling down plantains, destroying more than they ate. They kept up a whinnying, chattering noise, and I noticed their reach of arm was immense. When they passed from one plantain-tree to another across the clear ground they waddled along in a most inelegant style, dragging their long arms knuckle downwards on the ground. I should think the old male and female were both well over six feet, but this was another case in which I failed to take measurements. I watched them intently, until I was disturbed by a quaint noise from Wiki; looking round at him, I saw to my horror his face convulsed and his hand clutching his throat. Forming the opinion that he intended having a fit, I became anxious; he rolled his head to and fro for a second, and then buried his face in a heap of dried rubbish at the foot of a plantain clump, clasped both his hands over it, and gave an explosive sneeze. The gorillas let go all, and gave a queer sound between a squeal and a roar, and the ladies and young folk "went for bush one time"; the old male rose right up and looked full at where we were. Wiki went off into a paroxysm of falsetto sneezes the like of which I have never heard; nor I fancy had the gorilla, who, doubtless thinking, as one of his black co-relatives would have thought, that the phenomenon "favoured Duppy," went off after his family with a celerity that was amazing as soon as he reached the forest. I have seen various wild animals one time and another in their native wilds, but I have never seen anything so grand as a gorilla going through the forest. It is a powerful, graceful, superbly perfect trapeze performance.

Regarding the river Rembwe, I will only say that when I reached it I found that the mangrove line was much farther inland on it than on the Ogowé; this is caused by the great body of salt water brought far inland by the estuary of Gaboon, and the fact that the currents of the Rembwe and its neighbour the Como are sluggish, not extremely swift and powerful like the Ogowé's, and that the body of fresh water which these two rivers, considerable though they are, bring down to the estuary is far inferior to that brought down by the most lovely river I have ever seen, the Ogowé.

My ascent of Mungo Mah Lobeh, the Throne of Thunder as the natives call it, the Great Cameroon as the white people call it, was made from the south-east face. I was the second "party" to ascend this face; the first was composed of the first officer and the doctor of H.I.M. ship *Hyæna.* I may remark that I did not "discover," as I have seen stated, seventy volcanic craters on it, but I have heard that they are there. Instead of being in any way hindered by the German authorities, I received from them every help, good advice, and kindness.

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