

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PYGMIES. Nubian stories. Ancient classical allusions.

Homer, Herodotus, Aristotle. My introduction to Pygmies. Adimokoo the Akka. Close questioning. War-dance. Visits from many Akka. Mummery's Pygmy corps. My adopted Pygmy. Nsewue's life and death. Dwarf races of Africa. Accounts of previous authors: Battel, Dapper, Kölle. Analogy of Akka with Bushmen. Height and complexion. Hair and beards. Shape of the body. Awkward gait. Graceful hands. Form of skull. Size of eyes and ears. Lips. Gesticulations. Dialect inarticulate. Dexterity and cunning. Munza's protection of the race.

WHENEVER two or three Egyptians are found in company, the chances are very great that their conversation, if it could be overheard, would be found to relate to the market prices of the day, or to some fluctuations in the state of trade. With the romantic sons of the Nubian Nile-valley the case would be very different. Ample opportunity of making this comparison was continually afforded me during the long evenings which I passed in my transit upon the waters of the Upper Nile; and even now I can recall with vivid interest the hours when, from my detached compartment on the stern of the boat, I could, without being observed, listen to the chatter by which the Nubians on the voyage beguiled their time. They seemed to talk with eagerness of all the wonders of the world. Some would expatiate upon the splendours of the City of the Caliphs, and others enlarge upon the accomplishment of the Suez Canal and the huge ships of the Franks; but the stories that ever commanded the most rapt attention were those which treated of war and of the chase; or, beyond all, such as described the wild beasts and still wilder natives of Central Africa.

NUBIAN TALES.

It was not with stories in the sense of 'The Thousand and One Nights' that this people entertained each other; neither did they recite their prolix histories as though they were reading at the

celebration of Ramadan in Cairo, amidst the halls where night by night they abandoned themselves to the enjoyment of their coffee. These things I had now long ago left far behind; however, occasionally, as the expiring strain of Arabia, I might still hear the song of Abd-el-Kader the sheikh, or of Aboo Zeyd the hero. My whole style of living seemed now to partake of the character of an Odyssey; it appeared to be adapted for the embellishment of an Homeric episode, and such an episode in truth was already awaiting me.

Of the Nile itself, which had the appearance, day by day, of becoming wider as farther and farther we progressed towards the south, they affirmed that it issued from the ocean by which Africa was girt; they would declare that we were on the route which would lead us, like the cranes, to fight with the Pygmies; ever and again they would speak of Cyclops, of Automoli, or of “Pygmies,” but by whatever name they called them, they seemed never to weary of recurring to them as the theme of their talk. Some there were who averred that with their own eyes they had seen this people of immortal myth; and these—men as they were whose acquaintance might have been coveted by Herodotus and envied by Aristotle—were none other than my own servants.

It was a fascinating thing to hear them confidently relate that in the land to the south of the Niam-niam country there dwelt people who never grew to more than three feet in height, and who wore beards so long that they reached to their knees.^[29] It was affirmed of them that, armed with strong lances, they would creep underneath the belly of an elephant and dexterously kill the beast, managing their own movements so adroitly that they could not be reached by the creature’s trunk. Their services in this way were asserted to contribute very largely to the resources of the ivory traders. The name by which they are known is the “Shebber-digintoo,” which implies the growth of the disproportioned beard.

I listened on. The more, however, that I pondered silently over the stories that they involuntarily disclosed—the more I studied the traditions to which they referred—so much the more I was perplexed to explain what must either be the creative faculty or the derived impressions of the Nubians.

Whence came it that they could have gained any knowledge at all of what Homer had sung? How did it happen that they were familiar at all with the material which Ovid and Juvenal, and Nonnus and Statius worked into their verse, giving victory at one time to the cranes, and at another to the Pygmies themselves?

My own ideas of Pygmies were gathered originally only from books, but the time seemed now to have come when their existence should be demonstrated in actual life.

**CLASSICAL
WITNESS TO
PYGMIES.**

Legends of Pygmies had mingled themselves already with the earliest surviving literature of the Greeks, and the poet of the *Iliad*, it will be remembered, mentions them as a race that had long been known:—

“To warmer seas the cranes embodied fly,
With noise, and order, through the midway sky;
To pygmy nations wounds and death they bring,
And all the war descends upon the wing.”

Pope's 'Homer's Iliad,' iii. 6-10.

But not the classic *poets* alone; sober historians and precise geographers have either adopted the poetic substance of the tradition or have endeavoured, by every kind of conjecture, to confirm its accuracy. Nothing, for instance, can be more definite than the statement of Herodotus about the Nasamonians after they had crossed the Libyan deserts: “They at length saw some trees growing on a plain, and having approached they began to gather the fruit that grew on the trees; and while they were gathering it some diminutive men, less than men of middle stature, came up and seized them and carried them away.”^[30] The testimony of Aristotle is yet more precise when he says plainly: “The cranes fly to the lakes above Egypt, from which flows the Nile; there dwell the Pygmies, and this is no fable but the pure truth; there, just as we are told, do men and horses of diminutive size dwell in caves;”^[31] a quotation this, which would seem to imply that the learned Stagyrte was in possession of some exact and positive information, otherwise he would not have ventured to

insist so strongly upon the truth of his assertion. Very likely, however, we should be justified in surmising that Aristotle mentions cranes and Pygmies together only because he had the passage of the Iliad floating in his memory, and because he was aware of the fact that cranes do pass the winter in Africa. For my own part, I should be inclined to doubt whether cranes ever reach the Victoria and Albert Nyanza; on the Red Sea I saw them in latitude 20° N., and Brehm observed them in Sennaar; on the White Nile, however, and farther inland, I only found the native Balearic crane, which could hardly have been the species mentioned by Aristotle. But whether cranes were really capable of fighting with Pygmies or not, or whether (as Pauer attempts to prove) the Homeric tradition was derived from ancient Egyptian symbolism, and so was an emblematic representation of the cranes battling with the falling waters of the Nile stream, this is now immaterial; all that concerns us, with regard to the present topic, is that three or four centuries before the Christian era the Greeks were aware of the existence of a people inhabiting the districts about the sources of the Nile, who were remarkable for their stunted growth. The circumstance may warrant us, perhaps, in employing the designation of "pygmy," not for men literally a span long, but in the sense of Aristotle, for the dwarf races of Equatorial Africa.

Throughout the time that I had resided in the Seribas of the Bongo territory, of course I had frequent opportunities of enlarging my information, and I was continually hearing such romantic stories that I became familiarised in a way with the belief that the men about me had really been eye-witnesses of the circumstances they related. Those who had been attached to the Niam-niam expeditions, whenever they described the variety of wonders about the splendour of the courts of the cannibal kings, never omitted to mention the dwarfs who filled the office of court buffoons; every one outvying another in the fantastic embellishment of the tales they told. The general impression that remained upon my mind was that these must be some extraordinary specimens of pathological phenomena that had been retained by the kings as natural curiosities. The instance did not escape my recollection that Speke had given the description and portrait of a dwarf, Kimenya, with whom

he had become acquainted at the court of Kamrasi;^[32] but that there could be a whole series of tribes whose average height was far below an average never really found a reception in my understanding, until at the court of Munza the positive evidence was submitted to my eyes.

Several days elapsed after my taking up my residence by the palace of the Monbuttoo king without my having a chance to get a view of the dwarfs, whose fame had so keenly excited my curiosity. My people, however, assured me that they had seen them. I remonstrated with them for not having secured me an opportunity of seeing for myself, and for not bringing them into contact with me. I obtained no other reply but that the dwarfs were too timid to come. After a few mornings my attention was arrested by a shouting in the camp, and I learned that Mohammed had surprised one of the Pygmies in attendance upon the king, and was conveying him, in spite of a strenuous resistance, straight to my tent. I looked up, and *there*, sure enough, was the strange little creature, perched upon Mohammed's right shoulder, nervously hugging his head, and casting glances of alarm in every direction. Mohammed soon deposited him in the seat of honour. A royal interpreter was stationed at his side. Thus, at last, was I able veritably to feast my eyes upon a living embodiment of the myths of some thousand years!

**ADIMOKOO
THE AKKA.**

Eagerly, and without loss of time, I proceeded to take his portrait. I pressed him with innumerable questions, but to ask for information was an easier matter altogether than to get an answer. There was the greatest difficulty in inducing him to remain at rest, and I could only succeed by exhibiting a store of presents. Under the impression that the opportunity before me might not occur again, I bribed the interpreter to exercise his influence to pacify the little man, to set him at his ease, and to induce him to lay aside any fear of me that he might entertain. Altogether we succeeded so well that in a couple of hours the Pygmy had been measured, sketched, feasted, presented with a variety of gifts, and subjected to a minute catechism of searching questions.

His name was Adimokoo. He was the head of a small colony, which was located about half a league from the royal residence. With his own lips I heard him assert that the name of his nation was Akka, and I further learnt that they inhabit large districts to the south of the Monbuttoo between lat. 2° and 1° N. A portion of them are subject to the Monbuttoo king, who, desirous of enhancing the splendour of his court by the addition of any available natural curiosities, had compelled several families of the Pygmies to settle in the vicinity.

My Niam-niam servants, sentence by sentence, interpreted to me everything that was said by Adimokoo to the Monbuttoo interpreter, who was acquainted with no dialects but those of his own land.

In reply to my question put to Adimokoo as to where his country was situated, pointing towards the S.S.E., he said, "Two days' journey and you come to the village of Mummery; on the third day you will reach the River Nalobe; the fourth day you arrive at the first of the villages of the Akka."

"What do you call the rivers of your country?"

"They are the Nalobe, the Namerikoo, and the Eddoopo."

"Have you any river as large as the Welle?"

"No; ours are small rivers, and they all flow into the Welle."

"Are you all one people, or are you divided into separate tribes?"

To this inquiry Adimokoo replied by a sudden gesture, as if to indicate the vastness of their extent, and commenced enumerating the tribes one after another. "There are the Navapukah, the Navatipeh, the Vabingisso, the Avadzubeh, the Avagowumba, the Bandoa, the Mamomoo, and the Agabundah."

"How many kings?" I asked.

"Nine," he said; but I could only make out the names of Galeema, Beddeh, Tindaga, and Mazembe.

My next endeavour was directed to discover whether he was acquainted in any way with the dwarf races that have been mentioned by previous travellers, and whose homes I presumed would be somewhere in this part of Africa. I asked him whether he knew the Malagilagé, who, according to the testimony of Escayrac de Lauture, live to the south of Baghirmy. My question, however, only elicited a comical gesture of bewilderment and a vague inquiry, "What is that?" Nor did I succeed at all better in securing any recognition of the tribes of the Kenkob or the Betsan, which are mentioned by Kölle. Equally unavailing, too, were all my efforts to obtain answers of any precision to the series of questions which I invented, taking my hints from Petermann and Hassenstein's map of Central Africa, so that I was obliged to give up my geographical inquiries in despair and turn to other topics. But in reality there did not occur any subject whatever on which I obtained any information that seems to me to be worth recording. At length, after having submitted so long to my curious and persistent questionings, the patience of Adimokoo was thoroughly exhausted, and he made a frantic leap in his endeavour to escape from the tent. Surrounded, however, by a crowd of inquisitive Bongo and Nubians, he was unable to effect his purpose, and was compelled, against his will, to remain for a little longer. After a time a gentle persuasion was brought to bear, and he was induced to go through some of the characteristic evolutions of his war-dances. He was dressed, like the Monbuttoo, in a rokko-coat and plumed hat, and was armed with a miniature lance as well as with a bow and arrow. His height I found to be about 4 feet 10 inches, and this I reckon to be the average measurement of his race.

**THE PYGMY'S
WAR-DANCE.**

Although I had repeatedly been astonished at witnessing the war-dances of the Niam-niam, I confess that my amazement was greater than ever when I looked upon the exhibition which the Pygmy afforded. In spite of his large, bloated belly and short bandy legs—in spite of his age, which, by the way, was considerable—Adimokoo's agility was perfectly marvellous, and I could not help wondering whether cranes would ever be likely to contend with such creatures. The little man's leaps and attitudes were accompanied by such lively and grotesque

varieties of expression that the spectators shook again and held their sides with laughter. The interpreter explained to the Niam-niam that the Akka jump about in the grass like grasshoppers, and that they are so nimble that they shoot their arrows into an elephant's eye and drive their lances into their bellies. The gestures of the Akka, to which I shall have occasion again to refer, always reminded me of the pictures given by travellers to represent the Bushmen of the south.

Adimokoo returned home loaded with presents, I made him understand that I should be glad to see all his people, and promised that they should lose nothing by coming.

On the following day I had the pleasure of a visit from two of the younger men. I had the opportunity of sketching their likenesses, and as one of the portraits has been preserved it is inserted here.

After they had once got over their alarm, some or other of the Akka came to me almost every day. As exceptional cases, I observed that some individuals were of a taller stature; but upon investigation I always ascertained that this was the result of intermarriage with

the Monbutto amongst whom they resided. My sudden departure from Munza's abode interrupted me completely in my study of this interesting people, and I was compelled to leave before I had fully mastered the details of their peculiarities. I regret that I never chanced to see one of the Akka women, and still more that my visit to their dwellings



Bomby the Akka.

was postponed from day to day until the opportunity was lost altogether.

**COLLISION
WITH THE
AKKA.**

I am not likely to forget a *rencontre* which I had with several hundred Akka warriors, and could very heartily wish that the circumstances had permitted me to give a pictorial representation of the scene. King Munza's brother Mummery, who was a kind of viceroy in the southern section of his dominions, and to whom the Akka were tributary, was just returning to the court from a successful campaign against the black Momvoo. Accompanied by a large band of soldiers, amongst whom was included a corps of Pygmies, he was conveying the bulk of the booty to his royal master. It happened on the day in question that I had been making a long excursion with my Niam-niam servants, and had heard nothing of Mummery's arrival. Towards sunset I was passing along the extensive village on my return to my quarters, when, just as I reached the wide open space in front of the royal halls, I found myself surrounded by what I conjectured must be a crowd of impudent boys, who received me with a sort of bravado fight. They pointed their arrows towards me, and behaved generally in a manner at which I could not help feeling somewhat irritated, as it betokened unwarrantable liberty and intentional disrespect. My misapprehension was soon corrected by the Niam-niam people about me. "They are Tikkitikki,"^[33] said they; "you imagine that they are boys, but in truth they are men; nay, men that can fight." At this moment a seasonable greeting from Mummery drew me off from any apprehension on my part and from any further contemplation of the remarkable spectacle before me. In my own mind I resolved that I would minutely inspect the camp of the new-comers on the following morning; but I had reckoned without my host: before dawn Mummery and his contingent of Pygmies had taken their departure, and thus,

"Like the baseless fabric of a vision,"

this people, so near and yet so unattainable, had vanished once more into the dim obscurity of the innermost continent.

Anxious, in my contact with this mythical race, to lose or pass over nothing which might be of interest, I very diligently made memoranda after every interview that I had with the Akka. I measured six full-grown individuals, none of whom much exceeded 4 feet 10 inches in height, but, unfortunately, all my notes and many of my drawings perished in the fire.

A brief account may now be given of the little Pygmy that I carried off and kept with me during the remainder of my wanderings till I was again in Nubia, who for a year and a half became my companion, thriving under my care and growing almost as affectionate as a son.

I have already explained in a previous chapter the circumstances under which the little man came into my keeping. I succeeded tolerably well in alleviating the pain of the lad's parting from all his old associations by providing him with all the good living and bestowing upon him all the attention that lay in my power. To reconcile him to his lot I broke through an old rule. I allowed him to be my constant companion at my meals—an exception that I never made in favour of any other native of Africa. Making it my first care that he should be healthy and contented, I submitted without a murmur to all the uncouth habits peculiar to his race. In Khartoom at last I dressed him up till he looked like a little pasha. The Nubians could not in the least enter into my infatuation, nor account for my partiality towards the strange-looking lad. When he walked along the thoroughfares at my side they pointed to him, and cried, with reference to his bright-brown complexion, "See, there goes the son of the Khavaga!" Apparently they overlooked the fact of the boy's age, and seemed not to be in any way familiarised with the tradition of the Pygmies. In the Seribas all along our route the little fellow excited a still greater astonishment.

NSEWUE'S DEATH.

Notwithstanding all my assiduity and attention, I am sorry to record that Nsewue died in Berber, from a prolonged attack of dysentery, originating not so much in any change of climate, or any alteration in his mode of living, as in his immoderate excess in eating, a propensity which no influence on my part was sufficient to control.

During the last ten months of his life, my *protégé* did not make any growth at all. I think I may therefore presume that his height would never have exceeded 4 feet 7 inches, which was his measurement at the time of his death. The portrait on the following page may be accepted as a faithful representation of one who was a fair type of his race.

Altogether very few examples of the Akka came under my notice; but so ample was my opportunity of studying in detail the peculiarities of this individual specimen, that, in the course of any observations that follow, I shall feel justified in referring to Nsewue, when the rest of my experience furnishes no other illustration.



Nsewue the Akka.

THE OBONGO. The Akka would appear to be a branch of that series of dwarf races which, exhibiting all the characteristics of an aboriginal stock, extend along the

equator entirely across Africa. Whatever travellers have penetrated far into the interior of the continent have furnished abundant testimony as to the mere fact of the existence of tribes of singularly diminutive height; whilst their accounts are nearly all coincident in representing that these dwarf races differ in hardly anything from the surrounding nations excepting only in their size. It would be entirely an error to describe them as dwarfs either in the sense of the ancient myths, or in the way of *lusus naturæ*, such as are exhibited as curiosities amongst ourselves; most of the accounts, moreover, that have been given, concur in the statement that these undersized people are distinguished from their neighbours by a redder or brighter shade of complexion; but they differ very considerably in the reports they make about the growth of the hair. The only traveller, I believe, before myself that has come into contact with any section of this race is Du Chaillu, who, in the territory of the Ashango, discovered a wandering tribe of hunters called Obongo, and took the measurements of a number of them. He describes these Obongo as “not ill-shaped,” and as having skins of a pale, yellow-brown, somewhat lighter than their neighbours; he speaks of their having short heads of hair, but a great growth of hair about their bodies. Their average height he affirms to be 4 feet 7 inches. In every particular but the abundance of hair about the person, this description is quite applicable to the Akka. According to Battel,^[34] there was a nation of dwarfs, called the Matimbos or Dongo, to the north-east of the land of Tobbi, which lies to the north of the Sette River, and consequently in the same district as that in which Du Chaillu discovered the Obongo. Portuguese authorities, moreover, quite at the beginning of the seventeenth century, contain a distinct reference to a dwarf nation called Bakka-bakka. Dapper furnishes corresponding information on the same subject; and all that he relates about the dwarfs coincides very accurately with what is known about the Akka, whose name had penetrated even at that date to the western equatorial coasts. It is to be understood that districts were known by the name of the people who chanced to be occupying them, and not by any permanent name of the soil itself. After Dapper, in his compilation, had told the history of the Yagas, who is said in

olden time to have spread fear and destruction as far as the coasts of the Loango, a hundred miles away, so that it took three months for caravans to come and go, he proceeds to state that the greater part of the ivory was obtained still farther inland, and was brought from a people who were tributary to the great Makoko, and called Mimos or Bakke-bakke. "These little men," he writes,^[35] "are stated by the Yagas to have the power of making themselves invisible, and consequently can slay an elephant with little trouble." And this dexterity in killing elephants seems to be implied in another place,^[36] where, in describing the court of Loango and the dwarfs who took up their positions before the throne, he says, "the negroes affirm that there is a wilderness inhabited by those dwarfs, and where there are many elephants; they are generally called Bakke-bakke, but sometimes Mimos." Farther on again^[37] he speaks of the empire of the great Makoko (described as lying beyond the kingdom of Kongo, and some 200 miles or more inland, north of the River Zaire), and proceeds to specify that "in the wilderness of this country there are to be found the little people that have been mentioned before, who carry on the greater part of the ivory trade throughout the kingdom." Besides this it is expressly stated that the ivory was bartered for the salt of Loango. Now in none of the countries that I visited in Central Africa was either sea salt or common salt ever an article of commerce, but each separate nation produced its own supply from ashes: but whilst I was at the court of Munza I learnt from the Khartoomers who had settled there that, as matter of fact, king Munza did receive tribute from the Akka in the shape of "*real good salt*," which was brought from the far south. Taken in connection with Dapper's account, this statement would seem to justify the hypothesis that even at this day there may be commercial transactions between the very heart of Africa, where the Akka dwell, and the western coasts.

THE KENKOB. Still more demonstrative than any reports about Matimbos and Bakke-bakke, as proving the identity of my Akka with the abnormally-formed folks previously named, is the evidence that is furnished by the natives of the Upper Shary districts. Escayrac de Lauture^[38]

was told of a Lake Koeidabo, which was said to be a two months' journey to the S.S.E. of Masena, the capital of Baghirmy, and to unite the source-affluents of the Shary just at the spot where, according to the Monbuttoo, the Welle widens into a boundless expanse of water. Somewhat to the west of this lake, he was informed, were the dwellings of the Malagilageh (literally, men with tails), who were of small stature and reddish complexion, or, as the Africans expressed it, "*white*," and covered with long hair. The fabulous tails must be supposed to be added by a kind of poetic licence, or as a concession to the belief in marvellous stories that were rife throughout the Soudan. It may with much probability be assumed that the same districts in Central Africa must be the homes of the Kenkob and Betsan, of whom Kölle,^[39] residing in Sierra Leone, heard reports from those who professed to have actually seen them. In these reports the great lake was very often referred to. One of Kölle's informants called it "Leeba," and said that he had on one occasion personally accompanied an embassy that was commissioned to convey a present of salt to the king who governed over the territories by the shores of the lake; and he distinctly affirmed not only that the Kenkob lived in close proximity to the same lake, but that they were a people only three or four feet in height, but who nevertheless possessed great strength and were excellent hunters. Another witness informed Kölle that he only knew of "a river Reebe" in that part of the country; but it is extremely likely that in reality he was referring to the same Lake Leeba which, by repeated geographical investigation, has been proved to be a part of the Shary:^[40] he went on to describe that by this river Reebe there dwelt a diminutive race called Betsan, varying from three feet to five feet in height, and stated that they had very long hair and very long beards, adding that they supported themselves entirely by the produce of the chase.

Both these witnesses agreed in describing the hair of the dwarfs as long; and I always found that the Niam-niam laid particular stress upon their having long beards; but I must confess I never observed this characteristic in any of the Akka who came under my notice.

Nor is east Tropical Africa without its representatives of people of this stunted growth. Of these I may especially mention the Doko, who are reported to dwell to the south of Enarea and Kaffa on the Upper Juba. Krapf, who has with much diligence compared the various accounts of many slaves who have been carried away from the district in question to Shoa, fixes the habitation of the Doko as being below the latitude of 3° north. Their height is compared with that of boys ten years of age. Even those who have seen them and (like A. d'Abbadie) deny that they are *dwarfs*, yet admit that they are under a medium stature. On the coast itself, in Zanzibar and at Brava, where, occasioned by the Mohammedan Somali, there is a considerable intercourse with the districts said to be populated by the Doko, stories of these dwarfs are in every one's mouth, and they are termed the "Berikeemo," *i.e.* people two feet high.

**PYGMIES
COMPARED
WITH
BUSHMEN.**

This rapid summary of the dwarf races that are known in Africa would be incomplete without a passing reference to the Kimos of Madagascar, of whom, from the middle of the seventeenth century down to our own time the most contradictory reports have been in circulation. Any detailed accounts of these would of course be here entirely out of place. Madagascar, too, from its isolation, must ever be treated independently. The relation of its inhabitants to the inhabitants of Central Africa is very doubtful. It will now suffice to say generally that the evidence appears to lie open before us of there being a series of unestablished and imperfectly developed nations which, although they are now in their decline, extend from ocean to ocean across the entire equatorial zone of Africa.

Scarcely a doubt can exist but that all these people, like the Bushmen of South Africa, may be considered as the scattered remains of an aboriginal population now becoming extinct; and their isolated and sporadic existence bears out the hypothesis. For centuries after centuries Africa has been experiencing the effects of many immigrations: for thousands of years one nation has been driving out another, and as the result of repeated subjugations and interminglings of race with

race, such manifold changes have been introduced into the conditions of existence that the succession of new phases, like the development in the world of plants, appears almost as it were to open a glimpse into the infinite.

Incidentally I have just referred to the Bushmen, those notorious natives of the South African forests, who owe their name to the likeness which the Dutch colonists conceived they bore to the ape, as the prototype of the human race. I may further remark that their resemblance to the equatorial Pygmies is in many points very striking. Gustav Fritsch, the author of a standard work upon the natives of South Africa, first drew my attention to the marked similarity between my portraits of the Akka and the general type of the Bushmen, and so satisfied did I become in my own mind that I feel quite justified (in my observations upon the Akka) in endeavouring to prove that all the tribes of Africa whose proper characteristic is an abnormally low stature belong to one and the self-same race.

According to Fritsch the average height of the genuine Bushmen is 1·44 metres, or about 4 feet 8½ inches; the height of the two Akka, whose portraits I have inserted, were 4 feet 1 inch and 4 feet 4 inches respectively; and, as I have said, I never saw any instance in which the height materially exceeded 4 feet 10 inches. The skin of the Akka is of a dull brown tint, something of the colour of partially roasted coffee. As far as I can remember, the colour would correspond nearly with Nos. 7 and 8 in the table of skin-tints in Plate 49 of Fritsch's work, and these are the numbers by which he indicates the complexion of the Bushmen. It is somewhat difficult to discriminate between the complexion of the Akka and that of their neighbours the Monbuttoo, since the latter exhibit a variety of shades of the same tint; but I should be inclined to say that the distinction lies in the somewhat duller hue of the Akka, such as might be understood by comparing No. 2 with No. 8 in the table to which I have referred.

The hair and beard are but slightly developed. All the Akka that I saw wore the ordinary costume and cylindrical straw hat of the Monbuttoo; but, in consequence of their hair being short as well as woolly, they are unable to form a chignon like their

neighbours. The colour of their hair corresponds with their complexion; in texture it may best be compared with the waste tow from old cordage. This absence of the beard is characteristic also of the Bushmen. The Nubians indeed used to tell me of the dwarfs about the courts of the Niam-niam princes being noted for long hair, and they affirmed that some of them, in the fashion of the West Africans, were in the habit of stiffening out their long pointed tufts of hair on their chin with pitch; no doubt, too, their common designation for this people (Shebber digintoo) has reference to this characteristic; but I could never succeed in getting any accurate or more definite information about dwarfs of this species. The Akka resemble the majority of the Monbuttoo in having brown hair, other nations of a reddish tone of complexion not sharing this peculiarity.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AKKA.

Taking, as I have said, my little *protégé* Nsewue as a fair type of the Akka in general, I will proceed to enumerate the most prominent marks in their common appearance.

The head of the Akka is large, and out of proportion to the weak, thin neck on which it is balanced. The shape of the shoulders is peculiar, differing entirely from that of other negroes in a way that may probably be accounted for by the unusual scope required for the action of the shoulder-blades; the arms are lanky; and altogether the upper portion of the body has a measurement disproportionately long. The superior region of the chest is flat and much contracted, but it widens out below to support the huge hanging belly, which gives them, however aged, the remarkable appearance of Arabian or Egyptian children. The look of the Akka from behind is very singular. Their body seeming then to form a curve so regular and defined that it is almost like a letter S; this is probably to be accounted for by an exceptional suppleness in the lower joints of the spine, since after a full meal the centre of gravity is shifted, and the curve of the back accordingly becomes more or less concave. All the various personal traits of the Akka to which I have thus referred are illustrated very plainly in Fritsch's work by the figure (No. 69) which represents an old Bushman.

The joints of the legs are angular and projecting, except that the knees are plump and round. Unlike other Africans, who ordinarily walk with their feet straight, the Akka turn them somewhat inward. I hardly know how to describe their waddling; every step they take is accompanied by a lurch that seems to affect all their limbs alike; and Nsewue could never manage to carry a full dish for any distance without spilling at least a portion of its contents.

Of all their members their hands were undoubtedly the best formed. These might really be pronounced elegant, although I do not mean that they were in the least like the long narrow ladies' hands that are so lauded in romance, but which Carl Vogt has characterised as appropriate to the monkey type. Nothing about my poor little favourite ever excited my admiration to the same degree as his pretty little hands, and so attentively have I studied every part of his singular form that not even the smallest detail has escaped my memory.

But all the peculiarities of the race culminate in the shape of the skull and in the physiognomical character of the head. As matter of fact, history has not exhibited that any general degeneracy in a nation has ever been attended by a general decrease in a people's stature; but still it is quite possible that the peculiarities I have already mentioned might originate in some modification of the way of living. Any attempt, however, to attribute the formation of the skull to the effects either of circumstance, of food, or of climate must at once be rejected as inadmissible. The most noticeable points in the structure of the heads of the Akka is their high degree of *prognathie*. The two portraits that are given exhibit facial angles of 60° and 66° respectively. Besides this they are remarkable for the snout-like projection of the jaw with an unprotruding chin, and for the wide skull which is almost spherical, and which has a deep indentation at the base of the nose. These leading resemblances indubitably exist between the Akka and the Bushmen; and where the general similarity is so great, all minor discrepancies must sink into insignificance.

All the accounts of the South African Bushmen agree in representing that their eyes are small and their eyelids contracted. "Their eyes," says Lichtenstein, "are small, deeply

set, and so compressed as to be scarcely visible.” Fritsch lays special stress upon this peculiarity of the Bushmen, but at the same time draws attention to the likeness of expression between them and the Hottentots, who otherwise differ from them so widely. Now the Akka, on the other hand, have large eyes, wide open, so as to give them the bird-like appearance of Azteks; and does not Bomby’s portrait,^[41] I may ask, recall the Azteks who a few years ago were exhibited in Europe? Amid the multitude of resemblances this may be said to be the only important difference between the Akka and the Bushmen, and probably even this may be accounted for as being the effect either of food or climate, in the same way as the weather-beaten countenance of the mariner may be attributed to the life of exposure that he has led.

**COMPARISON
OF AKKA
WITH
BUSHMEN.**

Setting aside, however, this diversity with regard to the eyes, the heads of the Akka and the Bushmen will be found to present various points of similarity in other respects. The Akka are distinguished from all other nations of Central Africa by the huge size of the ear. Now, however small, in an æsthetic sense, the negroes’ pretensions to any beauty may ordinarily be supposed to be, it must be conceded that they can vie with any race whatever in the elegance and symmetrical shape of their ears; but no share of this grace can be assigned either to the Bushmen or to the Akka.

The lips project in a way that corresponds completely with the projecting jaw. They are long and convex; they do not overlap, and are not so thick as those of the generality of negroes. What really suggests the resemblance to an ape is the sharply-defined outline of the gaping mouth; for the pouting lips of most negroes convey no idea at all of relationship with inferior animals. These gaping lips, again, are possessed by the Akka in common with the Bushmen, whose profiles may be seen in the illustrations given by Fritsch; they are not found at all amongst the Monbuttoo.

The continual changes of expression which, as Lichtenstein observes, play upon the countenance and render the Bushmen like apes rather than human beings are exhibited to a very remarkable degree by the Akka. The twitching of the

eyebrows (in this case still more animated by the brightness of the eyes), the rapid gestures with the hands and feet while talking, the incessant wagging and nodding of the head, all combine to give a very grotesque appearance to the little people, and serve to explain the fund of amusement derived from the visit of Adimokoo.

Of the language of the Akka I must confess my entire ignorance, having lost the few notes that I possessed. I remember that I was much struck by the inarticulateness of the pronunciation. During the year and a half that my *protégé* was domesticated with me he was unable to learn sufficient Arabic to make himself understood; in this respect he was very different to the other natives about me, who made themselves masters of a copious vocabulary. He never advanced beyond stammering out a few Bongo phrases, which no one except myself and a few of my own people could comprehend.

Although I was informed that circumcision was practised by the Akka, I could never ascertain whether it was really an indigenous custom, or whether it was merely borrowed from the Monbuttoos, and so adopted by such of the Akka as had settled near the court of Munza.

In acuteness, dexterity, and it must be added in cunning, the Akka far surpass the Monbuttoos. They are κατ' ἑξοχήν, a nation of hunters. The cunning, however, which they display is but the outward expression of an inner impulse which seems to prompt them to find a delight in wickedness. Nsewue was always fond of torturing animals, and took a special pleasure in throwing arrows at the dogs by night. During the period in which we were involved in war, and while my servants were almost beside themselves with anxiety, nothing afforded him greater amusement than to play with the heads that had been severed from the slain A-Banga; and when I boiled some of the skulls his delight knew no bounds; he rushed about the camp shouting, "Bakinda,^[42] nova? Bakinda he he koto" (Where is Bakinda? Bakinda is in the pot!) Such a people as this would naturally excel in the inventive faculty for laying traps and snares for game.

**RELATIONS
OF THE AKKA
WITH THE
MONBUTTOO.**

Like the Obongo and the Bushmen, as I myself experienced during my first *rencontre* with Adimokoo, the Akka are extremely shy with other men.

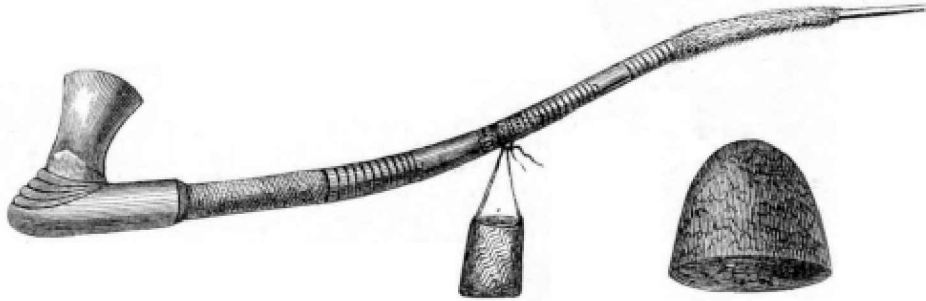
Their only domestic animals are poultry; and it struck me as a coincidence somewhat curious that one of the Pompeian mosaics which I saw in the National Museum at Naples represents the Pygmies in the midst of their little houses, which are depicted as full of common fowls.

It is notorious that the natives of South Africa in general have vowed death and destruction against the Bushmen, reckoning them as incorrigibly wild and in no way superior to apes of the most dangerous character. Now the dwarfs of Central Africa, although they fall little short of the Bushmen in natural maliciousness, are not regarded as mischievous fiends who must be exterminated like a brood of adders, but they are considered rather as a sort of benevolent spirits or mandrakes who are in no way detrimental. They are of assistance to the Monbuttoo in securing them a more abundant produce from the chase, and so they enjoy the protection of their neighbours very much in the same way as (according to Du Chaillu) the Obongo enjoy the protection of the Ashango. These amicable relations, however, would not be possible but for the reason that the Monbuttoo possess no herds. If the Monbuttoo were a cattle-breeding people, it cannot be doubted that the Akka would consider all their animals as game, and could not deny themselves the delight of driving their spears into the flanks of every beast they could get near, and by these tactics would very soon convert their guardians into enemies.

Munza supplies all the Akka who have settled near him with the best of diet, and Nsewue was never weary of descanting in praise of the flasks of beer, the plantain wine, the ears of corn, and all the other delicacies with which his people were feasted.

I will only add that a debt of gratitude is due from the students of ethnology to the Monbuttoo king, who has been instrumental in preserving this remnant of a declining race

until the time has come for the very heart of Africa to be laid open.



Dinka Pipe. (See description, vol. i., p. 292)

FOOTNOTES:

[29] It may be remarked that the people of the Soudan when they depict a dwarf, ordinarily, like we should ourselves, represent him as a diminutive man with a long beard.

[30] Herodotus, ii. 32.

[31] Aristotle's 'Hist. Animal,' lib. viii. cap. 2.

[32] 'Speke's Travels,' p. 550.

[33] Tikkitikki is the Niam-niam designation of the Akka.

[34] *Vide* Battel. 'Purchas his Pilg.,' II. London, 1625, p. 983.

[35] Dapper, Germ. ed., Amsterd., p. 571.

[36] *Ib.*, p. 527.

[37] *Ib.*, p. 573.

[38] 'Bulletin de la Soc. de Géograph. de Paris,' tom. x., 1855.

[39] 'Polyglotta Africana,' p. 12.

[40] In nearly all the negro dialects the letters *l* and *r* are used indifferently; and Africans, as a rule, very much confound the ideas of lake and river.

[41] *Vide antè*, p. 130.

[42] "Bakinda," is a mere derisive nickname.

CHAPTER XVII.

Return to the North. Tikkitikki's reluctance to start. Passage of the Gadda. Sounding the Keebaly. The river Kahpily. Cataracts of the Keebaly. Kubby's refusal of boats. Our impatience. Crowds of hippopotamuses. Possibility of fording the river. Origin and connection of the Keebaly. Division of highland and lowland. Geographical expressions of Arabs and Nubians. Mohammedan perversions. Return to Nembey. Bivouac in the border-wilderness. Eating wax. The Niam-niam declare war. Parley with the enemy. My mistrust of the guides. Treacherous attack on Mohammed. Mohammed's dangerous wound. Open war. Detruncated heads. Effect of arrows. Mohammed's defiance. Attack on the abattis. Pursuit of the enemy. Inexplicable appearance of 10,000 men. Wando's unpropitious omen. My Niam-niam and their oracle. Mohammed's speedy cure. Solar phenomenon. Dogs barbarously speared. Women captured. Niam-niam affection for their wives. Calamus. Upper course of the Mbrwole. Fresh captive. Her composure. Alteration in scenery. Arrival at the Nabambisso.

AFTER a sojourn of three weeks, the 12th of April was fixed for the raising of our camp and for the departure of our caravan from the residence of the Monbuttoo king.

For myself it was with a sad and heavy heart that I had to begin retracing my steps towards the north. How bitter was my disappointment may well be imagined. I could not be otherwise than aware that I was leaving behind my only chance of answering some of those important questions that might be propounded to me; and my regret was aggravated by the conviction that a journey comparatively short would now have brought me to the sources of the three great rivers of the west, the only streams that are absolutely closed to our

geographical knowledge, viz, the Benwe, the Ogawai, and the Congo. Distant as I was hardly more than 450 miles from the limit that had been reached by Livingstone, I could discern, as I fondly imagined, from Munza's residence, a path clearly open towards the south-west which would conduct me to the Congo and to the states of the mighty Mwata Yanvo; it appeared to me to be a path that, once explored, would solve the remaining problems of the heart of Africa as decidedly as the sword of Alexander severed the Gordian knot, and now, just when there was only one more district to be traversed and that not larger than what we had already passed since leaving the Gazelle, to be obliged to abandon further progress and to leave the mysterious secrets still unravelled was a hardship to which it was impossible patiently to submit. But there was no alternative, and, however reluctantly, I had to yield.

I have already spoken of the various obstacles to any further advance; I must, however, again insist upon my conviction that any single traveller, provided he had not an undue proportion of flesh (for to be fat would be fatal), might march on unhindered down the Welle as far as Baghirmy, since the population was all well disposed enough as far as regards the white man. But any attempt to carry on an entire caravan in that direction would have met with the most strenuous opposition on the part of King Munza; his indirect influence might have enabled travellers to descend as far to the south as lat. 2° N.; but for this his sanction would have had to be purchased by an enormous contribution of copper.

The first event of the morning of our start occasioned no small stir amongst the Nubians. Mohammed Aboo Sammat had established a Seriba in the place, for the garrisoning of which twenty-eight men had to be left behind, and several hours elapsed before the necessary conscription could be accomplished. Apart from myself, depressed as I was by my disappointment, every one else was elated at the prospect of returning, so that no penalty could be considered much heavier than being compelled to tarry in this remote region for one or two years, and possibly longer, to be the associates of cannibals; each man accordingly upon whom the unlucky destiny chanced to fall received his orders to remain with the

loudest murmurs of dissatisfaction, and the outcry and contention threatened to be interminable. At length, by cajoling, by bribing, by promises of ample pay, and, it must be added, by the representation of the lives of frolic they would lead with the Monbuttoo women, the malcontents were persuaded unwillingly to acquiesce in their fate.

It was noon before the column was actually in motion. The Nubians parted from their companions with the most touching embraces; the crowds of chattering Monbuttoo surrounded the encampment and watched with vivid interest the thousand gestures of farewell, whilst the negro-bearers, silent and stolid as ever, set forward on their way.

**TIKKITIKKI'S
FAREWELL.**

During this parting scene my little Tikkitikki (as the Niam-niam called the Pygmy who had been presented to me a few days previously) was seized with an apparent fit of home sickness; he set up such a dismal howling and sobbed so bitterly that I confess I was for a while undecided whether I would really carry him away, but I soon discovered that it was only the uninitiated who could be imposed upon by his behavior. He was not bewailing the loss of his home, for he was utterly ignorant as to where that home had been; neither was he deploring his separation from his kinsfolk, for they stood by, gesticulating wildly, and only mocked at his distress. The fact was, he was influenced solely by his dread of strangers. He was in mortal fear of being eaten up. It very rarely happens among the Monbuttoo that natives are surrendered to the Nubians for slaves: the occasion therefore of a present being made of a human creature would only too readily suggest the thought that some ulterior destination for cannibal purposes was in view. Altogether inadequate to appease Tikkitikki's fears as to his approaching fate was the gorgeous silk jacket in which I arrayed him, and it was with no little satisfaction that I found I could pacify him by offering him the choicest morsels that I could procure for him to eat. After spending a few days with me in my tent, and finding himself treated with all the dainties that the country could produce, he forgot his troubles, laid aside his apprehensions, and became as happy as a little prince.

From the splendid thickets upon the banks of the rivulets which streamed across our path I gathered all the specimens I could of the flora of this distant land, and all along our return journey I lost no available opportunity of contributing any novelty to my botanical store.

For about five miles we followed the route by which we had arrived, proceeding in a north-easterly direction until we reached the mounds of gneiss that lay before the third stream. Making a little *détour* to the left I mounted the eminences, which were crowned with some fine fig-trees, whence I could watch our long caravan winding amongst the plantain-groves; now and then my view of the *cortège* would be obstructed by some rising oil-palms, and finally the train would disappear in the obscurity of the gallery-forest. The streams were now much swollen, and their passage entailed not only a considerable loss of time but some trial of strength. The paths were so narrow that we were compelled to proceed in single file, not unfrequently being obliged to halt in places where the shadows of the forest were far too light to afford us any protection from the raging heat. Upon these occasions I found a draught from a calabash of plantain-wine very refreshing. Every now and then I had recourse to a pipe. Altogether, however, in spite of its inconveniences the journey was through scenery so charming that it could not be otherwise than enjoyable.

After crossing the third brook we made a turn to the right, thus entering upon a way that was new to us. Having traversed an open steppe along the edge of a gallery extending to the north-east, we encamped at nightfall at a farmstead near the river Gadda. Half-an-hour's march in the morning brought us to the river bank.

THE GADDA.

In its dimensions the Gadda resembles the Woor just above its junction with the Dyoor, but it does not exhibit the same periodical changes in the volume of its waters; its bed remains fall throughout the year, and at this date (April 13th) I found that it was 155 feet wide and but 3 feet deep, its velocity being 57 feet in a minute. The banks were bounded by light woods, and the soil not being subject to any further inundations had only a gentle slope; the

floodmarks on the shore proved the difference between the highest and lowest conditions of the river to be 20 feet. The Gadda has its source far to the south-east, and, flowing across the dominions of the Monbuttoo king Degberra, joins the Keebaly: the united streams then receive the name of the Welle.

Without unnecessary loss of time we forded the sandy river-bed, and, continuing our march for about another half hour, arrived at the left bank of the Keebaly. The river here exhibited much the same character as the Welle at the spot where we had forded it upon our outward journey, but I presume it was somewhat narrower, as by trigonometrical measurement I found that its width was only 325 feet.

By the orders of the king boats were in readiness to convey the caravan across, and the ferrymen did their work so well and quickly that the entire passage was accomplished in three hours. While the transit was being effected I took the opportunity of embarking in a canoe for the purpose of estimating the depth and velocity of the stream, an operation in which I was materially assisted by the greater experience of my servant Mohammed Ameen. In the same way as I noticed on the Welle, the current was much stronger on the northern or right shore; by throwing a gourd upon the flood and observing the number of feet it progressed in a minute, I estimated the ratio of the currents upon the opposite banks to be as 15:19. The depth was between 12 and 13 feet, and there were neither rocks nor sand-banks in this part of the river-bed.

As I stood in the long grass superintending the stowage of the baggage, I was very considerably inconvenienced by the inquisitiveness of the natives, who persisted in thronging close around. In order to get free from their intrusion I was glad to resort to all kinds of artifices, such as throwing some lighted touchwood amongst them, and treating them to a few cartridges. After the last bearer had started and they observed that I still continued to paddle up and down the stream, their curiosity knew no bounds. Trusting to the superiority of our firearms and the protection of my own servants, I felt perfectly secure and enjoyed the bewildered surprise with which the natives who crowded the banks surveyed our evolutions. The

dexterous swimming and diving of my Nubians excited the liveliest interest, and every time the sounding-lead was dipped it was watched as eagerly as if it were about to draw forth from the deep some treasure of the Nibelungen.

Northward again. We passed the farmsteads of the local overseer Parra, crossed the brook Mboolah, and pitched our camp at a hamlet but a few miles from the stream. The remainder of the day I spent in botanizing. I made my way into the thickets, and found some splendid representatives of such large-leaved plants as the philodendra, calladia, and marantha, which gleamed with a metallic sheen. The overseer was very liberal: he supplied us freely with beer, and the greater part of the night was spent in friendly intercourse with the natives, who found, as ever, my hair and my lucifers to be an unfailing source of interest. Myself the people designated as “a good man,” and, satisfied that I had come from the skies, they interpreted my arrival as a token of peace and happiness.

BONGWA. Our road on the following day lay through a country that was generally open, and we had no stream to cross until we reached the brook Bumba, near the village of Bongwa. Here we regained our former route. The country was perfectly safe, and I was accordingly able to march with my own people in the rear of the caravan, and devote my attention to my botanical researches. The hamlets that we passed were pleasant resting-places, and as we halted under the welcome shade of the foliage, the natives rarely failed to hasten out and bring fresh plantains for our refreshment.

At Bongwa we made a halt for a whole day, for the purpose of giving the smiths an opportunity of working, as it was necessary for our copper bars to be transformed into some thousands of rings. For my own part I found ample employment in sketching, and in adding what I could to my store of curiosities. The victualling of the caravan, moreover, had become a matter of increased difficulty; it was now the season for planting out, and all the roots and tubers which the natives had spared from the preceding year had just been put into the ground, so that there was a general scarcity of provisions; a fact that was brought home to our own

experience, when we found that the yams that were supplied to us had already commenced throwing out their fresh sprouts.

Retracing our former track we crossed by fording the six approximate streams that it may be remembered I noticed on our advance. On our arrival at Nembey's residence, we at once found shelter in the camp-huts that had been erected at our last visit, and which were still in a very fair state of preservation. I took a long ramble and made a careful inspection of the plantations of sugar-cane in the adjoining wildernesses upon the river-banks; my first impression was that the canes were a rank spontaneous growth, but I was distinctly and repeatedly assured that they were nowhere, by any chance, found wild, and would not thrive without the aid of man.

Wando's territory was before us. It now became a matter of serious consideration how our progress across that hostile district should be accomplished. Mohammed's first suggestion was that we should take a circuitous route far to the east, and then that he should himself return with his armed forces strengthened by a complement from his head Seriba on the Nabambisso, and thus proceed to rescue the store of ivory that had been entrusted to Wando's care. To this scheme no doubt there were various objections. The new route would be entirely unknown to the Nubians, and as, beyond a question, it would lead across wildernesses utterly void of any population, the caravan would necessarily have to endure no small measure of privation. In any case trustworthy guides would be necessary in order that the caravan might arrive at its destination in any seasonable time. Notwithstanding all difficulties, Mohammed resolved to attempt to penetrate to the eastern Monbuttoo country, although for this purpose we should be obliged to recross the Keebaly. Nembey was tributary to Degberra, the king of the eastern Monbuttoo, and it had been necessary for Mohammed thus to proceed in the first place to his village; the fact being that the enmity between Munza and Degberra was so bitter that there was no possibility of passing *directly* from the territory of one to that of the other. We started accordingly, and the whole train having crossed the brook Kussumbo, we turned to the south-east along an open steppe, and proceeded for about half a league until we reached

a deep hollow from which there issued one of the smaller tributaries of the Kussumbo. This hollow was formed by one of the landslips so common in this part of Africa, caused by the gradual washing away from below of the ferruginous swamp-ore, which was here at least 50 feet thick. The depth of the defile itself was about 80 feet; its sides were enveloped in dense bushes, and the masses of rock which were quite homogeneous were adorned with a covering of hitherto unknown fern of the genus *adiantum*, which, in spots like this, clothes the reeking stones with a complete down of feathery fronds.

THE KAHPILY.

Another half league across the steppe and I was surprised to find that we were on the banks of a copious river that about eight miles to the south-west joined the Keebaly. Astonished at the sight of the rushing waters I turned to my Monbuttoo guide, and, availing myself of the few words in his dialect with which I was familiar, I asked him "*Na eggu rukodassi?*" (What do you call that river?) From his reply I discovered that it was the Kahpily, not the Keebaly. The similar sound of the names of these two collateral streams warned me afresh how carefully the traveller should render the names of rivers which he hears; time passes on and the names of places are changed with their chiefs, but the names of their rivers are handed on by the Africans from generation to generation as long as their language and nationality remain unaltered;^[43] only where these change do the names of the rivers fall into oblivion. The Kahpily has a rapid current from north-east to south-west; its depth here was only 4 feet, but its bed, 40 feet in width, and its steep rocky walls, 40 feet in height, demonstrated that this important stream must be subject to a considerable increase in its volume. In my own mind I was convinced that all these rivers, meeting within so limited an area, must have their sources in some mountain region at no great distance, little as the aspect of the surrounding country seemed to warrant the supposition. It was evident to my mind that the Kahpily must rise near the source-streams of the Dyoor, and from a mountain-chain extending to the south-east from Baginze, a district which

would appear to be the nucleus of a whole series of source-streams that flow thence to the north and west.

While the caravan was being carefully conducted across the river by means of an immense stem of a tree that stretched over from bank to bank, I enjoyed a refreshing bath in the foaming waters. Proceeding next in the direction of E.S.E., we passed over a level steppe. As we approached the river that next intercepted us we found that we were on the recent track of a lion; the vestiges in the red clay were all so well-defined that the natives, with their keen hunting instinct, pronounced without hesitation that they had been made by an aged male. The steppes extend for a long distance along the right bank of the Keebaly without being relieved by human habitations, and the district naturally abounds with game. Herds of leucotis antelopes animated the plain and tempted me to devote an hour to the chase. Drenched with perspiration, almost as if I were in the tumult of a battle, and aimlessly following the impulse of the moment, I pushed my way through the tall savannah-grass. Hunting in Africa may be fairly described to be one continual whirl and scramble; the very abundance of game confuses the vision; one object of attraction rises rapidly after another, and baffles any attempt at deliberation. After considerable perseverance I succeeded in bringing down a buck antelope, much to the astonishment of the natives, who were watching my movements from the road, and persisted to the last in questioning the efficiency of my firearms. I hit a second antelope, but did not kill it. It was pursued by the natives for many miles, and only just before sunset did they succeed in surrounding it so that they could despatch it by means of their lances. In the middle of the night I was called up, and naturally supposed that something serious had transpired, but I soon discovered that the reason why my rest had been disturbed was merely that I might be shown the mark of my bullet in the animal's thigh. The men insisted upon my feeling the depth of the wound with my finger, and seemed unable to comprehend that they were showing me nothing that was new.

**THE
TRUMPET-
TREE.**

A little rivulet, called the Kambeley, wound down a hollow incline of which the

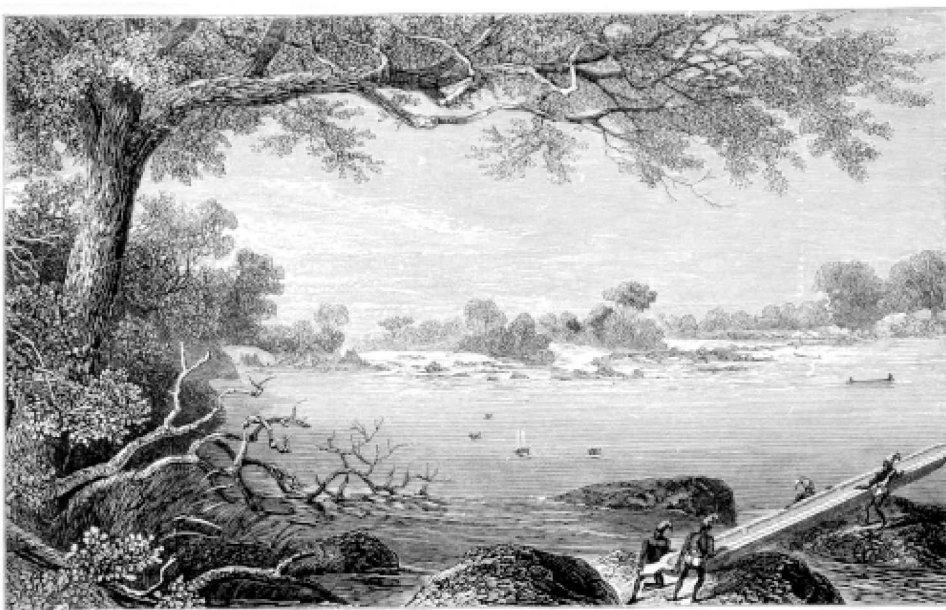
sides were indented with many a vale of different level. The sides of the hollow were covered for a considerable height with a tangled jungle from which the great leaves of the trumpet-tree (*Cecropia*) rose like brilliant fans; and interwoven amongst its thickets there was a new species of palm, something akin to the rotang, of which every leaf terminated in a long spray, armed with prickles, like a pike-hook. From this palm the Monbuttoo cut canes as thick as their arms, which are reputed to be so difficult to break that they are not unfrequently used as a criterion in testing strength. Above the primeval wood the narrow valley was crowned with a number of small and graceful huts. Altogether the spot was so romantic and wild, and yet withal it had an air of so much snug and cosy comfort, that it seemed to entice one to choose it for his home.

At this point our caravan was joined by a party of people sent by Kubby, one of Degberra's sub-chieftains, from beyond the Keebaly, to open ivory transactions with Mohammed, a circumstance that boded us no good, and forbade us from being in any way sanguine of a hospitable reception from Kubby. This half-way meeting was only a blind; it was a pretext to prevent us from alleging that his subsequent refusal to allow us to cross the river was actuated by any hostile motive. An African chief always likes to have a loophole as long as it is doubtful whether peace is preferable to war.

The ground, with its continual indentations, slanted gradually downwards as we approached the great river. Several ravines and clefts with their flowing source-springs had to be traversed before we reached the river bank, and even then, with the roar of the cataract close beside us, we were obliged to trace and retrace our steps up and down the shore before we could find a suitable place for an encampment.

At this date (April 18th) the Keebaly filled a bed more than 1200 feet in width. The main current followed the left or southern shore, along which a great bank of gneiss lay exposed, now stretched out in wide flats, and now piled up in countless fragments like huge lumps of ice. The extreme height of this bank never exceeded fifty feet, while the northern bank, on which we had our station, was covered with

the most splendid forest and rose to a height of at least a hundred feet. Higher up, the stream was parted into numerous channels, and amidst these was a profusion of woody islands, against which the foaming waters broke, throwing the sparkle of their spray into the darkness of the thicket.^[44] The channels appeared to be all quite navigable, although the sound of the rapids could be distinctly heard. "Kissingah" is the general name by which these rapids are distinguished; but the Monbuttoo are accustomed simply to refer to them as "the islands." We could observe the conical roofs of the fishing-huts peeping out from amidst the foliage, and noticed the canoes of the unfriendly natives darting rapidly across from one islet to another. Not one, however, of these fishing-boats came near us; nor was there the least indication of the coming of any of Kubby's messengers to assist us in our passage across the stream. We became aware only too soon of a resolution to obstruct our progress, the cause of which was readily to be explained. Poncet's (subsequently Ghattas's) company had a Seriba in Kubby's district, and the Nubians who had been left in charge had succeeded in inducing the chief to refuse us the assistance of his boats, for no other reason whatever than that they feared Mohammed's competition with themselves, and that they were eager to monopolize the entire ivory-trade of the district.



VIEW ON THE KEEBALY, NEAR KUBBY.

For the next day we waited on. No boats arrived. This waste of time suited the plans neither of Mohammed nor of myself. Our provisions, moreover, were getting low. There was no prospect of revictualling. Accordingly our resolution was taken: without delay we would return to Nembey.

**THE
KEEBALY.**

During the day of indecision, I exerted myself as best I could to explore the wildernesses of the Keebaly. My attention was chiefly attracted by a fragrant crinum, in shape and size resembling a white lily. The diversity of the trees seemed almost endless, and I was especially amazed at the variety of the anonaceæ and fig-trees, of which I found little short of forty species.

An infallible proof of the size and copiousness of the river was afforded by the number of hippopotamuses that were floundering about. I amused myself by clambering along the smooth rocks that projected into the water, and testing my bullets on the hides of the unwieldy brutes; having an ample store of ammunition, for which there did not seem to be much demand in the way of regular hunting, I fired away over the surface of the water, for the hour together. My sport created a vivid sensation amongst the natives upon the opposite bank, for although they had the prudence to keep carefully out of sight, they could not resist surreptitiously spying at our camp from behind their bushes; they manifested their surprise at the enormous range covered by my rifles, being acquainted only with the guns of the Nubians, the best of which could not carry half the distance.

The waters of the Keebaly have the repute of affording a home to a very remarkable animal that has never been observed in any of the streams that rise from the Nile basin. The Nubians, who have a habit of calling anything with which they are not familiar by whatever name may come uppermost at the moment, have given this animal the designation of a "Kharoof-el-bahr," or river-sheep; they describe it in such a way that there can be little doubt that it is a manatus or lamantin (probably *M. Vogellii*), which is so frequently found in the rivers of Western Africa that flow into the Atlantic. My short and unsettled sojourn on the Keebaly prohibited me from

securing, out of these tropical source-streams, a specimen of this strange representative of the Sirenia family.

I am perfectly certain that if Mohammed had pleased he could have forced his way across the river. The dexterous Nubians had but to swim over with their guns upon their heads, and they could readily have taken possession of the canoes which, too large and cumbrous to be transported by land, were concealed in the thickets upon the opposite shore. I merely mention this to illustrate my opinion that, with a company of Nubians, the great African rivers in themselves offer no insuperable obstacles to a resolute traveller.

As already affirmed, the Keebaly is to be considered as the main stream of the river that, in its lower course, is known as the Welle. Before quitting it we may do well to give our brief attention to the geographical questions that are associated with this discovery.

In the accounts collected from his agents, and published by Poncet, the river is called the Boora or Baboora,^[45] but as I never heard this name, I can only surmise that Poncet's informants had somehow misunderstood or misinterpreted the regular name Keebaly or Keebary. In the same way I never heard anything of a king mentioned under the name of Kagooma, or of a tribe called the Onguroo. The Nubians seem never to recollect the native names of rivers, and invariably pronounce all names whatever most incorrectly; the information derived from that quarter is of little value to the geographer, and it is very much to be regretted that the most travelled and experienced leaders of the Khartoom expeditions should have failed so much in acquiring definite details; had it been otherwise, their knowledge would have been of great assistance in laying down more complete and accurate maps of the country.

The probability that the Keebaly and the Welle are identical with the upper course of the Shary appears to become at once almost a positive certainty when we ask the counter-question, "If this is not the Shary, whence does the Shary come?" All that we know and all that we do not know about the north and north-western districts conspire to satisfy us that in that

direction there is neither a sufficient reservoir, nor an adequate space, for the development of a network of streams large enough to form a river which is half a mile broad at its mouth, and which fills a lake as large as the whole of Belgium. The waters of the Welle, however, do not rise till April, while the Shary occasionally rises in March. In order to explain this earlier rising of the lower river, we seem to be compelled to adopt the supposition that there must be some *second* main stream which issues from a latitude more southerly than the Keebaly. Quite insignificant are the two affluents, the Nalobey and the Nomayo, which the river receives on the left from the south of Munza's territory.

There can be little doubt about the real origin of the Keebaly. Although, as delineated on my map, the river has a position as though it issued directly from the north-west angle of the Mwootan Lake (Albert Nyanza), nothing was more remote from my intention than to jump to such a precipitate conclusion; there was nothing either in the nature of the river and its tributaries, or in the information received from the various natives, which could, in any way, justify such a hypothesis. On the contrary, I am quite convinced of the correctness of Baker's statement. I entirely concur with his view that Lake Mwootan is the great basin of the Nile, and that the Bahr-el-Gebel is its only outlet. That Lake Mwootan, simply on account of its abundance of water, must necessarily have *several* outlets, and that the Ayi (the river which Baker calls the Yè) is one of those outlets, is only a geographical chimera which, in the Old World at least, has no analogy, and which would only be admitted to the theories of *dilettanti*. According to Baker's measurement Lake Mwootan (Albert Nyanza) is 2720 feet above the level of the sea. But by comparing the rapids of the Keebaly with the height of Munza's residence (2707 feet), which has been verified by the most rigid scientific appliances, I have ascertained that they are almost on the same level as the lake. The river and the lake being thus at the same altitude constitutes decisive evidence that the Keebaly does not issue from the lake, from which it is distant about 170 miles.

All the rivers that were embraced within the compass of my journey appeared to me to have their source in the spur of the Galla-Abyssinian highlands, through which the Bahr-el-Gebel passes in the Madi country. Those which belong to the Nile system would seem to spring from the mountains of Koshi on the north of Lake Mwootan, whilst those which are tributary to the Shary have their source in what Baker designates the Blue Mountains, which he observed to the north-west of the lake. Including the Mfumbiro group on the north of Lake Tanganyika—that group which under Speke’s name of “the Mountains of the Moon,” has obtained a certain geographical notoriety—this mountain system apparently forms a section of that conspicuous terrace-chain which (with the only exceptions of the Niger source-territory and the lofty isolated coast ranges by the equator) divides the continent of Africa, not according to the prevailing idea into a northern and southern, but into an eastward and westward half of highland and lowland. The highland embraces a large number of inland lakes, some of which allow their waters to escape most diffusely, whilst others appear to have no outlet at all. Many of these lakes are found close to the western ridge of the high ground. Besides the Keebaly, the Lualaba amongst other rivers may be named as forcing its way through the mountains of Rua, and apparently flowing in a westerly direction towards the lowland. If we imagine a prolonged line to cut the entire continent from Massowa to Mossamedes, it would coincide almost precisely with the terrace-chain of which I have spoken; it would answer very much to a corresponding line of division between the highlands and lowlands of South America which, like an Africa turned right over, has its coast-chain on the western side.

Nurtured as I had been upon the banks of the Düna, my earliest memories were associated with the aspect of a majestic river with its foaming waves, and it was consequently with no ordinary pleasure that I gazed upon this stream which hitherto no white man had ever beheld. I retain the most vivid recollection of the last evening that I spent upon the banks of the Keebaly, when both time and place contributed to provoke a geographical discussion. The Nubians are always ready to talk about rivers. They will enlarge freely upon their source,

their aspect, and their connection; but, carried away by their imagination, they never fail to represent their own incomparable Nile as *par excellence* the river of rivers, the very spring and reservoir of all the goodliest waters of the earth. A compendium of all their geographical delusions would form an interesting study, and might furnish a key to many antiquated traditions. It is well known that the Nubians and Arabians always give the name of “island” to the projecting point of land which lies at the confluence of any two rivers; thus Sennaar would be described as the “island” between the White and the Blue Nile; and it was in the same sense that the ancients applied the name to Meroë, the land between the Nile and the Atbara. It is a matter of remark again that the Nubians are accustomed to invert, as it were, the upward and downward courses of a stream, and to describe the confluence of two rivers as the separation of the main stream into two branches. This habit may possibly account for the frequent mention of “arms” in all their descriptions of their rivers: it is in accordance moreover with the practice of the ancients, who referred to the junction of the White and Blue Nile at Khartoom as a partition of the entire stream, “*ubi Nilus iterum bifurcus*,” a notion probably only derived from the habitual expressions of the natives which would thus appear to have remained unaltered for many centuries.

**NUBIAN
INCON-
SISTENCY.**

A corresponding difference between the Nubian mode of expression and our own is observable in all their allusions to the motions of rivers, and they would speak, for example, of the Nile as going *towards*, and not as descending *from* the mountains. On the bank of the Keebaly I sat discussing the topic of river-systems with Mohammed Aboo Sammat and his people; but as we argued over the many hydrographical problems that were yet unsolved I detected him in the most flagrant contradictions. At length, losing my patience, I desired him to show me with his hand which way he supposed the Keebaly to flow; the whole party simultaneously motioned towards the east, and turning to the west declared that that was the direction from which the river came. Startled from my composure, I rated them soundly upon their inconsistencies. “Why, you Mussulmen,” I said, “twist and turn everything

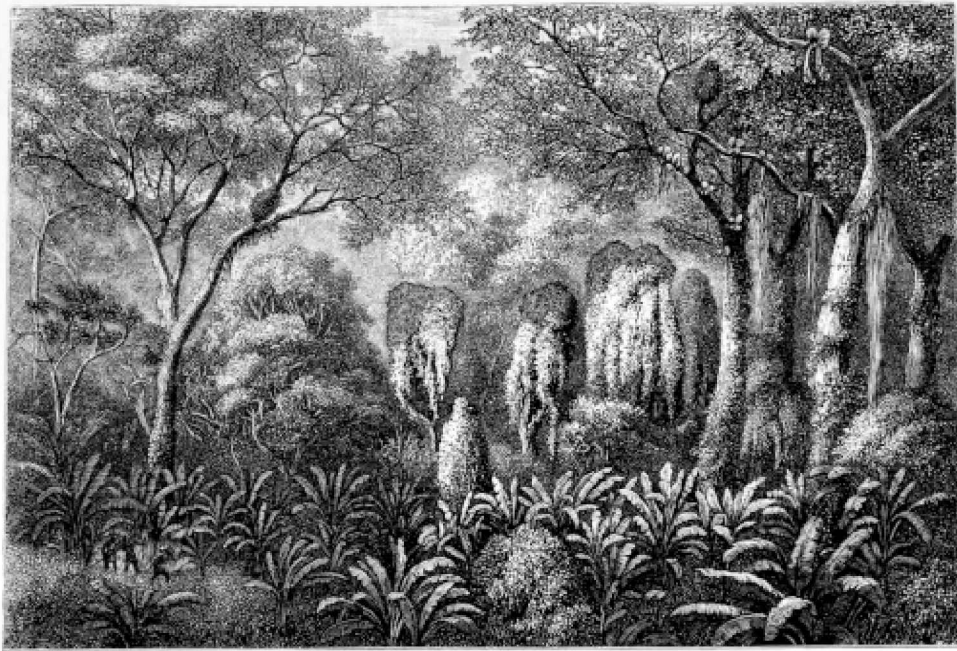
upside down. We can comprehend you in nothing. What is sin with us is righteousness with you. The day you call night.^[46] In your Ramadan, *you* fast during the daytime; *we* do all our fasting at night. Go to a strange place and you expect the people to be the first to visit you. Go to a feast and you take the place of the host, and treat the servants to their beer. Your bridegrooms, too, you make them pay for their brides instead of taking them with a dowry of their own. You talk of what is 'pure and impure;' but for yourselves you are always dirty. Your names for colour are contradictions; 'akhdar' is green and grey; 'azrak' is both blue and black. You call your drums trumpets;^[47] and your trumpets drums.^[48] In bed you wrap up your heads and leave your feet uncovered. To tell the truth, I could go on and enumerate a hundred of your vagaries, and I can only wonder that you do not stand on your heads and eat with your feet." The incredible confusion in the ideas of this people involves the traveller in continual tedious explanations. Speke^[49] complains in the same way about the geographical blunders of his retinue.

We made our way back to Nembey by the same route that we had come. Before regaining the place we very narrowly escaped coming into collision with the inhabitants of some hamlets through which we passed. The entire caravan for some days past had been placed upon reduced rations, and when some of the bearers caught sight of the manioc roots that had been planted close to the dwellings, the temptation of pulling them up was too great to be resisted. The women were highly indignant, assailed the offenders lustily, and shrieked at them with the loudest imprecations. The caravan came to a standstill. As those in the rear never knew what was happening in front, Mohammed, attended by his bodyguard, hurried up to inquire into the cause of the disturbance. Having ascertained the circumstances, he came to the resolution that it would be his best policy to make an example of the thieves. Accordingly he gave his instructions, and the delinquents received a sound thrashing with the kurbatch, while the injured women looked on with mingled satisfaction and derision.

On arriving at Nembey we found our grass camp-huts in flames, the inhabitants having set fire to them as a token of

their sense of having had enough of our company. They had evidently no wish for us to tarry among them any longer. Without halting, therefore, we continued our march, recrossed the Kussumbo, and, towards dark, reached the last of the villages before the frontier wilderness, where I and my people found comfortable accommodation in a large shed belonging to the local chief. We were here informed that Wando was bent upon our destruction, the entire population of the frontier being already in arms, and the women and children having been removed to a place of safety.

Mohammed by this time had been driven, however unwillingly, to the conclusion that he had neither competent guides nor adequate provisions to enable him to carry out his original project of avoiding the enemy's territory by taking a circuitous route to the east. There was no alternative for us except to continue our old road over the wilderness that bounded the frontier. Meanwhile, repeated showers of rain had fallen, and had contributed very much to the difficulty of crossing the swamps by making them unusually humid. So much time was occupied in conveying the caravan across the brook that bounded the Monbuttoo district that I had leisure to make a sketch of the gallery-forest, which, however, very inadequately represents the splendour of its luxuriance.^[50]



A GALLERY-FOREST.

The sun was still high when we made our first camp in the wilderness. We were upon the third of the gallery-brooks. Since our former visit new blossoms had unfolded themselves, and seemed to give a fresh aspect to the scene. In every quarter of the thickets, gleaming like torches, there rose the imposing clusters of the *combretum*, with its large bright-red bracteæ; and, as if to rival them in splendour, every branch of the *spathodea* put forth a *thyrsus* of large orange-coloured balls.

AFRICAN BEESWAX.

In the midst of my enjoyment, as I was admiring the beauties all around me, I was startled by a cry, like a shout of triumph, that came from a party of our negroes who were scouring the woods in the hope of securing something good to eat. I hurried in the direction of the sound, and found the men all clustered round the stem of a tree, to which they were busily applying firebrands. Having discovered a quantity of honey in a hollow tree, they adopted the most effectual measures to secure their treasure, and very soon the honey, the wax, and the very bodies of the bees themselves were indiscriminately devoured. If any one could persuade the inhabitants of Central Africa to desist from their habit of consuming this wax, he would do no small service towards accelerating the civilization of the

continent. At present, with the exception of ivory, no article of traffic from these districts repays its transport: but the inexhaustible supply of wax from these districts might be made the object of a productive trade. Hitherto Abyssinia and Benguela have been the only countries that have supplied any considerable quantities of this valuable product; yet the demand for real beeswax in the lands alone that are subject to the orthodox Greek Church, where it is the only material allowed for church lights, is almost unbounded.

The ruins of the grass-huts beside the broad meadow-water brought back to our recollection the melancholy night of rain which we had to endure upon our outward journey. The spot was, if possible, more miserable and dejected now. Neither leaves nor grass could be obtained in sufficient quantity for our need. Trees had to be felled to make a path across the swamp, and even then, go carefully as we would, the mud was much above our knees. If the enemy had been sagacious enough to attack us under those adverse circumstances, we should have fallen an easy prey.

In another two days we should pass the enemy's border. The very expectation seemed to awaken our impatience, and we started off at early dawn. Already we could trace the footprints of our antagonists' outposts, who had been seen some distance along the road to watch for our approach. Towards noon we came to the official declaration of war, consisting, as I have previously described, of the maize, the feather, and the arrow, hung across our path, as the emblems of defiance. There was something of the anxiety of suspense as we found ourselves at the partition brook which marked off Wando's territory. Aware of the danger of venturing rashly into the pathless thickets, our cautious leader ordered a general halt. Small detachments were first despatched to reconnoitre and to clear the way. As soon as they had satisfied themselves that all was safe, the signal was given by the trumpets, and the column of bearers was set in motion. The crowd of women were not permitted to march as usual in single file, but for the sake of compactness were gathered in a mass and strode on, trampling down whatever vegetation came in their way; the chaos of confusion was indescribable; the shrill chatter of their