

William Loney RN - Background

VOLUME II, CHAPTER IX.

Bay of Amboises - Mongo ma-Lobah; probably the "Chariot of the Gods" of Hanno - An amusing chase - Abobbi, or Pirate Isle - Difficulty of the ascent - The inhabitants of the Amboises - Their language - Damèh - Mòndoleh - Geological formation - The Chief of the Woody Hill - The purple-crested plantain-eater - King Will - Royal displeasure - Bad bobs or palavers - Bimbia Island - Physical characteristics of the Bimbians - Superstition - Ideas of white doctors - Bimbian musical instruments and music - Return to Clarence Cove - Enquiries made as to the fate of Mr. Carr - Young Glorio - Edeeyah dance - Visit George's Bay - Natives - Topi or palm-wine - Edeeyah females - Mode of communicating by music -Glasgow and the drum.

The mountainous district in which the Bay of Amboises is situated, was formerly called by the Portuguese, Tierra Alta de Ambozes, according to Mr. John Brazilhier, who made a voyage to Old Kalabar in 1699. The native name for the highest part of the mountain is Mongo-ma-Lobah, but at the back or further inland, it is called Mokali-ma-Pako. The isolated peak near the bay, about five thousand feet high, is Mongo-m'Etindeh. The summit of the principal mountain, rising thirteen thousand feet above the level of the sea, was often lighted up most brilliantly by the morning sun, while the deep shadows thrown across its base involved all the lower parts in gloom, hiding the deep ravines which furrow its rugged sides. Although at a distance, this noble mountain appears to rise by one continuous and somewhat abrupt slope from the sea, on a closer view, it is found to consist of a succession of hills with intervening valleys of the richest soil, covered to within a third of the summit by beautiful forest trees, which are also seen fringing the still higher ravines. The remainder is clothed with grass, which becomes more scanty, as the colour which approaches the reddish brown of the ashes near the cone, sufficiently indicates. The volcanic origin of the whole of this district, is strongly marked by the scoria and numerous streams of lava which have reached the sea. From the present condition of its surface, one might suppose it to have been for ages in a state of repose; but there is reason to believe it sometimes betrays its latent fires. Mr. Lilly, who has known the mountain many years, assured us he had seen flames near the summit. This might be accounted for by the practice of the natives, who burn the grass in the dry season for the purpose of catching the wild animals, which they style "bush-meat;" but several of the principal natives of Bimbia declared, that about three years previous to our visit, that is about

1839, "fire came out of the ground;" they said, "God made it;" in contradistinction to that caused by the burning of the grass. "They all saw it; and at Mongo, they felt the earth shake like a steam-boat." "The people there feared it would kill them all." This, coupled with the name of the mountain, Mongo-ma-Lobah, or God's Mountain, offers a reason for supposing it might be the "chariot of the gods" of Hanno, the Carthaginian. He says, in the Periplus, "we discovered at night a country full of fire. In the middle was a lofty fire, larger than all the rest, which seemed to touch the stars. When day came, we discovered it to be a, large hill, called Teonochema,- the Chariot of the Gods."

To judge by the gray curling smoke which issued from many parts of the woods for some distance up the mountain, it must have a large population. Along the sea-shore are many villages, some of which we visited; and although the natives were described by Brazilhier as the "worst blacks of all Guinea," we found them very civil. In his time they had a little trade in slaves, chiefly with the Dutch. They now have intercourse only with the Bimbia people, whom they supply in a great measure with the nutritious well-flavoured plantain fruit.

14th.— The morning seemed to threaten us with a terrific tornado; however, "Yellow Nako" said, the "thunder was only making play," in fact, the dense black clouds which seemed "big with storms," soon dispersed, and we weighed and went round the bay, taking soundings. We passed inshore of Bobbi Island in less than two fathoms' water. A large portion of the inner end of this islet has fallen since Captain Allen visited it in 1833, with Colonel Nicolls, R.M., in the 'Quorra' steamer. At that time no communication had ever been made by Europeans with these islands, nor with the main land, except for the purposes of aggression, by carrying off the poor natives into slavery. The consequence was, that they looked on all white men with suspicion, which Colonel Nicolls was desirous of removing. When the 'Quorra' came into the bay, the surface of it was covered with little canoes, pursuing their daily avocations of fishing. All made for their strongholds in the islands or for the mainland, with the utmost speed; the 'Quorra's' boats following close upon them until they were near to the shore, where some natives checked their advance by firing muskets. Two small canoes, however, having a man and boy in one, and one man in the other, were so far out to sea, that the vessel was between them and the shore; they paddled with all

their might, thinking, poor fellows, that it was for life or liberty; and when they found our boats were approaching, the single man abandoned his canoe, and added his energies to those of the man and boy in the other, hoping by these means to get in shore, being still some distance from the cutter. There was now a most amusing chase,- both parties entered into it with their utmost vigour, but with very different motives; the Krumen - six powerful fellows - pursued with the keen relish of sportsmen or slave-catchers, while despair added strength to the poor natives; they doubled repeatedly like a hare with their light canoe, and shot far a-head, while the cutter took, comparatively, a long while to turn.

Their strength could not hold out in such an unequal contest, and they were at last fairly under the bows of the cutter; when, as if feeling that the choice of death alone was left to them, they all three plunged overboard. In an instant, all the Krumen dived after them, and brought them on board the 'Quorra.' The two men came up the side, finding that further resistance was vain; but the poor little boy kicked and screamed, and clung to everything within his reach. They lay prostrate on the deck, terror-stricken wretches. However, as may be supposed, they were "*quittes pour la peur.*" The object of Colonel Nicolls in getting hold of them was, to endeavour to instil other feelings into them, being anxious to establish a friendly communication with the inhabitants of the mainland and these islands, in the hope of being able to benefit the natives, as well as to procure live stock for Fernando Po. They were therefore quickly received with friendly looks and encouraging tones; their fish was purchased, and they were sent away with presents of handkerchiefs, beads, medals, and biscuits, as much astonished at this unlooked-for result, as they had been previously terrified.

But to return to the proceedings of the 'Wilberforce.' Coasting along the beautiful base of the Cameroons mountain, and passing several bold rocky points, she anchored off the town of Jonjeh,- beyond the bay,- where "Yellow Nako" said, plenty of stock was to be had. The natives came out in considerable numbers, armed with muskets, and determined to repel the hostile descent, which they no doubt expected we were about to make for the purpose of carrying them off. However, "Yellow Nako" was dispatched with a small "dash," and agreeably undeceived them. The chief sent a goat in return as a "dash," to "open trade."

If it were not for the difficulty of access, on account of the constant surf on the shore, this would be an admirable place for a settlement. The square rocky headland called Mokali, forming the little bay, is an impregnable position for a fortress, and some beautiful land with apparently rich soil, stretches from the low isthmus up the side of the mountain. A small river flows into the little bay near the promontory. The chief would very willingly have sold the whole for one thousand fathoms of cloth.

The chiefs of two villages came on board. Nako called them both kings, though the dominions of each do not exceed ten huts. They brought trifling presents, with one exception - a very handsome yellow girl - and they were much mortified at finding she would not be accepted, in which we thought the *beauty* also participated. A large pelerine was given to envelope her unappreciated charms, and to instil into her mind some foreign notions of modesty.

In a walk along the shore we passed many courses of lava, which had descended from the mountain to the sea, countless ages ago. The soil of decomposed basalt, &c., was exceedingly rich, but only very partially cultivated. We saw some "gentlemen's houses," as Nako called them. All were dirty and wretched, without even the most remote pretensions to comfort or neatness. A small fetiche house for some departed hero showed a slight attempt at ornament.

We had some heavy rains here, which we understood to be frequent, and the breezes were very cool. Although a lee shore to the prevalent winds, they are never strong, and the mountain was supposed to be a shelter from the force of the tornado in its usual direction. However, in the night a very heavy one came on, *not* from the mountain, but along shore from the north, bringing the dangerous rocky point Mokali under our lee, with a heavy surf breaking on it. Another anchor was immediately dropped, and the steam got up; but the squall soon passed off, although the first gust was very severe. There was very vivid lightning, but no thunder. Thus the mountain, instead of being a shelter, merely gives a different direction to the tornado, which is generally from the north-east. This is therefore an unanticipated danger on this coast, which has otherwise a constant "saucy sea."

May 17th.— We got under weigh at daylight, and ran back to our favourite Bay of Amboises. The point nearest to Mokali to the south-east, is called Isongoh, with a,

town near it - Isambah; the next, Limboh, being the north-west point forming the Bay of Amboises, with a town called Batoko. To the north-west of Mokali the first point is Divongoh; the next Enyaugeh, with a town of the same name near the Rumbia river, which Nako said is not so large as the Mādiba-ma-Dualla or Cameroons; it is navigable only to Batondo.

Being desirous of visiting the singular rocky islet called the Pirate Island, with a view, if possible, to establish a friendly disposition with its wild inhabitants, Nako was landed with a bottle of rum for the chief, as an assurance of friendship, and an invitation to him to come on board. After much hesitation, he sent his "mate," who said he would gladly have visited us before, but he was afraid of the white men. Others soon followed in their canoes, and brought pigs, &c., and traded freely.

Captain Allen then went on shore with Commander Ellis of the 'Soudan,' and Lieutenant Sidney the surveying officer, who took a set of angles for the different points in the bay. The landing-place was at one spot only, a little sandy point at the foot of the highest part of the island, which rises precipitously, and with a wild confusion of huge fragments of rock, strown about. Amongst them the canoes were hauled up, and partly concealed. We passed round to the other side of the island, where the perpendicular cliffs form a little pebbly bay, in which the surf beats incessantly. Here we looked in vain for a path leading to the summit, or inhabited part, which was already covered with black heads anxiously watching our progress. Two kings met us, and showed a narrow ledge, which seemed to be perfectly inaccessible except to goats. They were desired to lead the way, and we followed up what appeared to be the edge of a basaltic dyke, where hands were as much in requisition as feet. We scrambled up, however, as fast as their more practised Majesties, to the great admiration of the crowd on the summit. It was rather a nervous feat, as one false step would have dashed us to atoms. We never, in all our mountain rambles, had seen such a path, hardly even among those where the wild goat derides his pursuers. The first level spot we reached, corresponded with the rude ascent. It was not more than ten feet wide, with a sheer precipice on either side - a sort of isthmus dividing the highest point of the island, - a steep acclivity which might be a citadel - from the part inhabited. Here we were met by the principal man at the head of the whole population.

Our reception was not very ceremonious, and after the first display of curiosity, and the discussion of the object of our visit, they allowed us to wander about perfectly unmolested. On mentioning the subject of King William's "bad bob," they declared he had no authority over them, and that they were determined to maintain their independence: with regard to his son, all said that he was neither killed by a gun nor by a cutlass, but "God took him."

The mother or woman who had charge of the child told us he was burned by accident.

The appearance of the town is what might be anticipated from such an approach. The surface of the island is so confined and uneven, that the huts, of the meanest description, are huddled together wherever there is an available spot, and seem almost piled one on another. They were swarming with children, goats, dogs, pigs, &c., and blackened by smoke. There is not the smallest space for cultivation, and but scanty browsing for the numerous goats.

The people of this and the other Amboise Islands are apparently of the same tribe as the Bimbians, but they are somewhat taller, and more muscular, especially about the lower extremities. The teeth are filed much in the same way as their neighbours; the eyes are bright, quick, and restless, expressive both of distrust and determination. Their abrupt and resolute demeanour shows how little they have associated with Europeans, and how much influence is exerted on their character, by the state of hostility in which they live with the people on the mainland. They subsist chief by fishing; exchanging the produce of the sea for vegetables, bananas, yams, &c., with their neighbours, who meet them at a sort of neutral spot on the main, where a market is held. That they are not wanting in the necessaries of life is evident in their robust and healthy look, which may also be influenced in some measure by the dryness and superior salubrity of their island homes. Water is the most scarce article; and excepting such trifling quantities as are left by the showers, in the small natural excavations in the rocks, they are dependent on the springs of the adjacent coast. Their language is a dialect of the Dualla, having but slight differences, and these principally in the pronunciation. They have no tradition of their origin; but some pages of their past and future history may be read in the physical nature of the island, which doubtless was at no distant period joined to the mainland, forming a promontory

similar to one at the south-east side of the bay, as it is directly opposite to, and not far distant from, a precipitous spur of the Cameroons mountain of the same formation. The narrow channel between them is shallow, and the numerous fragments at the contiguous end of the island prove that the process which caused the dismemberment, is still going on; while nine fantastic little islets or "needles," lying in the same line of direction, some almost like pinnacles, cut in at the water line, and "nodding to their fall," and three of them perforated by the incessant action of the sea, forming irregular arches, through which the surf chafes and expends its not idle fury, show that the Pirate Island was originally much larger, perhaps connected with the island Damèh, which is in the same line; and the ridge of shallow water between, justifies the idea, that the restless Atlantic has effected a physical as well as a moral separation between the inhabitants, which were probably of the same family.

"Mountains interpos'd,
Make enemies of nations; which, had else
Like kindred drops, been mingled into one."

The rock of which Abobbi or Pirate Island is composed, offers very little resistance to the action of the sea, beating incessantly at its base: it seems to be a compact mass of volcanic ashes with basaltic dykes. The little isthmus before alluded to is very nearly cut through, and the singular destiny of these poor islanders is easily divined; a generation not remote will see their "fatherland" swept from under them. Nature will work more sure destruction than the vengeance of King William of Bimbia.

Damèh, the outer island, is of more durable materials, on which, although more exposed, the action of the sea has little effect, and it lashes its rocky sides with such ceaseless rage, that a landing can only be effected with difficulty at one spot at the inner end.

From this point the land rises in a central ridge, terminating at the outer end in a bold rocky eminence about one hundred and fifty feet high, with some trees and sufficient soil for a garden; as there is also, on either slope of the island. Beyond this bold point the sea boils and frets incessantly, covering a large expanse with foam, though outside what seems to be a vortex, the water is as tranquil as in a lake.

The habitations are in the middle part of the island, and are built in a style very superior to those of Abobbi, forming an irregular street on the highest part of the ridge; the sloping sides affording browsing to numerous goats. There is no cultivation, and except in a pool at the outer end,- nearly dry,- we saw no water, this necessary of life being principally brought from the main land. The inhabitants were very civil, and followed us about everywhere, but the least thing would frighten them away. Every morning and evening we had visits from the people, who brought off fish of various kinds: one a small and well favoured species allied to *Sphyraena*, with a very elongate lower jaw, tipped with scarlet and black.

Empty bottles were in the greatest demand, probably for the purpose of carrying water; needles were also much in request, for what use we could scarcely surmise, as they have no clothing to sew; still the outcry was always "Dundokki! dundokki! Needles! needles!" We also bought some goats and pigs from them, which they seemed very unwilling to part with.

Between Damèh, and the promontory forming the south-east side of the Bay, lies the beautiful island, Mòndoleh; rising abruptly from the sea to the height of about two hundred feet. It is steep on all sides, especially to the west, not too much so, however, for the growth of magnificent trees; such as the bombax, African-oak, camwood, iron-wood, &c., festooned with orchidaceous plants in great variety, and intermixed with an impenetrable tangle of low bushes. The surface - of little extent - is undulating, or of a "saddle-back" form; covered with the richest soil, of decomposed basalt, and with very little labour yields yams, plantains, cocoa-nuts, &c., and might be made very productive. There are few inhabitants.

From the summit the views through the openings between the trees are exceedingly picturesque; the shores of the bay, on one side, backed by the stupendous Mongo-ma-Lobah, or Cameroon mountains, rising at once from the sea to the elevation of about 13,000 feet; on the other, the rival Peak of Fernando Po, 11,000, in the distance; in fact these grand objects, together with the richly wooded promontories, the islands and the tranquil sea, combine to form one of the finest panoramas.

Mòndoleh possesses a great advantage over the other islands in several springs of water, which though scanty, would - from being perennial - afford an abundant

supply, if economized by tanks. The temperature of these, 77° of Fahrenheit, while the air was at 83°, shows that their sources are in the loftier regions of the mountain.

{This island - Mòndoleh - is principally basalt, a rock composed of felspar, hornblende, and magnetic iron ore: with porphyritic crystals of basaltic hornblende embedded in it, of an amygdaloid texture; the pores elongated horizontally, - filled with mesotype, either in crystals, or in compact masses of crystalline character, or with a green earthy matter, or with some other spathic mineral: the last mentioned exhibiting crystalline forms of the hexagonal system, as, rhomboedrons with elongated hexagonal axes, combined with others of turned, - or of shortened axes. This combination may be possibly new.

Sometimes the crystals are arranged in kidney-shaped groups, indicated by the sulphuret of iron, but in such a manner, that each specimen can be distinguished and examined in respect of its crystallization.

In the higher parts of the island the amygdaloidal texture of the basalt ceases, and it seems to be of a more solid character with shivery cleavage; crystals of basaltic hornblende more distinct are embedded in it and few crystals of olivine. These formations are intersected by a second kind of basalt in vertical veins from two to four feet in breadth, running east and west.

The rock is quite solid, of a rather deep blue colour, with embedded crystal of basaltic hornblende and olivine. The separation assumes a columnar character in a horizontal position and hexagonal form.

A minute examination of the basalt discloses evidences of different periods of cooling; as, on the sides of the vein it is quite compact and solid like rock of a single structure; as limestone. At a distance of four inches within, it has pores of considerable size. The middle of the vein is of a more granulous structure, extremely rich in embedded crystals of basaltic hornblende.

The contact of the vein with the amygdaloid basalt has operated a great change in the latter. The crystalline alters to a metamorphose character, so that the massive basalt has the appearance of conglomerate; pieces of it like slag being combined in different sizes by an earthy substance, coloured by oxide of iron of a fine texture.

The heat of the basalt at the time of its appearance at the surface, must have been very great, since its effect is observable to a distance of more than six feet. Several veins run parallel to one another at short distances, which may be seen most frequently at the north and south parts of the island, and which may account for its saddle-back outline.

On the western side, where the heat operated with the greatest intensity, not only has it destroyed the older deposits, but separate veins are no longer traceable,- the columnar structure alters to a coarse granular character like kokolite, the crystallanic solid changes to a metamorphose granulous texture due to hest and algidity.

If the whole surface of this island could be carefully examined, it would afford a fine field for observing the laws of operation in this laboratory of nature.

The similarity of the geological character of the islands Fernando Po, Prince's, St. Thomas', Rollas, and Annobone, indicates a line of volcanic action in that direction with an offset at an angle of 90° at Ascension.- M. Roscher's *Geological Journal*.)

At the north-eastern angle of the head of the bay, a little stream falls in, but there is no landing for boats on account of the surf, being completely open to the set from south-west. There is a market to which the natives of the island go in canoes.

The chief of a village situated on the hill, which we have said was formerly joined in all probability to the islands Abobbi and Damèh, sent an invitation to Captain Allen, who landed with Commander Ellis. On our way up, we met large parties of men with cutlasses, clearing the road of grass and underwood, while the women were preparing for our reception, by sweeping their huts and clearing the square of weeds. Although the houses were neither large, nor commodious, there was an appearance of neatness about them. The "Chief of the woody hill," is said to be rich in fourteen wives, thirteen children, and about five hundred people, besides many goats and some cows. Our early visit,- profiting by the deliciously cool land-wind,- had taken him rather by surprise, as he was dressing to receive us; the most important part of his toilet, being the arrangement of a Union Jack, which Mr. Beecroft had given him and which he wore as a kilt. We were much pleased with his great civility.

The soil on the summit is of the richest description. But the villages have no water except at the foot of the hill, where a delicious stream gushes out from rocks, a considerable distance along the margin of the sea. Our Sappers cleared them away, so as to enable the people to fill their casks. This slight operation will be of advantage to the natives, and a very little trouble in blasting the rock would make an excellent watering-place.

In the woods adjacent to this locality, we shot some of the pretty rufous-necked king-hunters; the large grey-headed bush shrike; the Senegal swallow; some half-collared doves; and a new species of plantain-eater - the *Corythaix macrorynchus* - the greater part of the plumage on the breast and neck is fine green, the back dark blue, with crimson and black wings - a white stripe extends behind the eye; the crest is green, with a thin line of black, margined over all with purple. We were so fortunate as to procure from the same tree three specimens, each having the crest in a different state; in one it was simply green, in another green, with a black margin; in the third as described above. In all other respects they had the same plumage; we have reason to believe they have been divided into distinct species, although it is quite clear to us, they were merely of different ages.

May 20th.- We completed our survey of the bay, by taking lines of sounding in every direction with the 'Wilberforce' and 'Soudan.' We then paid another visit to Bimbia, and on this occasion went with the vessel into the little strait, and anchored abreast of the pretty amphitheatre of villages; but the everlasting swell finds its way even into this apparently sheltered nook, and breaks at low water on a shoal half way across the channel from Bimbia Island.

Some of the officers went on shore for the purpose of procuring specimens of natural history. On approaching the abode of the Bimbia *monarch*, he was observed striding to and fro, under a verandah, in a furious passion, evidently "nursing his wrath to keep it warm" for the "Cappy." As each officer passed the spot, he called out in a loud tone, "King Will, no will let." "King Will, no will let." "King Will, make bob." "Too much bad bob." The cause of all this was elucidated on Captain Allen's landing soon afterwards, and going to the Palace, where King William was found in a humour to show off yet further the royal displeasure.

He was dressed in a long cotton coat, on which Captain Allen unluckily complimented him, as it afterwards proved to be a tender subject. He replied in a haughty manner, "No! he no be good coat, he very wow, wow - bad - coat. King William plenty angry; got bad bob for you. What for you go buy goat, sheep, pig, from that *dam* bushman' Plenty bad bob for you." Captain Allen thought it necessary to assume even a higher tone than he had, and scolded him in well-affected rage for his presumption. "How dare you speak to the captain of the Queen of England's man-of-war ship in that fashion? Who made you king? You were a 'small boy' when Kokliko (Colonel Nicolls) came here and made you a 'strong man,' and now you dare to speak to me of 'bad bob?' I came to you to buy goats, and you sell them 'plenty dear,' I go to the bushman and he sells them to me 'plenty cheap.' Take care you don't make me angry, that will be 'too much bad bob' for you."

The wrath of the savage instantly abated, and he became perfectly humble. He was beyond measure delighted to find that "many-tongued rumour" had misinformed him of our having given a military coat and epaulettes to a mere "bush king."

On asking Billeh whether he would be willing to receive a missionary, he passionately exclaimed, "No'. I no will, that's humbug palaver." He spoke violently on the subject for some time; his broken English was difficult to understand, but we gathered that he would not have any one to interfere with his authority; nor to introduce customs, which might be repugnant to the feelings of his people.

He renewed the subject of the Bobbi people, and said he would stop some of their canoes until his "bob" was settled; but promised that he would not make war for the purpose of killing any one: for which concession he was promised a uniform jacket and other things. Two of his wives were sent to receive the presents, as he said he could not trust his son. These were both natives of Dualla, one a very good-looking girl, the other a sister of A'Lobah - King Bell. After giving the presents, and some articles of dress for themselves, they became so importunate that we were obliged to dismiss them rather unceremoniously - for royal personages.

The villages lining the shore of this beautiful little strait are generally neat and clean. Each has a headman, and they are all *kings* or *dukes*. The government seems to be a patriarchal commonwealth, their subjects being principally their families and slaves.

John King explained the succession: his father was the head chief: he left three sons, Nako, John King, and Billeh: Nako assumed the chief authority; on his death, John King waived his right in favour of King Billeh. The latter had frequently declared that whichever of his sons proved to have the "best head" would succeed him. He seemed very fond of a pretty little prattling boy, about four years of age. He "liked him plenty;" said he always slept with him, and he "might be king if he had a good head." From this it would appear that the chieftainship is elective. The place is certainly rising in importance, and they are very anxious to have ships to come and trade with them in palm oil, of which they have abundance, as well as wood. Duke Martin said he had four hundred large jars of oil.

We found the night insufferably hot here, giving palpable evidence of the superiority of the climate of the Bay of Amboises, where we had a pure and prolonged sea-breeze, or a cool land-wind, every night; insuring a calm and refreshing sleep.

Sunday, May 22nd.— We had signified that we did not wish to be disturbed. John King came on board, but he was exceedingly well behaved, and, so far from being importunate like his brother, he would not even receive a small present, because we had told him it was our Lord's day of rest. However, he said he would let us know his wants after he had sent on board some fine bullocks, which he had procured for us. On the following day he was as good as his word, and sold three at "one price," - without haggling.

Our former prompt departure, and the scolding he had just received, brought Billeh to his senses, as he also let us have some goats at "one price," that is, without first asking thrice as much as he intended to take. He sent four men with muskets to try and shoot bullocks for us; but he said they were "too much wild; they savy too much when white man comes, and run far away into the bush." They at length succeeded, and brought a small one on board which had been shot with broken bits of brass.

At the back of the *palace* were numerous huts, ranged in two long lines, the dwellings of the chief's wives, children, and slaves. The former came out immediately on our entering the court-yard, and commenced begging for everything they saw. They were neither remarkable for decency of manners nor appearance. The natural ugliness of their features was increased by a dark green pigment, which, however, was

distributed on their faces, and other parts of their person, with such care as to prove that they thought it had a contrary effect. Some of the children were pretty; one especially, a daughter of the Chief, named Luchinga, was a perfect miniature Venus, though she was not more than seven years of age. In one large hut, we could see through the bars at the entrance a number of females of all ages, who were doubtless slaves, from the authoritative way in which the pretty little boy,- the Chief's favourite son,- ordered them about.

Landing on another occasion we found the Chief lying on his bed very unwell, and begging most piteously for some of the white man's medicine. We had a proof, however, how little the comforts of civilization,- according to our ideas,- are appreciated by the natives of a tropical climate. Although this Chief prided himself on his connexion with the white men, and the multitude of good things he possessed from their country, he was lying in the lower part of his house, without flooring, though he had excellent rooms above, which, with the numerous and valuable articles of European manufacture, he merely kept for show, or "to make him strong." We had difficulty, in scrambling over lumber of different kinds, to reach the damp and dark corner where he was lying. He had, nevertheless, a decent bed and pillow.

The land near the town of Bimbia is tolerably well cultivated, but the dense underwood which spreads so rapidly and luxuriantly, makes it a difficult matter to keep any space properly cleared. Many fine timber trees grow a little distance off, and some blanched yet stalwart trunks, visible here and there, bore evidence to the destroying influence of the electric fluid, which is said to be more frequently dangerous here, than at almost any other part of the coast.

There is one irregular street, kept tolerably clean, and a number of straggling huts. All the dwellings are small square clay-built edifices, thatched with the sedgy *cyperus* and the useful palm-leaf. The places more constantly appropriated to sleeping in have a small aperture, just large enough to enter, over which a grass-mat is suspended internally. Most of the natives have various European articles hung up about their dwellings, the amount of which is a fair index of individual wealth; but as light is as scrupulously kept out as if a window-tax were levied among them, we had great difficulty in ascertaining what they were. Palm-oil is the staple commodity of export, with a few elephants' teeth, brought from the Balung country. Live stock,

goats, sheep, pigs, and poultry abound, and form a source of no little wealth to the possessors; time is, however, of so little value to these people, that they think nothing of passing backwards and forwards several days, before they arrange the sale or purchase of a single goat, and quite exhaust an Englishman's patience, especially as a preliminary *dash* is expected before commencing business of the most trifling nature. When not engaged in barter, fishing appears to be the most common employment; and, as the fish is both abundant and good, it forms a large portion of their food, together with plantains, instead of yams, which are not so much cultivated. That the slave trade has been actively prosecuted here, and is still more or less so, is evident, from the number of persons who speak a little Spanish or Portuguese.

Although the language of Bimbia closely resembles the Dualla or Cameroons, the physical characters of the people are somewhat different; the Bimbians being for the most part small in stature, but muscular. The hands and feet are large; the lower jaw is prognathous or protruding; the eyes are bright, but full of cunning and avarice; and the countenance generally expressive of bad feelings, which subsequent inquiries into their dispositions confirmed. The mode of filing the teeth very much down, leaving a wide space between, so as to have them long and sharp, adds not a little to their disagreeable looks, and is apt to raise unpleasant suspicions as to cannibal propensities. Many of them have squares tatoed over the abdomen, resembling the scarifications of cupping, and others have triangular marks in the temples, not unlike the Krus, with whom they seem rather anxious to *fraternize*.

Their religious superstitions are much the same as in other parts of the coast, and said also to be accompanied with human sacrifices. On the demise of a chief or any great man, more or less of the property is left in the house, which is abandoned and allowed after an interval to go to decay, We saw in the deserted hut reported to have been occupied by the late chief, a number of utensils and earthenware articles, which the superstitious fears of the natives prevented their appropriating, although quite exposed.

Nothing can exceed their absurd credulity in the magical powers of European medical men. They believe white doctors can kill or cure almost with a look, and we have often observed them to turn away in apparent fright, if any of the medical officers looked steadfastly at them; sometimes covering their faces, they would jump

overboard, calling out, "No make me white, no make me white, doc'or;" nor could all our reasoning shake this belief; subsequently when we found it difficult to keep them from crowding the decks and loitering about instead of concluding their trade "palavers," it was only necessary to hint at the "doc'or," and they would disperse quickly enough.

They are fond of music, and as well as the noisy dance-provoking tom-tom, they have flutes made out of reeds, with three apertures; they blow into the upper one, and by pressing the thumb and fore-finger on the lower two with different degrees of firmness, they contrive to play some very sweet though simple airs. They have also a sort of harp, made in the shape of a bow, of light wood, tightly strung, with the hard fibre of some creeping plant; this is placed inside of the teeth, and breathed on with more or less force, as with the common Jew's harp, and by striking the chord with a light piece of stick, the sounds are produced.

Our position outside the Bimbia Strait was in four fathoms, with the outer point N.W. about half a mile. Inside we anchored in two and a half fathoms at low water, with the King's White House W. $\frac{3}{4}$ S., and the south point of Bimbia Island S. $\frac{1}{2}$ E. We were, however, rather too near a shoal to the eastward of us on which the surf breaks at half tide. A cable's length more to the N.E. would be a more sheltered berth. It is high water here at full and change at 8.54 P.M., the rise and fall six and a half feet.

Lieutenant Sidney, the Assistant-Surveyor, made a little examination of the strait, and we searched for a rock said to lie south of Bimbia Point, but without success.

The current between Fernando Po and the mainland is sometimes rapid, but on anchoring 'mid channel, to try it during the night, we found it almost imperceptible: it is stronger on both shores.

On the 24th of May we returned in the 'Wilberforce' to Clarence Cove, 'Soudan' having preceded us. We found there Her Majesty's brig 'Rapid.' Lieutenant Earle reported that, in compliance with Captain Allen's wishes, he had "communicated with Mr. Hope at Benin, who attached no credit whatever to the report either of the murder of Mr. Carr, or of any disaster or ill treatment of the persons composing the model farm, by the natives, as he conceived that had it been true, he must have heard of it

from the traders frequenting the Benin." At the village of Akassa, in the Rio Nun, "they positively deny the murder of Mr. Carr, as also any knowledge of the persons composing the model farm."

In crossing the bar of the Nun to make this inquiry, Lieutenant Earle informed us that his boat was unfortunately swamped and lost, with one of the crew. A valuable life had thus been sacrificed in the search after a person who had so imprudently risked his own; and Captain Allen rejoiced that he had not placed his whole crew in jeopardy by attempting such a fruitless search among the swamps of the Niger, where no information could be had from the inhabitants; who, if even they knew the fact, would be interested in concealing it, and would, moreover, have been very likely to mislead, in the hope of a richer booty in the ship; being doubtless well aware, that if she should be aground for any length of time in that intricate labyrinth of creeks, the climate would soon leave them in undisturbed possession.

Our hopes of receiving instructions from England were again disappointed.

Some letters and newspapers, however, came by Her Majesty's ship 'Iris,' which left Ascension on the 10th April. The 'Albert' was still there, and the crew, we heard, had suffered much from dysentery. In a private note to Captain Allen, Captain Foote expressed his opinion that we ought not to ascend the river without further instructions from Government.

We found the Government stores belonging to the Expedition had been much injured, owing to the leaky state of the buildings they had been placed in. A survey was held, and they were carried up the hill to houses in some degree in a better state of repair.

In a beautiful walk a little way inland we met a remarkably fine intelligent young native, who said his name was Boku Glorio, son of Old Glorio, who likewise rejoiced in the name of "Cut-throat." He professed to "like" us very much, but we perceived that his affection diminished notably, when informed we were not in the habit of carrying a dram-bottle. He said he was a Christian man, and was going to see his friend the missionary, who had taught him; and that he knew "God had made him altogether, and the skin of him too." He had only one wife,- a very young girl.

Although his costume was not very *recherche*, according to our ideas, he was evidently well satisfied with himself. His waist, legs, and arms, were encircled by many strings of pieces of white shells; his hair, abundantly plastered with red earth and palm-oil, was surmounted by a grass hat, with the red tail feathers of the parrot, and fastened on his head in a jaunty style by a piece of iron. With much reluctance he sold his hat for some tobacco, but could hardly be prevailed on to exchange the fastening for a handsome plated meat-skewer. To his walking-stick were attached small calabashes, of which he explained very dramatically the use. One was for drinking their favourite *topi*, or palm-wine; he put himself in an attitude, and smacked his lips, as if in enjoyment of wine of the firmest vintage. Another was cut in half, and served as a horn for communicating with his companions when hunting in the wood. We once heard a man at "Cut-throat's" village blow a fine blast with the *barrel of a fowling-piece* which had burst at the breech.

Young Glorio's religious enthusiasm does not appear to have become general among the Edeeyahs; and until more active exertions are used for their spiritual improvement, we fear they will prefer their own pagan rituals, which combine pleasure with duty. Thus, after leaving him, we stumbled on four of his countrymen, who were enacting a sort of fetiche dance, and the copious perspiration which bedewed their faces, testified to their active zeal. They were covered with dried palm leaves and twining convolvuli, and their bodies, where visible, were more than usually bedaubed with red and yellow clay. They first began to stamp on the ground, changing the feet very regularly and simultaneously, then raising their spears on high, they sprung backwards and forwards, as if about to attack each other, yet observing a certain precision in all their motions. Each step was accompanied with a sort of pavior's grunt - eh - eh! eh - eh! - and with the rustling noise of the palm leaves, was as discordant in sound as their performance was wild in appearance. Having danced until they were quite exhausted, they approached, and saluted as with their usual kindly expression, "bu-bi" (friend).

As we had learned that the 'Peruvian,' a Liverpool ship, bound homewards, was lying in George Bay, on the north-west side of Fernando Po, we went thither for the purpose of sending dispatches and letters by her. In coasting along the western side of the Fernando Po, the form of the vast crater of the volcano, which threw up this

beautiful island, is distinctly seen. The dense forests and luxuriant vegetation which cover the island, and clothe the sides of the mountain to the very summit, with the modification of altitude, attest the quiescent state in which the volcano has remained for ages. It is doubtful whether it be perfectly extinct, as smoke is said to be occasionally seen; but the highest part composed evidently of volcanic ashes, has been so decomposed, that it is mantled with grass.

On approaching this noble bay, we were deceived by the appearance of the enormous trunks of the bombax, or silk-cotton trees, which looked in the distance like the white sails of vessels, "hull down." One might almost have supposed a numerous fleet was there, with canvas loosened to dry.

George's Bay is much more extensive than Clarence; open to the north-west wind, which however seldom blows strong; the scenery on all sides is remarkably fine, and it would be an excellent place for ships to rendezvous, but that the water is too deep for anchorage, except close in by the shore. The country around appeared to be clearer of underwood than at most other points, and the view of the Peak is particularly grand.

We found the natives at George's Bay, civil and inoffensive, as in all other parts of this singular island. Their habitations are indeed the rudest of the rude, being nothing more than a coarse mat of palm-leaves thrown over four uprights, and open to all the winds of heaven. A little block of wood for a pillow, an earthen pot to boil yams, and a rude wooden pipe for smoking, were the only articles of comfort or luxury, any of them seemed to possess. Yet they looked happy and healthy, and proffered us a portion of their simple fare, as also eggs, which are never eaten by them, on account of some religious prejudice. The yams are abundant, and probably the finest in Africa, forming the chief article of food to the unsophisticated Edeeyah.

Occasionally they have as a "bonne bouche," a stew of bush-rat, porcupine, snake, or venison. Fish is also plentiful at certain seasons, particularly a species of *Clupea*, about the size of an English sprat, and having very much its flavour. During some months, the land-crab is a favourite luxury, and the capture of them affords employment late in the evening, at which time they venture out from their habitations in the sand. Towards dusk there were numerous lights moving about on the beach,

where the "Bubis" were actively engaged catching their prey for supper. With the exception of such spirituous liquors as the natives receive in exchange for their oil; topi, or palm-wine, is the common beverage. This exudes from the palm-tree on incision; is of a pleasant slightly acid flavour: very wholesome in the morning when first drawn, but more or less intoxicating towards evening, according to its state of fermentation. A tumblerful of it was frequently given to each of our men at daylight. About three or four pints may generally be extracted each day, but it gradually ceases after the seventh or eighth. The total quantity for each tree, averages about four gallons, but this depends on the size and age.

A party of disaffected Krumen and Fishmen, who left the employment of the West African Company, had taken up their abode in George's bay, and had caused the natives much trouble, stealing their yams, canoes, &c., some fighting had in consequence resulted, in which the aggressors were beaten and some killed. An officer was sent to inform them that they had better return to their work at Clarence, and that if they continued to harass the natives, they were not to expect British protection, in case they were retaliated on by the suffering aborigines.

We had a visit from two Edeeyah hunters, bringing various specimens of monkeys, squirrels, &c., &c., which they had killed with slings. They were accompanied by their wives, two of the most beautifully formed and symmetrical figures we have ever seen. Notwithstanding the disfigurement of the face by large incisions, and the clay-bedaubed hair, they looked remarkably pretty, nay, even interesting; their gentle and modest demeanour, contrasting strangely, with the almost naked and unadorned state of their persons.

These were first wives, and had only recently come forth from the seclusion which they are obliged to undergo, prior to the public acknowledgment of the marriage contract among the tribe.

As we had often heard that the natives could hold musical dialogues even at great distances, by means of little gourd flutes, (*vide* the plate of African instruments), we prevailed on them to separate, while by an interpreter one of them was desired to convey certain sentences, to those at a distance. To our surprise we found, on cross-examination that everything had been perfectly understood. They said they could

communicate with one another, even at the distance of some miles, where the locality was favourable to the resonance of the sounds. This facility of musical correspondence is not confined to these people alone, since that distinguished traveller, the late Mr. Bowdich, mentions a similar practice among the Ashantis, and he was also informed of its existence in the district of Accra. That the Cameroons people have also tutored their hearing with a similar result, we had an instance in the pilot Glasgow. He was in Captain Allen's cabin one day, answering some queries relating to the river; suddenly he became totally abstracted, and remained for a while in the attitude of listening. On being taxed with inattention, he said, "You no hear my son speak?" As we had heard no voice, he was asked how he knew it. He said, "Drum speak me, tell me come up deck." This seemed to be very singular, so Captain Allen desired him to remain below, and privately sent several messages to the performer in the boat alongside, who executed them by a variety of taps on his wooden drum; and these Glasgow interpreted in a way that left no doubt of his having understood perfectly all that the "drum spoke." He also said they could communicate by this means at very great distances, by the "war-drum," which is kept in every village to give and repeat these signals; so that there is intimation of danger long before the enemy can attack them. We are often surprised, to find the sound of the trumpet so well understood in our military evolutions; but how far short that falls of the result arrived at by those untutored savages.

This method of communication, is no doubt employed by slave dealers, to give notice of the movements of our cruisers.

Having found, that the steering compass in the 'Wilberforce' was very much affected by the local attraction, owing to the difference in the magnetic intensity between these regions and the latitude of England, where it was corrected; several days were devoted on our return to Clarence Cove, to swinging the ship to the different points of the compass, and replacing the magnetic bars or correctors. The cardinal points were made exact, but N.E. remained very refractory, the box of soft iron having little or no effect.

Several ships were communicated with, in the hopes of receiving letters and dispatches from England, as we began to be very impatient and uneasy at not

receiving instructions, and the time was near at hand when we ought to re-enter the Niger, or abandon the enterprise.