

**AFRICA
AND
THE AMERICAN FLAG.**

BY
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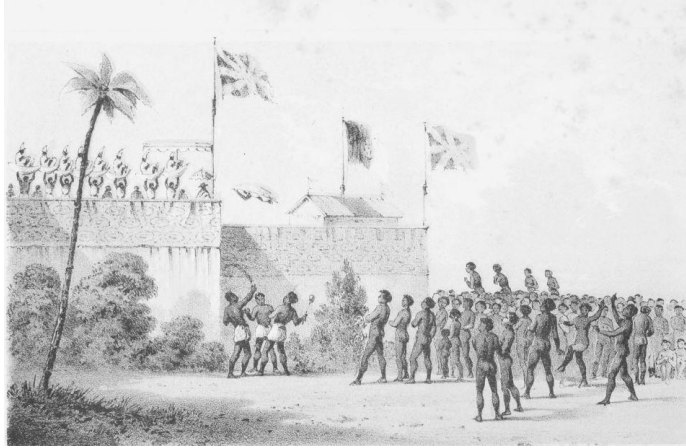
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THE HUMAN SACRIFICES OF THE EK-GNEE-NOO-AH-TOH.

**AFRICA
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CHAPTER I.

SUBJECT AND ARRANGEMENT—AREA OF CRUISING-GROUND—DISTRIBUTION OF SUBJECTS.

On the 28th of November, 1849, the U. S. brig “Perry” sailed for the west coast of Africa, to join the American squadron there stationed.

A treaty with Great Britain, signed at Washington in the year 1842, stipulates that each nation shall maintain on the coast of Africa, a force of naval vessels “of suitable numbers and description, to carry in all not less than eighty guns, to enforce separately and respectively, the laws, rights, and obligations of each of the two countries, for the suppression of the slave-trade.”

Although this stipulation was limited to the term of five years from the date of the exchange of the ratifications of the treaty, “and afterwards until one or the other party shall signify a wish to terminate it;” the United States have continued to maintain a squadron on that coast for the protection of its commerce, and for the suppression of the slave-trade, so far as it might be carried on in American vessels, or by American citizens.

To illustrate the importance of this squadron, the relations which its operations bear to American interests, and to the rights of the American flag; its effects upon the condition of Africa in checking crime, and preparing the way for the

introduction of peace, prosperity, and civilization, is the primary object of this work.

A general view of the continent of Africa, comprising the past and present condition of its inhabitants; slavery in Africa and its foreign slave-trade; the piracies upon the coast before it was guarded and protected by naval squadrons; the geological structure of the country; its natural history, languages, and people; and the progress of colonization by the negro race returning to their own land with the light of religion, of sound policy, and of modern arts, will also be introduced as subjects appropriate to the general design.

If a chart of the Atlantic is spread out, and a line drawn from the Cape Verde Islands towards the southeastern coast of Brazil; if we then pass to the Cape of Good Hope and draw another from that point by the island of St. Helena, crossing the former north of the equator, the great tracks of commerce will be traced. Vessels outward bound follow the track towards the South American shore, and the homeward bound are found on the other. Thus vessels often meet in the centre of the Atlantic; and the crossing of these lines off the projecting shores of central Africa renders the coasts of that region of great naval importance.

The wide triangular space of sea between the homeward bound line and the retiring African seaboard around the Gulf of Guinea, constituted the area on which the vigilance of the squadron was to be exercised. Here is the region of crime, suffering, cruelty and death, from the slave-trade; and here has been at different ages, when the police of the sea happened to

be little cared for, the scene of the worst piracies which have ever disgraced human nature.

Vessels running out from the African coast fall here and there into these lines traced on the chart, or sometimes cross them. No one can tell what they contain from the graceful hull, well-proportioned masts, neatly trimmed yards, and gallant bearing of the vessel. This deceitful beauty may conceal wrong, violence, and crime—the theft of living men, the foulness and corruption of the steaming slave-deck, and the charnel-house of wretchedness and despair.

It is difficult in looking over the ship's side to conceive the transparency of the sea. The reflection of the blue sky in these tropic regions colors it like an opaque sapphire, till some fish startles one by suddenly appearing far beneath, seeming to carry daylight down with him into the depths below. One is then reminded that the vessel is suspended over a transparent abyss. There for ages has sunk the dark-skinned sufferer from "the horrors of the middle passage," carrying that ghastly daylight down with him, to rest until "the sea shall give up its dead," and the slaver and his merchant come from their places to be confronted with their victim.

The relation of the western nations to these shores present themselves under three phases, which claim more or less attention in order to a full understanding of the subject. These are,

I. Period of Discovery, Piracy and Slaving.

II. Period of Colonizing.

III. Period of Naval Cruising.

CHAPTER II.

DISCOVERIES BY FRENCH AND PORTUGUESE ALONG THE COAST—CAPE OF GOOD HOPE—RESULTS.

The French of Normandy contested with the Portuguese the honor of first venturing into the Gulf of Guinea. It was, however, nearly a hundred years from the time when the latter first embarked in these discoveries, until, in 1487, they reached the Cape of Good Hope. For about eight centuries the Mohammedan in the interior had been shaping out an influence for himself by proselyting and commerce. The Portuguese discoverer met this influence on the African shores. The Venetians held a sort of partnership with the Mohammedans in the trade of the East: Portugal had then taken scarcely any share in the brilliant and exciting politics of the Levant; her vocation was to the seas of the West, but in that direction she was advancing to an overwhelming triumph over her Eastern competitor.

On the 3d of May, 1487, a boat left one of two small high-sterned vessels, of less tonnage than an ordinary river sloop of the present day, and landed a few weather-beaten men on a low island of rocks, on which they proceeded to erect a cross. The sand which rustled across their footsteps, the sigh of the west wind among the waxberry bushes, and the croakings of the penguins as they waddled off,—these were the voices which hailed the opening of a new era for the world; for

Bartholomew Diaz had then passed the southern point of Africa, and was listening to the surf of the Antarctic Sea.

This enterprising navigator had sailed from Lisbon in August, 1486, and seems to have reached Sierra Parda, north of the Orange River, in time to catch the last of the strong southeasterly winds, prevailing during the summer months on the southern coast of Africa, in the region of the Cape. He stood to the southwest, in vessels little calculated for holding a wind, and at length reached the region of the prevailing southwest winds. Then standing to the eastward he passed the Cape of Good Hope, of which he was in search, and bearing away to the northward, after running a distance of four hundred miles, brought up at the island of St. Croix above referred to. Coasting along on his return, the Cape was doubled, and named *Cabo Tormentoso*, or the Cape of Storms. The King of Portugal, on the discoverer's return, gave it the more promising name of *Cabo de buen Esperanza*, or Cape of Good Hope.

Africa thus fell into the grasp of Europe. Trade flowed with a full stream into this new channel. Portugal conquered and settled its shores. Missionaries accompanied the Portuguese discoverers and conquerors to various parts of Africa, where the Portuguese dominion had been established, and for long periods influenced the condition of the country.

CHAPTER III.

PIRATES—DAVIS, ROBERTS, AND OTHERS—BRITISH CRUISERS—SLAVE-TRADE SYSTEMATIZED— GUINEAMEN—“HORRORS OF THE MIDDLE PASSAGE.”

The second period is that of villany. More Africans seem to have been bought and sold, at all times of the world's history, than of any other race of mankind. The early navigators were offered slaves as merchandise. It is not easy to conceive that the few which they then carried away, could serve any other purpose than to gratify curiosity, or add to the ostentatious greatness of kings and noblemen. It was the demands of the west which rendered this iniquity a trade. Every thing which could debase a man was thrust upon Africa from every shore. The old military skill of Europe raised on almost every accessible point embattled fortresses, which now picturesquely line the Gulf of Guinea. In the space between Cape Palmas and the Calabar River, there are to be counted, in the old charts, forts and factories by hundreds.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were especially the era of woe to the African people. Crime against them on the part of European nations, had become gross in cruelty and universal in extent. From the Cape of Good Hope to the Mediterranean, in respect to their lands or their persons, the European was seizing, slaying and enslaving. The mischief perpetrated by the white man, was the source of mischief to its

author. The west coast became the haunt and nursery of pirates. In fact, the same class of men were the navigators of the pirate and the slaver; and sailors had little hesitation in betraying their own vessels occasionally into the hands of the buccaneer. Slave-trading afforded a pretext which covered all the preparations for robbery. The whole civilized world had begun to share in this guilt and in this retribution.

In 1692, a solitary Scotchman was found at Cape Mesurado, living among the negroes. He had reached the coast in a vessel, of which a man named Herbert had gotten possession in one of the American colonies, and had run off with on a buccaneering cruise; a mutiny and fight resulted in the death of most of the officers and crew. The vessel drifted on shore, and bilged in the heavy surf at Cape Mesurado.

The higher ranks of society in Christendom were then most grossly corrupt, and had a leading share in these crimes. There arrived at Barbadoes in 1694, a vessel from New England, which might then have been called a *clipper*, mounting twenty small guns. A company of merchants of the island bought her, and fitted her out ostensibly as a slaver, bound to the island of Madagascar; but in reality for the purpose of pirating on the India merchantmen trading to the Red Sea. They induced Russell, the governor of the island, to join them in the adventure, and to give the ship an official character, so far as he was authorized to do so by his colonial commission.

A "sea solicitor" of this order, named Conklyn, arrived in 1719 at Sierra Leone in a state of great destitution, bringing with him twenty-five of the greatest villains that could be culled from the crews of two or three piratical vessels on the coast. A

mutiny had taken place in one of these, on account of the chief's assuming something of the character and habits of a gentleman, and Conklyn, after a severe contention, had left with his desperate associates. Had he remained, he might have become chief in command, as a second mutiny broke out soon after his departure, in which the chief was overpowered, placed on board one of the prize vessels, and never heard of afterwards. The pirates under a new commander followed Conklyn to Sierra Leone. They found there this worthy gentleman, rich, and in command of a fine ship with eighty men.

Davis, the notorious pirate, soon joined him with a well-armed ship manned with one hundred and fifty men. Here was collected as fruitful a nest of villany as the world ever saw. They plundered and captured whatever came in their course. These vessels, with other pirates, soon destroyed more than one hundred trading vessels on the African coast. England entered into a kind of compromise, previously to sending a squadron against them, by offering pardon to all who should present themselves to the governor of any of her colonies before the first of July, 1719. This was equivalent to offering themselves to serve in the war which had commenced against Spain, or exchanging one kind of brigandage for another, by privateering against the Spanish commerce. But from the accounts of their prisoners very few of them could read, and thus the proclamation was almost a dead letter.

In 1720, Roberts, a hero of the same class, anchored in Sierra Leone, and sent a message to Plunket, the commander of the English fort, with a request for some gold dust and ammunition. The commander of the fort replied that he had no gold dust for

them, but that he would serve them with a good allowance of shot if they ventured within the range of his guns; whereupon Roberts opened his fire upon the fort. Plunket soon expended all his ammunition, and abandoned his position. Being made prisoner he was taken before Roberts: the pirate assailed the poor commander with the most outrageous execrations for his audacity in resisting him. To his astonishment Plunket retorted upon him with oaths and execrations yet more tremendous. This was quite to the taste of the scoundrels around them, who, with shouts of laughter, told their captain that he was only second best at that business, and Plunket, in consideration of his victory, was allowed to escape with life.

In 1721, England dispatched two men-of-war to the Gulf of Guinea for the purpose of exterminating the pirates who had there reached a formidable degree of power, and sometimes, as in the instance noted above, assailed the establishments on shore. They found that Roberts was in command of a squadron of three vessels, with about four hundred men under his command, and had been particularly active and successful in outrage. After cruising about the northern coast, and learning that Roberts had plundered many vessels, and that sailors were flocking to him from all quarters, they found him on the evening of the third of February, anchored with his three vessels in the bay north of Cape Lopez.

When entering the bay, light enough remained to let them see that they had caught the miscreants in their lair. Closing in with the land the cruisers quietly ran in and anchored close aboard the outer vessel belonging to the pirates. Having ascertained the character of the visitors, the pirate slipped his

cables, and proceeded to make sail, but was boarded and secured just as the rapid blackness of a tropical night buried every thing in obscurity. Every sound was watched during the darkness of the night, with scarcely the hope that the other two pirates would not take advantage of it to make their escape; but the short gray dawn showed them still at their anchors. The cruisers getting under way and closing in with the pirates produced no movement on their part, and some scheme of cunning or desperate resistance was prepared for. They had in fact made a draft from one vessel to man the other fully for defence. Into this vessel the smaller of the cruisers, the *Swallow*, threw her broadside, which was feebly returned. A grape-shot in the head had killed Roberts. This and the slaughter of the cruiser's fire prepared the way for the boarders, without much further resistance, to take possession of the pirate. The third vessel was easily captured.

The cruisers suffered no loss in the fight, but had been fatally reduced by sickness. The larger vessel, the *Weymouth*, which left England with a crew of two hundred and forty men, had previously been reduced so greatly as scarcely to be able to weigh her anchors; and, although recruited often from merchant vessels, landed but one hundred and eighty men in England. This rendered the charge of their prisoners somewhat hazardous, and taking them as far as Cape Coast Castle, they there executed such justice as the place could afford, or the demerits of their prey deserved. A great number of them ornamented the shore on gibbets—the well-known signs of civilization in that era—as long as the climate and the vultures would permit them to hang.

Consequent on these events such order was established as circumstances would admit, or rather the progress of maritime intercourse and naval power put an end to the system of daring and regulated piracy by which the tropical shores of Africa and the West Indies had been laid waste. This, however, was slight relief for Africa. It was to secure and systematize trade that piracy had been suppressed, and the slave-trade became accordingly cruelly and murderously systematic.

The question what nation should be most enriched by the guilty traffic was a subject of diplomacy. England secured the greater share of the criminality and of the profit, by gaining from her other competitors the right by contract to supply the colonies of Spain with negroes.

Men forget what they ought not to forget; and however startling, disgusting, and oppressive to the mind of man the horrors are which characterized that trade, it is well that since they did exist the memory of them should not perish. It is a fearfully dark chapter in the history of the world, but although terrific it has its value. It is more worthy of being remembered than the historical routine of wars, defeats, or victories; for it is more illustrative of man's proper history, and of a strange era in that history. The evidence taken by the Committee of the English House of Lords in 1850, has again thrust the subject into daylight.

The slave-trade is now carried on by comparatively small and ill-found vessels, watched by the cruisers incessantly. They are therefore induced, at any risk of loss by death, to crowd and pack their cargoes, so that a successful voyage may compensate for many captures. In olden times, there were

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