

DU CHAILLU BELLONI

STORIES OF THE GORILLA
COUNTRY

Paul Du Chaillu

Stories of the Gorilla Country

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Paul Du Chaillu

Stories of the Gorilla Country / Narrated for Young People

PRELIMINARY CHAPTER

I had passed several years on the African Coast before I began the explorations recorded in my first book. In those years I hunted, traded with the natives, and made collections in natural history.

In such a wild country as Africa one does not go far without adventures. The traveller necessarily sees what is strange and wonderful, for everything is strange.

In this book I have attempted to relate some of the incidents of life in Africa for the reading of young folks. In doing this I have kept no chronological order, but have selected incidents and adventures here and there as they seem to be fitted for my purpose.

I have noticed that most intelligent boys like to read about the habits of wild animals, and the manners and way of life of savage men; and of such matters this book is composed. In it I have entered into more minute details concerning the life of the native inhabitants than I could in my other books, and have shown how the people build their houses, what are their amusements, how they hunt, fish, eat, travel, and live.

Whenever I am at a friend's house the children ask me to tell them something about Africa. I like children, and in this book have written especially for them. I hope to interest many who are yet too young to read my larger works.

CHAPTER II

ARRIVAL ON THE COAST – A KING AND HIS PALACE – DANCING AND IDOL-WORSHIP

Some years ago a three-masted vessel took me to a wild country on the West Coast of Africa near the Equator.

It was a very wild country indeed.

As we came in sight of the land, which was covered with forest, canoes began to start from the shore towards us; and, as we neared the land, we could see the people crowding down on the beach to look at the strange sight of a vessel.

The canoes approached the vessel in great numbers. Some of them were so small that they looked like mere nutshells. Indeed, some of the men paddled with their feet; and one man carried his canoe ashore on his shoulder.

At last, the natives came on board, and what funny people they were! I could not discern one from another; they seemed to me all alike.

What a queer way of dressing they had too! You would have laughed to see them. Some had only an old coat on. Others had an old pair of trousers which probably had belonged to some sailor; these wore no shirt or coat. Some had only an old ragged shirt, and some again had nothing on except an old hat. Of course none of them had shoes.

How they shouted and hallooed as they came about the vessel! They seemed to speak such a strange language. No one on board appeared to understand them. They made so great a noise that I thought I should become deaf.

One of them had a fowl to sell; another brought an egg or two; and another a few bunches of plantains.

Our captain knew the coast; for he had long been an African trader, though he had never been at this place before.

The ship cast anchor. It was not far from a river called Benito.

I left the vessel and went ashore with some others. As I landed I was surrounded immediately by crowds of natives, who looked so wild and so savage that I thought they would kill me at once.

I was led to the village, which stood not far from the sea, and was hidden from view by the very large trees and the great forest that surrounded it. On one side of the village was a prairie.

I shall always remember this village. It was the first African village I had ever seen; and it was unlike those built in Southern Africa.

Don't think for a moment that I am going to speak to you of stone or wooden houses. No! These wild people lived in queer little huts, the walls of which were made of the bark of trees, and were not more than four or five feet high. The top of the roof was only about seven or eight feet from the ground. The length of these huts was about ten or twelve feet, and they were seven or eight feet wide. There were no windows, and the door was very small. They immediately took me to one of these houses, and said they gave it to me. They meant that it was mine as long as I would stay with them. It belonged to the son of the king.

So I went in. But where was I to sit down?

There was no chair to be seen.

Patience, thought I. These people had probably never seen a chair in their lives. It was so dark I could not see at first. By and by I saw how the hut was furnished. There were some calabashes to hold water, and two or three cooking pots. There were some ugly-looking spears, an axe, and two or three

large and queer-looking knives, which could sever the head of a man at one blow. Of course I looked for a bed: I need not tell you there was none; but, instead, there were some sticks to lie upon. The very look of this sleeping-place made me shudder; I thought of snakes, scorpions, and centipedes. The dark hut seemed the very place for them. Shortly after the king's son came. If I remember well, his name was *Andèké*. He told me that his father, the king, was ready to receive me.

The king ready to receive me!

This was a great announcement. I must dress.

But how?

There was no washing-basin to wash myself in; besides, I had forgotten my soap.

I was glad I had no beard at that time; for I do not know how I could have shaved.

In short, I resolved to go and see his majesty as I was.

The sun being very warm, I took my umbrella with me. The people conducted me to the royal palace.

What do you suppose a palace to be in the Benito country? The king's palace was made of the same material (bark of trees) as the houses I have just described to you; and it was only about twice as big.

As I entered I went towards the king, who was seated on a stool. Another empty stool was by his side.

I may say that Apourou – such was the king's name – did not come up to my ideas of a king. In fact, I should have laughed at him had I dared.

His costume was composed of a red soldier's coat, and he wore a little bit of calico round his waist. That was all. You must understand he had no shirt.

He was a tall, slim negro, with grey hair, and had large scars on his face, and his whole body was covered with tattoos. He wore large earrings. He was smoking a big ugly pipe.

He looked at me, and I looked at him.

The room was full of people, and the king had several of his wives around him. The queen was there. Would you believe it? in that country a man marries as many wives as he chooses!

The king looked at me for a long time without saying a word. Finally he opened his mouth, clapped his hands, and said I was a funny-looking *fellow*.

He next said he was very glad to see me, and would take care of me. Then he touched my hair, and said I must give him some. He would like to have me remain with him always. At this the people shouted, "We want the *ntangani* to stay with us!"

What do you think he did next?

He quietly proposed to me that I should get married to some of his countrywomen; and added that whomsoever I should choose would become my wife.

The suggestion was received by all the people with a tremendous grunt of approval, to show that they thought just as their king. Then they shouted, "The girl he likes he shall marry!"

I said, "I don't want to get married, I am too young." I did not want to tell him that I would not, for all the world, marry one of his people.

It was getting very warm in the hut, and there was a strong odour. The people were packed so closely together that they reminded one of herrings in a barrel, and you must remember I said the house had no windows.

Then the king presented me with one fowl, two eggs, and one bunch of plantain; and as I went away he said I had better give him my umbrella. But I went off as if I had not heard what he said. I thought it was rather too much for a king to ask a stranger to give up his umbrella. I had just begun to learn what African kings were.

The people followed me everywhere; I wish I could have understood their language. One man could talk English, and I am going now to give you a specimen of his English.

When he thought I must be hungry, he said, "Want chop? Want chop?" When he saw that I could not understand what he meant, he made signs with his hands and mouth, which at once explained to me that he had asked me if I wanted to eat. I said, "Yes;" and after a while, some cooked plantains, with some fish, were brought to me. I did not care for the plantains; it was the first time I had ever tasted them.

After my meal, I walked through the street of the village and came to a house, in the recess of which I saw an enormous idol. I had never in all my life seen such an ugly thing. It was a rude representation of some human being, of the size of life, and was made of wood. It had large copper eyes, and a tongue of iron, which shot out from its mouth to show that it could sting. The lips were painted red. It wore large iron earrings. Its head was ornamented with a feather cap. Most of the feathers were red, and came from the tails of grey parrots, while the body and face were painted red, white, and yellow. It was dressed in the skins of wild animals. Around it were scattered skins of tigers and serpents, and the bones and skulls of animals. Some food also was placed near, so that it might eat if it chose.

It was now sunset; and night soon set in over the village. For the first time in my life I stood alone in this dark world, surrounded by savages, without any white people near me. There was no light in the street, and only the reflection of the fires could be seen now and then. How dismal it was!

I looked at my pistols and my guns, and was glad to find that they were in good order.

By-and-by the people began to come out of their huts; and I saw some torches lighted, and taken towards the large *mbuiti* as they call the idol, and there placed on the ground. The large drums or tom-toms were also carried there; and the women and men of the village gathered around. The tom-toms beat; and, soon after, I heard the people singing. I went to see what was the matter.

What a sight met my eyes!

The men had their bodies painted in different colours. Some had one cheek red and the other white or yellow. A broad white or yellow stripe was painted across the middle of the chest and along both the arms. Others had their bodies spotted. Most ugly they looked! The women wore several iron or brass rings around their wrists and ankles.

Then the singing began, and the dancing! I had never seen such dancing before. It was very ungraceful. The drummers beat on the tom-toms with all their might. As they became warm with exertion their bodies shone like seals, so oily were they.

I looked and looked, with my eyes wide open; I was nearly stunned with the noise. As the women danced and sung, the brass and iron rings which they wore struck against each other, and kept time with the music and the beating of the tom-toms.

But why were they all there dancing and screeching around the idol?

I will tell you.

They were about to start on a hunting expedition, and they were asking the idol to give them good luck in their sport.

When I found it was to be a hunting expedition, I wanted to go at once with these savages, though I was only a lad under twenty years old.

I retired to my hut with a valiant heart; I was going to do great things.

If you had been in my place, boys, would you not have felt the same? Would you have left the gorillas alone? I am sure you all shout at once, "No! no!" Would you have let the elephants go unmolested in the forest? "Certainly not," will be your answer.

And what about the chimpanzee, and the big leopards who carry away so many people and eat them, the huge buffaloes, the wild boars, the antelopes, and the gazelles?

Would you have left the snakes alone?

Perhaps you are all going to say "Yes" to that; and I think you are right, for many of these snakes are very poisonous, and they are numerous in these great forests; for the country I am telling you about is nothing but an immense jungle. When a man is bitten by one of these snakes he often dies

in a few minutes. There is also to be found in these woods an immense python, or boa, that swallows antelopes, gazelles, and many other animals. I shall have a good deal to tell you about them by-and-by.

So I resolved that I would try to see all these native tribes; that I would have a peep at the cannibals; that I would have a good look also at the dwarfs.

I am sure, that if any one of you had been with me on that coast, you would have said to me, "Du Chaillu, let us go together and see all these things, and then come back home and tell the good folks all we have seen."

Yes, I am certain that every one of you would have felt as I did.

CHAPTER III

A WEEK IN THE WOODS – A TORNADO – THE LEOPARDS PROWLING ABOUT – I KILL A COBRA AND A SCORPION – FIGHT WITH A BUFFALO – HUNTING FOR WILD BOARS – A LEOPARD TAKES A RIDE ON A BULL – SICK WITH THE FEVER

Now, boys, fancy yourselves transported into the midst of a very dense and dark forest, where the trees never shed their leaves all at one time, where there is no food to be had, except what you can get with your gun, and where wild beasts prowl around you at night, while you sleep.

I found myself in such a place.

Immediately after we arrived in those gloomy solitudes we began to build an olako to shelter us from the rains.

I must tell you that Benito is a very strange country. It is situated, as you have seen by the map, near the equator. Of course, you know what the equator is? There, at a certain time of the year, the sun is directly above your head at noon, and hence it is the hottest part of the earth. The days and nights are of the same length. The sun rises at six o'clock in the morning, and the sunset takes place at six o'clock in the evening. There is only a difference of a few minutes all the year round. There is no twilight, and half an hour before sunrise or after sunset it is dark. There is no snow, except on very high mountains. There is no winter. There are only two seasons – the rainy season and the dry season. Our winter time at home is the time of the rainy season in Equatorial Africa, and it is also the hottest period of the year. It rains harder there than in any other country. No such rain is to be witnessed either in the United States or Europe. And as to the thunder and lightning! You never have heard or seen the like; it is enough to make the hair on your head stand on end. Then come the tornados, a kind of hurricane which, for a few minutes, blows with terrific violence, carrying before it great trees. How wild the sky looks! How awful to see the black clouds sweeping through the sky with fearful velocity!

So you will not wonder that we busied ourselves in preparing our shelter, for I remember well it was in the month of February. We took good care not to have big trees around us, for fear they might be hurled upon us by a tornado, and bury us all alive under their weight. Accordingly we built our olako near the banks of a beautiful little stream, so that we could get as much water as we wanted. Then we immediately began to fell trees. We carried two or three axes with us, for the axe is an indispensable article in the forests. With the foliage we made a shelter to keep off the rain.

While the men were busy building the olako, the women went in search of dried wood to cook our supper. We had brought some food from the village with us.

We were ready just in time. A most terrific tornado came upon us. The rain poured down in torrents. The thunder was stunning. The lightning flashed so vividly and often as nearly to blind us.

Our dogs had hidden themselves, indeed all animals and birds of the forest were much frightened, which was not to be wondered at. How thankful I was to be sheltered from such a storm! We had collected plenty of fuel, and our fires burned brightly.

We formed a strange group while seated around the fires, the men and women smoking their pipes and telling stories. We had several fires, and, as they blazed up, their glare was thrown out through the gloom of the forest, and filled it with fantastic shadows. Though tired, everybody seemed merry. We were full of hope for the morrow. Every one spoke of the particular animal he wished to kill, and of which he was most fond. Some wished for an antelope, others for an elephant, a wild boar, or a buffalo. I confess that I myself inclined towards the wild boar; and I believe that almost every one had the same wish, for that animal, when fat, is very good eating. Indeed, they already

began to talk as if the pig were actually before them. All fancied they could eat a whole leg apiece, and their mouths fairly watered in thinking about it. No wonder they are so fond of meat, they have it so seldom. Who among us does not relish a good dinner, I should like to know?

By-and-by all became silent; one after the other we fell asleep, with the exception of two or three men who were to watch over the fires and keep them bright; for there were plenty of leopards prowling in the neighbouring forest, and none of us wanted to serve as a meal for them. In fact, before going to sleep, we heard some of these animals howling in the far distance. During the night, one came very near our camp. He went round and round; and, no doubt, lay in wait to see if one of us would go out alone; and then he would have pounced upon the careless fellow. I need not say we did not give him a chance; and you may be sure we kept the fire blazing. Finally, we fired a few guns, and he went off.

These leopards are dreadful animals, and eat a great many natives. They are generally shy; but once they have tasted human flesh, they become very fond of it, and the poor natives are carried off, one after another, in such numbers that the villages have to be abandoned.

The next day we went hunting. I had hardly gone into the forest when I saw, creeping on the ground under the dry leaves, an enormous black snake: I fancy I see it still. How close it was to me! One step more and I should have just trodden upon it, and then should have been bitten, and a few minutes after have died, and then, boys, you know I should have had nothing to tell you about Africa. This snake was a cobra of the black variety (*Dendrapispis angusticeps*). It is a very common snake in that region; and, as I have said, very poisonous.

As soon as the reptile saw me, he rose up, as if ready to spring upon me, gave one of his hissing sounds, and looked at me, showing, as he hissed, his sharp-pointed tongue. Of course, the first thing I did was to make a few steps backward. Then, levelling my gun, I fired and killed him. He was about eight feet long. I cut his head off, and examined his deadly fangs. What horrible things they were! They looked exactly like fish bones, with very sharp ends. I looked at them carefully, and saw that he could raise and lower them at will; while the teeth are firmly implanted in a pouch, or little bag, which contains the poison. I saw in the end of the fang a little hole, which communicated with the pouch. When the snake opens his mouth to bite, he raises his fangs. Then he strikes them into the flesh of the animal he bites, and brings a pressure on the pouch, and the poison comes out by the little hole I have spoken of.

I cut open the cobra, and found in his stomach a very large bird. Andèké packed the bird and snake in leaves, and, on our return to the camp, the men were delighted. In the evening they made a nice soup of the snake, which they ate with great relish.

I had also killed a beautiful little striped squirrel, upon which I made my dinner. I felt almost sorry to kill it, it was such a pretty creature.

In the evening, as I was sitting by the fire, and looking at the log that was burning, I spied a big ugly black scorpion coming out of one of the crevices. I immediately laid upon its back a little stick which I had in my hand. You should have seen how its long tail flew up and stung the piece of wood! I shuddered as I thought that it might have stung my feet or hands, instead of the wood. I immediately killed it, and the natives said these scorpions were quite common, and that people have to be careful when they handle dry sticks of wood, for these poisonous creatures delight to live under the dry bark, or between the crevices.

A nice country this to live in! thought I, after killing a snake and a scorpion the same day!

So when I lay down on my pillow, which was merely a piece of wood, I looked up to see if there was any scorpions upon it. I did not see any; but, during the night, I awoke suddenly and started up. I thought I felt hundreds of them creeping over me, and that one had just stung me, and caused me to wake up. The sweat covered my body. I looked around and saw nothing but sleeping people. There was no scorpion to be found. I must have been dreaming.

Not far from our camp was a beautiful little prairie. I had seen, during my rambles there, several footprints of wild buffaloes; so I immediately told Andèké we must go in chase of them. Andèké, the son of the king, was a very nice fellow, and was, besides, a good hunter – just the very man I wanted.

So we went towards the little prairie, and lay hidden on the borders of it, among the trees. By-and-by I spied a huge bull, who was perfectly unaware of my presence, for the wind blew from him to me; had the wind blown the other way, the animal would have scented me and made off. As it was, he came slowly towards me. I raised my gun and fired. My bullet struck a creeper, on its way, and glanced aside, so I only wounded the beast. Turning fiercely, he rushed at me in a furious manner, with his head down. I was scared; for I was, at that time, but a young hunter; I got ready to run, though I had a second barrel in reserve. I thought the infuriated bull was too powerful for me, he looked so big. Just as I was about to make my escape, I found my foot entangled and hopelessly caught in a tough and thorny creeper. The bull was dashing towards me with head down and eyes inflamed, tearing down brushwood and creepers, which barred his progress. Turning to meet the enemy, I felt my nerves suddenly grow firm as a rock. If I missed the bull all would be over with me. He would gore me to death. I took time to aim carefully, and then fired at his head. He gave one loud, hoarse bellow, and tumbled almost at my feet. In the meantime, Andèké was coming to the rescue.

I must say I felt very nervous after all was over. But being but a lad, I thought I had done pretty well. It was the first direct attack a wild beast had ever made upon me. I found afterwards, that the bulls are generally very dangerous when wounded.

Now I must tell you how this beast looked. He was one of the wild buffaloes frequently to be met with in this part of Africa. During the greater part of the day they hide in the forest. When much hunted they become very shy. They are generally found in herds of from ten to twenty-five, though I have found them sometimes in much greater number.

This animal (*Bos brachicheros*) is called by some of the natives "niaré." It is of the size of our cattle. It is covered with thin red hair, which is much darker in the bull than in the cow. The hoofs are long and sharp; the ears are fringed with most beautiful silky hair; the horns are very handsome, and bend backward in a graceful curve. In shape, the buffalo looks like something between an antelope and a common cow; and, when seen afar off, you might think these wild buffaloes were a herd of cattle at home.

How glad the people were when Andèké and I brought the news that we had killed a bull! There was great rejoicing. But I was tired and remained in the camp; while they went with knives and swords to cut the buffalo to pieces, and bring in the flesh.

What a fine place it was for hunting! The animals seemed to come down from the mountains beyond, and remain in the flat woody country along the seashore.

There were a great many wild boars. You know we all wanted one of these. So one night Andèké and I agreed to go and lie in wait for them on the prairie. In order to look like Andèké, I blackened my face and hands with charcoal, so that in the night the colour of my face could not be distinguished.

We started from the camp before dark, and reached the prairie before night. I stationed myself behind a large ant-hill not far from the open space. There I lay; one hour passed – two hours – three hours, and still neither wild boar nor buffaloes. I looked at Andèké. He was fast asleep, at the foot of another ant-hill close by. Once I saw a whole herd of gazelles pass by; but they were too far from me. Occasionally a grunt or the cracking of a twig, told me that a wild boar was not far off. At last everything became silent, and I fell asleep unconsciously.

Suddenly I was awakened by an unearthly roar – the yell of a wild beast.

I rubbed my eyes in a hurry – what could be the matter?

I looked round me, and saw nothing. The woods were still resounding with the cry that had startled me. Then I heard a great crash in the forest, made by some heavy animal running away. Then I saw emerge from the forest a wild bull, on whose neck crouched an immense leopard. The poor buffalo reared, tossed, roared and bellowed; but in vain. The leopard's enormous claws were firmly

fixed in his victim's body, while his teeth were sunk deeply in the bull's neck. The leopard gave an awful roar, which seemed to make the earth shake. Then both buffalo and leopard disappeared in the forest, and the roars, and the crashing of the trees, soon ceased. All became silent again.

I had fired at the leopard, but it was too far off. We stayed a week here, and I enjoyed myself very much in the woods. I collected birds and butterflies, killed a few nice little quadrupeds, and then we returned to the seashore village. There the fever laid me low on my bed of sickness. How wretched I felt! I had never had the fever before. For a few days my head was burning hot. When I got better, and looked at myself in my little looking-glass I could not recognise myself; I had not a particle of colour left in my cheeks and I looked as yellow and pale as a lemon. I got frightened. This fever was the forerunner of what I had to expect in these equatorial regions.

CHAPTER IV

A VILLAGE ON THE SEASHORE – LYING IN WAIT FOR A LEOPARD

On the promontory called Cape St. John, about a degree north of the Equator stood a Mbinga village, whose chief was called Imonga. This was, I think, in the year 1852. The country around was very wild. The village stood on the top of a high hill which ran out into the sea, and formed the cape itself. The waves there beat with great violence against a rock of the tertiary formation. It was a grand sight to see those angry billows white with foam dashing against the shore. You could see that they were wearing away the rock. To land there safely was very difficult. There were only two or three places where between the rocks a canoe could reach the shore. The people were as wild as the country round them, and very warlike. They were great fishermen, and many of them spent their whole time fishing in their little canoes. Game being very scarce, there were but few hunters.

Imonga, the chief, had a hideous large scar on his face, which showed at once that he was a fighting man. Not a few of his men showed signs of wounds which they had received in battle. Many of these fights or quarrels took place in canoes on the water, among themselves, or with people of other villages.

I do not know why, but Imonga was very fond of me, and so also were his people. But one thing revolted me. I found that several of Imonga's wives had the first joint of their little finger cut off. Imonga did this to make them mind him; for he wanted his wives to obey him implicitly.

The woods around the village were full of leopards. They were the dread of the people, for they were constantly carrying off some one. At night, they would come into the villages on their errands of blood, while the villagers were asleep. There was not a dog nor a goat left; and within two months three people had been eaten by them; the very places could be seen in the huts where the leopards had entered. They would tear up the thin thatched palm leaves of the roofs, and having seized their victims, they would go back through the hole with a tremendous leap, and with the man in their jaws, and run off into the forest.

The last man taken uttered a piercing cry of anguish, which awoke all the villagers. They at once arose and came to the rescue, but it was too late. They only found traces of blood as they proceeded. The leopard had gone far into the woods, and there devoured his victim. Of course there was tremendous excitement, and they went into the forest in search of the leopard; but he could never be found. There were so many of these savage beasts that they even walked along the beach, not satisfied with the woods alone; and when the tide was low, during the night, the footprints of their large paws could be seen distinctly marked on the sand. After ten or eleven o'clock at night, no native could be seen on the seashore without torches.

During the day the leopard hides himself either in the hollow of some one of the gigantic trees, with which these forests abound, or sleeps quietly on some branch, waiting for the approach of night. He seldom goes out before one o'clock in the morning, unless pressed by hunger, and about four o'clock he goes back to his lair.

I was now getting accustomed to face danger. Killing the buffalo that attacked me had given me confidence.

To kill a leopard must be my next exploit.

I selected a spot very near the sands of the sea, where I remarked the leopards used to come every night, when the tide was low. I chose a day when the moon began to rise at midnight, so that it might not be so dark that I could not take a good aim at the leopard, and see what was going on.

I then began to build a kind of pen or fortress; and I can assure you I worked very hard at it. Every day I went into the forest and cut branches of trees, with which I made a strong palisade. Every stick was about six feet high, and was put in the ground about a foot deep. These posts were fastened together with strong creepers. My little fortress, for so I must call it, was about five feet square. This would never answer; for the leopard might leap inside and take hold of me. So with the help of some strong branches all tied strongly together I built a roof. Then I made loopholes on all sides for my guns, so that I might fire at the beast whenever he came in sight.

I was glad when I had finished, for I felt very tired. My axe was not sharp, and it had required several days to complete my work.

One clear starlight night, at about nine o'clock, I went and shut myself up in my fortress. I had taken a goat with me, which I tied a few yards from my place of concealment. It was quite dark. After I had tied the goat, I went back and shut myself very securely inside my stronghold.

I waited and waited, but no leopard came. The goat cried all the time. It was so dark that even if the leopard had come I could not have seen it.

The moon rose by one o'clock. It was in its last quarter; and very strange and fantastic it made everything look. There were the shadows of the tall trees thrown upon the white sand of the beach, while in the forest the gloom was somewhat greater. The sea came rolling on the beach in gentle waves, which, as they broke, sent up thousands of bright, phosphorescent flashes. There was a dead silence everywhere, except when the goat cried, or some wild beast made the forest resound with its dismal howl. The wind whispered gently, mournfully through the woods.

I could not account for it, but now and then a cold shudder ran through me. I was quite alone, for the negro I had taken with me was fast asleep.

One o'clock. No leopard. I looked in vain all round me: I could see nothing.

Two o'clock. Nothing yet.

Suddenly, I spied something a long way off on the beach, so far that I could not make out what it was. It came slowly towards me. What could it be? I asked myself. Soon I recognised a big spotted leopard. The goat, which had seen it, began to cry more loudly. The big beast came nearer and nearer. He began to crouch. Then he lay flat on the ground. How his eyes glittered! They looked like two pieces of bright, burning charcoal.

My heart beat. The first thought that came to me was – Is my house strong enough to resist his attack, in case I should wound him, or if, perchance, he should prefer me to the goat, and make an onslaught upon it?

The savage beast crawled nearer, and again crouched down on the ground. I took my gun; and, just as I was getting ready to fire, he made an immense leap, and bounded upon the goat. I fired. I do not know how, but, in the twinkling of an eye, the goat was seized, and both leopard and goat disappeared in the dark forest. I fired again, but with no better success. In the morning, I saw nothing but the traces of the poor goat's blood.

I did not return to the village till morning; for I dared not go outside of my palisade that night. So, the goat being gone, I concluded I had better light a fire, to warm myself, and drive away the mosquitoes. I always carried a box of matches with me. I struck one, and soon succeeded in making a blaze with the little firewood I had collected.

Strange enough I must have looked, inside of my cage, while the fire sent its glimmering light around.

Finally, seeing that everything was well secured, I went to sleep, taking good care to put myself in the middle of the fort, so that if, by any chance, a leopard came, he could not get hold of me with his paw. When I awoke it was broad daylight, and I immediately started for Imonga's village.

CHAPTER V

THE BAY OF CORISCO – THE MANGROVE TREES – THE WONDERFUL FLOCKS OF BIRDS – WHAT I FOUND IN THE POUCH OF A PELICAN – HOW AN OLD KING IS BURIED, AND THE NEW KING CROWNED

Now that you have followed me in the Benito country, and to Cape St. John, I will take you a little further down the coast to the Bay of Corisco. There, two rivers empty their waters into the sea. One of them is called the Muni river, and the other the Monda.

I will leave the Muni, for we shall have to come to it by-and-by, and will speak to you only of the Monda. It is throughout a low-banked swampy stream. The banks are covered with mangrove trees. Every limb or branch that grows in the water is covered with oysters – real oysters too; so that at low tide you can see, in some places for a long distance, immense beds of this kind of shell-fish.

The mangroves, on which the oysters grow so curiously, are very extraordinary trees. The main trunk, or parent tree, grows to an immense size. From a single tree a whole forest will grow up in time, for the branches send down shoots into the ground, which in their turn take root and become trees; so that, generally, almost the whole of the mangrove forest may be said to be knitted together.

The inhabitants of the country at the mouth of the river are called Shekiani. They are a very warlike tribe, and many of them are armed with guns, which they obtain from the vessels that come here from time to time to buy bar wood, ivory, or india-rubber.

I arrived at the mouth of the river, in a small canoe, manned by several Mbinga men. The canoe was made of the trunk of a single tree, and had a mat for a sail. At the mouth of the river, high above the swamps that surround its banks, are two hills. On the top of one of these hills, a village was situated. There I stayed. It was a village of insignificant size.

At low tide, the high muddy banks of the river are exposed. So many birds as are there, I never saw elsewhere: they are to be seen in countless thousands. The shore, the mud islands, and the water were so covered with them, that it was really a sight worth seeing. Here and there flocks of pelicans swam majestically along, keeping at a good distance from my canoe. You would probably wish to know what these pelicans are like. I will tell you. They are large birds, and have an enormous bill, under which is a large pouch, capable of containing several pounds of fish. They have webbed feet, and their feathers are white. I wish you could see them looking out for their prey. How slyly they pry in the water for the fish they are in search of, and how quickly they pounce upon them unawares with their powerful beak! In an instant the fish are killed and stored away in the pouch; and when this is full, then Master Pelican begins to eat. The fish are put in the pouch as if it were a storehouse.

Now and then a string of flamingoes go stretching along the muddy shore, looking for all the world like a line of fire. Most beautiful are these flamingoes! and very singular they appear when not on the wing, but standing still on their long red legs! They are very wild, however, and difficult of approach.

Wherever the mud peeped out of the water, there were herons, cranes, gulls of various kinds. Scattered everywhere were seen those beautiful white birds (*Egretta flavirostris*). Some of the shore trees were covered with them, looking like snow in the distance.

Of course I wished to kill some of these birds. So I took a tiny little canoe, and covered it with branches of trees, that the birds might think it was a tree coming down the stream, as is often the case. Then I took a Shekiani with me to paddle, and, putting two guns in the canoe, we made for the pelicans. The sly birds seemed to suspect something, and did not give me a chance to approach them for a long time. But, as you know, in order to succeed in anything, people must have patience and

perseverance. So, after chasing many, I finally succeeded in approaching one. He was just in the act of swallowing a big fish, when – bang! – I fired, and wounded him so that he could not fly. His wing had been broken by my shot. At the noise made by firing my gun, the birds flew away by thousands. I made for Master Pelican. The chase became exciting; but at last we succeeded in coming near him. But how to get hold of him was now the question. His wing only was broken; and, with his great beak, he might perhaps be able to cut one of my fingers right off. I was afraid to spoil his feathers if I fired again. He became exhausted, and with one of the paddles I gave him a tremendous blow on the head, which stunned him. Another blow finished him, and we lifted him into the canoe.

I cannot tell you how pleased I was. His pouch was full of fish. They were so fresh that I resolved to make a meal out of them.

I had hardly put the bird at the bottom of the canoe, when there came flying towards me a flock of at least two hundred flamingoes. In a moment I had my gun in readiness. Would they come near enough for me to get a shot at them? I watched them anxiously. Yes! Now they are near enough; and – bang! bang! – I fired the two barrels right into the middle of the flock, and two beautiful flamingoes fell into the water. Quickly we paddled towards them. In order to go faster I took a paddle also, and worked away as well as I could. They were dead. Both had received shots in the head.

We made for the shore. When I opened the pouch of the pelican – just think of it! – I found a dozen large fishes inside! They were quite fresh; and I am sure they had not been caught more than half an hour. You will agree with me that the pelican makes quick work when he goes a-fishing.

In the evening I felt so tired that I went straight to bed; and I slept so soundly, that if the Shekianis had chosen, they could have murdered me without my even opening my eyes.

This village had a new king; and I wondered if his majesty were made king in the same fashion as the sovereign of the Mpongwe tribe; a tribe of negroes among whom I have resided, and I will tell you how their king was made.

Old King Glass died. He had been long ailing, but clung to life with determined tenacity. He was a disagreeable old heathen; but in his last days he became very devout – after his fashion. His idol was always freshly painted, and brightly decorated; his fetich, or "monda," was the best cared for fetich in Africa, and every few days some great doctors were brought down from the interior, and paid a large fee for advising the old king. He was afraid of witchcraft: he thought everybody wanted to put him out of the way by bewitching him. So the business of the doctors was to keep off the witches, and assure his majesty that he would live a long time. This assurance pleased him wonderfully, and he paid his doctors well.

The tribe had got tired of their king. They thought, indeed, that he was himself a most potent and evil-disposed wizard; and, though the matter was not openly talked about there were very few natives indeed who would pass his house after night, and none who could be tempted inside, by any slighter provocation than an irresistible glass of rum. In fact, if he had not been a great king, he would probably have been killed.

When he got sick at last, everybody seemed very sorry; but several of my friends told me in confidence, that the whole town hoped he would die; and die he did. I was awakened one morning, by those mournful cries and wails with which the African oftener covers a sham sorrow than expresses a real grief. All the women of the village seemed to be dissolved in tears. It is a most singular thing to see how readily the women of Africa can supply tears on the slightest occasion, or for no occasion at all. They will cry together, at certain times of the day, on mourning occasions, when a few minutes before they were laughing. They need no pain or real grief to excite their tears. They can, apparently, weep at will.

The mourning and wailing on this occasion lasted six days. On the second day the old king was secretly buried, by a few of the most trusty men of the tribe, very early in the morning, before others were up; or perhaps at night. Some said he had been buried at night, while others said he had been buried in the morning, thus showing that they did not know. This custom arises from a belief

that the other tribes would much like to get the head of the king, in order that with his brains they might make a powerful fetich.

During the days of mourning, the old men of the village busied themselves in choosing a new king. This, also, is a secret operation, and the result is not communicated to the people generally till the seventh day.

It happened that Njogoni (fowl), a good friend of mine, was elected. I do not know that Njogoni had the slightest suspicion of his elevation. At any rate, he shammed ignorance very well.

While he was walking on the shore, on the morning of the seventh day – probably some one had told him to go – he was suddenly set upon by the entire populace, who proceeded with a ceremony which is preliminary to the crowning. In a dense crowd they surrounded him, and then began to heap upon him every manner of abuse that the worst of mobs could imagine. Some spat in his face. Some beat him with their fists, not very hard of course. Some kicked him. Others threw dirty things at him. Those unlucky ones who stood on the outside and could only reach the poor fellow with their voices, assiduously cursed him, and also his father, and especially his mother, as well as his sisters and brothers, and all his ancestors to the remotest generation. A stranger would not have given a farthing for the life of him who was presently to be crowned.

Amid the noise and struggle, I caught the words which explained all to me; for every few minutes some fellow, administering a comparatively severe blow or kick, would shout out, "You are not our king yet; for a little while we will do what we please with you. By-and-by we shall have to do your will."

Njogoni bore himself like a man, and a prospective king, and took all this abuse with a smiling face. When it had lasted about half an hour, they took him to the house of the old king. Here he was seated, and became again for a little while the victim of his people's curses and ill-usage.

Suddenly all became silent, and the elders of the people rose, and said solemnly (the people repeating after them), "Now we choose you for our king; we engage to listen to you, and to obey you."

Then there was silence; and presently the silk hat, of "stove-pipe" fashion, which is the emblem of royalty among the Mpongwe and several other tribes, was brought in, and placed on Njogoni's head. He was then dressed in a red gown, and received the greatest marks of respect from all those who had just now abused him.

Then followed six days of festival, during which the poor king, who had taken the name of his predecessor, was obliged to receive his subjects in his own house, and was not allowed to stir out. The whole time was occupied in indescribable gorging of food, and drinking of bad rum and palm wine. It was a scene of beastly gluttony and drunkenness and uproarious confusion. Strangers came from the surrounding villages. Everything to eat and drink was furnished freely, and all comers were welcome.

Old King Glass, for whom during six days no end of tears had been shed, was now forgotten; and *new* King Glass, poor fellow, was sick with exhaustion.

Finally, the rum and palm wine were drunk up, the food was eaten, the allotted days of rejoicing had expired, and the people went back to their homes.

CHAPTER VI

AN OLD MAN KILLED FOR WITCHCRAFT – MY JOURNEY TO THE COUNTRY OF THE CANNIBALS – STARTING ON THE ROUTE

In the year 1856 I was again in the equatorial regions. I was in the great forest, on my way to the cannibal country; yes, the country where the people eat one another. It was a long way off, and how was I to get there through the dense jungle? How was I to find my way in that vast African forest? These were the thoughts that troubled me when I was in the village of Dayoko.

The village of Dayoko lies not far from the banks of the Ntambounay river, and is surrounded by beautiful groves of plantain trees.

Dayoko is one of the chiefs of the Mbousha tribe, and a wild and savage set of people they are I can tell you. But Dayoko became my friend, and said he would spare me a few men to take me part of the way.

These Mbousha people look very much like the Shekiani I have already described. They are superstitious and cruel, and believe in witchcraft. I stayed among them only a few days. I will now tell you what I saw there.

In a hut I found a very old man. His wool (hair) was white as snow, his face was wrinkled, and his limbs were shrunken. His hands were tied behind him, and his feet were placed in a rude kind of stocks. Several negroes, armed to the teeth, stood guard over him, and now and then insulted him by angry words and blows, to which he submitted in silence. What do you suppose all this meant?

This old man was to be killed for witchcraft!

A truly horrible delusion this witchcraft is!

I went to Dayoko, the chief, to try to save the old man's life, but I saw it was in vain.

During the whole night I could hear singing all over the town as well as a great uproar. Evidently they were preparing for the sacrifice of the old man.

Early in the morning the people gathered together with the fetich-man. His blood-shot eyes glared in savage excitement, as he went around from man to man. In his hands he held a bundle of herbs with which he sprinkled, three times, those to whom he spoke. Meantime, there was a man on the top of a high tree close by, who shouted, from time to time, "Jocou! Jocou!" at the same time shaking the trees.

"*Jocou*" means "devil" among the Mbousha; and the business of this man was to scare the evil spirit, and keep it away.

At last they all declared that the old man was a most potent wizard, that he had killed many people by sorcery, and that he must be killed.

You would like to know, I dare say, what these Africans mean by a wizard, or a witch? They believe that people have, within themselves, the power of killing anyone who displeases them. They believe that no one dies unless some one has bewitched him. Have you ever heard of such a horrible superstition? Hence those who are condemned for witchcraft are sometimes subjected to a very painful death; they are burnt by slow fire, and their bodies are given to the Bashikouay ant to be devoured. I shall have something to tell you about ants by-and-by. The poor wretches are cut into pieces; gashes are made over their bodies and cayenne pepper is put into the wounds. Indeed it makes me shudder to think of it, for I have witnessed such dreadful deaths, and seen many of the mutilated corpses.

After I witnessed the ceremony, the people scattered, and I went into my hut, for I was not well. After a while I thought I saw a man pass my door, almost like a flash, and after him rushed a

horde of silent but infuriated men towards the river. In a little while, I heard sharp, piercing cries, as of a man in great agony, and then all became still as death.

I came out, and going towards the river was met by the crowd returning, every man armed, with axe, spear, knife or cutlass; and these weapons, as well as their own hands, and arms, and bodies were sprinkled with blood.

They had killed the poor old man they called a wizard, hacked him to pieces, and finished by splitting open his skull, and scattering the brains into the water. Then they returned. At night these blood-thirsty men seemed to be as gentle as lambs, and as cheerful as if nothing had happened.

Ought we not to be thankful that we were born in a civilized country?

Now came the "grand palaver" over my departure. I called Dayoko and all the elders of the village together. When they had all assembled, I told them I must go into the Fan country inhabited by the cannibals.

Dayoko said I should be murdered by the cannibals, and eaten up, and tried to dissuade me from going.

Finally I said that go I would.

So it was determined that I should go under Dayoko's protection. Accordingly he gave me two of his sons to accompany me, and ordered several men to carry my chests, guns, powder, bullets, and shot. They were to take me to one of Dayoko's fathers-in-law, a Mbondemo chief who lived in the mountains.

I was going farther and farther from the sea; if the savages were to leave me and run away in the forest, what would become of me?

We started in canoes, ascended the Muni river, and then paddled up the river called the Ntambounay (you must not mind these hard names, they are not of my choice. I must call things by the names the natives give them).

After paddling all day, towards sunset we all felt very tired; for we had gone a long way up the river, and reached a Shekiani village. I was quite astonished to meet Shekiani here, but so it happened.

I shall always remember this Shekiani village, for I thought I should be murdered and plundered there. After we had landed in the village, I was told at once, that I could not go any further, for the road belonged to them. I must pay a tribute of six shirts similar to those I wore, three great-coats, beads, etc., etc. This would have entirely ruined me.

I could not sleep at all. Through the whole night a crowd surrounded my hut, talking, shouting, and singing in the greatest excitement. My guns and revolvers were all loaded and I made up my mind not to be killed without fighting desperately. If I was to die, I resolved at all events to die like a brave man. All my party were in my hut except Dayoko's two sons, who had gone to talk with the Shekiani chief. The Shekiani chief was a friend of Dayoko, and Dayoko's sons told him I was their father's stranger-friend.

At last, things became more quiet; and, towards morning, the people were still or asleep.

We left the hut. All was still peaceful. My men said that Dayoko's sons had a big fetich to avert war.

I gave a present to the Shekiani chief, and off we started. We left our large canoes and took smaller ones; for we were to go through a very small stream.

As we ascended the beautiful river, we could see the lofty mountains of the interior. A great many islands studded the stream. From the trees on the banks, the monkeys looked down at us with astonishment. What curious creatures they were, with their black faces peeping out through the dark foliage, and looking as if they were making grimaces at us. By-and-by we left the river and made our way along the creeks or through the woods towards the Mbondemo village. Now and then we walked freely through the wide openings which the elephants had made. The rushing of a herd of elephants effects quite a clearing in the forest. On we went, till finally we came to a place where a great number of large trees had been prostrated. Wherever we looked, trees were lying on the ground, many of

them of enormous size. As I looked I heard, not far off, a tremendous crash – a most awful noise. I could not conjecture what was the matter. It turned out that a tree had come down; and as it fell, being a huge one, it crushed a dozen others around it, and each as it broke gave a great crash, so that the combined effect was awful to hear.

We had to go through these fallen trees; and what tough work it was! I never had seen anything like it. Now we had to climb on a fallen tree and follow its trunk; then we had to come down, and were entangled in its branches or in those of other trees. At other times we had to creep under them. I was continually afraid that my gun would be fired off by some creepers or boughs getting hold of the trigger.

At last, when my patience was entirely gone, and my few clothes literally hanging in ribbons about me, my legs sadly wounded, and my face and hands scratched, we arrived at the camp of the Mbondemos, situated almost at the foot of the mountain.

These mountains were covered with an immense forest; and so thick were the trees that no open view could be obtained in any direction. The mountains ended somewhere in the interior, no one knew where, but this they knew, that it was near the home of the Fans, a cannibal tribe, and that elephants were plentiful, and gorillas were occasionally seen there. This encampment of the Mbondemos was called an Olako. There was not a house in the camp, and it was a romantic scene to look at. Scattered under huge trees, on the edge of the woods, were leafy shelters, opening towards the forest. Under these the people lived. A few sticks put close together formed their beds. They contrived to sleep upon them, and I did the same. I assure you that they were hard enough, and reminded me that a mattress was a very good thing. Every family had its fire prepared beside the beds; and around these fires in the evening they clustered, men, women, and children.

The chief of this Mbondemo encampment was called Mbéné, and I liked him very much. He was very kind to me, and always tried to furnish me with food. There was scarcity of provisions, at the time, in the camp of the Mbondemos. There were no plantain and cassada fields near, and often I had to go without breakfast or dinner. The people lived chiefly on the nuts of the forest, and at that season of the year these were very scarce.

Poor Mbéné said they had very little to eat, but would give me what they could. I had carried with me a few little crackers, which I found very precious, more precious than gold, and which I reserved for time of sickness; but one by one they disappeared. I looked at them every time I took one; but I felt so hungry that I could not refrain from eating them.

Have you known what hunger is – real craving hunger? I can assure you it is a dreadful feeling.

During that time of the year, this people had half the time nothing to eat but the nut of a kind of palm.

This nut was so bitter I could scarcely eat it. It is shaped like an egg, with rounded ends. To prepare it for eating, it is divested of its husk, and soaked in water for twenty-four hours, when it loses part of its exceedingly bitter taste, and becomes tolerably palatable, that is, to a starving man. Sometimes hunger will make them eat the nut without soaking it. I have done so myself, when lost in the forest. It is dreadfully disagreeable.

Now and then, the women succeeded in getting a few little fish in the streams, and gave me some. I could bear a good deal, for I had firmly resolved to go into the cannibal country.

These Mbondemos are continually moving their villages. Mbéné has moved his village three times within a few years. I asked him why he made these frequent changes. He said he moved the first time because a man had died, and the place was "not good" after that event. The second time he was forced to move because they had cut down all the palm trees, and would get no more mimbo (palm wine), a beverage of which they are excessively fond. They tap the palm, just as the maple tree is tapped in America, only they tap the tree at the top. This palm wine has somewhat of a milky colour; and, when drunk in great quantity, it intoxicates. The palm trees are very plentiful all over this part of the country, and it seems easier for them to move than to take care of the trees surrounding their

settlements, useful as they are to them; for they furnish not only the wine they love, but the bitter nut I mentioned before, which often keeps them from actual starvation. When the tree is cut down they get what we call the palm cabbage which grows at the top. When cooked this palm cabbage is very good.

A country which has plenty of palm trees, plenty of game, a good river or rivulet, and plenty of fish, is the country for a Mbondemo settler or squatter.

In these forests there is a vine or creeper which I might call the traveller's vine. If thirsty you may cut it, and within less than a minute a tumblerful of water will come out of it. This vine hangs about in the forest, and seemed to me to grow without leaves. What a capital thing it would be if water were not abundant in this country! The water procured from it has hardly any taste, and is perfectly pure and limpid.

Being unable to endure the continual hunger, I called Mbéné, and told him that his place had no food to give, and he must take me to a country where there was something to eat, and which would be on my way to the Fan country. Good Mbéné said, "Spirit, I will try the best I can to take you where you want to go. I will send some of my people with you."

In the meantime, Dayoko's people had all returned to their village. These forests had no game. I spent hour after hour scouring the forest, but I could see nothing, except birds, some of which were extremely pretty. I am afraid that if I had succeeded in killing a snake I should have eaten it, as I felt desperately hungry. I did not like the bitter nuts; so it was agreed that Mbéné's brother Mcomo, together with several of his people, should accompany me as far as the country of the Fan tribe. I could hardly believe such good news to be true.

Mbéné's wife always cooked my food. She was a dear good old woman, and I gave her a fine necklace of beads when I left. She was delighted with my present. They were big white porcelain beads of the size of a pigeon's egg. One day Mbéné succeeded in getting a fowl for me. His wife cooked it; she made soup, and put plenty of cayenne pepper into it. I had also some plantain. How I enjoyed this meal! the more so that it was probably the last I should get for a good many days, unless we were unusually lucky, and should kill some antelopes or elephants on our road to the Fan country.

Elephant meat is execrable, as you would say on tasting it. But as you may not have the chance I will tell you by-and-by how it tastes.

As much food as possible was collected for our journey, and at last everything was ready.

CHAPTER VII

OUR JOURNEY THROUGH THE WILDERNESS CONTINUED – A REBELLION IN CAMP – NOTHING TO EAT – I SHOOT A FISH AND MISS AN ELEPHANT – I KILL A BIG SNAKE, AND THE OTHERS EAT HIM – MY FIRST SIGHT OF GORILLAS

Before we renewed our journey the natives had done all they could to gather provisions; but the result was poor enough. By going to distant villages they had succeeded in getting a few bunches of plantain.

Mcomo, Mbéné's brother, backed out. He said he was not going into the cannibal country to be eaten up. But I must tell you that Mbéné had some friends among the cannibals. And he sent with me two of his sons called Miengai and Makinda, together with twelve good hunters, and six women who were the wives of some of the men. The women carried the provisions, etc.

I took seventy pounds of shot and bullets, nineteen pounds of powder, ten pounds of arsenic for preserving the birds and animals I should kill, for I knew I should probably succeed in getting some new specimens.

When all was arranged, when everybody had taken leave of all his friends, for this was a very great journey, and they came back half-a-dozen times to take leave over again, or say something they had forgotten, when all the shouting and quarrelling about who should carry the smallest load was over, we at last got away.

We had left the camp of Mbéné behind us at a distance of about five miles when we came to the banks of a little river called the Noonday, a clear and beautiful stream. I was ahead of the party with Miengai, and was waiting for the others to come up before crossing. As we stood on the banks I spied a fish swimming along. Immediately the thought came into my mind, "How nicely that fish would taste if I could get it and boil it in a pot over the fire!" I fired a charge of small shot into it; but no sooner had I pulled the trigger than I heard a tremendous crash on the opposite bank about six or seven yards off. Small trees were torn down violently, and then we heard the shrill trumpeting of a party of frightened elephants. They were probably sleeping or standing in a dead silence on the opposite bank in the jungle. I was sorry I had fired, for after crossing the stream we might have killed an elephant. Poor Miengai was terribly vexed. "I am sure," said he, "they had big tusks of ivory."

Our party, as soon as they heard the gun, came up in haste, and asked what was the matter. When they heard the story they began to lament our not killing an elephant; for then we should have had meat enough for the whole journey; and they shouted with one accord: "Elephant meat is so good!"

This exclamation made me wonder how an elephant steak would taste.

On we went, and got fairly into the mountainous country. The hills became steeper as we advanced. How tired I felt; for the diet at Mbéné's camp had not strengthened me. These Mbondemos had a great advantage over me. They used their bare feet almost as deftly as monkeys, and hence got their foothold more easily than I.

Miengai and I were in advance. All at once he made me a sign to keep very still. I thought he had discovered a herd of elephants, or seen the traces of an enormous leopard. He cocked his gun; I cocked mine; the other men did the same; and there we stood in perfect silence, for at least five minutes. Suddenly Miengai sent a "hurrah" echoing through the forest. It was immediately answered by shouts from many voices not very far off, but whose owners were hidden from us by huge rocks and trees. Miengai replied with the fierce shout of the Mbondemo warriors, and was again answered.

Thinking we were going to have a general fight, I looked carefully after my powder flask and my bullets, and found they were all right. Going a little farther on, we came in sight of the encampment of a large party, who proved to be some of Mbéné's people just returning from a trading expedition to the interior. Two men of this camp offered to go with us. Their names were Ngolai and Yeava. We consented to take them.

What a journey it was! Nothing but thick woods to struggle through, hills to climb, rivers to cross, and nearly all the time it rained; in fact, I was wet from morning to night. How glad I was when, in the evening, we had made our camp, and built great fires! For my part, I had three fires lit about my bed of leaves; and in the evening I always hung up my clothes to dry, so as to have them ready for the next day.

One morning my men came to tell me they were tired, and would not go a step farther unless I gave them more cloth.

They seemed in earnest; and I began to question myself whether they meant to plunder me or to leave me in these mountains. To be left thus alone would have been almost certain death. To give them what they asked was to show them I was afraid of them. If they knew I was afraid of them I did not know what they might next do. So I determined to put on a bold front. Taking my two revolvers in my hand, I said: "I will not give you any more cloth. I will not let you leave me, because your father Mbéné has given you to me to accompany me to the Fan tribe. You must therefore go with me, or" (here I motioned with my pistols) "there will be war between us. But," said I, "this is a very hard road, and at the end of the journey I will give you something more."

This satisfied them, and we again resumed our journey. Up, and up, and up we struggled, and now we began to meet with immense boulders. Not the scream of a bird, or the shrill cry of a monkey, broke the stillness of the dark solitude. Nothing was heard but the panting breaths of our party as we ascended the hills.

At last we came to an immense mountain torrent, which rushed down the hillside with fearful force, and was white with foam. Its course was full of huge granite boulders, which lay about as though the Titans had been playing at skittles in that country. Against these the angry waters dashed as if they would carry all before them, and, breaking, threw the milky spray up to the very tree-tops. As I looked up the torrent seemed to pour its foaming waters directly down upon us.

This was the head of the Ntambounay river which I had ascended in a canoe, and on the banks of which I came near being murdered in the Shekiani village. What a change had taken place in it! Here a canoe would be dashed into a hundred pieces against the rocks.

I was so thirsty and tired that I went to the river's bank, and drank a few handfuls of the pure, clean cold water.

After resting a little while, we continued our course till we reached the top of a very high mountain, whence I could see all the country round. How wild and desolate it looked! Nothing but forest and mountains stretching away as far as the eye could reach.

I was sitting under a very large tree, when, suddenly looking up, I saw an immense serpent coiled upon the branch of a tree just above me; and I really could not tell whether he was not about to spring upon me and entangle me in his huge folds. You may well believe that I very quickly "stood from under." I rushed out, and taking good aim with my gun, I shot my black friend in the head. He let go his hold, tumbled down with great force, and after writhing convulsively for a time, he lay before me dead. He measured thirteen feet in length, and his ugly fangs proved that he was venomous.

My men cut off the head of the snake, and divided the body into as many pieces as there were people. Then they lighted a fire, and roasted and ate it on the spot. They offered me a piece; but, though very hungry, I declined. When the snake was eaten I was the only individual of the company that had an empty stomach; I could not help reflecting on the disadvantage it is sometimes to have been born and bred in a civilized country, where snakes are not accounted good eating.

We now began to look about the ruins of the village near which we sat. A degenerate kind of sugar-cane was growing on the very spot where the houses had formerly stood. I made haste to pluck some of this, and chew it for the little sweetness it had. While thus engaged my men perceived what instantly threw us all into the greatest excitement. Here and there the cane was beaten down or torn up by the roots; and, lying about, were fragments which had evidently been chewed. There were also footprints to be seen, which looked almost like those of human beings. What could this mean? My men looked at each other in silence, and muttered, "Nguyla!" (Gorillas!).

It was the first time I had seen the footprints of these wild men of the woods, and I cannot tell you how I felt. Here was I now, it seemed, on the point of meeting, face to face, that monster, of whose ferocity, strength, and cunning the natives had told me so much, and which no white man before had hunted. My heart beat till I feared its loud pulsations would alarm the gorilla. I wondered how they looked. I thought of what Hanno the Carthaginian navigator said about the wild hairy men he had met on the West Coast of Africa more than two thousand years ago.

By the tracks it was easy to know that there must have been several gorillas in company. We prepared at once to follow them.

The women were terrified. They thought their end had come – that the gorilla would be soon upon them. So, before starting in search of the monster, we left two or three men to take care of them and reassure them. Then the rest of us looked once more carefully at our guns; for the gorilla gives you no time to reload, and woe to him whom he attacks! We were fortunately armed to the teeth.

My men were remarkably silent, for they were going on an expedition of more than usual risk; for the male gorilla is literally the king of the forest – the king of the equatorial regions. He and the crested lion of Mount Atlas are the two fiercest and strongest beasts of that continent. The lion of South Africa cannot be compared with either for strength or courage.

As we left the camp, the men and women left behind crowded together, with fear written on their faces. Miengai, Ngolai, and Makinda set out for the hunt in one party; myself and Yeava formed another. We determined to keep near each other; so that in case of trouble, or in a great emergency, we might be at hand to help one another. For the rest, silence and a sure aim were the only cautions to be given.

As we followed the footprints, we could easily see that there were four or five of them, though none appeared very large. We saw where the gorillas had run along on all fours, which is their usual mode of progression. We could perceive also where, from time to time, they had seated themselves to chew the canes they had borne off. The chase began to be very exciting.

We had agreed to return to the women and their guards and consult about what was to be done, after we had discovered the probable course of the gorilla; and this was now done. To make sure of not alarming our prey, we moved the whole party forward a little way, to some leafy huts, built by passing traders, and which served us for shelter and concealment. Here we bestowed the women, whose lively fear of the terrible gorilla arises from various stories current among the tribes, of women having been carried off into the woods by the fierce animal. Then we prepared once more to set out on our chase, this time hopeful to get a shot.

Looking once more to our guns, we started off. I confess that I was never more excited in my life. For years I had heard of the terrible roar of the gorilla, of its vast strength, of its fierce courage when only wounded. I knew that we were about to pit ourselves against an animal which even the enormously large leopards of the mountains fear, which the elephants let alone, and which perhaps has driven away the lion out of this territory; for the "king of beasts," so numerous elsewhere in Africa, is not met with in the land of the gorilla.

We descended a hill, crossed a stream on a fallen log, crept under the trees, and presently approached some huge boulders of granite. In the stream we had crossed we could see plainly signs that the animals had just crossed it, for the water was still disturbed. Our eyes wandered everywhere

to get a glimpse of our prey. Alongside of the granite blocks lay an immense dead tree, and about this the gorillas were likely to be.

Our approach was very cautious; I wish you could have seen us. We were divided into two parties. Makinda led one, and I the other. We were to surround the granite block, behind which Makinda supposed the gorillas to be hiding. With guns cocked and ready we advanced through the dense wood, which cast a gloom, even in midday, over the whole scene. I looked at my men, and saw that they were even more excited than myself.

Slowly we pressed on through the dense bush, dreading almost to breathe, for fear of alarming the beasts. Makinda was to go to the right of the rock, while I took the left. Unfortunately he and his party circled it at too great a distance. The watchful animals saw him. Suddenly I was startled by a strange, discordant, half human, devilish cry, and beheld four young and half-grown gorillas running towards the deep forest. I was not ready. We fired, but hit nothing. Then we rushed on in pursuit; but they knew the woods better than we. Once I caught a glimpse of one of the animals again; but an intervening tree spoiled my mark, and I did not fire. We pursued them till we were exhausted, but in vain. The alert beasts made good their escape. When we could pursue no more we returned slowly to our camp, where the women were anxiously expecting us.

I protest I felt almost like a murderer when I saw the gorilla this first time. As they ran on their hind legs, with their heads down, their bodies inclined forward, their whole appearance was that of hairy men running for their lives. Add to all this their cry, so awful, yet with something human in its discordance, and you will cease to wonder that the natives have the wildest superstitions about these "wild men of the woods."

In our absence the women had made large fires, and prepared the camp. I changed my clothes, which had become drenched by the frequent torrents and puddles we ran through in our eager pursuit. Then we sat down to our supper, which had been cooked in the meantime. I noticed that all my plantains were gone – eaten up. What was to become of us in the great forest? I had only two or three biscuits, which I kept in case of actual starvation or sickness.

As we lay by the fire in the evening before going to sleep, the adventure of the day was talked over to those who had not gone with us; and, of course, there followed some curious stories of the gorillas. I listened in silence.

One of the men told a story of two Mbondemo women who were walking together through the woods, when suddenly an immense gorilla stepped into the path, and, clutching one of the women, bore her off in spite of the screams and struggles of both. The other woman returned to the village much frightened, and told the story. Of course her companion was given up for lost. Great was the surprise when, a few days afterwards, she returned to her home.

"Yes," said one of the men, "that was a gorilla inhabited by a spirit." This explanation was received by a general grunt of approval.

One of the men told how, some years ago, a party of gorillas were found in a cane-field tying up the sugar-cane in regular bundles, preparatory to carrying it away. The natives attacked them, but were routed, and several killed, while others were carried off prisoners by the gorillas; but in a few days they returned home, not uninjured indeed, for the nails of their fingers and toes had been torn off by their captors.

Then several people spoke up, and mentioned names of dead men whose spirits were known to be dwelling in gorillas.

Finally came the story that is current among all the tribes who are acquainted with the habits of the gorilla, that this animal will hide himself in the lower branches of a tree, and there lie in wait for people who go to and fro. When one passes sufficiently near, the gorilla grasps the luckless fellow with his powerful feet, which he uses like giants' hands, and, drawing the man up in to the tree, he quietly chokes him there.

Hunger and starvation began to tell upon us severely. When we started I did not calculate on meeting with gorillas. I had eaten all my sea bread. There was not a particle of food among us, and no settlement near us. I began to feel anxious for fear that we should die. Berries were scarce; and nuts were hardly to be found. The forest seemed deserted. There was not even a bird to kill. To make matters worse, we had been misled. We were lost – lost in the great forest! – and we failed to reach a certain settlement where we had expected to arrive.

Travelling on an empty stomach is too exhausting to be very long endured. The third day I awoke feeble, but found that one of the men had killed a monkey. This animal, roughly roasted on the coals, tasted delicious. How I wished we had ten monkeys to eat! but how glad and grateful we were for that single one.

Presently, Makinda, looking up, discovered a beehive. He smoked the bees out, and I divided the honey. There might have been a fight over this sweet booty had I not interposed and distributed it in equal shares. Serving myself with a portion not bigger than I gave the rest, I at once sat down, and devoured honey, wax, dead bees, worms, dirt, and all; I was so hungry. I was only sorry we had not more.

I had really a hard time getting through the old elephant tracks, which were the best roads through the jungle. The men seemed to have lost their way. We saw no animals, but found several gorillas' tracks.

At last my men began to talk more cheerfully; they knew where they were: and, soon after, I saw the broad leaves of the plantain, the forerunner of an African town. But, alas! as we approached, we saw no one coming to meet us; and when we reached the place we found only a deserted village. But even for this how thankful I was! Since I left Dayoko I had experienced nothing but hunger and starvation; and these were the first human habitations we had met.

Presently, however, some Mbicho people made their appearance. They were relatives of Mbéné, and their village was close by. They gave us some plantains, but no fowls. I wished very much to get a fowl. I felt gouamba (which means hunger) for meat, and knew that a good warm fowl broth would have done me a great deal of good. We spent the evening in the houses, drying and warming ourselves. It was much better than the forest, even if it was only a deserted town.

I asked if we should ever reach the cannibal country, and found that, with the exception of the Mbicho village near at hand, we were already surrounded on three sides by Fan villages.

I was too tired to rest. Besides, I was getting deep into the interior of Africa, and was in the neighbourhood of the Fans, the most warlike tribe that inhabited the country. So I barricaded my hut, got my ammunition ready, saw that my guns were all right, and then lay awake for a long time, before I could go to sleep.

CHAPTER VIII

I ARRIVE AMONG THE CANNIBALS – THEIR SPEARS, BOWS, AND BATTLE-AXES – THEY TAKE ME FOR A SPIRIT – THEIR KING SHAKES WHEN HE SEES ME – I GIVE HIM A LOOKING-GLASS – IT ASTONISHES HIM

We were, at last, near the Fan country. We had passed the last Mbichos village, and were on our way to the villages of the *man-eaters*.

I remember well the first Fan village I approached. It stood on the summit of a high hill in the mountains. All its inhabitants were very much excited when they perceived we were coming towards it, through the plantation path; for the trees around the hill had been cut down. The men were armed to the teeth, as we entered the village, and I knew not whether hundreds of spears and poisoned arrows might not be thrown at me, and I be killed on the spot. What dreadful spears those cannibals had; they were all barbed. Each man had several in his hand; and, besides, had a shield made of elephant's hide, to protect himself with. Others were armed with huge knives, and horrible-looking battle-axes, or with bows and poisoned arrows.

Wild shouts of astonishment, which, for all I knew, were war-shouts, greeted me as I entered the village. I must own that I felt not quite at my ease. How wild and fierce these men looked! They were most scantily dressed. When they shouted, they showed their teeth, which were filed to a point, and coloured black. Their open mouths put me uncomfortably in mind of a tomb; for how many human creatures each of these men had eaten!

How ugly the women looked! They were all tattooed, and nearly naked. They fled with their children into their houses, as I passed through the street, in which I saw, here and there, human bones lying about. Yes, human bones from bodies that had been devoured by them! Such are my recollections of my first entrance into a village of cannibals.

The village was strongly fenced, or palisaded; and on the poles were several skulls of human beings and of gorillas. There was but a single street, about two-thirds of a mile long. On each side of this were low huts, made of the bark of trees.

I had hardly entered the village when I perceived some bloody remains, which appeared to me to be human. Presently we passed a woman who was running as fast as she could towards her hut. She bore in her hand a piece of a human thigh, just as we should go to market and carry thence a joint or steak.

This was a very large village. At last we arrived at the palaver house. Here I was left alone with Mbéné for a little while. There was great shouting going on at a little distance, at the back of some houses. One of them said they had been busy dividing the body of a dead man, and that there was not enough for all.

They flocked in presently, and soon I was surrounded by an immense crowd. Not far from me was a ferocious-looking fellow. On one arm he supported a very large shield, made of an elephant's hide, and of the thickest part of the skin, while in his other hand he held a prodigious war-knife, which he could have slashed through a man in a jiffy.

Some in the crowd were armed with cross-bows, from which were shot either iron-headed arrows, or the little, insignificant-looking, but really most deadly darts, tipped with poison. These are made of slender, harmless reeds, a foot long, whose sharpened ends are dipped in a deadly vegetable poison, which these people know how to make. These poisoned darts are so light that they would blow away, if simply laid in the groove of the bow. Hence they use a kind of sticky gum to hold them.

The handle of the bow is ingeniously split; and, by a little peg, that acts as a trigger, the bow-string is disengaged. The bow is very stiff and strong, and sends the arrow to a great distance. As you see by the representation of a Fan bowman, they have to sit down and apply both feet to the middle of the bow, while they pull with all their strength on the string to bend it back.

These little poisoned arrows are much dreaded by them, and are very carefully kept in little bags, which are made of the skin of wild animals.

Some bore on their shoulders the terrible war-axe. A single blow of this axe suffices to split a human skull. I saw that some of these axes, as well as their spears and other ironwork, were beautifully ornamented.

The war-knife, which hangs by their side, is a terrible weapon. It is used in hand-to-hand conflict, and is designed to be thrust through the enemy's body. There was also another sort of huge knife used by some of the men in the crowd before me. It was a foot long, about eight inches wide, and is used to cut through the shoulders of an adversary. It must do tremendous execution.

A few of the men had also a very singular pointed axe, which is thrown from a distance. When thrown, it strikes with the point down, and inflicts a terrible wound. They handle it with great dexterity. The object aimed at with this axe is the head. The point penetrates to the brain, and kills the victim immediately.

The spears were six or seven feet long, and are ingeniously adapted to inflict terrible wounds. They are thrown with an accuracy and a force which never ceased to astonish me. The long, slender staff fairly whistles through the air; and woe to the man who is within twenty or thirty yards of their reach.

Most of the knives and axes were ingeniously sheathed in covers made of snake or antelope skins, or of human skin. These sheaths were slung round the shoulder or neck by cords, which permit the weapon to hang at the side, out of the wearer's way.

These Fan warriors had no armour. Their only weapon of defence is the huge shield of elephant hide, of which I spoke to you. It is three and a half feet long, by two and a half feet wide.

Besides their weapons, many of the men wore a small knife, as a table-knife, or jack-knife.

From this description of the men by whom I was surrounded, you may judge with what amazement I looked around me, with my guns in my hands. It was a grand sight to see such a number of stalwart, martial, fierce-looking fellows, fully armed, and ready for any desperate fray, gathered together.

Finer-looking savages I never saw; and I could easily believe them to be brave; and the completeness of their war-like equipments proved that fighting is a favourite pastime with them. No wonder they are dreaded by all their neighbours!

Here was I, at this time only a lad, alone in the midst of them.

Presently came the king, a ferocious-looking fellow. His body was naked. His skin in front was painted red, and his chest, stomach, and back were tattooed in a rude but effective manner. He was covered with charms, and he wore round his neck a necklace made with leopard's teeth. He was fully armed. Most of the Fans wore queues; but the queue of Ndiayai, the king, was the biggest of all, and terminated in two tails, in which were strung brass rings. His beard was plaited in several plaits, which contained white beads. His teeth were filed sharp to a point. He looked like a perfect glutton of human flesh.

I looked around me in a cool, impassive manner. Ndiayai, the king, fairly shook at the sight of me. He had refused to come and see me, at first, from a belief that he would die in three days after setting eyes on me. But Mbéné had persuaded him to come. Ndiayai was accompanied by the queen, the ugliest woman I ever saw, and very old. She was called Mashumba. She was nearly naked, her only covering being a strip of cloth about four inches wide, made of the soft bark of a tree, and dyed red. Her body was tattooed in the most fanciful manner; her skin, from long exposure, had become rough

and knotty. She wore two enormous iron anklets, and had, in her ears, a pair of copper rings, two inches in diameter. I could easily put my little fingers in the holes through which the earrings passed.

The people looked at me, wondered at my hair, but never ceased to look at my feet. "Look at the strange being," said they to each other, "his feet are not of the colour of his face, and he has no toes!"

Finally, the king said to Mbéné that, when surrounded by his people, he was not afraid of anybody.

I could well believe him. When fighting they must look perfect devils.

When night came I entered my house, and looked about to see how I could barricade myself for the night; for I did not fancy putting myself entirely at the mercy of these savage Fans. Their weapons had been sufficient to show me that they were men who were not afraid to fight. I told Mbéné to send for Ndiayai. The king came, and I presented him a large bunch of white beads, a looking-glass, a file, fire-steels, and some gun-flints. His countenance beamed with joy. I never saw such astonishment as he exhibited when I held the looking-glass before his face. At first he did not know what to make of it, and did not want to take the glass, till Mbéné told him that he had one. He put his tongue out, and he saw it reflected in the looking-glass. Then he shut one eye, and made faces; then he showed his hands before the looking-glass – one finger – two fingers – three fingers. He became speechless, and with all I had given him, he went away as "happy as a king"; and "every inch a (savage) king" he was.

Shortly afterwards, Mashumba, the queen, thinking that probably I had something for her, also came and brought me a basketful of plantains. They were cooked. At once the idea rushed into my mind, that perhaps the very same pot that cooked the plantains had cooked a Fan's head in the morning; and I began to have a horrible loathing of the flesh-pots of these people. I would not have cooked in their pots for the world.

A little after dark, all became silent in the village. I barred my little bit of a door as well as I could with my chest, and, lying down on that dreadful Fan bed, I placed my gun by my side, and tried hard, but in vain, to go to sleep. I wondered how many times human flesh had entered the hut I was in. I thought of all I had seen during the day, which I have related to you. The faces of those terrible warriors, and the implements of war, were before my eyes though it was pitch dark.

Was I afraid? Certainly not. What feeling was it that excited me? I cannot tell you. It was certainly not fear; for if anyone the next day had offered to take me back where I came from, I should have declined the offer. Probably I was agitated by the novel and horrible sights that had greeted my eyes, and which exceeded all my previous conceptions of Africa. Now and then I thought that as these men not only killed people, but ate them also, they might perhaps be curious to try how I tasted.

Hour after hour passed, and I could not get to sleep. I said my bed was a dreadfully bad one. It was a frame composed of half a dozen large round bamboos. I might as well have tried to sleep on a pile of cannonballs. Finally, I succeeded in going to sleep, holding my gun tightly under my arm.

When I got up in the morning, and went out at the back of the house, I saw a pile of ribs, leg and arm bones, and skulls, piled together. The cannibals must have had a grand fight, not long before, and devoured all their prisoners of war.

In what was I to wash my face? I resolved at last not to wash at all.

CHAPTER IX

AN ELEPHANT HUNT

After a few days the Fans began to get accustomed to me, and I to them; and we were the best friends in the world.

They are great hunters. One day a woman returning from the plantations brought news, that she had seen elephants; and that one of the plantain fields had been entirely destroyed by them. This was an event of common occurrence in the country; for the elephants are not very particular, and whatever they like they take; not caring a bit how much hunger they may occasion among the poor natives.

When the news arrived, a wild shout of joy spread among the villagers. The grim faces of the Fans smiled; and in doing so, showed their ugly filed teeth. "We are going to kill elephants," they all shouted. "We are going to have plenty of meat to eat," shrieked the women.

So in the evening a war-dance took place; a war-dance of cannibals! It was the wildest scene I ever saw. It was pitch-dark; and the torches threw a dim light around us, and showed the fantastic forms of these wild men. Really it was a wild scene. They were all armed as if they were going to war. How they gesticulated! What contortions they made! What a tumult they raised! How their wild shouts echoed from hill to hill, and died away in the far distance! They looked like demons. Their skins were painted of different colours; and, as the dancing went on, their bodies became warm, and shone as if they had been dipped in oil.

Suddenly a deafening shout of the whole assemblage seemed to shake the earth. Their greatest warrior (Leopard) came to dance. Leopard was, it appears, the bravest of them all. He had killed more people in war than anybody else. He had given more human food to his fellow-townsmen than many other warriors put together. Hence they all admired and praised him; and a song describing his feats of arms was sung by those who surrounded him. How ferocious he looked! He was armed to the teeth. He had a spear like one of those I have already described. A long knife hung by its side, and the hand that held the shield carried a battle-axe also. In dancing, he acted at times as if he were defending himself against an attack; at other times, as if he were himself attacking somebody. Once or twice I really thought he meant to throw his spear at someone. I could hardly breathe while looking at him. He appeared actually to be a demon. Finally he stopped from sheer exhaustion, and others took his place.

The next day the men furbished up their arms. I myself cleaned my guns, and got ready for the chase; so that, if I could get a chance, I might send a bullet through an elephant.

The war-dish was cooked. It is a mixture of herbs, and is supposed to inspire people with courage. They rubbed their bodies with it, and then we started. There were about five hundred men. After leaving the village we divided into several parties. Each party was well acquainted with the forest, and knew just where to go. The march was conducted in perfect silence, so that we might not alarm the elephants. After proceeding six hours we arrived not far from the hunting-ground where the elephants were supposed to be. The Fans built shelters, and these were hardly finished when it began to rain very hard.

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