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Horatio Bridge

Journal of an African Cruiser / Comprising Sketches of the Canaries, the Cape De Verds, Liberia, Madeira, Sierra Leone, and Other Places of Interest on the West Coast of Africa

PREFACE

The following pages have afforded occupation for many hours, which might else have been wasted in idle amusements, or embittered by still idler regrets at the destiny which carried the writer to a region so little seductive as Africa, and kept him there so long. He now offers them to the public, after some labor bestowed in correction and amendment, but retaining their original form, that of a daily Journal, which better suited his lack of literary practice and constructive skill, and was in fitter keeping with the humble pretensions of the work, than a re-arrangement on artistic principles. At various points of the narrative, however, he has introduced observations or disquisitions from two or three common-place books, which he kept simultaneously with the Journal; and thus, in a few instances, remarks are inserted as having been made early in the cruise, while, in reality, they were perhaps the ultimate result of his reflection and judgment upon the topics discussed.

If, in any portion of the book, the author may hope to engage the attention of the public, it will probably be in those pages which treat of Liberia. The value of his evidence, as to the condition and prospects of that colony, must depend, not upon any singular acuteness of observation or depth of reflection, but upon his freedom from partizan bias, and his consequent ability to perceive a certain degree of truth, and inclination to express it frankly. A northern man, but not unacquainted with the slave institutions of our own and other countries – neither an Abolitionist nor a Colonizationist – without prejudice, as without prepossession – he felt himself thus far qualified to examine the great enterprise which he beheld in progress. He enjoyed, moreover, the advantage of comparing Liberia, as he now saw it, with a personal observation of its condition three years before, and could therefore mark its onward or retreating footsteps, and the better judge what was permanent, and what merely temporary or accidental. With these qualifications, he may at least hope to have spoken so much of truth as entirely to gratify neither the friends nor enemies of this interesting colony.

The West Coast of Africa is a fresher field for the scribbling tourist, than most other parts of the world. Few visit it, unless driven by stern necessity; and still fewer are disposed to struggle against the enervating influence of the climate, and keep up even so much of intellectual activity as may suffice to fill a diurnal page of Journal or Commonplace Book. In his descriptions of the settlements of the various nations of Europe, along that coast, and of the native tribes, and their trade and intercourse with the whites, the writer indulges the idea that he may add a trifle to the general information of the public. He puts forth his work, however, with no higher claims than as a collection of desultory sketches, in which he felt himself nowise bound to tell all that it might be desirable to know, but only to be accurate in what he does tell. On such terms, there is perhaps no very reprehensible audacity in undertaking the history of a voyage; and he smiles to find himself, so simply and with so little labor, acquiring a title to be enrolled among the authors of books!

APRIL 5, 1845

CHAPTER I

Departure – Mother Carey's Chickens – The Gulf stream – Rapid Progress
– The French Admiral's Cook – Nautical Musicians – The Sick Man – The Burial
at Sea – Arrival at the Canaries – Santa Cruz – Love and Crime – Island of Grand
Canary – Troglodytes near Las Palmas.

June 5, 1843. – Towed by the steamer Hercules, we go down the harbor of New York, at 7 o'clock A.M. It is the fourth time the ship has moved, since she was launched from the Navy Yard at Portsmouth. Her first experience of the ocean was a rough one; she was caught in a wintry gale from the north-east, dismasted, and towed back into Portsmouth harbor, within three days after her departure. The second move brought us to New York; the third, from the Navy Yard into the North river; and the fourth will probably bring us to an anchorage off Sandy Hook. After a hard winter of four months, in New Hampshire, we go to broil on the coast of Africa, with ice enough in our blood to keep us comfortably cool for six months at least.

At 10 A.M. the steamer cast off, and we anchored inside of Sandy Hook; at 12 Meridian, hoisted the broad pennant of Commodore Perry, and saluted it with thirteen guns. At 3 P.M. the ship gets under way, and with a good breeze, stands out to sea. Our parting letters are confided to the Pilot. That weather-beaten veteran gives you a cordial shake with his broad, hard hand, wishes you a prosperous cruise, and goes over the side. His life is full of greetings and farewells; the grasp of his hand assures the returning mariner that his weary voyage is over; and when the swift pilot boat hauls her wind, and leaves you to go on your course alone, you feel that the last connecting link with home is broken. On our ship's deck, there were perhaps some heart-aches, but no whimpering. Few strain their eyes to catch parting glimpses of the receding highlands; it is only the green ones who do that. The Old Salt seeks more substantial solace in his dinner. It is matter of speculation, moreover, whether much of the misery of parting does not, with those unaccustomed to the sea, originate in the disturbed state of their stomachs.

7. – We are in the Gulf-stream. The temperature of the water is ten degrees above that of the air. Though the ship is deep, being filled with stores, and therefore sailing heavily, we are yet taken along eleven knots by the wind, and two or three more by the current. Swiftly as we fly, however, we are not quite alone upon the waters. Mother Carey's chickens follow us continually, dipping into the white foam of our track, to seize the food which our keel turns up for them out of the ocean depths. Mysterious is the way of this little wanderer over the sea. It is never seen on land; and naturalists have yet to discover where it reposes, and where it hatches its young; unless we adopt the idea of the poets, that it builds its nest upon the turbulent bosom of the deep. It is a sort of nautical sister of the fabled bird of Paradise, which was footless, and never alighted out of the air. Hundreds of miles from shore, in sunshine and in tempest, you may see the Stormy Petrel. Among the unsolvable riddles which nature propounds to mankind, we may reckon the question, Who is Mother Carey, and where does she rear her chickens?

9. – We are out of the Gulf-stream, and the ship is now rolling somewhat less tumultuously than heretofore. For four days, we have been blest with almost too fair a wind. A strong breeze, right aft, has been taking us more than two hundred and forty miles a day on our course. But the incessant and uneasy motion of the ship deprives us of any steady comfort. In spite of all precautions, tables, chairs, and books, have tumbled about in utter confusion, and the monotony is enlivened by the breaking of bottles and crash of crockery. As some consolation, our Log Book shows that we have made more than half of a thousand miles, within the last forty-eight hours. Land travelling, with all the advantages of railroads, can hardly compete with the continual diligence of a ship before a prosperous breeze.

11. – Spoke an American brig from Liverpool, bound for New York. Though the boat was called away, and our letters were ready, it was all at once determined not to board her; and, after asking the captain to report us, we stood on our course again. The newspapers will tell our friends something of our whereabouts; or, at least, that on a certain day, we were encountered at a certain point upon the sea.

13. – Wind still fair, and weather always fine. We have not tacked ship once since leaving Sandy Hook, and are almost ready to quarrel with the continual fair wind. There is nothing else to find fault with, except the performances of our French cook in the wardroom, who came on board just before we left New York, and made us believe that we had obtained a treasure. He told us that he had cooked for a French Admiral. We swore him to secrecy on that point, lest the Commodore should be disposed to engage the services of so distinguished an artist for his own table. But our self-congratulations were not of long continuance. The sugared omelet passed with slight remark. The beefsteak smothered in onions was merely prohibited in future. But when, on the second day, the potatoes were served with mashed lemon-peel, the general discontent burst forth; and we scolded till we laughed again at the dilemma in which we found ourselves. Next to being without food, is the calamity of being subjected, in the middle of the Atlantic, to the diabolical arts of the French Admiral's cook. At sea, the arrangements of the table are of far more importance than on shore. There are so few incidents, that one's dinner becomes, what Dr. Johnson affirmed it always to be, the affair of which a man thinks oftenest in the course of the day.

16. – All day, the wind has been ahead, and very light. This evening, a dead calm is upon the sea; but the sky is cloudless, and the air pure and soft. All the well are enjoying the fine weather. The commodore and captain walk the poop-deck; the other officers, except the lieutenant and young gentlemen of the watch, are smoking on the fore-castle, or promenading the quarter-deck. A dozen steady old salts are rolling along the gangways; and the men are clustered in knots between the guns, talking, laughing, or listening to the yarns of their comrades – an amusement to which sailors are as much addicted as the Sultan in the Arabian Nights. But music is the order of the evening. Though a band is not allowed to a ship of our class, there are always good musicians to be found among the reckless and jolly fellows composing a man-of-war's crew. A big landsman from Utica, and a dare-devil topman from Cape Cod, are the leading vocalists; Symmes, the ship's cook, plays an excellent violin; and the commodore's steward is not to be surpassed upon the tambourine. A little black fellow, whose sobriquet is Othello, manages the castanets, and there is a tolerable flute played by one of the afterguard. The concerts usually commence with sentimental songs, such as "Home, sweet Home," and the Canadian Boat Song: but the comic always carries off the palm; "Jim along Josey," "Lucy Long," "Old Dan Tucker," and a hundred others of the same character, are listened to delightedly by the crowd of men and boys collected round the fore-hatch, and always ready to join in the choruses. Thus a sound of mirth floats far and wide over the twilight sea, and would seem to indicate that all goes well among us.

But the delicious atmosphere, and the amusements of the ship, bring not joy to all on board. There are sick men swinging uneasily in their hammocks; and one poor fellow, whose fever threatens to terminate fatally, tosses painfully in his cot. His messmates gently bathe his hot brow, and, watching every movement, nurse him as tenderly as a woman. Strange, that the rude heart of a sailor should be found to possess such tenderness as we seldom ask or find, in those of our own sex, on land! There, we leave the gentler humanities of life to woman; here, we are compelled to imitate her characteristics, as well as our sterner nature will permit.

22. – The sick man died last night, and was buried to-day. His history was revealed to no one. Where was his home, or whether he has left friends to mourn his death, are alike unknown. Dying, he kept his own counsel, and was content to vanish out of life, even as a speck of foam melts back into the ocean. At 11 A.M., for the first time, in a cruise likely to be fatal to many on board, the boatswain piped "all hands to bury the dead!" The sailor's corpse, covered with the union of his country's flag,

was placed in the gangway. Two hundred and fifty officers and men stood around, uncovered, and reverently listened to the beautiful and solemn burial service, as it was read by one of the officers. The body was committed to the deep, while the ship dashed onward, and had left the grave far behind, even before the last words of the service were uttered. The boatswain "piped down," and all returned to their duties sadly, and with thoughtful countenances.

23. – At 4 A.M., the island of Palma and the Peak of Teneriffe are in full sight, though the lofty summit of the mountain is one hundred miles distant.

24. – At 5 A.M., anchored at Santa Cruz, capital of the island of Teneriffe. The health-officer informed us that we must ride out a quarantine of eight days. A fine precaution, considering that we are direct from New York! After breakfast, I went to the mole, to see the Consular Agent, on duty. While waiting in our boat, we were stared at by thirty or forty loafers (a Yankee phrase, but strictly applicable to these foreign vagabonds), of the most wretched kind. Some were dressed in coarse shirts and trowsers, and some had only one of these habiliments. None interested me, except a dirty, swarthy boy, with most brilliant black eyes, who lay flat on his stomach, and gazed at us in silence. His elf-like glance sparkles brightly in my memory.

One of the seamen in our boat spoke to the persons on shore in Spanish. I inquired whether that were his mother-tongue, and learned that he was a native of Mahon. On questioning him further, I ascertained that he was concerned in a tragedy of which I had often heard, while on the Mediterranean station, two or three years ago. A beautiful girl of sixteen, of highly respectable family, fell in love with a young man, her inferior in social rank, though of reputable standing. The affair was kept secret between them. At length, the lover became jealous, and, one evening, called his mistress out of her father's house, and stabbed her five or six times. She died instantly, and her murderer fled. It was believed in Mahon that he was drowned by falling overboard from the vessel in which he escaped. Nevertheless, that murderer was the man with whom I was speaking in the boat, now bearing another name, and a common sailor of our ship. He told me his real name; and I heard, afterwards, that, when drunk, he had confessed the murder to one of his messmates.

This incident illustrates what I have often thought, that the private history of a man-of-war's crew, if truly told, would be full of high romance, varied with stirring incident, and too often darkened with, deep and deadly crime. Many go to sea with the old Robinson Crusoe spirit, seeking adventure for its own sake; many, to escape the punishment of guilt, which has made them outlaws of the land; some, to drown the memory of slighted love; while others flee from the wreck of their broken fortunes ashore, to hazard another shipwreck on the deep. The jacket of the common sailor often covers a figure that has walked Broadway in a fashionable coat. An officer sometimes sees his old school-fellow and playmate taken to the gangway and flogged. Many a blackguard on board has been bred in luxury; and many a good seaman has been a slaver and a pirate. It is well for the ship's company, that the sins of individuals do not, as in the days of Jonas, stir up tempests that threaten the destruction of the whole.

The island of Grand Canary is one of the most interesting of the group at which we have now arrived. The population of its capital, the city of Las Palmas, is variously estimated at from nine thousand inhabitants, to twice that number. The streets, however, have none of the bustle and animation that would enliven an American town, of similar size. Around the city there is an aspect of great fertility; fields of corn and grain, palm-trees, and vineyards, occupy the valleys among the hills, and extend along the shores, twining a glad green wreath about the circuit of the island. The vines of Canary produce a wine which, two or three centuries ago, was held in higher estimation than at present, and is supposed by some to have been the veritable "sack" that so continually moistened the throat of Falstaff. The very name of Canary is a cheerful one, associated as it is with the idea of bounteous vineyards, and of those little golden birds that make music all over the world.

The high hills that surround the city of Las Palmas are composed of soft stone, the yielding quality of which has caused these cliffs to be converted to a very singular purpose. The poorer people,

who can find no shelter above ground, burrow into the sides of the hill, and thus form caves for permanent habitation, where they dwell like swallows in a sand-bank. Judging from the number of these excavations, the mouths of which appear on the hill-sides, there cannot be less than a thousand persons living in the manner here described. Not only the destitute inhabitants of Grand Canary, but vagabonds from Teneriffe and the other islands, creep thus into the heart of the rock; and children play about the entrances of the caverns as merrily as at a cottage-door: while, in the gloom of the interior, you catch a glimpse of household furniture, and women engaged in domestic avocations. It is like discovering a world within the world.

CHAPTER II

Nelson's defeat at Santa Cruz – The Mantilla – Arrival at Porto Grande – Poverty of the inhabitants – Portuguese Exiles at the Cape de Verds – City of Porto Prayo – Author's submersion – Green Turtle – Rainy Season – Anchor at Cape Mesurado.

July 1. – Ashore at Santa Cruz. The population of the city is reckoned at six or eight thousand. The streets are clean, and the houses built in the Spanish fashion. Camels are frequent in the streets.

The landing at the Mole is generally bad, as Nelson found to his cost. It is easy to perceive that, even in ordinary times, the landing of a large party, though unopposed, must be a work of considerable difficulty. How much more arduous, then, was the enterprise of the great Naval Hero, who made his attack in darkness, and in the face of a well-manned battery, which swept away all who gained foot-hold on the shore! The latter obstacle might have been overcome by English valor, under Nelson's guidance; but night, and the heavy surf, were the enemies that gave him his first and only defeat. The little fort, under whose guns he was carried by his step-son, after the loss of his arm, derived its chief interest, in my eyes, from that circumstance. The glory of the great Admiral sheds a lustre even upon the spot where success deserted him. In the Cathedral of Santa Cruz are to be seen two English flags, which were taken on that occasion, and are still pointed out with pride by the inhabitants. I saw them five years ago, when they hung from the walls, tattered and covered with dust; they are now enclosed in glass cases, to which the stranger's attention is eagerly directed by the boys who swarm around him. The defeat of Nelson took place on the anniversary of the patron-saint of Santa Cruz; a coincidence which has added not a little to the saint's reputation. It was by no means his first warlike exploit; for he is said to have come to the assistance of the inhabitants, and routed the Moors, when pressing the city hard, in the olden time.

We wandered about the city until evening, and then walked in the Plaza. Here the ladies and gentlemen of the city promenade for an hour or two, occasionally seating themselves on the stone benches which skirt the square. Like other Spanish ladies, the lovely brunettes of Santa Cruz generally wear the mantilla, so much more becoming than the bonnet. There are just enough of bonnets worn by foreigners, and travelled Spanish dames, to show what deformities they are, when contrasted with the graceful veil. This head-dress could only be used in a climate like that of Teneriffe, where there are no extremes of heat or cold. It is a proverb that there is no winter and no summer here. So equable and moderate is the temperature, that, we were assured, a person might, without inconvenience, wear either thick or thin clothing, all the year round. With such a climate, and with a fertile soil, it would seem that this must be almost a Paradise. There is a great obstruction, however, to the welfare of the inhabitants, in the want of water. It rains so seldom that the ground is almost burnt up, and many cattle actually perish from thirst. It is said that no less than thirty thousand persons have emigrated from the island, within three years.

The productions of Teneriffe, for export, are wine and barilla. Of the first, the greater part is sent to England, Russia and the United States. About thirty thousand pipes are made annually, of which two thirds are exported. Little or no wine is produced on the southern slope of the island. The hills around Santa Cruz are little more than rugged peaks of naked rock. The scenery is wild and bold, but sterile; and scattered around are stupendous hills of lava, the products of former volcanic eruptions, but which have, for ages, been cold and wave-washed.

14. – Arrived at Porto Grande, in the island of St. Vincent's, one of the Cape de Verds. The harbor is completely landlocked by the island of St. Antonio, which stretches across its mouth. Still, there is, at times, a considerable swell. The appearance of the land is barren, desolate, and unpromising in the highest degree; and the town is in keeping with the scenery. Eighty or ninety

miserable hovels, constructed of small, loose stones, in the manner of our stone-fences, stand in rows, with some pretence of regularity. Besides the Governor and his aid, there are here five white men, or rather Portuguese (for their claim to white blood is not apparent in their complexions), viz. the Collector, the American Consular Agent, a shop-keeper, whose goods are all contained in a couple of trunks, and two private soldiers. We called to see the Governor, and were politely received; he offered seats, and did the honors of the place with dignity and affability. His pay is one dollar per diem. He has five soldiers under his command, two of them Portuguese, and three native negroes, one of whom has a crooked leg.

The people here are wretchedly poor, subsisting chiefly by fishing, and by their precarious gains from ships which anchor in the port. The Collector informed me that there had been sixty whale-ships in the harbor, within the past year. The profits accruing from thence, however, are very inadequate to the comfortable support of the inhabitants. The adults are mostly covered with rags, while many of the children are entirely naked; the cats and dogs (whose condition may be taken as no bad test of the degree of bodily comfort in the community) are lean and skeleton-like. As to religion, I saw nothing to remind me of it, except the ruins of an old church. There has been no priest since the death of one who was drowned, a few years ago, near Bird Island, a large rock, at the mouth of the harbor. At the time of this fatal mishap, the reverend father was on a drunken frolic, in company with some colored women.

The Cape de Verd Islands derive their name from the nearest point of the mainland of Africa; they are under the dominion of Portugal, and, notwithstanding their poverty, furnish a considerable revenue to that country, over and above the expenses of the Colonial Government. This revenue comes chiefly from the duties levied upon all imported articles, and from the orchilla trade, which is monopolized by the Government at home, and produces 50,000 dollars per annum. Another source of profit is found in the tithes for the support of the Church, which, in some, if not all the islands, have been seized by the Government (under a pledge for the maintenance of the clergy), and are farmed out annually. These islands supply the Portuguese with a place of honorable exile for officers who may be suspected of heresy in politics, and hostility to existing institutions. They are advanced a step in rank, to repay them (and a poor requital it is) for the change from the delicious climate of Portugal, and the gaieties of Lisbon, to the dreary solitude, the arid soil, and burning and fever-laden air of the Cape de Verds. It is a melancholy thought, that many an active intellect – many a generous and aspiring spirit – may have been doomed to linger and perish here, chained, as it were, to the rocks, like Prometheus, merely for having dreamed of kindling the fire of liberty in their native land.

22. – We have spent some days at Porto Praya, the capital of St. Jago, the largest of the Cape de Verd islands; whence we sail to-day. A large part of the population is composed of negroes and mulattoes, whose appearance indicates that they are intemperate, dissolute, and vile. The Portuguese residing here are generally but little better; as may be supposed from the fact, that most of those who were not banished from Portugal, for political or other offences, came originally to engage in the slave-trade.

Going ashore to-day, we beached the boat, and a large negro, with a ragged red shirt, waded out and took me on his shoulders. There is no position so absurd, nor in which a man feels himself so utterly helpless, as when thus dependant on the strength and sure-footedness of a fellow-biped. As we left the boat, a heavy "roller" came in. The negro lost his footing, and I my balance, and down we plunged into the surf. My sable friend seemed to consider it a point of duty to hold stoutly by my legs, the inevitable tendency of which manoeuvre was to keep my head under water. Having no taste for a watery death, under these peculiar circumstances, I freed myself by a vigorous kick, sprang to my feet, and seizing the negro by the "ambrosial curls," pushed his head in turn under the surf. But seeing the midshipmen and boat's crew laughing, noiselessly but heartily, at my expense, the ludicrousness of the whole affair struck me so forcibly that I joined in their mirth, and waded ashore as fast as possible. An abolitionist, perhaps, might draw a moral from the story, and say that

all, who ride on the shoulders of the African race, deserve nothing better than a similar overthrow. Sailed from Porto Praya. The bay of this port is a good one, except in south-east gales, when the anchorage is dangerous. The town, called Villa de Praya, contains about two thousand inhabitants of every shade, the dark greatly predominating. Many vessels from Europe and the United States, bound to India, Brazil, or Africa, find this a convenient place to procure water and fresh provisions, and bring, in return, much money into the city. There are three hundred troops here, nearly all black, and commanded by forty Portuguese officers. The men are under severe discipline, are tolerably well dressed, and make a soldierly appearance. It is said that a St. Jago soldier formerly wore only a cocked hat, being otherwise in a state of nature; but I cannot pretend to have seen any instance of this extreme scantiness of equipment.

23. – Saw a large green turtle asleep on the surface of the water. One of our boats went alongside of him, and two men attempted to turn him over with boat-hooks. He struggled successfully, however, to keep himself "right side up," and, in a few moments, plunged beneath the surface. Once upon his back, he would have been powerless and a prisoner, and we might have hoped for the advantage of his presence at our mess-table.

24. – At noon, the first rain came. It continued heavy and unremitting, for twenty-four hours, after which there was a glimpse of the blue sky. Two startling thunder-claps burst over the ship, at about 9 o'clock, A.M. Last night, at 10, a heavy plunge carried away both our chain bobstays at once, and all hands were turned up in the rain, to secure the bowsprit.

The sanitary regulations of the squadron, induced by the commencement of the rainy season, cause considerable mirth and some growling. One rule is, that every man shall protect himself with flannel next his person, and at night shall also wear a cloth-jacket and trowsers. Stoves are placed on the berth-deck, to dry the atmosphere below. It is a curious fact, that, in March last, at Portsmouth, N. H., with the thermometer at zero, we were deprived of stoves the moment the powder came on board; while now in the month of July, on the coast of Africa, sweltering at eighty degrees of Fahrenheit, the fires are lighted throughout the ship.

27. – Continual rain for the last three days. All miserable, but getting used to it.

29. – A clear day, and comfortably cool. Wind fair.

30. – Made land, and saw an English brig of war. Commander Oakes, of the *Ferret*, came on board.

31. – Made Cape Mount.

August 1. – At 12, meridian, anchored at Cape Mesurado, off the town of Monrovia. We find at anchor here the U. S. brig *Porpoise*, and a French barque, as well as a small schooner, bearing the Liberian flag. This consists of stripes and a cross, and may be regarded as emblematical of the American origin of the colony, and of the Christian philanthropy to which it owes its existence. Thirty or forty Kroomen came alongside. Three officers of the *Porpoise* visited us. All are anxious to get back to the United States. They coincide, however, in saying that, with simple precautions, the health of this station is as good as that of any other. They have had only a single case of fever on board; and, in that instance, the patient was a man who ran away, and spent a night ashore.

My old acquaintance, Captain Cooper, came on board, and is to be employed as pilot.

CHAPTER III

Visit of Governor Roberts, &c. – Arrival at Cape Palmas – American Missionaries – Prosperity of the Catholic Mission – King Freeman, and his royal robe – Customs of the Kroo-people – Condition of native women.

August 2. – We were visited by Governor Roberts, Doctor Day, and General Lewis, the latter being colonial secretary, and military chief of the settlement. They looked well, and welcomed me back to Liberia with the cordiality of old friendship. The Governor was received by the commodore, captain, and officers, and saluted with eleven guns. He and his suite dined in the cabin, and some of the officers of the Porpoise in the ward-room. In the evening, we brought out all our forces for the amusement of our distinguished guests. First, the negro band sang "Old Dan Tucker," "Jim along Josey," and other ditties of the same class, accompanied by violin and tambourine. Then Othello played monkey, and gave a series of recitations. The French cook sang with great spirit and skill. The entertainments of the evening, as the theatrical bills expressed it, concluded with *Ma Normandie* and other beautiful songs and airs well executed by the French cook, accompanied by Symmes on the violin, and a landsman on the flute.

5. – Sailed for Cape Palmas, in company with the Porpoise.

9. – Anchored at Cape Palmas. We were boarded by Kroo-men, in eight or ten canoes. While the thermometer stood at 75 or 80 degrees, these naked boatmen were shivering, and seemed absolutely to suffer with cold; and such is the effect of the climate upon our own physical systems, that we find woollen garments comfortable at the same temperature.

Visited and lunched with Governor Rasswurm. Called on Mr. James, a colored missionary, now occupying the house of Mr. Wilson, who has lately removed to Gaboon river. Mr. James presented us with some ebony, and a few Grebo books. He informed us that the fever had visited him more or less severely, as often as once in four weeks during seven years. This may truly be called a feverish life! He is about to remove to Gaboon.

The Catholic Mission seems to have driven the Presbyterian from the ground. We called on Mr. Kelly, a Catholic priest from Baltimore, and the only white man of the Mission at present in Africa. Preparations, however, have already been made for twenty more, principally French, whose arrival is expected within a year, and who will establish themselves at different points along the coast. Mr. Kelly is now finishing a very commodious house, on a scale of some magnitude, with piazzas around the whole. There is evidently no lack of money. The funds for the support of the Catholic mission are derived principally through Lyons, in France; and the enterprise is said to be under the patronage of the king. The abundant pecuniary means which the priests have at command, and the imposing and attractive ceremonies of their mode of worship – so well fitted to produce an effect on uncultivated natures, where appeals either to the intellect or the heart would be thrown away – are among the chief causes of their success. It is said, too, and perhaps with truth, that as many converts are made, among the natives, by presents, as by persuasion. But no small degree of the prosperity of the mission must be attributed to the superior shrewdness and ability of the persons engaged in it – to their skilful adaptation of their precepts and modes of instruction to the people with whom they have to deal, and to their employment of the maxims of worldly policy in aid of their religious views. These qualities and rules of conduct have characterized the Catholic missionaries in all ages, in all parts of the world, and in their dealings with every variety of the human race; and their success has everywhere been commensurate with the superiority, in a merely temporal point of view, of the system on which they acted.

Before returning on board, we called on King Freeman, who received us, seated on a chair which was placed in front of his house. His majesty's royal robe was no other than an old uniform

frock, which I had given him three years ago. We accepted the chairs which he offered us, and held a palaver, while some twenty of his subjects stood respectfully around. He remembered my former visit to the colony, and appeared very glad to see me again. His town was nearly deserted, the people having gone out to gather rice. About the royal residence, and in the vicinity, I saw thirty or forty cattle, most of them young, and all remarkably small. It is said, and I believe it to be a fact, that cattle, and even fowls, when brought from the interior, take the coast-fever, and often perish with it. Certain it is that they do not flourish.

11. – King Freeman came on board, dressed in his uniform frock, with two epaulettes, a redcap, and checked trowsers. He received some powder and bread from the Commodore, and some trifles from the ward-room.

12. – Joe Davis brought his son on board to "learn sense." In pursuit of this laudable object, the young man is to make a cruise with us. The father particularly requested that his son might be flogged, saying, "Spose you lick him, you gib him sense!" On such a system, a man-of-war is certainly no bad school of improvement.

13. – A delightful day, clear sky, and cool breeze. We sailed from Cape Palmas yesterday, steering up the coast.

I have been conversing with young Ben Johnson, one of our Kroomen, on the conjugal and other customs of his countrymen. These constitute quite a curious object of research. The Kroomen are indispensable in carrying on the commerce and maritime business of the African coast. When a Kroo-boat comes alongside, you may buy the canoe, hire the men at a moment's warning, and retain them in your service for months. They expend no time nor trouble in providing their equipment, since it consists merely of a straw hat and a piece of white or colored cotton girdled about their loins. In their canoes, they deposit these girdles in the crowns of their hats; nor is it unusual, when a shower threatens them on shore, to see them place this sole garment in the same convenient receptacle, and then make for shelter. When rowing a boat, or paddling a canoe, it is their custom to sing; and, as the music goes on, they seem to become invigorated, applying their strength cheerfully, and with limbs as unwearied as their voices. One of their number leads in recitative, and the whole company respond in the chorus. The subject of the song is a recital of the exploits of the men, their employments, their intended movements, the news of the coast, and the character of their employers. It is usual, in these extemporary strains, for the Kroomen attached to a man-of-war to taunt, with good-humored satire, their friends who are more laboriously employed in merchant vessels, and not so well fed and paid.

Their object in leaving home, and entering into the service of navigators, is generally to obtain the means of purchasing wives, the number of whom constitutes a man's importance. The sons of "gentlemen" (for there is such a distinction of rank among them) never labor at home, but do not hesitate to go away, for a year or two, and earn something to take to their families. On the return of these wanderers – not like the prodigal son, but bringing wealth to their kindred – great rejoicings are instituted. A bullock is killed by the head of the family, guns are fired, and two or three days are spent in the performance of various plays and dances. The "boy" gives all his earnings to his father, and places himself again under the parental authority. The Krooman of maturer age, on his return from an expedition of this kind, buys a wife, or perhaps more than one, and distributes the rest of his accumulated gains among his relatives. In a week, he has nothing left but his wives and his house.

Age is more respected by the Africans than by any other people. Even if the son be forty years old, he seldom seeks to emancipate himself from the paternal government. If a young man falls in love, he, in the first place, consults his father. The latter makes propositions to the damsel's father, who, if his daughter agree to the match, announces the terms of purchase.

The price varies in different places, and is also influenced by other circumstances, such as the respectability and power of the family, and the beauty and behavior of the girl. The arrangements here described are often made when the

girl is only five or six years of age, in which case she remains with her friends until womanhood, and then goes to the house of her bridegroom.

Meantime, her family receive the stipulated price, and are responsible for her good behavior. Should she prove faithless, and run away, her purchase-money must be refunded by her friends, who, in their turn, have a claim upon the family of him who seduces or harbors her. If prompt satisfaction be not made (which, however, is generally the case), there will be a "big palaver," and a much heavier expense for damages and costs.

If, after the commencement of married life, the husband is displeased with his wife's conduct, he complains to her father, who either takes her back, and repays the dowry, or more frequently advises that she be flogged. In the latter alternative, she is tied, starved, and severely beaten; a mode of conjugal discipline which generally produces the desired effect.

Should the wife be suspected of infidelity, the husband may charge her with it, and demand that she drink the poisonous decoction of sassy-wood, which is used as the test of guilt or innocence, in all cases that are considered too uncertain for human judgment. If her stomach free itself from the fatal draught by vomiting, she is declared innocent, and is taken back by her family without repayment of the dower. On the other hand, if the poison begin to take effect, she is pronounced guilty; an emetic is administered in the shape of common soap; and her husband may, at his option, either send her home, or cut off her nose and ears.

There is one sad discrepancy in the moral system of these people, as regards the virtue of the women. No disgrace is imputed to the wife who admits the immoral advances of a white man, provided it be done with the knowledge and consent of her husband. The latter, in whose eyes the white man is one of a distinct and superior order of beings, usually considers himself honored by an affair of this nature, and makes it likewise a matter of profit. All proposals, in view of such a connection, must pass through the husband; nor, it is affirmed, is there any hazard of wounding his delicacy, or awakening his resentment, whatever be his rank and respectability. The violated wife returns to the domestic roof with undiminished honor, and confines herself as rigidly within the limits of her nuptial vow, as if this singular suspension of it had never taken place.

In spite of the degradation indicated by the above customs, the Kroo-women are rather superior to other native females, and seem to occupy a higher social position. The wife first married holds the purse, directs the household affairs, and rules the other women, who labor diligently for the benefit of their common husband and master. Their toil constitutes his wealth. It is usual for a man to live two, three, or four days, with each of his wives in turn. As old age advances, he loses the control of his female household, most of the members of which run away, unless he is wise enough to dispose of them (as usage permits) to his more youthful relatives. As a Krooman of sixty or seventy often has wives in their teens, it is not to be wondered at that they should occasionally show a disposition to rove.

CHAPTER IV

Return to Monrovia – Sail for Porto Praya – The Union Hotel – Reminiscences of famine at the Cape de Verds – Frolics of Whalemen – Visit to the island of St. Antonio – A dance – Fertility of the island – A Yankee clock-maker – A mountain ride – City of Poverson – Point de Sol – Kindness of the women – The handsome commandant – A Portuguese dinner.

August 14. – Passed near Sinoe, a colonial settlement, but did not show our colors. An English merchant brig was at anchor. Our pilot observed, that this settlement was not in a flourishing condition, because it received no great "*resistance*" from the Colonization Society. Of course, he meant to say, "*assistance*;" but there was an unintentional philosophy in the remark. Many plants thrive best in adversity.

Anchored at the river Sesters, and sent a boat ashore. Two canoes paddled alongside, and their head-men came on board. One was a beautifully formed man, and walked the deck with a picturesque dignity of aspect and motion. He had more the movement of an Indian, than any negro I ever saw. Two men were left in each boat, to keep her alongside, and wait the movements of their master. They kneel in the boat, and sit on their heels. When a biscuit is thrown to them, they put it on their thighs, and thence eat it at their leisure.

16. – Ashore at Monrovia. The buildings look dilapidated, and the wooden walls are in a state of decay. Houses of stone are coming into vogue. There is a large stone court-house, intended likewise for a Legislative Hall. What most interested me, was an African pony, a beautiful animal, snow white, with a head as black as ebony. I also saw five men chained together, by the neck; three colonists and two natives, with an overseer superintending them. They had been splitting stone for Government.

A gun from the ship gave the signal for our return. Going on board, we got under way, and sailed for Porto Praya.

20. – For four days, we have had much rain; and I have seldom visited the deck, except when duty called me. Fortunately, Governor Roberts had lent me the report of the Committee of Parliament, on the Western Coast of Africa, the perusal of which has afforded me both pleasant and profitable occupation. It is an excellent work, full of facts, from men who have spent years on the coast.

21. – Wind still favorable. The day is sunny, and all are on deck to enjoy the air. Damp clothes hang in the rigging to-day, and mouldy boots and shoes fill the boats.

24. – We find ourselves again off the harbor of Porto Praya. I landed in quest of news, and heard of the death of Mr. Legare, and the loss of the store-ship, at this port. All hands were saved, but with the sacrifice of several thousand dollars' worth of property, besides the vessel.

On approaching the shore, three flags are observed to be flying in the town. One is the consular flag of our own nation; another is the banner of Portugal; and the third, being blue, white, and blue, is apt to puzzle a stranger, until he reads UNION HOTEL, in letters a foot long. When last at Porto Praya, a few friends and myself took some slight refreshment at the hotel, and were charged so exorbitantly, that we forswore all visits to the house in future. To-day, the keeper stopt me in the street, and begged the favor of our patronage. On my representing the enormity of his former conduct, he declared that it was all a mistake; that he was the master of the hotel, and was unfortunately absent at the time. I was pleased with this effrontery, having paid the exorbitant charge into his own hands, not a month before. It is delightful, in these remote, desolate, and semi-barbarous regions, to meet with characteristics that remind us of a more polished and civilized land.

The streets are hot and deserted, and the town more than ordinarily dull, as most of the inhabitants are out planting. The court has gone to Buonavista, on account of the unhealthiness of Porta Praya, at this season of the year. A few dozen scrubby trees have been planted in the large square, but, though protected by palings and barrels, have not reached the height of two feet. In the centre stands a marble monument, possibly intended for a fountain, but wholly destitute of water.

25. – The boat went ashore again, and brought off the consul, and some stores. We then made sail, passing to the windward of all the islands, and reached our former anchorage at Porto Grande.

28. – There are one barque and three brigs, all American whalers, in the harbor of Porto Grande. They have been out from three to six months, and are here for water, bad though it be, and fresh provisions. Their inducements to visit this port, are the goodness of the harbor, and the smallness of the port charges. No consular fee has been paid until now, when, an agent being appointed, each vessel pays him a perquisite of four dollars.

This group of islands is chiefly interesting to Americans, as being the resort of our whale-ships, to refit and obtain supplies, and of other vessels trading to the coast of Africa. Little was generally known of them, however, in America, until 1832, when a long-continued drought parched up the fields, destroyed the crops, and reduced the whole population to the verge of death, by famine. Not less than ten thousand did actually perish of hunger; and the remainder were saved only by the timely, prompt and bountiful supplies, sent out from every part of the United States. I well remember the thrill of compassion that pervaded the community at home, on hearing that multitudes were starving in the Cape de Verd islands. Without pausing to inquire who they were, or whether entitled to our assistance, by any other than the all-powerful claim of wretchedness, the Americans sent vessel after vessel, laden with food, which was gratuitously distributed to the poor. The supplies were liberal and unremitted, until the rains returned, and gave the usual crops to the cultivators.

Twelve years have passed since that dismal famine; but the memory of the aid extended by Americans has not yet faded, nor seems likely to fade, from the minds of those who were succored in their need. I have heard men, who were then saved from starvation, speak strongly and feelingly on the subject, with quivering lip and faltering voice. Women, likewise, with streaming eyes, to this day, invoke blessings on the foreign land that fed their children, when there was no other earthly help. England, though nearer, and in more intimate connection with these islands, sent not a mouthful of food; and Portugal, the mother country, shipped only one or two small cargoes to be sold; while America fed the starving thousands, gratuitously, for months. Our consul at Porto Praya, Mr. Gardner, after making a strong and successful appeal to the sympathies of his own countrymen, distributed his own stores to the inhabitants, until he was well-nigh beggared. He enjoys the only reward he sought, in the approval of his conscience, as well as the gratitude of the community; and America, too, may claim more true glory from this instance of general benevolence, pervading the country from one end to the other, than from any victory in our annals.

29. – Ashore again. An ox for our ship was driven in from the mountains by three or four horsemen and as many dogs, who chased him till he took refuge in the water. A boat now put off, and soon overtaking the tired animal, he was tied securely. When towed ashore, one rope was fastened round his horns, and another to his fore-foot, each held by a negro, while a third took a strong gripe of his tail. In this manner, they led and drove him along, the fellow behind occasionally biting the beast's tail, to quicken his motions; until at length the poor creature was made fast to an anchor on the beach, there to await the butcher.

There is here a miserable church, but no priest. Passing the edifice to-day, I saw seven or eight women at their devotions. Instead of kneeling, they were seated, with their chins resting on their knees, on the shady side of the church.

30. – The crews of the whale-ships, when ashore, occasionally give no little trouble to the colonial police. This evening, one of their sailors came up to us, quite intoxicated, and bleeding from a hurt in his head. He was bent upon vengeance for his wound, but puzzled how to get it; inasmuch

as a female hand had done the mischief, by cutting his head open with a bottle. His chivalry would not allow him to strike a woman; nor could he find any man who would acknowledge himself her relative. In this dilemma, he was raving through the little village, accompanied by several of his brother whale-men, mostly drunk, and ready for a row. The Portuguese officer on duty called out the guard, consisting of two negroes with fixed bayonets, and caused them to march back and forth in the street. Fifty paces in the village would bring them to the country; when the detachment came to the right about, and retraced its steps. These two negroes formed precisely two-fifths of the regular military force at Porto Grande; but, besides this formidable host, there are some thirty officers and soldiers of the National Guard, comprising all the negro population able to bear clubs.

The women here have a peculiar mode of carrying children, when two or three years old. The child sits astride of the mother's left hip, clinging with hands and feet, and partially supported by her left arm. The little personage being in a state of total nudity, and of course very slippery, this is doubtless the most convenient method that could be adopted.

The gait of the women is remarkably free and unembarrassed. With no constraint of stays or corsets, and often innocent of any covering, the shoulders have full play, and the arms swing more than I have ever seen those of men, in our own country. Their robes are neither too abundant, nor too tight, to prevent the exhibition of a very martial stride. The scanty clothing worn here is owing partly, but not entirely, to the warmth of the climate. Another cogent reason is the poverty of the inhabitants; so, at least, I infer from the continual petitions for clothes, and from remarks like the following, made to me by a mulatto woman: – "You very good man, you got plenty clothes, plenty shirt."

September 3. – The *Cornelia*, of New Bedford, came in and anchored. She has been out fifteen months, and has only 400 barrels of oil.

4. – Left the ship in the launch on an expedition to the neighboring island of St. Antonio; being despatched by the Commodore to procure information as to the facilities for anchoring ships, and obtaining water and refreshments. Our boat was sloop-rigged, and carried three officers, a passenger, and ten men. At 11 A.M. we "sheeted home," and stood out of the harbor with a fair breeze, and all canvass spread: but, within an hour, the wind freshened to a gale, and compelled us to take in everything but a close reefed mainsail. The sea being rough, and the weather squally, our boat took in more water than was either agreeable or safe, until we somewhat improved matters by constructing a temporary fore-castle of tarpaulins. Finding it impossible, however, to contend against wind and current, we bore up for an anchorage called Santa Cruz. This was formerly a notorious haunt for pirates; but no vestige of a settlement remains, save the ruins of an old stone house, which may probably have been the theatre of wild and bloody incidents, in by-gone years. The serrated hills are grey and barren, and the surrounding country shows no verdure. Anchoring here, we waited several hours for the wind to moderate, and tried to get such sleep as might perchance be caught in an unsteady boat.

By great diligence in working against wind and current, we succeeded in reaching Genella at 9 o'clock in the evening of the second day. Our mulatto pilot, Manuel Quatrine, whistled shrilly through his fingers; and, after a brief delay, the response of a similar whistle reached our ears from shore. A conversation was sustained for some moments, by means of shouts to-and-fro in Portuguese; a man then swam off to reconnoitre; and, on his return, the people launched a canoe and carried us ashore, weary enough of thirty-six hours' confinement in an open boat. We took up our quarters in the house of a decent negro, who seemed to be the head man of the village, and, after eating such a supper as the place could supply, sallied out to give the women an opportunity of preparing our beds.

Meanwhile, the pilot had not been idle. Though a married man, and the father of six children, he was a gay Lothario, and a great favorite with the sex; he could sing, dance, and touch the guitar with infinite spirit, and tolerable skill. Being well known in the village, it is not surprising that the arrival of so accomplished a personage should have disturbed the slumbers of the inhabitants. At ten o'clock, a dance was arranged before the door of one of the huts. The dark-skinned maidens,

requiring but little time to put on their ball-costume, came dropping in, until, before midnight, there were thirty or forty dancers on foot. The figures were compounded of the contra-dance and reel, with some remarkable touches of the Mandingo balance. The music proceeded from one or two guitars, which, however, were drowned a great part of the time, by the singing of the girls and the clapping of each individual pair of hands in the whole party. A calabash of sour wine, munificently bestowed by a spectator, increased the fun, and it continued to wax higher and more furious, as the night wore away. Our little pilot was, throughout, the leader of the frolic, and acquitted himself admirably. His nether garments having received serious detriment in the voyage, he borrowed a large heavy pea-jacket, to conceal the rents, and in this garb danced for hours with the best, in a sultry night. Long before the festivity was over, my companions and myself stretched ourselves on a wide bag of straw, and fell asleep, lulled by the screaming of the dancers.

The next morning we were early on foot, and looked around us with no small interest. The village is situated at the point where a valley opens upon the shore. The sides of this vale are steep, and, in many places, high, perpendicular, and rocky. Every foot of earth is cultivated; and where the natural inclination of the hill is too great to admit of tillage, stone walls are built to sustain terraces, which rise one over another like giant steps to the mountain-tops. It was the beginning of harvest, and the little valley presented an appearance of great fertility. Corn, bananas, figs, guavas, grapes, oranges, sugar-cane, cocoa-nuts, and many other fruits and vegetables, are raised in abundance. The annual vintage in this and a neighboring valley, appertaining to the same parish, amounts to about seventy-five pipes of wine. It is sour and unpalatable, not unlike hard-cider and water. When a cultivator first tries his wine, it is a custom of the island for him to send notice to all his acquaintances, who invariably come in great force, each bringing a piece of salt-fish to keep his thirst alive. Not unfrequently, the whole produce of the season is exhausted by a single carouse.

The people are all negroes and mulattoes. Male and female, they are very expert swimmers, and are often in the habit of swimming out to sea, with a basket or notched stick to hold their fish; and thus they angle for hours, resting motionless on the waves, unless attacked by a shark. In this latter predicament, they turn upon their backs, and kick and splash until the sea-monster be frightened away. They appear to be a genial and pleasant-tempered race. As we walked through the village, they saluted us with "Blessed be the name of the Lord!" Whether this expression (a customary courtesy of the islanders) were mere breath, or proceeded out of the depths of the heart, is not for us to judge; but, at all events, heard in so wild and romantic a place, it made a forcible impression on my mind. When we were ready to depart, all the villagers came to the beach, with whatever commodities they were disposed to offer for sale; a man carrying a squealing pig upon his shoulders; women with fruits and fowls; girls with heavy bunches of bananas or bundles of cassada on their heads; and boys, with perhaps a single egg. Each had something, and all lingered on the shore until our boat was fairly off.

Five or six miles further, we landed at Paolo, where reside several families who regard themselves as the aristocracy of St. Antonio, on the score of being connected with Señor Martinez, the great man of these islands. Their houses are neatly built, and the fields and gardens well cultivated. They received us hospitably, principally because one of our party was a connection of the family. I was delighted with an exhibition of feeling on the part of an old negro servant-woman. She came into the parlor, sat down at the feet of our companion, embraced his knees, and looked up in his face with a countenance full of joy, mingled with respect and confidence. We saw but two ladies at this settlement. One was a matron with nine children; the other a dark brunette, very graceful and pleasing, with the blackest eyes and whitest teeth in the world. She wore a shawl over the right shoulder and under the left arm, arranged in a truly fascinating manner.

The poorer classes in the vicinity are nearly all colored, and mostly free. They work for eight or ten cents a day, living principally on fruit and vegetables, and are generally independent, because their few wants are limited to the supply. The richest persons live principally within themselves, and derive their meats, vegetables, fruits, wine, brandy, sugar, coffee, oil, and most other necessaries and

luxuries, from their own plantations. One piece of furniture, however, to be seen in several of the houses, was evidently not the manufacture of the island, but an export of Yankee-land. It was the wooden clock, in its shining mahogany case, adorned with bright red and yellow pictures of Saints and the Virgin, to suit the taste of good Catholics. It might have been fancied that the renowned Sam Slick, having glutted all other markets with his wares, had made a voyage to St. Antonio. Nor did they lack a proper artist to keep the machine in order. We met here a person whom we at first mistook for a native, so identical were his manners and appearance with those of the inhabitants; until, in conversation, we found him to be a Yankee, who had run away from a whale-ship, and established himself as a clock and watch-maker.

After a good night's rest, another officer and myself left Paolo, early, for a mountain ride. The little pilot led the way on a donkey; my friend followed on a mule, and I brought up the rear on horseback. We began to ascend, winding along the rocky path, one by one, there being no room to ride two abreast. The road had been cut with much labor, and, in some places, was hollowed out of the side of the cliff, thus forming a gallery of barely such height and width as to admit the passage of a single horseman, and with a low wall of loose stones between the path and the precipice. At other points, causeways of small stones and earth had been built up, perhaps twenty feet high, along the top of which ran the path. On looking at these places from some projecting point, it made us shudder to think that we had just passed, where the loosening of a single one of those small stones might have carried us down hundreds of feet, to certain destruction. The whole of the way was rude and barren. Here and there a few shrubs grew in the crevices of the rocks, or wild flowers, of an aspect strange to our eyes, wasted their beauty in solitude; and the small orchilla weed spread itself moss-like over the face of the cliff. At one remarkable point, the path ran along the side of the precipice, about midway of its height. Above, the rock rose frowningly, at least five hundred feet over our heads. Below, it fell perpendicularly down to the beach. The roar of the sea did not reach us, at our dizzy height, and the heavy surf-waves, in which no boat could live, seemed to kiss the shore as gently as the ripple of a summer-lake. This was the most elevated point of the road, which thence began to descend; but the downward track was as steep and far more dangerous. At times, the animals actually slid down upon their haunches. In other places, they stepped from stone to stone, down steep descents, where the riders were obliged to lie backwards flat upon the cruppers.

Over all these difficulties, our guide urged his donkey gaily and unconcernedly. As for myself, though I have seen plenty of rough riding, and am as ready as most men to follow, if not to lead, I thought it no shame to dismount more than once. The rolling of a stone, or the parting of stirrup, girth, or crupper, would have involved the safety of one's neck. Nor did the very common sight of wooden crosses along the path, indicating sudden death by accident or crime, tend to lessen the sense of insecurity. The frequent casualties among these precipitous paths, together with the healthfulness of the climate, have made it a proverb, that it is a natural death, at St. Antonio, to be dashed to pieces on the rocks. But such was not our fate. We at length reached the sea-shore, and rode for a mile along the beach to the city of Poverson, before entering which metropolis, it was necessary to cross a space of level, sandy ground, about two hundred yards in extent. Here the little pilot suddenly stuck his heels into the sides of his donkey, and dashed onward at a killing pace; while mule and horse followed hard upon his track, to the great admiration of ragamuffins, who had assembled to witness the entrée of the distinguished party.

Poverson is the capital of the island, and contains about two thousand inhabitants, who, with few exceptions, are people of color. The streets are crooked and narrow, and the houses mean. We called upon the military and civil Governors, and, after accepting an invitation to dine with the former, left the place for a further expedition. Passing over a shallow river, in which a number of women and girls were washing clothes, we ascended a hill so steep as to oblige us to dismount, and from the summit of which we had a fine view of the rich valley beneath. It is by far the most extensive tract of cultivated land that we have seen in the island, and is improved to its utmost capacity. We thence rode three

miles over a path of the same description as before, and arrived at the village and port of Point-de-Sol. The land about this little town is utterly barren, and the inhabitants are dependent on Poverson for food, with the exception of fish. A custom-house, a single store, a church, and some twenty houses of fishermen, comprise all the notable characteristics of the principal seaport of the island.

It was a part of our duty to make an examination of the harbor, for which purpose we needed a boat. Two were hauled up on the beach; but the smallest would have required the power of a dozen men to launch her; – whereas, the fishermen being absent in their vocation, our party of three, and a big boy at the store, comprised our whole available masculine strength. The aid of woman, however, is seldom sought in vain; nor did it fail us now. Old and young, matron and maid, they all sallied forth to lend a hand, and, with such laughing and screaming as is apt to attend feminine efforts, enabled us to launch the boat. In spite of their patois of bad Portuguese, we contrived to establish a mutual understanding. A fine, tall girl, with a complexion of deep olive, clear, large eyes, and teeth beautifully white and even, stood by my side; and, like the Ancient Mariner and his sister's son, we pulled together. She was strong, and, as Byron says, "lovely in her strength." This difficulty surmounted, we rowed round the harbor, made our examination, and returned to the beach, where we again received the voluntary assistance of the women, in dragging the boat beyond the reach of the waves. We now adjourned to the store, in order to requite their kindness by a pecuniary offering. Each of our fair friends received two large copper coins, together equal to nine cents, and were perfectly satisfied, as well they might be – for it was the price of a day's work. Two or three individuals, moreover, "turned double corners," and were paid twice; and it is my private belief that the tall beauty received her two coppers three times over.

After a lunch of fried plantains and eggs, we rode back to Poverson. On the way, we met several persons of both sexes with burdens on their heads, and noticed that our guide frequently accosted them with a request for a pinch of snuff. With few exceptions, a horn or piece of bone was produced, containing a fine yellow snuff of home-manufacture, which, instead of being taken between the thumb and finger, was poured into the palm of the hand, and thence conveyed to the nose. Arriving at the city, we proceeded at once to the house of the Commandant, and in a little time were seated at dinner.

Our host was fitted by nature to adorn a far more brilliant position than that which he occupied, as the petty commander of a few colored soldiers, in a little island of the torrid zone. He was slightly made, but perfectly proportioned, with a face of rare beauty, and an expression at once noble and pleasing. His eyes were large, and full of a dark light; his black hair and moustache were trimmed with a care that showed him not insensible of his personal advantages; as did likewise his braided jacket, fitting so closely as to set off his fine figure to the best effect. His manners were in a high degree polished and graceful. One of the guests, whom he had invited to meet us, understood English; and the conversation was sustained in that language, and in Spanish. The dinner was cooked and served in the Portuguese style; it went off very pleasantly, and was quite as good as could be expected at the house of a bachelor, in a place so seldom visited by strangers. Each of the Portuguese gentlemen gave a sentiment, prefaced by a short complimentary speech; and our party, of course, reciprocated in little speeches of the same nature. The Commandant did not fail to express the gratitude due from the people of the Cape de Verd islands to America, for assistance in the hour of need. Time did not permit us to remain long at table, and we took leave, highly delighted with our entertainment.

Mounting again, we rode out of town more quietly than we had entered it. A sergeant was drilling some twenty negro soldiers in marching and wheeling. His orders were given in a quick, loud tone, and enforced by the occasional application of smart blows of a rattan to the shoulders of his men. Suspecting that the blows fell thicker because we were witnesses of his discipline, it seemed a point of humanity to hasten forward; especially as the approach of night threatened to make our journey still more perilous than before. After riding about three miles, we met two well-dressed mulatto women on donkeys, accompanied by their cavaliers. Of course, we allowed the ladies to pass between us and the rock; a matter of no slight courtesy in such a position, where there was a

very uncomfortable hazard of being jostled headlong down the precipice. We escaped, however, and spurring onward through the gloom of night, passed unconsciously over several rough spots where we had dismounted in the morning. The last mile of our mountain-ride was lighted by the moon; and, as we descended the last hill, the guide gave a shrill whistle, to which the boat's crew responded with three cheers for our return.

A good night's rest relieved us of our fatigue. The following morning, with a fair breeze and a six hours' sail, we reached our floating-home, and have ever since entertained the mess-table with the "yarn" of our adventures; until now the subject is beginning to be worn thread-bare. But, as the interior of the island of St. Antonio is one of the few regions of the earth as yet uncelebrated by voyagers and tourists, I cannot find in my heart to spare the reader a single sentence of the foregoing narrative.

CHAPTER V

Arrival of the Macedonian – Return to the Coast of Africa – Emigrants to Liberia – Tornadoes – Maryland in Liberia – Nature of its Government – Perils of the Bar – Mr. Russwurm – The Grebo Tribe – Manner of disposing of their Dead.

September 9. – Weighed anchor, and stood out to sea. At 8 o'clock A.M., made the frigate Macedonian. She saluted the broad pennant, and both ships bore up for Porto Grande, where we anchored, and read the news from home.

11. – The Commodore left the ship, and hoisted his broad pennant on board the Macedonian.

16. – Sailed at 6 o'clock P.M., for Porto Praya.

17. – Anchored at Porto Praya, where we find the Decatur, which arrived yesterday, after a passage of forty-five days from Norfolk.

22. – Sailed in the evening for the coast.

October 7. – Off Cape Mount.

8. – Ashore at Monrovia. It being Sunday, we attended the Methodist Church. Mr. Teage, editor of the Liberia Herald, preached an appropriate and well-written discourse, on occasion of admitting three men and a woman to church-membership. One of the males was a white, who had married a colored woman in America, and came out to the colony with Mr. McDonough's people, some time ago. His wife being dead, he has married another woman of color, and is determined to live and die here.

10. – Dined with the Governor. Visited the house of a poor colonist, a woman with two children and no husband. She endeavors to support her family by washing. Two or three, other women of the neighborhood dropped in. It is said that the proportion of female emigrants to males is as three and a half to one. Unless it be expected that these women are to work in the fields, it is difficult to imagine how they are to earn a subsistence. A little chance washing and sewing, not enough to employ one in ten, is all they have to depend upon. The consequence is, that every person, of even moderate means of living, has two or three women to feed and clothe. They do not need their services, but cannot let them starve. This is one of the drawbacks upon Colonization.

Even the able-bodied men are generally unfit for promoting the prosperity of the colony. A very large proportion of them are slaves, just liberated. Accustomed to be ruled and taken care of by others, they are no better than mere children, as respects the conduct and economy of life. In America, their clothes, food, medicines, and all other necessaries, have been furnished without a thought on their own part; and when sent to Liberia, with high notions of freedom and exemption from labor (ideas which with many are synonymous), they prove totally inadequate to sustain themselves. I perceive, in Colonization reports, that the owners of slaves frequently offer to liberate them, on condition of their being sent to Liberia; and that the Society has contracted debts, and embarrassed itself in various ways, rather than let such offers pass. In my opinion, many of the slaves, thus offered, are of little value to the donors, and of even less to the cause of Colonization. Better to discriminate carefully in the selection of emigrants, than to send out such numbers of the least eligible class, to become burdens upon the industrious and intelligent, who might otherwise enjoy comfort and independence. Many a colonist, at this moment, sacrifices his interest to his humanity, and feels himself kept back in life by the urgent claims of compassion.

The Society allows to new emigrants provisions for six months. After that period, if unable to take care of themselves, they must either starve, or be supported by the charitable. Fifty young or middle-aged men, who had been accustomed to self-guidance in America, would do more to promote the prosperity of the colony, than five hundred such emigrants as are usually sent out. The thievish propensity of many of the poor and indolent colonists is much complained of by the industrious. On

this account, more than any other, it is difficult to raise stock. The vice has been acquired in America, and is not forgotten in Africa.

13. – A rainy morning. Last night we were all roused from sleep by the sea coming into the starboard air-ports. We of the larboard side laughed at the misfortune of our comrades, and closed our own ports, without taking the precaution to screw them in. Half an hour afterwards, a very heavy swell assailed us on the larboard, beat in all the loose ports, and deluged the rooms. I found myself suddenly awakened and cooled by a cataract of water pouring over me. Out jumped the larboard sleepers, in dripping night-gear, and shouted lustily for lights, buckets, and swabs; while the starboard gentlemen laughed long and loud, in their turn.

14. – Sailed for the leeward.

17. – Beautiful weather. This afternoon all hands were called to shorten sail, in those earnest, startling tones, which are prompted by the sense of danger alone. Every man sprang to his station with the instinctive readiness of disciplined seamen. The idlers were all on deck, and looked about for the cause. Had a man fallen overboard? No! Nor was there any particular appearance of a squall. But the earnest gaze of the commander and a passenger, towards the shore, drew all eyes in the same direction; and, behold! a smoke was seen rising from the land, which had been mistaken for the cloud that precedes the tornado. It is necessary to prepare for many blows that do not come. In the tornado-seasons (which may be estimated at four or five weeks, about the months of March and November), there are frequent appearances of squalls, sometimes as often as twice or thrice in twenty-four hours. The horizon grows black, with very much the aspect of a thunder-shower in America. Generally, the violence of the wind does not equal the apprehensions always entertained. We could have carried royals through nineteen out of twenty of the tornadoes that assailed our ship; but the twentieth might have taken the sticks out of us. The harmless, as well as the heavy tornadoes, have the same black and threatening aspect. They usually blow from the land, although once, while at anchor, we experienced one from seaward.

19. – Anchored at Cape Palmas. This colony is independent, of Liberia proper, and is under the jurisdiction and patronage of the Maryland State Colonization Society. Its title is Maryland in Liberia. The local government is composed of an agent and an assistant agent, both to be appointed by the Society at home, for two years; a secretary, to be appointed by the agent annually; and a vice-agent, two counsellors, a register, a sheriff, a treasurer, and a committee on new emigrants, to be chosen by the people. Several minor officers are appointed by the agent, who is entrusted with great powers. The judiciary consists of the agent, and a competent number of justices of the peace, who are appointed by him, and two of whom, together with the agent, constitute the Supreme Court. A single justice has jurisdiction in small criminal cases, and in all civil cases where the claim does not exceed twenty dollars.

Male colored people, at twenty years of age, are entitled to vote, if they hold land in their own right, or pay a tax of one dollar. Every emigrant must sign a pledge to support the constitution, and to refrain from the use of ardent spirits, except in case of sickness. By a provision of the constitution, emigration is never to be prohibited.

Our boat attempted to land at some rocks, just outside of the port, in order to avoid crossing the bar; but as the tide was low, and the surf troublesome, we found it impracticable. I hate a bar; there is no fair play about it. The long rollers come in from the sea, and, in consequence of the shallowness of the water, seem to pile themselves up so as inevitably to overwhelm you, unless you have skilful rowers, a good helmsman, and a lively boat. At one moment, your keel, perhaps, touches the sand; the next, you are lifted upon a wave and borne swiftly along for many yards, while the men lie on their oars, or only pull an occasional stroke, to keep the boat's head right. Now they give way with a will, to escape a white-crested wave that comes trembling and roaring after them; and now again they cease rowing, or back water, awaiting a favorable moment to cross. Should you get into a trough

of the sea, you stand a very pretty chance to be swamped, and have your boat rolled over and over upon its crew; while, perchance, a hungry shark may help himself to a leg or arm.

Pulling across this ugly barrier, we landed at the only wharf of which the colony can boast. There is here a stone warehouse, but of no great size. In front of it lay a large log, some thirty feet long, on which twelve or fourteen full grown natives were roosting, precisely like turkeys on a pole. They are accustomed to sit for hours together in this position, resting upon their heels. A girl presented us with a note, informing all whom it might concern, that Mrs. – would do our washing; but, as the ship's stay was to be short, we turned our attention to the cattle, of which a score or two were feeding in the vicinity. They are small, but, having been acclimated, are sleek and well-conditioned. As I have before observed, it is a well-established fact, that all four-footed emigrants are not less subject to the coast fever than bipeds. Horses, cattle, and even fowls, whether imported or brought from the interior to the coast, speedily sicken, and often die.

I dined with Mr. Russwurm, the colonial agent, a man of distinguished ability and of collegiate education. He gave me, some monkey-skins and other curiosities, and favored me with much information respecting the establishment. The mean temperature of the place is eighty degrees of Fahrenheit, which is something less than that of Monrovia, on account of its being more open to the sea. The colony comprises six hundred and fifty inhabitants, all of whom dwell within four miles of the Cape. Besides the settlement of Harper, situated on the Cape itself, there is that of Mount Tubman (named in honor of Mr. T. of Georgia), which lies beyond Mount Vaughan, and three and a half miles from Cape Palmas. There is no road to the interior of the country, except a native path. The agent, with a party of twenty, recently penetrated about seventy miles into the Bush, passing through two tribes, and coming to a third, of large numbers and strength. The king of the latter tribe has a large town, where many manufactures are carried on, such as iron implements and wooden furniture of various kinds. He refused Mr. Russwurm an escort, alleging that there was war, but sent his son to the coast, to see the *black-white* people and their improvements.

A large native tribe, the Grebo, dwells at Cape Palmas in the midst of the colonists. Their conical huts, to the number of some hundreds, present the most interesting part of the scene. Opposite the town, upon an uninhabited island at no great distance, the dead are exposed, clad in their best apparel, and furnished with food, cloth, crockery, and other articles. A canoe is placed over the body. This island of the dead is called by a name, which, in the plainest of English, signifies "Go-to-Hell;" a circumstance that seems to imply very gloomy anticipations as to the fate of their deceased brethren, on the part of these poor Grebos. As a badge of mourning, they wear cloth of dark blue, instead of gayer colors. Dark blue is universally, along the coast, the hue indicative of mourning.

The Fishmen, at Cape Palmas, as well as at most other places on the coast, refuse to sell fish to be eaten on board of vessels, believing that the remains of the dead fish will frighten away the living ones.

21. – Sailed at 5 o'clock A.M., with a good wind, and anchored at Sinoe at 6 P.M.

CHAPTER VI

Settlement of Sinoe – Account of a murder by the natives – Arrival at Monrovia – Appearance of the town – Temperance – Law-suits and Pleadings – Expedition up the St. Paul's river – Remarks on the cultivation of sugar – Prospects of the coffee-culture in Liberia – Desultory observations on agriculture.

October 22. – At Sinoe. Mr. Morris, the principal man of the settlement, came on board, in order to take passage with us to Monrovia. He informs us that there are but seventy-two colonists here at present, but that nearly a hundred are daily expected. Such an accession of strength is much needed for the natives in the vicinity are powerful, and not very friendly, and the colony is too weak to chastise them. Our appearance has caused them some alarm. This is the place where the mate of an American vessel was harpooned, some months since, by the Fishmen. We shall hold a palaver about it, when the Commodore joins us.

We left Sinoe at 7 o'clock, P.M.

23. Mr. Morris has been narrating the circumstances of the murder of the American mate, at Sinoe, in reference to which we are to "set a palaver." "Palaver," by-the-by, is probably a corruption of the Portuguese word, "Palabra." As used by the natives, it has many significations, among which is that of an open quarrel. To "set a palaver," is to bring it to a final issue, either by talking or fighting.

The story of the murder is as follows. A Fishman agreed to go down the coast with Captain Burke, who paid him his wages in advance; on receiving which, the fellow jumped overboard, and escaped. The captain then refused to pay the sums due to two members of the same tribe, unless the first should refund the money. Finding the threat insufficient, he endeavored to entice these two natives on board his vessel, by promises of payment, but ineffectually. Meanwhile, the mate going ashore with a colonist, his boat was detained by the natives, during the night, but given up the next morning, at the intercession of the inhabitants. The mate returned on board, in a violent rage, and sent a sailor to catch a Fishman, on whom to take vengeance. But the man caught a Tartar, and was himself taken ashore as prisoner. The mate and cook then went out in a boat, and were attacked by a war-canoe, the men in which harpooned the cook, and stripping the mate naked, threw him overboard. They beat the poor fellow off, as he attempted to seize hold of the canoe, and, after torturing him for some time, at length harpooned him in the back. Captain Burke, having but one man and two passengers left, made sail, and got away as fast as possible.

23. – Arrived at Monrovia, where we find the Porpoise, with six native prisoners on board, who were taken at Berebee, as being concerned in the murder of Captain Farwell and his crew, two years ago. To accomplish their capture, the Porpoise was disguised as a barque, with only four or five men visible on deck, and these in Scotch caps and red shirts, so as to resemble the crew of a merchant-vessel. The first canoe approached, and Prince Jumbo stepped boldly up the brig's side, but started back into his boat, the moment that he saw the guns and martial equipment on deck. The Kroomen of the Porpoise, however, jumped into the water and upset the canoe, making prisoners of the four natives whom it contained. Six or eight miles further along the coast, the brig being under sail, another canoe came off with two natives, who were likewise secured. The Kroomen begged to be allowed to kill the prisoners, as they were of a hostile tribe.

28. – Leaving the ship in one of our boats, pulled by Kroomen, we crossed the bar at the mouth of the Mesurado, and in ten minutes afterwards, were alongside of the colonial wharf. Half-a-dozen young natives and colonists issued from a small house to watch our landing; but their curiosity was less intrusive and annoying, than would have been that of the same number of New-York boys, at the landing of a foreign man-of-war's boat. On our part, we looked around us with the interest which even common-place objects possess for those, whose daily spectacle is nothing more varied than

the sea and sky. Even the most ordinary shore-scenery becomes captivating, after a week or two on shipboard. Two colonists were sawing plank in the shade of the large stone store-house of the colony. Ascending the hill, we passed the printing-office of the Liberia Herald, where two workmen were printing the colonial laws. The publication of the newspaper had been suspended for nearly three months, to enable them to accomplish work of more pressing importance. Proceeding onward, we came to the Governor's house, and were received with that gentleman's usual courtesy. The house is well furnished, and arranged for a hot climate; it is situated near the highest point of the principal street, and commands from its piazza a view of most of the edifices in Monrovia town.

The fort is on the highest ground in the village, one hundred feet above the sea; it is of stone, triangular in shape, and has a good deal the appearance of an American pound for cattle, but is substantial, and adequate for its intended purposes. From this point, the street descends in both directions. About fifty houses are in view. First, the Government House, opposite to which stand the neat dwellings of Judge Benedict and Doctor Day. Further on, you perceive the largest house in the village, erected by Rev. Mr. Williams, of the Methodist mission. On the right is a one-story brick house, and two or three wooden ones. A large stone edifice, intended for a Court-House and Legislative Hall, has recently been completed. The street itself is wide enough for a spacious pasture, and affords abundance of luxuriant grass, through which run two or three well-trodden foot-paths. Apart from the village, on the Cape, we discerned the light-house, the base of which is about two hundred feet above the sea.

We dined to-day at the New Hotel. The dinner was ill-cooked (an unpardonable fault at Monrovia, where good cooks, formerly in the service of our southern planters, might be supposed to abound), and not served up in proper style. But there was abundance to eat and drink. Though the keeper of the house is a clergyman and a temperance-man, ale, porter, wine, and cherry-brandy, are to be had at fair prices. Three years ago, a tavern was kept here in Monrovia by a Mr. Cooper, whose handbill set forth, that "nothing was more repugnant to his feelings than to sell ardent spirits" – but added – "if gentlemen *will* have them, the following is the price." Of course, after such a salvo, Mr. Cooper pocketed the profits of his liquor-trade with a quiet conscience. He used to tell me that a little brandy was good for the "suggestion;" but I fear that he made, in his own person, too large a demand upon its suggestive properties; for his house is now untenanted and ruinous, and he himself has carried his tender conscience to another settlement.

30. – Went ashore in the second cutter. The Kroomen managed her so bunglingly, that, on striking the beach, she swung broadside to the sea. In this position, a wave rolled into her, half-filled the boat, and drenched us from head to foot. Apprehending that she would roll over upon us, and break our limbs or backs, we jumped into the water, and waded ashore.

While in the village, I visited the Court House, to hear the trial of a cause involving an amount of eight hundred dollars. Governor Roberts acted as judge, and displayed a great deal of dignity in presiding, and much wisdom and good sense in his decision. This is the highest court of the Colony. There are no regularly educated lawyers in Liberia, devoting themselves exclusively to the profession; but the pleading seems to be done principally by the medical faculty. Two Doctors were of counsel in the case alluded to, and talked of Coke, Blackstone, and Kent, as learnedly as if it had been the business of their lives to unravel legal mysteries. The pleadings were simple, and the arguments brief, for the judge kept them strictly to the point. An action for slander was afterwards tried, in which the damages were laid at one hundred dollars. One of the medico-jurisconsults opened the cause with an appeal to the feelings, and wrought his own sensibilities to such a pitch as to declare, that, though his client asked only for one hundred dollars, he considered the jury bound in conscience to give him two. The Doctor afterwards told me that he had walked eighty miles to act as counsel in this court. A tailor argued stoutly for the defendant, but with little success; his client was fined twenty dollars.

On our return, a companion and myself took passage for the ship in a native canoe. These little vessels are scooped out of a log, and are of even less size and capacity than the birch-canoes of our

Indians, and so light that two men, using each a single hand, may easily carry them from place to place. Our weight caused the frail bark to sit so deep in the water, that, before reaching the ship, we underwent another drenching. Three changes of linen in one day are altogether too expensive and troublesome.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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