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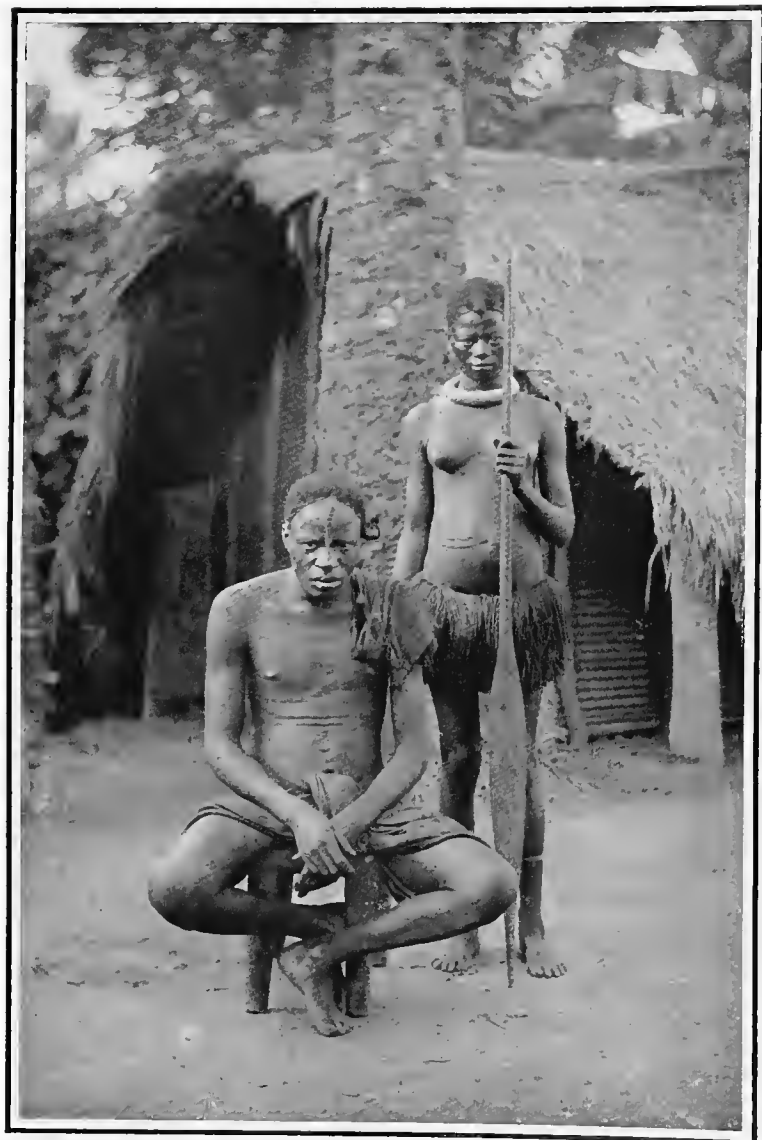




# AMONG CONGO CANNIBALS







BOLOKI MAN AND HIS WIFE

Notice the cicatrice on the man's forehead and on the woman's stomach. The brass ring round her neck in some cases weighs as much as 28 lbs. In her hand she is holding a paddle.



# AMONG CONGO CANNIBALS

EXPERIENCES, IMPRESSIONS, AND ADVENTURES  
DURING A THIRTY YEARS' SOJOURN AMONGST  
THE BOLOKI AND OTHER CONGO TRIBES  
WITH A DESCRIPTION OF THEIR  
CURIOUS HABITS, CUSTOMS  
RELIGION, & LAWS

BY

JOHN H. WEEKS

CORRESPONDENT TO THE ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE AND TO  
THE FOLK-LORE SOCIETY

AUTHOR OF "CONGO LIFE AND FOLK-LORE," &c. &c.

WITH 54 ILLUSTRATIONS & A MAP

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### Among Congo Cannibals.

Experiences, Impressions, and Adventures during a Thirty Years' Sojourn amongst the Boloki and other Congo Tribes, with a Description of their Curious Habits, Customs, Religion, & Laws. By JOHN H. WEEKS, Correspondent to the Royal Anthropological Institute, Author of "Congo Life and Folk-Lore," &c. &c. With 54 Illus. & Map. Demy 8vo, 16s. net.

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## PREFACE

THE object of the author throughout these pages has been to give an account of his experiences among the Boloki (or Bangala), and a description of the manners, habits, customs, etc., of this interesting people amidst whom he lived in closest intimacy as a missionary. The author went to the Congo in 1881, hence his residence in what has been aptly called "Darkest Africa" covers a period of thirty years—fifteen of which were spent in other parts of the Congo, and fifteen amongst the Boloki people. These pages, however, are not a record of missionary life and work, but a description of primitive life and native organizations, of African mythology, superstition, and witchcraft, and of barbarities that are the natural outcome of the native's view of life.

The writer, from the very first days of his life amongst the Boloki folk, kept extensive and careful notes of all that he saw and heard around him. The anthropology and folk lore of the people have always been interesting subjects to him; and while reducing the language to writing, a task which demanded a clear understanding of the various words in use and the customs which they often describe, he was gaining an insight into the native life and mode of thought only vouchsafed to those who have won the confidence of a savage people, and are living in close and sympathetic touch with them.

The author has no particular anthropological axe to grind, but has tried to give in plain language what he has seen and heard, leaving to the reader the pleasure of forming his own theories. The reader of these pages may rest assured that nothing is exaggerated or overcoloured. Had the writer wished

## PREFACE

he could have described the appalling corruption of native morals, the lack of innocency even among the very young, the absence of virtue among the women, and the bestiality existing among the men. One often felt the need of a moral bath to cleanse away the filth. An intimate knowledge of the natives impresses one with this fact : that the golden age has not yet dawned for them ; and that the unsophisticated savage living a *dolce far niente* existence in happy surroundings has not yet been discovered on the Congo.

Had this been a book dealing with missionary effort among the Boloki, the author would have made due mention of the honoured colleagues who so unstintingly shared his labours at Monsembe ; but as it is an account of the people themselves, their customs, habits, etc., this must be his apology for an omission that is due not to forgetfulness of happy years of comradeship, spent amid many perils and hardships, but simply to the limited scope of the narrative.

The author is much indebted to the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland for permission to use his articles printed by them in their Journal ; and for a similar kindness extended to him by the Council of the Folk-Lore Society. His best thanks are also due to his former colleagues, the Revs. C. J. Dodds and R. H. Kirkland, for their ready permission to use the photographs bearing their names ; to Prof. F. Starr, of Chicago University, for permitting the cats' cradles to be reproduced from the Proceedings of the Davenport Academy of Sciences ; and to Baron Haulleville, Directeur du Musée du Congo Belge, for permission to reproduce here the plates of some of the Congo Fish which were made from specimens collected by the author. To A. R. Wright, Esq., Editor of *Folk Lore*, and to the publishers' Reader, the writer tenders his hearty thanks for useful criticisms and helpful suggestions.

JOHN H. WEEKS.

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# AMONG CONGO CANNIBALS

## INTRODUCTION

**W**HEN living at San Salvador, in what is now known as the Portuguese Congo, in the early eighties of last century, the writer frequently conversed with the natives about the inhabitants of the far interior who occupied the banks of the Great Congo River and its tributaries. The San Salvador folk assured him that the natives of the mysterious hinterland were "half fish and half human"; that "from the navel upwards they were human, and downwards they were fish." No arguments would alter their opinion, and no amount of good-natured raillery would shift them from their position; and they generally clinched the matter by saying: "You have never seen these people; but some of our grandfathers saw them, and told our fathers about them."

One night this general belief that up-river folk were "half fish and half human," received a severe shock from which, I think, it never recovered. A caravan that had been trading towards Stanley Pool returned to San Salvador bringing with it a slave woman from far up the river. About midnight I was aroused to go and see this woman. No one understood her language; but she was making vigorous signs, and her owner was not sure whether the gestures indicated hunger, fatigue, or illness; so there was nothing for it but to "call the white man to interpret the signs," or, perchance to talk with

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her, "for these white men know everything, therefore let us send for one residing in our town."

On arriving at the hut we saw, by the flickering blaze of the fire, a fine, well-proportioned woman of splendid physique. Her hair was arranged in a coiffure, coloured, stiffened, and kept in shape by being plastered with palm-oil, and the powder of burnt pea-nuts, or soot. It looked as though she wore a shining black fez on her head, slightly tilted backwards. She was probably a Bambala, or a Kiteke woman of that branch of the tribe that lived behind the riverine folk three hundred miles above Stanley Pool.

The signs were interpreted as denoting some stomach trouble, and after a little medicine had been given we heard no more about it. During the short time she remained in the town she was the observed of all observers—a curiosity from afar; but her appearance killed once for all "the half-human and half-fish" theory the San Salvador natives had so fondly held respecting the inhabitants of the Upper Congo.

When in later years I went to live among the Bangalas on the Upper River, I found that they held as strange theories about the remoter peoples higher up, or north and south of them. They would tell of monsters down south whose chief was a woman<sup>1</sup> with a white skin that shone so fiercely that the eyes of those who looked on her were scorched; or of people away north who lived in trees and ate raw flesh, etc., because they did not know how to make a fire; or of folk far away in the watery west who lived half their time in the water and had webbed feet like ducks. It would seem as though folk of all climes, of all ages, and of all degrees of civilization have amused themselves by peopling unknown regions with mythical monsters—Cyclops, men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders, centaurs, mermaids, etc., and that even the savages of barbarous Africa beguiled the long evenings around their fires by

<sup>1</sup> Had the fact that some portions of South Africa were governed by a woman—Queen Victoria—filtered through the tribes in this distorted fashion?

## INTRODUCTION

conjuring up freaks in nature, like the more learned ancients, to inhabit the countries beyond their ken.

There is another peculiarity of the natives, worthy, perhaps, of notice in this connection: those who live on the coast always refer to the hinterland folk in contemptuous terms as "bush-people," i.e. ignorant, dull, slow in the up-take, or as we say, country yokels, clod-hoppers. When you arrive in the hinterland you find that dwellers in the large towns speak of those who live in the villages and hamlets as "bush-people," and they put into their tones such contempt that one is surprised to find that they belong to the same tribe and speak the same language.

Arriving on the Upper River you find also that all riverine peoples speak of the interior folk—those living away from the river—as "bush-people," and utterly beneath their notice. There is no more opprobrious phrase that can be flung at a native than to call him a "bush-man" in a language that he understands. He will resent it, and if there is the slightest chance of success he will fight over it.

In June, 1890, after having lived on the Lower Congo at San Salvador and Matadi for nine years, I started for the Upper Congo for the purpose of seeking out a new site for missionary effort amongst the natives of a new tribe and language. Between the last navigable point on the Lower Congo, Matadi, and the commencement of the navigable water on the Upper Congo, Stanley Pool, there were 240 miles of very bad, rough road.

Since those days a Belgian company has built a narrow-gauge railway running between Matadi and Stanley Pool. I cannot pay too high a tribute to the splendid courage, persistency and engineering skill exhibited by the Belgians who surveyed the land for the lines at the cost of many lives; and built the railway, conquering immense difficulties, and thus achieving for themselves a great and deserved financial success. If the Congo Free State had sent men of the same kind and class to govern the country that the railway company sent,

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and are sending, to build and control the railway, we should never have heard about the terrible atrocities that have taken place, nor should we have heard of mal-administration, cruel oppression, and the mutilation of wretched, unprotected natives.

The railway officials treat their native employees honourably and honestly ; and although hundreds of our native Christians work on the railway as stokers, guards, brakesmen, storekeepers, and stationmasters, I have never heard a single complaint from them against their white masters. They have to work hard, but they are treated justly, and they are sure of their pay; and our native Christians are always ready to sign contracts with the railway authorities for one or more years.

In the early eighties the road from Matadi to Stanley Pool was thickly populated, and every hour or two brought the traveller to a large, decently-kept town ; but in 1890 the people were mostly gone, and the few villages left on that long stretch of road were small and neglected, and the few remaining people had a wretched, poverty-stricken appearance. Why this change ?

In the meantime the country had become the possession of the African International Association, which quickly changed into the Congo Free State with King Leopold II of Belgium as its ruler. Zanzibaris were imported during this period, armed with rifles, and sent up-country to found and occupy the State stations on the Upper Congo. These soldiers no doubt were liberally provided with brass rods to buy native food on their march to Stanley Pool ; but they found a people practically unarmed, for what were flint-lock guns in the hands of natives—who depended more on the magic of their “medicine-men” for straight shooting than on the accuracy of their aim—against weapons of precision in the hands of a trained and unscrupulous soldiery such as were the Zanzibaris? The results were constant raiding on the part of the Zanzibaris ; looting of unprotected native huts ; taking twenty rods’ worth of food and throwing down only two or three rods in payment ; and often when there

## INTRODUCTION

was a white officer in charge, and he was appealed to, no redress was obtained by the defrauded native, nor punishment meted out to the offender ; but frequently the accuser was beaten from the white man's presence, thus adding physical suffering and insult to the loss of goods.

There is a probability that the natives were turbulent and swaggering in their attitude ; but it was not until after the first outrages had been committed by the Zanzibaris that the natives retaliated on every favourable occasion. From what I know of the folk from thirty years' experience of them, I feel sure they were not the first aggressors—they had, and still have, too wholesome a fear of rifles to be that. It was only when they had been treated like rats, having no rights in their own country, that at last, like rats, they turned at bay with hearts inflamed by hatred and revenge. But flint-lock guns could not compete with rifles ; and small, untrained bodies of men lacking leaders and cohesion could not contend against drilled soldiers who fired bullets that penetrated two or three men, so there was nothing for them but to leave their towns on the road, and build away in the forests and valleys at some distance from the main track running through the country.

Hence what was once a populous trade route, humming with life in the early eighties, had become by 1890 a desolate track that by its lack of people disappointed the new-comer, who in Europe had heard of the teeming millions of the Congo, but could not now in 240 miles of road find enough people to fill a decent-sized English village. "Where are the people ?" was the frequent question on his lips.

"They have left the trade route, and have rebuilt their towns and villages in the woods, the valleys, and the bush lands for peace and security," was the repeated answer.

"Why ?" was invariably the next question.

"Because the land was cursed with a plague of rascally Zanzibaris, and irresponsible white men who feared their soldiers more than they feared God, and who acted unjustly in their dealings with the people."

## INTRODUCTION

Lest some of my readers should think that I am unduly prejudiced in the above statements of what took place on the Stanley Pool road, let me give the history of another trade route in practically the same part of the Congo along which people of the same tribe and language lived, and for the same period of time, viz. 1878–1890.

The pioneers of our Mission in 1878 penetrated the interior from Musuku, which is about fifteen miles below Matadi, and used that place as a base for nearly five years. In 1883 a better site for their purpose was found on the top of the hill at Tunduwa (about three miles below Matadi). Our early pioneers<sup>1</sup> found the road between Musuku and San Salvador well populated with hospitable people, with plenty of food, so that there was no need to take rations for men, and very little provisions for themselves, and towns were so numerous that a tent was unnecessary.

When we removed our base to Tunduwa the traveller to San Salvador dropped down to Noki in a boat, and in two or three hours from Noki he joined the Musuku to San Salvador route. It was generally a five-days' journey.

When I left Musuku in January, 1882, for San Salvador, I found just what my predecessors had found—plenty of villages, abundance of supplies (fowls, eggs, goats, vegetables, native bread, etc.), and a hospitable people ever ready to lend us a house in which to pass the night; and for all the eight years I knew the road intimately, and traversed it, the supply of food, the number of villages, and the kindness of the people remained the same. Yet during that time there was an increase of traffic on the road, for our transport grew as our Mission extended; and in the meantime two trading factories—one French and the other Portuguese—were started and maintained in San Salvador, necessitating a greater number of carriers on the road.

What made the striking difference between the two routes—depopulation and poverty on the one, continued prosperity on

<sup>1</sup> Messrs. Comber, Bentley, Crudgington, Hartland, and Grenfell.



*Photo by]*

*[Rev. A. Billington*

### A MEAL "EN ROUTE"

The carriers, tired with a four hours' journey, on coming to a resting-place, drop their loads and stretch themselves for a good rest. The personal lads prepare a meal, and as there is a white lady in the party a white table-cloth is spread over the rough table in her honour.



*Photo by]*

*[Rev. C. F. Dodds*

### A NEW TYPE OF NATIVE HOUSE

These large, airy wattle and daub houses are taking the place of the old-style grass huts that were formerly the usual structures throughout the district. They are more healthy, clean, and comfortable.





## INTRODUCTION

the other ? I have already given the causes for the wretchedness and desolation found on the road to Stanley Pool in 1890 and the succeeding years ; now let me state, clearly and briefly, the reasons for the flourishing condition of the San Salvador road. The men used for the transport service on the latter route were natives of San Salvador and district, Kroo boys and Loangos, they travelled unarmed, they bought their food, and so long as they observed the well-known courtesies of the road they moved freely and were unmolested. The carriers thus behaving themselves *en route*, the natives treated them fairly, and often supplied them with water—a by no means trifling kindness in a country where there are no water-taps in the houses, and the refreshing drink has often to be carried a mile or more.

The inhabitants of the various villages knew that if they overcharged the porters, were extortionate in their demands, and surly in their conduct, the carriers would give them a wide berth and, by making a detour, leave them severely alone ; and thus a regular source of their village's wealth would be cut off. Besides, the natives are fond of social intercourse, giving and receiving news, and these men who passed constantly to and fro between the centre of native life at San Salvador and the outside world as represented by the trading stations on the river, were always full of interesting news, and to turn them aside from a village by outrageous conduct was equal to cutting themselves off from the world, stopping as it were the daily papers and the weekly budgets. This was unthinkable, for natives are sociable folk and like to keep in touch with their fellows.

When any serious cases of dispute arose between the carriers and the natives on the road, they were brought to us at San Salvador, and we settled them impartially, justly, and amicably to the satisfaction of the parties concerned.

The natives who lived near the large rivers that were impassable by fording during the rainy season, built bridges across them, and kept them in repair. We white men at San

## INTRODUCTION

Salvador acknowledged our indebtedness for this service by paying an understood sum in barter goods—the traders paying a much larger amount than the Missions<sup>1</sup> because their transport was heavier—when we heard they had completed the bridges. It was no easy task to make these bridges long and strong enough, considering the materials and tools the workmen had at their disposal ; but it meant for us that the road for our cases, bales, and mails was open all the year round, and also that our carriers and goods ran no risks from swollen, swirling rivers.

It will be seen from the above that the natives on the San Salvador road were treated very differently from those on the other trade route under consideration, consequently the villagers of the former maintained the food supply, retained their character for hospitality, and continued to live and thrive on the transport line ; while the people on the Stanley Pool route left the track, and starvation, depopulation, and desolation were the results. The Congo natives have a keen sense of justice, and they appreciate straight and honest dealing.

It was my first intention to add a chapter on the results of the Congo Free State's régime. I refrain, however, from doing so, but desire to touch upon the subject in a few short paragraphs. The charges brought against the Congo Free State during recent years have, unfortunately for the natives, been proved too true. More than that, they were worse than could ever be published in the daily Press, for no self-respecting editor could, or would, have printed in his paper the outrageous and abominable details that were brought to light by those who were living in the midst of them.

We hope, and we trust not in vain, that by the accession of King Albert and his gracious consort, Queen Elizabeth, to the throne of Belgium a better day is dawning for the poor, oppressed and downtrodden natives of the Congo ; and the

<sup>1</sup> The Portuguese Roman Catholic Mission settled at San Salvador a year or more after we had begun our Mission.

## INTRODUCTION

news that has come to us from the reformed part of the Congo indicates greatly improved conditions.

It is tacitly understood just now that we should give the Belgian State an opportunity of carrying out its reforms ; and although the agitation is not being prosecuted with its former activity, that does not mean that we are to relax our former vigilance, nor shall we do so until the natives enjoy those rights which are their proper heritage in their own country.

We missionaries are neither ashamed nor repentant, and never will be, of the humanitarian part we played in bringing to light the enormities that came to our notice. We had given up home, the comforts of civilization and, rightly or wrongly, we had devoted our lives to the amelioration of the natives, and we could not as men, as Englishmen, as Christian men, stand by and see those natives, for whom we had given up all, slowly oppressed to death for the sake of a clique of men in Europe who were in a hurry to get rich.

I was among the first to raise my voice against the horrible conditions that prevailed until recently in many parts of the Congo, and my mode of procedure was this : I sent my letter of protest, first to the " Commissaire " of my district ; if no investigation into the charges was made, then I forwarded a copy of the letter to the Governor-General at Boma, and then, if after waiting the necessary length of time there was neither inquiry nor redress, the letter, with all particulars, was posted to Mr. Morel for publication in the English Press as the last resort. The State itself forced us to appeal to the public.

The Commission of Inquiry selected by King Leopold himself exonerated us from all blame and thanked us for the part we had taken in the agitation, for on investigation we were able to prove to the very hilt every charge we had brought against the administration of the now defunct Congo Free State. It is too late in the day for travellers to deny that atrocities were committed because natives do not talk to them about such things. Let such travellers thoroughly learn the language of the people and gain their confidence and then listen to their story.

## INTRODUCTION

The native does not wear his heart on his sleeve for every crow to peck at, and when he sees a white man, here to-day and gone to-morrow, who knows little or nothing of his language, hob-nobbing with State officials, he is not going to pour out his heart to such and tell what he has suffered at the hands of the traveller's white friends.

What the Congo needs is a Government not seeking to enrich itself to-day, but with visions of a colony the inhabitants of which, in days to come, shall rise up and call it blessed ; it needs civil officers swayed by honourable principles, and controlled by pure, conscientious motives that shall administer impartially righteous laws ; it needs traders who shall deal fairly by the people (and some of them do that, we are glad to say), who will exchange the wares, the civilized conveniences (not fiery spirits) of Europe for the labour and produce of the natives as a further incentive for them to work, travel, and trade ; it needs the agriculturist to introduce better methods of cultivating the soil and fostering the resources of the country ; it needs the mechanic to teach various trades and industries ; the educationalist and the Christian teacher to cultivate the mental and spiritual side of the natives—these all working harmoniously together, no one class sneering at the other, no one arrogating to himself the work of another, but respecting each other and co-operating for the uplifting, civilizing, and Christianizing of the Congo people. We shall then see a people not cursing the white man, but blessing him ; not cringing before the white master in grovelling fear and hearts bursting with hatred, but standing erect as God intends men to stand ; and not downtrodden and oppressed, their lives a misery to them, but free and happy with the joy of life pulsating through their veins.

## CHAPTER I

### IN SEARCH OF A NEW SITE

Steamer *Peace*—Bangala tribe—Panic in Bungundu towns—People become friendly—Driven away from Bokomela—Fierce and revengeful natives—Revisit Bokomela—A cordial welcome—Reason for warlike attitude—Shooting a native for a wager—Monsembe district—Bumba people stand to defend their women and children—Quietness dispels their fears.

**D**URING the early days of July, 1890, we were busy at Bolobo station, preparing for our long journey up-river in search of a new site for a mission station. The steamer *Peace*, a vessel 70 feet long by 10 feet 6 inches wide, and of very shallow draught, was placed at our disposal. The Rev. W. H. Stapleton, who had just arrived from England, was appointed to be my colleague ; and as Mr. Silas Field had charge of the steamer and crew we were without responsibility respecting them, and were free to land at every available place and investigate its suitability as a centre for our work.

At this time the Baptist Missionary Society had three stations on the Upper Congo—one at Bolobo, about 200 miles above Stanley Pool, another at Lukolele, a little over 100 miles farther on, and the third at Bopoto, more than 400 miles beyond Lukolele, or 700 miles from Stanley Pool. It was thought desirable to plant a station among the Bangalas at a point somewhere midway between Lukolele and Bopoto, and thus occupy a part of that great unevangelized district inhabited by one of the finest tribes on the Congo.

The Bangalas were reported to be a strong, warlike, cannibal tribe of fierce habits, cruel customs, and independent spirit.

## BANGALA TRIBE

They would demand patience, tact, and the facing of many dangers from those who, without arms and soldiers, went to live among them. Still, such splendid men were worth winning to better ways, notwithstanding the many possible risks to be encountered in the work. As savages they were feared by surrounding tribes, and if won to Christianity their indomitable courage warranted us in hoping they would become the intrepid heralds of their new faith.

By July 11th we had packed on board our little steamer the nails, provisions, tools, barter goods, and medicines that could be collected for our new project. A better outfit would have been welcome ; but we thought it was wiser to start with what we could get together than to wait an indefinite period for larger supplies.

Two days after leaving Bolobo we arrived at Lukolele, and in due time Lulanga was reached. Lulanga was a large town at the mouth of the Lulongo River, a fine tributary of the Congo. There our search began. It took us fifty minutes to walk through the town, the houses of which were built closely together. We estimated the population at 3000 people. There was then less than a mile of bush, and another town of over 1000 inhabitants, and about an hour's walk back from the river were other clumps of villages containing, we were informed, more than 2000 persons. It was a good centre for our purpose ; but the Congo Bolobo Mission had established some stations up the Lulongo River, and after consulting with their senior missionary at Bonginda (30 miles up the Lulongo), we decided that the town at the mouth of the river they were working should really be their base of operations, and as they promised to occupy it, if we did not build there, we left it to them.

At Lulanga we left the south bank of the Congo, and after two hours' steaming and winding among the numerous islands we had the large district of Bungundu stretching before us on the north shore of the river. Picking out the biggest town we could see from the deck of our steamer, we steered our way towards it, and as we drew near we could see the women

## PEOPLE BECOME FRIENDLY

seizing hold of their children and their fowls, and scurrying away with them into the bush as fast as possible ; the men also were tugging at their goats and sheep to hide them in the bush and woods that surrounded their town, for it was their unfortunate experience that the white men who came on steamers took fowls, goats, and sheep without paying for them.

When we landed we could not see a single person. We walked up and down the roads calling upon the people to come out of hiding, to come and talk with us, or sell us some fowls. After a considerable amount of shouting an old man put his head round a corner of a house and said : “ White men, if you want to buy any fowls of us, sit down where you are, and send your boys ; we will sell to them, but not to you.”

We thereupon handed some looking-glasses, knives, bells, beads, and cloth to our boys, and told them that after they had bartered for some fowls they were to try to persuade the people to have some conversation with us. After buying a few fowls our lads said : “ Come and talk with our white men. See, they are perfectly harmless, for they are sitting down where you told them. They are not *bula matadi* (= State officers). They neither desire to fight you nor tie you up. They are *mindele mia Njambi* (= the white men of God, i.e. missionaries). Come and palaver with them.”

After much hesitation on the part of the native, and much persuasion by our lads, the old man drew near to us, and as he came closer he put out his hand to greet us ; but on seeing our white hands approaching his, fear took possession of him, and he drew his hand quickly back. At last, however, we heartily shook his hand and his courage returned. He then went over to a large drum, and beating upon it the women quickly returned from the bush with their children and their fowls, the men came back with their goats and sheep, and the town resumed its usual lively appearance.

Directly they learned the purpose of our visit they begged us to live in their town ; they took us up and down the various streets, and pointed out all the advantages we should enjoy

## PEOPLE BECOME FRIENDLY

if we would only build amongst them. We had to allay their importunity by telling them that we could not decide at once to live in their midst, as we wished to go higher up the river and visit other towns and tribes ; but if we found their town the most central for our work, we would return to them. And we concluded by saying : “ We do not desire, wherever we go in this district, that the people should run away from us as you did ; cannot you therefore lend us one or two of your young men to go with us to reassure the people ? We promise to return them safely in due time.”

It was astonishing to us that these nervous, fearful folk who had run helter-skelter from us about two hours before should bring two of their young men to us, and in their trustful simplicity place their hands in ours, saying : “ Here are two of our people to accompany you, and when you have done with them bring them back again.”

After that, whenever we arrived opposite a town, these two men would go into the bows of the steamer and, shouting loudly to the people ashore, would tell them not to be afraid, not to run away, that we were good sort of white men, that we were buying fowls at a very good price, and if they only stayed they could make some profit out of us. For we were giving the enormous sum of about threepence each in barter goods for the fowls, instead of the usual price of twopence.

Throughout the rest of that district we received a hearty welcome from the people, and many pressing invitations to settle in their midst. We had no illusions about these invitations. We fully recognized that the people desired us to live in their towns for reasons quite different from those that actuated us : our presence would give prestige to their district, and especially to the town in which we built ; we should be, more or less, a guarantee of security, and freedom from the lootings and raids of State soldiers who were already beginning to trouble the people on the Upper Congo ; and it would be an immense advantage to them to be able to exchange their food-



## DRIVEN AWAY FROM BOKOMELA

stuffs, etc., for barter goods at a store in their neighbourhood, rather than have such weary journeys to take in their canoes, or go without the needed articles. We understood perfectly well that we were not so boisterously invited because of our message, for of that they knew absolutely nothing, and in their then savage and ignorant state cared perhaps less than nothing for it.

Leaving the Bungundu district we steamed for many miles along a monotonous stretch of forest, and then reached the thickly populated line of Bokomela towns. Selecting the largest we could see, we turned our steamer towards it; and, putting our pretty little vessel along the beach in front of the chosen town, we prepared to go ashore. Through our glasses we had seen the women and children running hurriedly away, and the bustling activity of the men who lined the bank and stood on the trees overhanging the river. Just as we were about to step ashore we noticed that the men lining the bank above us had raised their spears in a very threatening attitude, and the old men on the trees had fitted their arrows to their bows ready to shoot at us. We recognized that we were in a tight corner; we wondered where the spears and arrows would strike us. A false movement would have been misunderstood, and a shower of sharp weapons would have been the result. Our pulses raced tumultuously, our hearts seemed to thump our ribs; but outwardly we were calm and self-possessed. We did not know until months later how near we were to a horrible catastrophe—to being, in fact, the principal dishes at a cannibal feast.

In the best “trade language” we could muster we told the excited savages who and what we were. “Go away,” they screamed, “or we will kill you. We want nothing to do with you white men.”

We tried to explain the purpose of our visit, and asked them to let the Bungundu men land and talk with them. And all the time we were standing unarmed within twenty feet of their upraised spears. There was a deadly silence on the little

## A CORDIAL WELCOME

steamer, and the crew had taken refuge behind any and every thing that offered protection from those murderous lances and arrows.

“Go away,” they shouted more fiercely; “we will kill the men if they come ashore, and all of you afterwards. We’ll have nothing to do with white men.” And in frantic unison the excited mob took up the cry of their head-men.

There was nothing for it but to push off our steamer and leave the place. It was not until we were beyond the reach of their arrows that we breathed freely, and then fully realizing the whole meaning of the incident, and its possibilities of death to us and disaster to our plans, we bowed our heads in prayerful thanks to God for His protecting care.

Some months after our establishment at Monsembe, I went down to those districts in a canoe paddled by a few lads; and those same Bokomela people, hearing, from the song of the lads, that one of the Monsembe white men was approaching, hurried out in their canoes with fowls in their hands as tokens of their good-will, and begged me to go ashore. What was the reason for this strange and pleasant change respecting us? It was this: In the meantime they had heard of our peaceable lives and intentions; of our straightforward and honest dealings with the natives about us; that we neither stole things ourselves, nor allowed our people to steal; but always bought what we wanted at a proper market value. These facts coming to their knowledge had entirely altered their attitude towards us, and had turned former enemies into would-be friends.

On going ashore they gave me a most cordial welcome, and when quietness had been restored, I said: “Some months ago we came to you on our little steamer, and you drove us away with murderous threats of spearing us. Why was that? We were quiet, peaceable men; why were you in such a rage?”

An oldish man, sitting quietly on a stool near by, arose and said: “White man, just before you came to us on your steamer, the white men on a passing steamer shot our chief and some of our people for no reason at all. Shot them down while

## SHOOTING A NATIVE FOR A WAGER

standing quietly on the bank, and for that reason we swore to kill the next white men that came our way, and you were the next to come."

Undoubtedly they would have had their revenge upon us but that God placed His hand over theirs, so that neither spear nor arrow was hurled at us. More than once or twice have we seen the spears poised ready for the throw ; and every time we have found that some cowardly, dastardly white men had been before us and, having shot down the natives for no reason whatever, had gone off and left the next unsuspecting white men who went that way to bear the brunt of the natives' mad, but excusable, desire for revenge. Legacies of hatred have been unfortunately left by too many white men among savage peoples, who regard all white folk as belonging to one tribe, and as one or more of their kinsmen have been murdered by white men, then to retaliate by killing other white men will, they think, balance the account.

As illustrative of the preceding remarks the following unvarnished story is unfortunately too *à propos* : A State steamer in 1890 was proceeding up a tributary of the Congo, and on its upper deck two white officers were sitting holding a discussion on marksmanship, when they saw, at some distance in front of them, a native standing in his canoe paddling it from one side to the other of the river. The two officers instantly made a bet as to which of them could knock the man over. Guns were raised and fired, and Captain X. brought down the poor unsuspecting wretch and pocketed the stakes ;<sup>1</sup> but he left a heritage of hate that has lasted to this day, if there are still alive in that district any relatives of the murdered man, or witnesses of the foul murder.

It seemed to some of us a righteous retribution when a couple of years later Captain X. himself was shot by his native attendant,

<sup>1</sup> In 1890 this incident was common talk in that district. Besides the two men who laid the wager, there were two other white men on board—captain of the steamer and the engineer. This incident was more frequently related as a joke than otherwise.

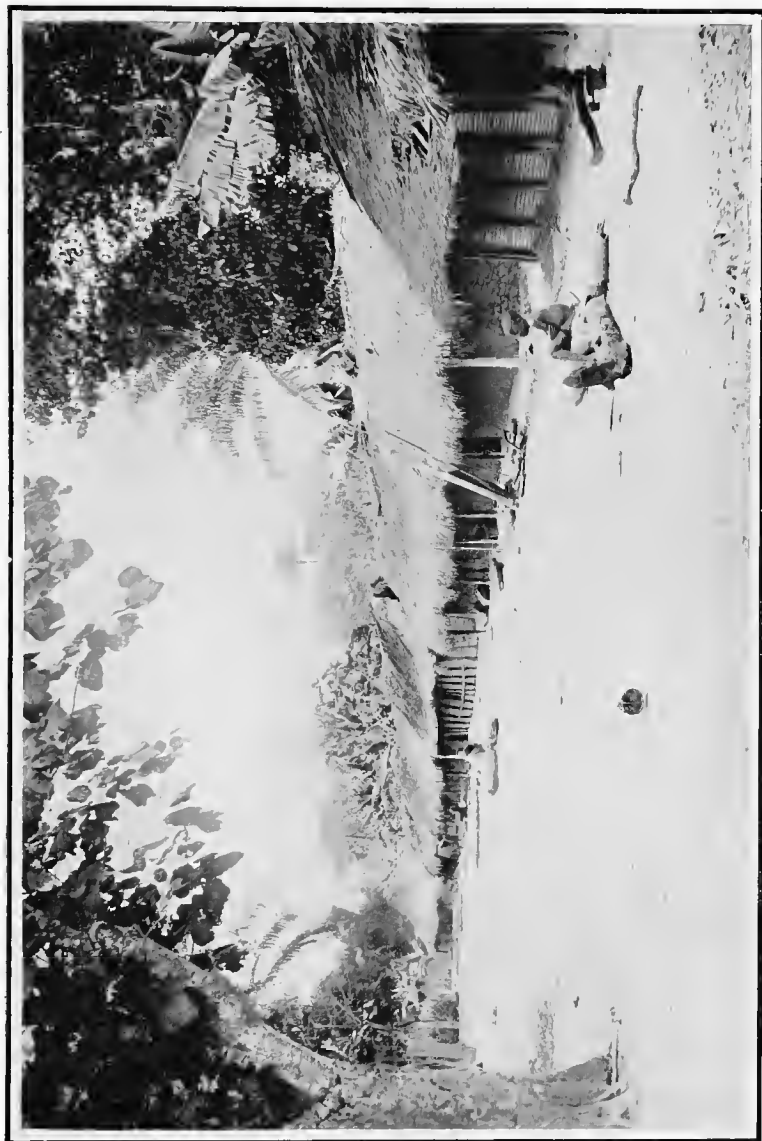
## MONSEMBE DISTRICT

whether accidentally or purposely nobody knew. Let me say, once for all, that among the State officers there were gentlemen of fine, sterling character who acted fairly and honourably in all their dealings with the natives; men whose ideals were high, whose motives were good, and who desired nothing better than the amelioration of the tribes with which they came into contact. If such men had been in the majority, and had had a free hand, the pitiful, horrible story of Congo atrocities would never have been written.

About twenty-five miles above Bokomela we came upon the Monsembe district. There were three bays crowded with large towns, and only two miles beyond Monsembe was a long creek teeming with people. We reckoned also that Bungundu and Bokomela districts would come within the sphere of our influence; but before fixing on Monsembe as our centre we went still higher up river to weigh the possibilities of other places. Town after town we passed of prosperous, healthy, fierce, and barbarous savages. Very often we were amongst them and shaking hands with them before they had decided whether to welcome or fight us; then seeing two friendly, unarmed white men in their midst they greeted us heartily and were soon bartering fowls, plantain, and various food-stuffs for empty bottles, old meat tins, and Manchester goods.

Diboko (or Nouvelles Anvers) was visited; and with our colleagues at Bopoto we spent a pleasant time. At Bumba we came upon a continuous stretch of villages for nearly two miles in length. As we steamed close to the bank we observed that the villages were divided by gullies which were bridged by old canoe planks. The folk were quiet, and as the place looked well populated with apparently prosperous people, we decided to land.

Arriving at the extreme upper end of the series of Bumba villages, we tied our steamer to a tree on the bank and went ashore. A few miserable, half-starved dogs barked at us; but there was no one to greet us, or object to our landing. We moved slowly forward, and then we noticed that the virile,



*Photo by*

**A VILLAGE STREET IN MONSEME**

*[Rev. C. J. Dodds*

*This row of houses belongs to one man, and while he may have one for himself, he will also have a wife in each hut. Every marriage means an additional house, for the Congo native is too cute to put two women in one house.*



## BUMBA PEOPLE

young men, armed with spears and shields, were keeping about fifty yards ahead of us ; that the old men and the sick were crouching over their fires warming their hands and keeping up a constant chatter ; and that there was an absence of women and children in the villages. Now when there is an absence of women and children in an African town or village, you may be fairly certain that the men are up to mischief, or think a fight is to the fore. We walked warily to keep ourselves out of any possible ambush ; and as we came to the gullies dividing the villages we found the planks had been removed, this necessitated our going down and up the sides of the gullies. Arriving at the last ditch we started to cross it as we had done the others, when we observed a rustle in the tall grass on the further side, and looking closely we saw that the bush was alive with armed men with spears gripped threateningly. Just beyond them in the forest were their women and children, and they were standing between them and possible death or capture as represented, so they thought, by the two white men on the opposite side of the gully.

To have run away would have meant a shower of spears hurtling through the air after us from the excited people, so we sat down and parleyed with them. "Did you ever know," we asked, "white men coming to fight without soldiers ?"

"No," was their ready though surly reply.

"Well, we have no soldiers with us," was our quick rejoinder. That was self-evident, for there were only a few of our personal lads about us.

With a little more hope in our heart of escaping from another difficult fix, we began again. "Did you ever know white men to come and fight without guns and swords ?" was our next question.

"No," again was their reply. This time a little more friendliness in their tone, for their fears of a fight were, like ours, passing away.

"Well," we argued, "we are two white men without guns or soldiers, but with simply walking-sticks in our hands ; and

## QUIETNESS DISPELS THEIR FEARS

are all your men armed with spears afraid of two white men with walking-sticks? Come and put up the bridge and help us across."

After a short consultation among themselves, some young men replaced the plank and helped us over; and the discreet distribution of a few beads, spoons, and penny looking-glasses won for us their eternal good-will.

Our return to the steamer was like a triumphal progress. The men shouted and danced in very revulsion of feeling to find it was a friendly visit and not a fight. Plank bridges were quickly rearranged, and outstretched, willing hands steadied us as we crossed them. The old and sick who had remained around the fires good-humouredly chaffed those who had armed themselves for a battle that never came off. All's well that ends well, and the people were as glad as we were that no blood had been shed and no wrong committed. They begged us very earnestly to come and live among them.

We went as far as Ngingiri on the River Luika, and then turned the nose of our steamer down-stream. Monsembe was the best centre for our work that we had seen in all the long stretch of river we had traversed above Lulanga. There we should have ample room for expansion, itineration, and out-posts along the north bank from Bungundu to Likunungu—a distance of 200 miles; we should also have the south bank in our parish from Bolombo to Bokatalaka Creek—a stretch of 80 miles; and the creek just above our proposed station site was said to communicate with the Mobangi River. We estimated the population near to Monsembe, among whom we should be able to itinerate on Sundays, at 7000, and throughout the district, lining the river, at 50,000 at the very least. Then there were the hinterland towns, whose populations were as yet unknown. It was a splendid sphere of immense possibilities. It was therefore with high hopes and undaunted hearts that my colleague and I entered upon our labours among the cannibals of Monsembe.

We returned the men we had borrowed from Bungundu.



## QUIETNESS DISPELS THEIR FEARS

What a welcome they had on their arrival home ! We had been absent so long that the folk had almost given up all hope of ever setting eyes again on their townsmen. They received a suitable reward, strutted about the town in their fine, brightly-coloured new cloths, and I suppose ever afterwards posed as widely travelled men whose words in future were to be taken on all matters relating to riverine geography, tribal marks, and other subjects. Leaving Bungundu we crossed to Lulunga and, picking up the goods we had left there in charge of a Dutch trader who treated us with much kindness and hospitality, we returned to our future home at Monsembe, which for the next fifteen years was to be the centre of our world and the scene of many joys and sorrows.

## CHAPTER II

### SETTLING AT MONSEMBE

Moral way of procuring land—Ground measured—Price asked—Amount accepted—Signing the agreement—Buying a house—An exorbitant price—A house for five shillings and a penny—Well-populated hut—Making ourselves comfortable—Cooking difficulties overcome—Present of two goats—Inveterate thieves—Afraid of our “books.”

THE authorities of the Congo Free State had informed us that we could take possession of any plot of land in the district that we cared to select. We did not, however, believe in accepting from a State that which they had no moral right to give, but in buying from the people the ground *they only* had a right to sell us for our station. A few hours after our return to Monsembe we measured out a piece of land one hundred paces along the river front by three hundred paces deep, and said that in the morning we would buy it of them.

Next morning at six o'clock we found a large crowd gathered to witness the novel transaction of buying and selling land. They formed a motley assemblage. Most of the men had two or more spears gripped tightly in their hands, and broad-bladed, ugly knives of various shapes were strapped in sheaths around their chests with the handles level with the breast-bone. Some wore gaudy cloths, while others had bark-cloth or rags that scarcely covered their nakedness. The women were dressed in petticoats made from palm fibres, and these fringes were so numerous and short that the wearers had every appearance of black ballet girls. Their faces were streaked with different coloured pigments, or dusted with camwood powder ;

## MORAL WAY OF PROCURING LAND

and their bodies were rubbed with palm-oil. Beneath the paint, the powder, and the grease one found agreeable faces often lit up with really pleasant smiles.

We asked them how much they wanted for the piece of land, and without hesitation they replied, "Five thousand brass rods."

"No," we said, "we cannot pay you so large a sum as that, but we will give you one thousand rods now, and another five hundred in six months' time, if you behave yourselves."

The head-men consulted apart for a time, and then their spokesman said: "We will accept your offer of one thousand rods now and another five hundred in six months' time, if you will put on top some bottles, some knives, spoons, tin plates, looking-glasses, forks, cowries, beads, cloth, fish-hooks," etc. etc., in fact samples of everything they had either ever heard about or could recall to mind at so short a notice.

Unfortunately for them we had not such a variety of barter goods as they demanded, and we frankly told them so; but we promised to add some of the articles we did have with us. We cut and counted out the thousand rods,<sup>1</sup> tied them up in bundles of one hundred each, and then raked out two empty pickle bottles from our store and, putting some fathoms of cloth, a packet of brass chair nails, a few iron spoons, some

<sup>1</sup> *Brass rods.* A brass rod at Monsembe at that time was 15 inches long, and not quite so thick as a slate pencil. These rods were the currency of the district and, in fact, of the whole of the Upper Congo. Everything had its price in brass rods—one egg=one brass rod; a fowl=ten brass rods; two yards of cloth=twenty brass rods; a male slave=600 brass rods; and a female slave=2500 brass rods. The brass wire for these rods was originally melted down for their brass ornaments—anklets, necklaces, armlets, leg rings, hafts of spears, paddles, and handles of knives, etc. It was using the brass for this purpose that first gave it any real value to them; and then they exchanged certain lengths of the brass wire at a fixed price—so many fathoms for a goat, etc.; and gradually the lengths of brass wire became the medium of exchange, the unit of value, the currency of the country. In 1890 the brass rods still retained their value not so much as a medium of barter, although they were convenient for that purpose, but as the metal from which they made their most popular ornaments. It is quite

## SIGNING THE AGREEMENT

trade knives, a dozen zinc-framed looking-glasses, a few empty meat tins, the ground became the property of our Society for about 38s. worth of goods, reckoning them at invoice price.

We then thought it wise to draw up a paper stating we had bought the land of the people, the price we had given, and the amount we had promised in six months' time. The document was duly written out, and my colleague and I signed it on behalf of the B.M.S. We then asked two of their head-men to put their marks against their names on the paper as witnesses to the fact that we had purchased the ground, so that there could not be any future possible dispute about our possession of the site.

At first they demurred greatly to having anything to do with the white man's "book"; they were extremely superstitious about the matter; it was something uncanny, and for all they knew some mysterious evil might be the result of touching that "book." It needed much persuasion, and it was only when we pointed out to them that they would have no proof that we owed them five hundred rods that their cupidity overcame their fears, and they consented to put their marks.

Mata Bombo was the first head-man chosen for this onerous duty. He was the oldest head-man in the town, and had been

possible that the rods changed hands in fathom lengths, and those who came into possession of these lengths, each cut off a little piece to procure a bit of brass for nothing, and hence the length was gradually shortened, until in 1890 it was 15 inches. The process of shortening continued, and in 1905 the standard length was only 11 inches. In Bolobo it was about 9½ inches, and on the Lower Congo, where brass wire was used long before it filtered through to the tribes on the Upper Congo, it was from four to five inches only in 1905. Of course, with the shortening of the rod, a larger number was given for the article to be purchased. Every white man imported his brass wire in coils, and cut the rod to the length used in the district where he resided. Brass rods are now almost a drug in the market, for not only have they been poured into the country in a steady stream for the last thirty years, but the custom of melting down brass for the manufacture of ornaments has been slowly dying out during the last ten years. They desire other things than simply ornaments now.

## BUYING A HOUSE

foremost in the negotiations for the land, in counting the goods, and most clamorous for his share of them. The people therefore rightly thought that he should be the first to undertake the unpleasant duty of putting his mark on the "book," so they laughingly pushed him forward much against his will. When he reached the table he was trembling all over from very fear of that "book" lying there upon it. His hand shook so much that I had to put my hand upon his and help him to make his mark. On finishing it he put the pen down with a dab, drew himself to his full height, carefully stretched out his arms, and finding that nothing had happened to him, he went away apparently satisfied that it was possible to have contact with that mysterious "book" of the white man's and not suffer for it. The next witness was a much younger man, who, seeing that nothing had happened to the first, came forward without any urging, picked up the pen, made his mark and went his way as though he were used to signing contracts every day of his life. Thus the land became ours on behalf of our Society.

Having settled about the site, our next requirement was a house into which we could move our goods from the steamer, and in which we could live, for it was necessary that the *Peace* should return immediately to Bolobo. Looking over the ground we had bought, we saw a native hut that would suit us until we could build a larger and better one. We had purchased the land and the trees upon it; but we had arranged with the people that all the houses on our newly acquired site should be removed. To them this was a trifling affair: they ran a knife along a few strings, a dozen men got under the roof, and in a few minutes you would see it walking down the road; a few more men shook the walls, uprooted the posts, and in an hour or so the house was rebuilt on another site.

We called the owner of the house that we thought would temporarily answer our purpose, and asked him how much he wanted for it. "Five hundred brass rods," was his quick reply. Natives generally ask about two or three times the value of

## AN EXORBITANT PRICE

an article, and I fancy this custom is not altogether peculiar to African people.

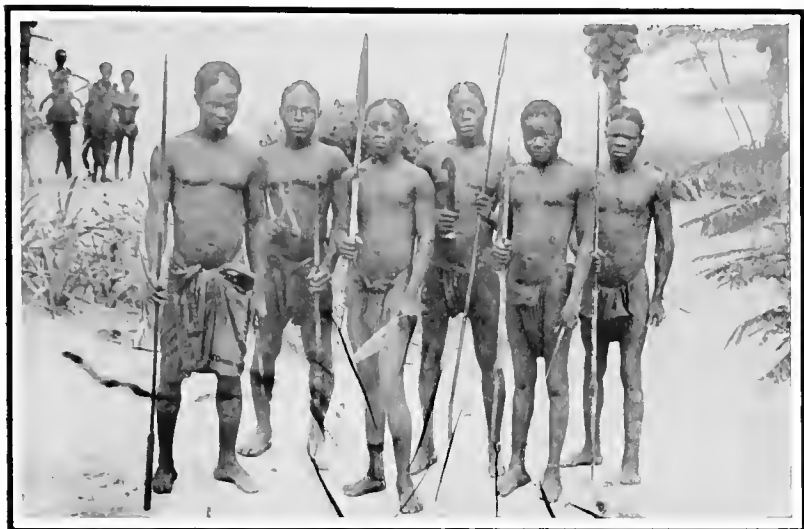
"That is too much," was our answer to his extravagant demand. "We will give you two hundred rods for the house, and then you will be well paid."

He cogitated on our offer for a few minutes, and then lifting his head, he said: "If you put a tin plate on top of the two hundred rods you can have the house." So we paid him two hundred brass rods, and a penny tin plate; and for the first time in our lives became the owners of house property.

Directly we had paid the price the man called his wives (he was the happy (?) possessor of six) to remove their belongings. They brought out their saucepans, hoes, baskets, mats, drinking-pots, firewood, and the rest of their miscellaneous effects; the man carried out his paddles, spears, knives, shield, and a few precious glass bottles that had contained pickles, lime-juice, and drinks of stronger brew, and then told us the house was ready for us.

We really could not expect a mansion for the amount we had paid, viz. 5s. 1d.; and we found that in order to enter it we had to stoop low, lift our feet high, and, being unfortunately stout, we had to turn sideways to effect an entry. Arriving inside, by putting up the hand we could touch the ridge-pole, by spreading out the arms and swaying slightly we could touch both walls, a few paces took us from one end to the other of the central room, and if we had gone against the wall and wanted to stand upright we should have had to put our heads through the roof, for the walls were only just four feet high.

The house, however, had the advantage of two small rooms—one at either end of the larger central room. In one of these small rooms we stored our tools, nails, and various materials for building our station; into the other small room we put our barter goods and our scanty stock of provisions; and in the central room we arranged our two camp bedsteads, a table, a trunk or two, our chairs, and when we went in ourselves there was not very much room to spare. That night when we went



*Photo by]*

#### GROUP OF MOBEKA MEN

*[a Dutch Trader*

Mobeka is situated at the mouth of the Mungala River, and the inhabitants of that and many other villages in the vicinity belong to the Boloki tribe.



*Photo by]*

#### LOOKING UP LAKE LIBINZA FROM BOSISERA

*[Rev. R. H. Kirkland*

Lake Libinza is a large sheet of water in the hinterland of Nouvelles Anvers. It is studded with numerous islands, and is drained by the Ngiri River, which runs into the Mobangi tributary.





## MAKING OURSELVES COMFORTABLE

to bed we discovered that although the women had removed their pots, hoes, mats, etc., they had left behind them a large population which we wished they had also taken with them.

To make our hut more habitable was our first object. We cut away the high door-sill of sticks, canes, and grass ; then in the eaves above the doorway we made a gap in the roof by shortening a few rafters and removing the palm-frond thatch—this gave us an easy means of entrance and exit. Then we placed two poles about eight feet from the front of our hut, and six feet from each other ; a small pole was tied to the posts about six feet from the ground, and other thin poles were run from the cross-piece to the roof, and on these we arranged and tied a large number of fronds from a small species of palm tree—this gave us a fine shady porch to our house, which we used as dining-room, study, pantry, and reception-room. We routed out a good percentage of the surplus population from our hut, and on fine days we were not so uncomfortable as to have any real ground for complaint.

But alas on wet days ! The discomfort of them has left a lasting impression on my memory. With a tornado the temperature often dropped from 90° down to 65° in less than two hours ; the strong, stormy winds whistled through the grass walls of our hut ; and the rain that fell in torrents percolated through our roof, and in some places, along the ridge especially, it ran in gentle cascades, anything but pleasant to the owners of such house property to behold. To have made a fire in the house to warm ourselves, as the natives did, would have meant being more than half choked and blinded by the smoke that would have filled the chimneyless house. We eventually found that the best way to weather the storms comfortably was to lie on our camp beds, pull a water-proof sheet over us, light a candle, and putting it on a dry spot read until the tornado had spent itself.

There was another difficulty that we had to meet, viz. cooking. It was easy enough to boil and fry our food ; but boiled meat and fowls after a few weeks somewhat pall ; and

## COOKING DIFFICULTIES OVERCOME

we had not sufficient fat or lard to fry much. There was palm-oil in abundance to be bought for a few brass rods, but we had too frequently watched the natives make it to relish food fried in it. We therefore bought two native saucepans for a penny each; these were about 10 inches in diameter, 6 inches deep, and semicircular in shape. One we stood on three stones, placed an empty sardine tin in the bottom, and, laying a fowl on a tin dish, arranged it on the sardine tin, and then turned the second saucepan upside down on the first, fitting their edges together. Our fowls baked beautifully in this improvised oven; but the saucepan had a tendency to crack.

Later on we procured an empty paraffin-oil drum, cut out the top with a hammer and chisel, laid the drum down, and put in a layer of clay along the bottom side. This clay not only gave us a level surface on which to stand our dishes, but also kept the food from burning, and retained the heat. We then nailed some tin, procured by flattening out a few empty meat tins, over some pieces of wood, and there we had an admirable door for our new oven. It cooked fowls, puddings, and bread<sup>1</sup> splendidly. No patent has yet been sought for these inventions, so all those placed in a similar predicament are free to use them.

Fowls were plentiful, such as they were; but fresh meat (beef, mutton, or goat) was a rarity. Consequently we were not at all sorry when two head-men brought us, one day, a goat each as a present. Up to that time we had not received a single present from them, not because the natives had not brought any to us—they would have loaded us with their so-called gifts—but we had persistently refused them on principle, knowing as we did that the offerings were simply presented that the givers might receive two or three times their value in return presents, and we had no desire to foster such a spirit of selfishness, and no money to waste on foolish amenities. We had refused so many “gifts” that when these two head-men brought their goats and offered one to Mr. Stapleton and the other to

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 1, p. 335.

## PRESENT OF TWO GOATS

myself, we decided to accept them. We had, however, no enclosure in which to keep goats, so putting a private mark on them we sent them to herd with the other goats of the town.

We arranged that as the goats were of the same size, we would give exactly the same return presents. We reckoned the goats at fifty brass rods each—the market value of them ; but we decided to give in barter goods the equivalents of one hundred rods each, which we thought was sufficiently generous for the occasion.

Mr. Stapleton called Dintela, the head-man who had presented him with his goat, and spreading out the goods he made the usual speech of good-will, etc., that the event demanded.

Dintela gave him to understand that the present was too small, that white men who were so rich should give a much larger quantity of goods, and that he could not accept such a paltry present. As Mr. Stapleton would not increase the offering, Dintela demanded the return of the goat, and tying a string round its neck he led it away, much disgusted that he had not made so good a bargain out of his present to the white man as he had anticipated.

A few days later as Bololi, the head-man who had given me the other goat, was passing across the station I called him into the house, and spreading out the goods identically the same as my colleague had offered to his head-man, I asked him to accept them as a token of our friendliness, etc., in return for his goat. He made some gestures expressive of his depreciation of the gift, and after a haggling attempt to procure an increase of goods, he, to my surprise in view of the action of Dintela, collected the articles, put them in his shoulder pouch, and went off apparently satisfied. The next day when we wanted to kill the goat it had disappeared, and we never again set eyes upon it. Dintela refused the goods and took his goat away ; but evidently they had talked over the matter with the other men in the town, and the result was that Bololi accepted the articles and afterwards stole the goat, which in the eyes of the natives

## INVETERATE THIEVES

was much the smarter action of the two. After this, when headmen were too pressing in their offers of friendly presents, we related the story of the two goats, and it never failed to cure them of their fits of generosity.

We found them at that time, as the above incident of the goats indicates, most inveterate thieves; but a few years later when three young men of the town broke into our store and stole goods to the value of sixteen thousand brass rods, the mass of the people arose in such indignation on learning the facts that they tied up the thieves, although they were free men and not slaves, and, bringing them to us ignominiously bound, laid them at our feet. And public opinion was so unmistakable in denouncing the act, that the young men and their families disgorged the whole of what they had stolen from us to the last brass rod.

At first they absolutely refused to trust us even with the value of an egg—we had to put the price in their hands as we took the article; but gradually they became less suspicious of us. During the early months at Monsembe our steamer failed to arrive at the expected time, consequently our small supply of barter goods became exhausted; and to be without these articles of exchange in such a country was like being a foreigner in a strange land without money. Food, however, was necessary, both for ourselves and those dependent on us. We told the natives that our store was practically empty, and that we could not pay them then, but would do so when we received our goods from down-river. We offered them papers stating what we had bought, the price agreed upon, the date, and the seller's name—a kind of promissory note which we promised to redeem on the arrival of our steamer.

The natives said: "We will let you have the food supplies that you need, but we will not accept your books." They called any piece of paper at that time a "book."

"Why will you not take our books?" we inquired; "for we may forget how much we owe, and to whom we owe it."

"Oh, you will not forget your debts," they replied; "and if

## AFRAID OF OUR "BOOKS"

there were any fear of that we should not even then accept your books, but should refuse to let you have the food without the money."

"Why will you not take our books, then?" we again asked in amazement.

"Well," they said, "if we were to accept your books, and put them in our houses, no rain would fall on our farms, and we should all be starved to death."

Argue as we would, we could not move them from their superstitious position in relation to our poor little pieces of paper. By that time they knew our intentions towards them were good, or they would not have trusted us with their fowls, eggs, plantain, and native bread without receiving the barter goods at once, yet they were afraid of the evil effects our "books" would have on their farms. They thought the magic was in the "book," and in spite of our good motives that that magic would work against them directly the "books" had passed from us into their possession. While the "books" were in our house we controlled or nullified their evil magic, but when they had passed out of our hands we had no further power over their wicked forces, and the natives were afraid of not being able to counteract their *black art*, hence their continued refusal to accept them. It was a curious belief that obsessed them: that men who they firmly believed were kindly disposed towards them should yet have in their possession such "books" as would work mischief to those for whom they had nothing but friendly feelings. We therefore entered their names in a notebook as we bought the food supplies, and thus keeping an account of what money we owed, and to whom, we were able to settle our accounts with them at a later date.

### CHAPTER III

## STRUGGLES WITH THE LANGUAGE

“Trade” and “Bangala” languages—Making a vocabulary—Housekeeper and master of works—Natives tell us words—Elements of difficulty—Glib translations—Natives deceive us—Head-men offer us wines—We are a conundrum to our neighbours—Confidence gained at last—Collect nearly seven thousand root words—A mode of making derivations—Native figures of speech.

ON the main river there was a mixed language, commonly called among us the “trade language”; by means of this *lingua franca* we were able to make ourselves understood at the various places at which we touched on our search for a new site, and it stood us in good stead during our early days among the Monsembe people. There was a large element of Bobangi in it, some Kiswahili words, and a few Lower Congo words and phrases. This “trade language” has now been supplanted by what is called the “Bangala language,” which is a mixture of the languages already mentioned, with a smattering of Bangala words thrown in.

For a considerable time Diboko (Nouvelles Anvers), or as it is most frequently called by white men generally when speaking to natives, Bangala, was the largest State station above Stanley Pool. A large number of natives were imported there from all the tribes on the Upper Congo, and this heterogeneous mass of humanity, often numbering over two thousand soldiers, workmen, and women, held communication with each other by means of the “trade language.” The smartest of the natives in the towns adjacent to Diboko quickly learned this jargon, and used it more or less fluently when communicating with the

## MAKING A VOCABULARY

State soldiers and workmen ; and the white men hearing the natives of the neighbourhood talking this lingo jumped to the conclusion that it was their own tongue in which they were conversing, and thus called it the Bangala language, and by that name it is now generally known on the Upper Congo.

As it was with the "trade language" so it is with the "Bangala" ; it varies considerably with the tribe using it. A Bobangi man when in difficulty for a word or phrase while speaking "Bangala" will fill up the hiatus with a word from his mother-tongue ; the Bangalas, Bopoto, and Bosoko peoples will fill up the gaps, each from their own language, so that the "Bangala" spoken differs according to the district in which the traveller may be sojourning. A crew running a steamer, or a gang of men working on a station, though they may come from half a dozen different tribes, will quickly arrange a lingo of their own, and the white man running the steamer, or in charge of the station, will easily acquire the resulting patter, and up to a certain point make himself fairly well understood in all matters relating to the ordinary affairs of steamer or station life. In the near future there will be, no doubt, a language formed by a gradual selection of words and phrases from all the great languages on the river from Stanley Pool to Stanley Falls. Such a means of intercommunication will be a great boon to all concerned—black and white alike—a better understanding will result, and, as a consequence, a greater respect for each other.

Directly we settled at Monsembe we began to learn the language of the people amongst whom we were living. The "trade language" was all that was necessary to a passer-by ; it answered the purpose of bartering for food and dealing with the trivialities of life ; but was absolutely inadequate for conveying our message as missionaries, or for dealing with the finer and deeper affairs of the minds, hearts, and souls of our parishioners. We *had* therefore to learn the language, and we had no desire to shirk the drudgery, nor avoid the arduous, persistent effort such a study demanded, for we regarded

## NATIVES TELL US WORDS

it as a part of our work, and not the least interesting part either.

My colleague, Mr. Stapleton, and I arranged that one should take charge of the house, buy the food brought for sale, and prepare the meals ; while the other should look after the workmen, clear the grass away, mark out the ground, collect materials for building, and start the erection of a larger and more comfortable house than our poor hut. We were to alternate these duties—one was to be housekeeper one week, and head of the works department the next week.

As I had been in the country nine years the heavier end of the stick fell naturally to my lot. I had brought two men and a lad with me from the Lower Congo, one Cameroons man capable of doing rough carpentry had joined us at Bolobo, and we had hired two men at Lukolele, so we had some help ; but more was necessary, and we were able to engage a few natives—as many as we required—at twenty rods per month as pay, five rods per week rations, and one fathom of cloth per month to wear, which came in all to about two shillings, invoice price. This seems very small, but we were in the heart of Africa where brass rods and cloth were worth, at that period, many times their invoice value, for their buying power was very great, and food was so plentiful and cheap that 12 lbs. of native bread could be bought for a single brass rod, and a large-size fish for another rod. The men often requested that we would reduce their ration rods and proportionately increase their monthly pay, which we did.

While we were digging the holes for the posts of our larger house, the natives who were curiously watching us, said : “ Oh, to do that sort of thing,” imitating a scooping action with the words, “ is *tima*.” So we wrote down *tima*=to dig ; when we had finished the hole, they said it was, “ *lifoko*,” hence we put down *lifoko*=hole ; when we procured a post, they told us its name was *mwete*, and that we recorded as *mwete*=a post ; on standing the post in the hole they informed us that that was *sumu mwete*, and we wrote that down as *suma mwete*=



## ELEMENTS OF DIFFICULTY

to stand a post in a hole. When we placed the wall-plate on they gave us a word for that ; when we brought hammer and nails out of our tool-house they acquainted us with the names for those things ; when we hammered a nail to hold the wall-plate in position they gave us an expression for nailing ; and if by any accident we hit our finger instead of the nail, they found a suitable expletive for that action also. Night by night my colleague and I added the words together we had procured during the day and counted them as eagerly as any miser might his gold, for we recognized in them a means by which we should eventually be able to deliver our message.

It was very difficult to acquire words for abstract ideas, as courage, faith, love, recklessness, etc. ; and it was not easy to procure words for tangible objects—things that we could point to and touch. I remember on one occasion wanting the word for table. There were five or six boys standing around, and tapping the table with my forefinger I asked : “ What is this ? ” One boy said it was *dodela*, another that it was *etanda*, a third stated it was *bokali*, a fourth that it was *elamba*, and the fifth said it was *meza*. These various words we wrote in our notebook, and congratulated ourselves that we were working among a people who possessed so rich a language that they had five words for one article.

By and by we wanted a table brought to us, and selecting a word at random from our list of five words, each one of which we supposed meant table, we said : “ *Benga bokali* ” = fetch the table. The boys looked at us with considerable astonishment, and, noticing their embarrassment, we checked the list of words and found that one lad had thought we wanted the word for tapping, so he told us *dodela* = to tap ; another understood we were seeking the word for the material of which the table was made, and he gave us *etanda* = plank ; another had an idea that we required the word for hardness, that which caused the noise as we tapped with our finger, and he told us *bokali*, and that is what we had told them to bring : *benga bokali* = fetch the hard-

## EXAMPLE OF OUR DIFFICULTIES

ness, a feat they could not possibly accomplish ; another thought we wished for a name for that which covered the table, and his contribution was *elamba*=cloth ; and the last lad, not being able, perhaps, to think of anything else, gave us the word *meza*=table—the very word we were seeking. We had to scratch out the first four words, leave the word *meza*, and pass on, having learned a good lesson on the evil results of jumping too quickly to conclusions. If the reader knows no German, and should ever happen to be in the company of some five or six Germans who do not understand a single word of English, let him ask : “ What is this ? ” in indifferent German, and write down their several answers.

In learning and reducing to writing an unwritten language there are always several elements that increase and complicate the difficulties. There is what is in your own mind as the object for which you are seeking a word, and there is what the native thinks is the object for which you are wanting the word, which two things may be very different ; again, when you are searching for a word to embody an abstract quality there is, on the one hand, the meaning you attach to the words you use as illustrative of the idea for which you want the word ; and there is, on the other hand, the meaning which your native lad attaches to the words you employ, and the two sets of meanings may widely vary. You may unknowingly employ a wrong phrase in your description of the quality you are wanting a word to express, and your teacher is either puzzled or thrown entirely off the scent, and the result leads to a disastrous mistake and, unless corrected later, to a false, misleading translation. Suppose you want a word for healthiness ; you say that a man walks well every day, paddles for long distances without fatigue, eats his food heartily, has no pains in his body, and never needs to go to a medicine-man. “ What do you call that ? ” Your helper will consider for a moment, and then reply : “ *Abe na bonganga.* ”

By and by you go over the description with another person, and he says of such a man : “ *Abe na nkonjo.* ” A few days later,

## EXAMPLE OF OUR DIFFICULTIES

in order to check the former teachers, you try another young man, and he tells you : “ *Abe na nkasu.*”

In due time, however, you discover that *abe na bonganga* means : he has a powerful charm ; that *abe na nkonjo*=he has good luck ; and *abe na nkasu*=he is very strong ; and that *nkuli* is the proper word for healthiness.

Your helpers have not purposely led you astray, for they have simply stated from their point of view how they would regard such a fortunate man who can walk, paddle, eat well, has no pains in his body, and never needs medicine—he must possess a powerful charm, or have wonderful luck, or be exceedingly strong. When you know the natives better you find they rarely talk about their health, hence *abe na nkuli*=he has healthiness, would not come readily to their minds.

The difference between our point of view and that of our teachers accounts for many of the difficulties we experience in learning a native language ; and I am afraid that a real appreciation of those difficulties has rendered me somewhat suspicious of those travellers who, after a very short acquaintance with the native language, translate glibly their interviews with the people. Just recently I have been reading a book on the Congo in which the following occurs : “ *Bikei yonso, malami be na Mputu. Sola è koye.*” This the author, who frequently takes credit to himself for his knowledge of the native language, translates as follows : “ All I say is true, you say I lie. It is finished. I have seen those things ; you have not.” Whereas it should be : All things are very good in Mputu (white man’s country). Truly friend ! And the sentence in Bangala should have been written : *Bike binso bilamu be na Mputu. Solo koye !* No Congo native would have been guilty of the grammatical blunders perpetrated in the sentence as written by the author. I have frequently noticed that the less a person knows about a native language the more fluently and beautifully he will translate it, as he is bound only by the limitations of his own imagination.

When we had been living at Monsembe a few months we

## NATIVES DECEIVE US

were much vexed and disgusted to find that the people had been deceiving us considerably over their language. One day, while working with the men, I heard a native workman shout out a request to another native labourer. From the nature of the work being done I could easily guess what the phrase really meant; but the wording of the sentence was entirely different from that which they had given us to express the same idea. Going into the house, I brought out my notebook and said: "Just now you called out so and so," repeating the short sentence that was still fresh in my memory. "How is it we have another set of words in our book?"

A broad smile gradually spread over the native's face as he replied: "White man, when you came first to live amongst us we could not understand the purpose of your coming. We brought you rubber and ivory; but you said, 'We do not trade in such things.' We then brought you male and female slaves, and asked you to buy them, and you replied, 'We do not trade in slaves.' We then brought you a large jar of sugar-cane wine, but you said that you did not drink wine, and we answered that we would drink it for you, and even then you would not buy it. After that we came to the conclusion that there was some wicked reason for your presence in our town, some bad purpose we could not understand, and we therefore arranged among ourselves not to teach you our language, but to tell you as many words and phrases as we could belonging to other languages."

We found they had kept their agreement far too well, and as a result we discovered that a large percentage of the words that we counted as good coin of the realm were nothing but base metal, and had to be thrown out of our notebook as utterly useless. Undoubtedly our presence was a great mystery to the natives. They could easily understand the reasons why traders and State officers were living in the country; but why men who neither traded nor governed should live in their midst was a problem discussed repeatedly around their evening fires. They had asked us more than once: "Were you bad men in

## HEAD-MEN OFFER US WIVES

your country that you had to leave it to come and live here in this land ? ” Or : “ Is there no food in your country that you come here and buy only fowls and vegetables of us ? ” Fowls were plentiful and very cheap, costing us often less than twopence each, and as it was the only fresh meat we could procure regularly, scarcely a day passed without our having a fowl for dinner, hence the point and purpose of their question. These inquiries we answered as fully as we could ; but, notwithstanding our replies, we remained a puzzle to our neighbours and the subjects of many a long and heated talk.

One day some of the head-men came to us, and after solemnly taking their seats on the stools their wives had brought for the purpose, they said : “ White men, we have come to talk a palaver with you.”

Our minds quickly ran over our actions during the last few days, for we wondered what offence we had committed to cause such a visit from so many serious-looking head-men. We could not recall any action or any words that were likely to have given umbrage to the natives, so we waited to hear from their lips of some breach of etiquette of which, all unknowingly, we had been guilty.

Old Mata Bombo, a tall, straight man of over sixty years, was spokesman for the deputation. “ We have noticed,” he said, “ that you have no wives, and we think it would be well for you two white men to marry two of our women ; and we have brought some from which you can make your selection.” And as he finished speaking he pointed to a row of giggling girls and women, who while he was talking had lined up a few yards away.

As seriously as we could, we expressed our thanks for their concern on our behalf, and also for their generosity in giving us such a fine array from which to choose our wives ; but continuing, I said : “ I have a wife in Mputu (white man’s country) ; and my friend, Mr. Stapleton, has a lady there waiting to become his wife as soon as he returns home. We cannot therefore accept your offer.”

## WE ARE A CONUNDRUM

"That is no difficulty," they all answered in chorus. "You can marry two of these now, and when your white wives come you can send these back to their families, and there will be no palaver."

We, however, persisted in declining with thanks, and at last it dawned upon them that we were quite serious in our refusal. The head-men went off in a huff, as they expected to make some profit out of the alliance; and the women moved away chagrined that their charms had had so little effect on us, and, possibly, they were also vexed by the knowledge that they would be, for many a day to come, the butts of much ridicule and chaff from the other women of the town and district.

Doubtless this incident added much to the problem concerning us that was exercising the native mind. Here are two strong, healthy white men, rich like other white men (the poorest white man is a millionaire in the eyes of the natives), building houses in our town, working hard from sunrise to sunset, refusing our ivory, and rubber, our slaves, our women, and our drink. What are they? They say they have "come to tell us about God." But would white men leave home, wives, family, and work in the sun as they do just to tell us about God? They say they have "come to help us, to teach us many things and to do us good"; and they offer us medicine when we are sick. How can they help us? What can they teach us? How will they do us good? And as for their medicine, who would be foolish enough to drink it? It might bewitch us. Such were the questions surging through their minds (as we learned later); and there was no one sufficiently in their confidence to help to the proper solution of this difficult conundrum. Is it any wonder that they came to the conclusion that we were bad men living in their district for some ulterior motive; and the best way to treat us was to humour us in building, keep their eyes alert to thwart any wicked designs, avoid teaching us their language, which we seemed particularly eager to learn, and in the meantime make as much money

## COLLECT ROOT WORDS

out of us as they could, either by fair or dishonest means, it did not matter which ?

Many of these thoughts we surmised from their actions, but their whole course of reasoning we did not fully learn until very many months had passed away, in fact, not until we had gained their entire confidence. In the meantime we tried, in our poor way, to live the life of our Master, Jesus Christ, among our barbarous neighbours, and their suspicions about us gradually melted away. They would come and chat freely with us, and by and by it was no uncommon thing to have three or four lads sitting with us teaching us their language and helping us to a right understanding of the rules that govern it ; and men passing by would stop, and, listening to the lads for a time, aid in elucidating some knotty point. Patience, love, and straight dealing won their confidence, their disinterested assistance, and at last their love.

Eventually, by the help of the people—old and young, for all became interested in the work—we were able to collect close upon seven thousand root words which, with their derivatives, give us a vocabulary of nearly forty thousand words.

These derivatives are produced by very regular rules, which when once understood, the learner possesses the key to a large treasury of words, e.g. :

Verb.	<i>Tula.</i>	To do smithing.
Der. Noun.	<i>Motuli.</i>	A smith.
„	„	<i>Motuliji.</i> One who causes the smithing to be done, a master.
„	„	<i>Motuleliji.</i> One who causes smithing to be done for another, a foreman.
„	„	<i>Ntula.</i> The smithing peculiar to one smith, as distinct from that of another smith—his mode of smithing.

## A MODE OF MAKING DERIVATIVES

Der. Noun.	<i>Lituli</i>	The kind of smithing needed by one article as distinct from that required by another.
„	„	<i>Botula.</i> Skill or ability in smithing.
„	„	<i>Etuli.</i> The article worked upon.
„	„	<i>Etulela.</i> Habit of smithing.
„	„	<i>Etuleli.</i> Instrument with which to do smithing.
„	„	<i>Motula.</i> A smithing, e.g. <i>Atuli motula</i> , literally, he smiths a smithing, i.e. he works at smithing.
„	„	<i>Litulele.</i> A place for smithing=a workshop, smithy.
„	„	<i>Motuleli.</i> One who does smithing for another, an employee at smithing.

Another set of derivatives is made from the reversive form of the word, as *kanga*=to tie, *mokangi*=a tier, *kangola*=to untie, *mokangoli*=an untier ; and this reversive form can give us derivatives built on its idea, as from *kangolela*=to untie for another, comes *mokangoleli*=one who unties for another ; and from the causative *kangoliya*=to cause to untie, comes *mokangoliya*=one who causes to untie ; and, again, from the causative of its prepositional form *kangoleliya*=to cause to untie something for someone, comes *mokangoleliya*=one who causes a person to untie something for or on behalf of another.

One could mention the stative and the passive forms of the verb with their respective prepositional and causative suffixes, each supplying their own series of derivatives ; but I fear the reader would weary of them, and the student of African languages has now at his disposal many grammars of Bantu tongues that will fully satisfy his love for comparative language study. My only desire in these few paragraphs is to show that the natives of the Congo do not talk a gibberish like a lot of monkeys, but have at their disposal a magnificent



## NEW WORD-PHRASES

language that excites the admiration of every student. And it will be seen that such complex languages are not to be mastered in a few weeks or months by any globe-trotter who has a fancy for African travel, for they demand time and constant study to appreciate their finesse, and special linguistic ability to master their details and accurately define the words collected, and the various derivatives discovered.

It must not be thought that for every verb all the various derivatives can be found, as for obvious reasons some derivatives are not required from some verbs, and other derivatives are not required from other verbs, e.g. the reversionary verb *tulola*=to undo smithing, can be built on *tula*=to do smithing; but as such an idea as to undo smithing is ridiculous, hence no derivatives founded on the reversionary form *tulola* are to be met with in the language. Smithing can be spoilt, and for that they have a word, but when once a knife is forged it cannot be unforged, i.e. it cannot be returned to iron ore like a knot that can be untied and the string resume its original form.

Neither do the natives add to *every* verb all the prefixes and suffixes that can grammatically be affixed to them. It is very apparent that some verbs are complicated with causative, prepositional, tense, and other forms, and it is necessary to know for what the polysyllabic word stands as a phrase, as there is no time to dissect it while a speech is in progress. This is what I think the native does. He has no words for the parts of speech as we have in grammar, he does not know that *bakamokangelela ntaba naxinga* is made up of the nominative pronominal prefix *ba*=they, the present tense progressive *ka*=ing, the objective pronominal prefix *mo*=him, the verb *kanga*=tie, the two prepositional suffixes *ela*=for, and *ela*=with (the "a" elides before "e"), and two objective nouns *ntaba*=goat, and *naxinga*=string; but he knows that *bakamokangelela ntaba naxinga* means "they are tying the goat for him with string." And if you, as a white man, while speaking and translating, try to make new polysyllabic words by a new combination of prefixes and suffixes, then you confuse your hearers (or readers)

## AN ALLITERATIVE LANGUAGE

to such an extent that they do not readily follow you. You will have to educate them to a proper understanding of your new phrases, as English folk had to learn Carlyle's picture-phrases a generation ago before they could appreciate their force and beauty.

It seems that in the course of time the various dialects have become more or less stereotyped in the use of certain verbal suffixes, and if a speaker now creates new combinations the hearers do not at once follow him ; or it may be that at some period in the past when a dialect was in the making the minds of the people were very active, and the combinations they formed are fixed and remembered, and no new ones are being made, as the minds of the present generation are less gymnastic ; or, again, it may be that a man with some pretensions to intellectual power created new combinations of verbal suffixes, and impressed them on his generation, and thus superseded other word-phrases as Chaucer's English has been succeeded by a later form, and that by a still later, and the forms of speech used by his characters have given place to later forms that would have been scarcely understood in his day. However, in the Bantu languages there are such possibilities of infinite combinations that as the natives are now being educated it is impossible to foretell what subtleties of thought they will be able to express accurately with so plastic and beautiful a language.

The Boloki dialect, like all the Bantu languages, is alliterative in construction, i.e. the prefix of the nominative of the sentence becomes the prefix of all the words dependent on it, e.g. :

*matoko mana mabale manene mamansombela we malaba,*  
(literally)

spoons those two large            which me  
   bought for    you they are lost

=those two large spoons which you bought for me, they are lost. The plural prefix *ma* of the first word which is the nominative is prefixed to all the other words because they are

## CLASSIFICATION OF WORDS

dependent on it. If it had been in the singular it would have been *litoko lina*, etc. This alliterative concord, as it is called, is very helpful to clearness of meaning.

In the Boloki language there are eight classes of alliterative concord,<sup>1</sup> i.e. all the nouns in the language belong to one or other of these eight classes, and directly the class of a noun is decided its pronominal prefixes, its possessive and demonstrative pronouns, etc., are at once known also by the fixed rules of usage, or, as we should say, by the grammar of the language, and its plural form is also easily ascertainable.

Class 1. <i>Motu</i> =person.	<i>Batu</i> =persons, people.
„ 2. <i>Ndaku</i> =house.	<i>Mandaku</i> =houses.
„ 3. <i>Loboko</i> =arm.	<i>Maboko</i> =arms.
„ 4. <i>Linkeme</i> =guinea fowl.	<i>Mankeme</i> =guinea fowls.
„ 5. <i>Bopepe</i> =pipe bowl.	<i>Mapepe</i> =pipe bowls.
„ 6. <i>Lobeki</i> =saucepan.	<i>Mbeki</i> =saucepans.
„ 7. <i>Etanda</i> =plank.	<i>Bitanda</i> =planks.
„ 8. <i>Munke</i> =eggs.	<i>Minke</i> =eggs.

Collective noun, *nke*=a lot of eggs, and this makes its plural in *manke*=lots, as *manke mabale*=two lots of eggs, as a noun of Class 2.

It took us a considerable time to work out this classification, as it meant the collecting of a very large number of words and the writing down of their singular and plural forms. It was easy enough to see that all nouns beginning with “*e*” made their plurals by turning the “*e*” into “*bi*”; but it was not so easy to decide about the “*lo*,” for we found that some plurals were made by changing the “*lo*” into “*ma*,” and others by turning “*lo*” into “*m*”; and when it is remembered that there are sixteen ways of using every adjective, according as it is singular or plural and belongs to one or other of the classes,

<sup>1</sup> On the Lower Congo there are fifteen classes.

## NATIVE FIGURES OF SPEECH

it will be recognized by the reader that an African language is something to study and not despise as being "only a nigger's language." Of course, it is easy to pick up a few words and phrases for ordinary daily use which, when eked out with gestures, will carry the traveller a long way if he has a factotum quick at sign and thought-reading; but for expressing the finer shades of meaning, and also for receiving the same, an intimate knowledge of the language is necessary. I have heard more than one white man blame the missionary for "making a grammar for the nigger"; whereas the missionary has simply found out the rules by which the "niggers" talk, and written them down in such grammatical terms that others might understand them.

I have inserted a short note on the verb<sup>1</sup> in the Appendix, and also a note on the Boloki method of counting.<sup>2</sup> But before closing this chapter I wish to write a few lines on the figurative mode of speaking which is peculiar to all Bantu languages, and by no means confined to the Boloki people. The phrases in italics are literal translations of the native terms for expressing their emotions, etc.

When a native is worried his *heart is let down*, and should he have a choice of two equally pleasant things his *heart is pulled in opposite directions*; but when the heart has recovered its normal condition after some violent outbreak it is said *to be stopped*, or after some perturbing grief they say the *heart is stuck to the ribs*, as there are no longer any flutterings.

A greedy, selfish person has a *heart of leaves*, and a person who is recklessly indifferent to all the consequences of his action has *lost his heart*, and one who is lying and treacherous in his ways has a *heart that has broken loose*, over which the owner has no proper control. Should you be kind enough to comfort a person in a great sorrow, your action will be described as *sticking the heart to the ribs*, and thus keeping it from moving about inside; or if you have soothed a person in distress you

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 2, p. 336.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix, Note 3, p. 339.

## NATIVE FIGURES OF SPEECH

are regarded as having *pushed his heart down into its place*. When a person is irresolute in mind, and undecided as to the best course to pursue, he describes his state by saying, "*My heart is rolling from side to side*," and the word used describes a canoe rocking in a storm.

The moon, as its light begins to appear above the horizon, is said to be *kicking out with its legs*, and when it shows itself above the sky-line it is then *unstuck from the earth*. Sunset is called either *the sun has become black*, or *the sun has entered*, or *when the fowls go to roost* ; and the Pleiades are spoken of as a *crowd of young women* ; and the bright star Venus as it draws near the moon is named *the wife of the moon*.

When you desire to warn a person you tell him to *throw his eyes about*, and a person who frowns is said to *tie his eyebrows*. A conceited person who wants the whole path to himself is scornfully asked, "*Did you plant the earth?*" (i.e. Did you create the world ?), as though it were a pumpkin over which he had sole rights of ownership. A lad who gives an impertinent answer is described as having a *sharp mouth*, while one who is not good at repartee is looked upon as having *no mouth at all*.

A person who frequently reverts to the cause of a quarrel, or a woman who is constantly nagging, has a word applied to her which means the *bubbling up of boiling water* ; and one who does not contribute his share to the general talk around the evening fire is likened to the useless *fibrous core of a cassava root*, only fit to be thrown away ; while a person who answers a question not addressed to him is *picking up something before it is lost*.

The native word for an *umbrella* means a *large bat*. When the eyes are dimmed from any cause they are said to be *covered with cobwebs* ; and a man suffering from hunger says, "*My waist is stuck to my back*" ; i.e. I am so empty of food that there is nothing to keep the front of the stomach from sticking to the backbone. A foolish, credulous person is likened to a *squirrel constantly nodding its head in assent to everything that is said*. To become conscious of someone behind looking at you

## NATIVE FIGURES OF SPEECH

is expressed in the phrase : *to feel the back heavy*. The Congo crow has a broad white band round its neck, and when the river is dark with the reflection of the frowning storm-clouds above, and the wind is blowing up-river, covering the water with white-crested waves, such waves are called by the natives *a flock of crows*.

## CHAPTER IV

### EARLY DAYS AT MONSEMBE

Building our house—Armed natives—Their ruse to discover our strength—  
The reason of their proffered help—A tribal war—Cannibal feast—Taunt  
us with being cowards and women—We defend some visitors—Blood-  
brotherhood—Inquisitive Congo boys—Medicine and “books”—Mental  
powers of Congo lads—Native view of women.

WE were about a fortnight erecting the framework of our house and finishing the walls ; and then it took us over two months to collect and dry local materials for the roof ; but in the meantime we made doors and windows, and cut a large number of nine-inch blocks for paving the floor. I thought that these blocks would raise us above the damp earth, and would also help to keep away some of the insect and reptile pests that invade a house built on the ground. We did not square the blocks, but simply laid them evenly bedded in puddled clay ; and with some native mats spread over them they formed a fairly comfortable floor. The blocks lasted for more than three years, by which time they began to rot at the bottom and sink ; but they served their purpose, and then became useful as firewood.

The house that we ran up so quickly was 40 feet long by 18 feet wide. This gave us each a bed-sitting-room 15 feet by 18 feet, a store-room 10 feet by 12 feet, and a six-foot passage communicating between the two principal rooms, and into this passage the front doors opened. In the front of the house we built a large open porch 14 feet by 14 feet, which served the purpose of dining, drawing and reception-room. Thus we had a large airy house, rain, wind, and sun-tight, which undoubtedly

## ARMED NATIVES

greatly conduced to health and comfort during the building of more permanent dwellings in anticipation of the coming of our wives.

At that time the natives never moved many yards from their houses without three or four spears in their hands, ugly knives in their sheaths, and shields on their arms. Armed in this manner they would frequently congregate on the bank, and, shading their eyes with their hands, they would look earnestly down the river ; and then coming to us they would say, “ White men, the people in the lower towns are coming up to fight you ; get out your guns ready and we will help you.”

Looking down the river we could see in the distance many canoes darting about, but as we had given the natives of those towns no reason for attacking us, and as we were the guests of another town we knew they would not assail us without collusion with our neighbours ; and as our neighbours had every opportunity of easily killing two unarmed men if they desired so to do without calling in outsiders to share the loot, we thought that the staring down-river, their statements regarding the evil designs of the lower towns, and their offers of help were simply attempts to fleece us of barter goods in payment for their proffered aid ; so we used to get out our binoculars, look down-river, and making some laughing remark, go on with our work.

This laughter and brave show were more often forced than not, for we were at times puzzled by the apparent earnestness of our neighbours, and their repeated assurances that they would help us if we would only bring out our guns and properly prepare to support them when the attack was made. As a matter of fact, we had only one gun between us, and that was in pieces at the bottom of one of my trunks. We had no cartridges, and although we had cartridge cases, shots, balls, caps, and outfit for making cartridges, yet we had not a grain of gun-powder ; but all this we kept to ourselves and refused to make preparations until we were certain the enemy really intended to attack us.



## RUSE TO DISCOVER OUR STRENGTH

It was not until some years later that I heard the reason for these frequent demonstrations on our beach ; there was a large party, composed of the principal head-men in the town, who wanted to kill and rob us of our goods, but they were not sure of our resources. "What have they in those cases and trunks ? Are they full of guns and cartridges ?" These were the questions discussed around their fires, hence they hit on the ruse of pretending the other towns were coming to fight us that we might make a show of such weapons of defence as were in our possession. They were nonplussed by our apparent indifference and calmness, and were as much puzzled by our quiet attitude as we were by their warlike demonstrations.

After their unsuccessful attempts to make us exhibit our force, other questions were agitated : "Why are the white men so calm and quiet ? Have they some wonderful magic or powerful 'medicine' that will kill us all directly we begin to fight them ? What have they behind them that they are not afraid when we tell them the people are coming to attack them ? Have they little guns (revolvers) concealed about their clothes ?" Doubtless our very calmness not only mystified them, but saved us from an attack that would have been disastrous to us, and would have frustrated our plans on behalf of the people. Some nine years before our arrival at Monsembe I had been told by an old German missionary with whom I was travelling, that a display of force often incited the natives to try issues with the sojourner in their midst ; and while the above incident is a confirmation of the soundness of his advice, we have a better example of it in Dr. Livingstone, who travelled among the wildest tribes and won their confidence and friendship because he moved freely amongst them unarmed, and unaccompanied by any exhibition of physical force.

One evening in November (1890), soon after we entered our new house, the whole town was thrown into a state of confusion by the report that some of the up-river towns were coming to attack Monsembe on the morrow. Women hurried by with their children, their fowls, and their most treasured belongings,

## A TRIBAL WAR

and, putting them in canoes, they paddled away in the darkness to hide them and themselves on the numerous islands opposite and below Monsembe ; men gathered their spears, knives, and shields, and stood in groups near the various roads that connected their town with the upper towns ; the bigger lads sharpened sticks and hardened the points in the fire so as to embarrass and annoy the enemy with them even if they could not kill ; and all through the long night they sounded drums and gongs not only to keep up their own spirits, but to warn the foe that they were on the alert.

As the sun next morning began to creep above the eastern line of trees that bounded our horizon there was great activity in the town. Men ran by with their faces daubed with a thick coating of oil and soot, or painted with red, blue or white streaks, their heads adorned with feather caps, and their waists bound tightly with closely woven cotton belts ; others had cuirasses of hippopotamus hide protecting their backs, and all were in a greatly excited state, waving their spears, shields, and knives, and boasting of what they would do to the enemy. The women who had no children, and consequently had not left the town, gathered near our mission house, feeling perhaps more secure there than anywhere else.

Soon we heard the shouts of the combatants, and the occasional bang of a gun (there were only three or four flint-locks in the whole town) ; and in came a man with a deep spear wound. He gave an account of the battle, and the women screamed in anger, or shouted in derision as his narrative either told of a friend wounded or an enemy killed. We dressed his wound, and his wives led him away. For nearly two hours we were busy dressing wounds to a chorus of screaming and shouting women ; and then we heard that the attackers had given way, and were in full retreat. By this time the natives of the lower towns had arrived to support their neighbours, and they too joined in the pursuit of the beaten foes, whom they followed to their towns, where the fight was renewed until the Monsembe people took possession of them.

## CANNIBAL FEAST

For a time the only sounds heard in the town were the low wails of the women mourning for the slain, or weeping over those who were badly wounded ; and the songs and shouts of the women whose husbands and relatives had escaped death and wounds. Before sunset the victorious party returned with their loot of goods and prisoners. Goats, sheep, and fowls were led or carried by our house ; men laden with bunches of plantains and bananas, or carrying heavy baskets of peanuts, cassava, and native bread ; others were weighted down with fish nets, animal nets, doors, paddles, saucepans, and jars ; for anything that would fetch a few brass rods was stolen and formed a part of the procession of miscellaneous oddments that streamed by our house. After raiding the enemies' towns they set fire to the houses, and some told us with glee of old and sick folk who had hidden themselves in the dark corners of their huts who were burnt to death, preferring, apparently, the tender mercies of the fire to the cruel death that awaited them if they fell into the savage hands of their ferocious victors.

While we were sitting at our tea the last party of returning warriors filed past our house, carrying the limbs of those who had been slain in the fight. Some had human legs over their shoulders, others had threaded arms through slits in the stomachs of their dismembered foes, had tied the ends of the arms together, thus forming loops, and through these ghastly loops they had thrust their own living arms and were carrying them thus with the gory trunks dangling to and fro. The horrible sight was too much for us, and retching badly we had to abandon our meal, and it was some days before we could again eat with any relish. The sight worked on our nerves, and in the night we would start from our sleep, having seen in our dreams exaggerated processions passing before us burdened with sanguinary loads of slain and dismembered bodies.

That night Monsembe and the neighbouring towns were given up to cannibal feasts, and the next morning they brought some of the cooked meat to the station, and thinking they were doing us a favour, they offered to share it with us—the

## CONSTANT FEAR OF REVENGE

meat looked like black boiled pork. We refused their offering with disgust, and told them what we thought of their horrible custom. Long before we settled amongst them we had heard rumours of their cannibalism, but we regarded the tales as more or less mythical; we could no longer now disbelieve the stories we had heard. And later still there came to our ears a very circumstantial report that the folk of the lower part of our district were procuring for their cannibal orgies the natives of a tributary of the Congo. They gave ivory and received human beings in exchange, who quickly found their way to the saucepan; and a white trader was the intermediary. However, as soon as the white folk of the district had gathered such evidence as was irrefutable they brought such pressure to bear on that white trader and his company (the company was not implicated) that the horrible traffic was stopped. That an educated white man could sink so low as to become a wholesale dealer in human flesh to a tribe of African savages is a psychological mystery that I must leave others to solve.

After the fighting and feasting were over the Monsembe folk lived in constant fear of reprisals. Night after night groups of men were posted near the roads leading from the enemies' towns, and frequently the gongs and drums broke on the night's silence with their rapid beats, awakening the sleepers who, hastily picking up their spears, knives, and shields, hurried by to the scene of the alarm only to find that the sentries "thought they saw or heard something" in the adjacent bush. The women sometimes came screaming in from the farms avowing they had been chased by the enemy. Every rustle of the grass, leaves, or bush was interpreted into a lurking foe; and the nerves of the victors became so jumpy that a voice raised in angry conversation would set the whole town agog with expectation that the enemy had come seeking revenge.

When these alarms took place during the day, the fighters would demonstrate before our house, and ask us to bring out our guns and help them to keep off the foe. "You are living in our town, and you are our white men. We offered to help

## TAUNT US WITH BEING COWARDS

you against the lower towns if they came to attack you, and now get out your guns and aid us. Why, if you were only to show yourselves the people of the upper towns would run away. Come on, our white men, and help us ! ”

We pointed out to them that all the people of the district were our friends, and consequently we could not assist one town to fight against another.

Then, finding that arguments and persuasion failed to move us, they took to taunting us. “ You are not white men,” they shouted, “ you are women ! You are cowards ! ” And with curled lips and gestures of scorn they pointed their spears and knives at us.

Their taunts and gestures of contempt stung us, making the blood surge through our veins and causing us to go hot and cold by turns. With pale faces, compressed lips, and hands gripping tightly whatever came within our grasp, we listened patiently to their sneers. How easy it would have been to have taken our gun and made some display of helping them ! To have walked among them, and to have fired a shot into the bush would probably have satisfied them and would have stopped their sneers ; but we were there on behalf of the “ Prince of Peace.” How could we, then, consistently help them in their fights ? We were there professing that all the peoples of the neighbouring towns and surrounding districts were our friends ; how could we then take up arms against any of them and expect them to believe our professions of good-will or trust again in our word ? We were hoping to make our station a centre of peace, the meeting-place for all factions ; how could we, then, with our hopes and prayers, embroil ourselves in their hatreds and wars, or join sides with them even in pretending to shoot down our other parishioners ? It was very difficult, but strength was given to meet the emergency, to bear calmly the taunts, the sneers, and the contempt ; and from that time we were regarded by all the towns of the district as belonging to no one place, but to all of them, as impartial in our judgments, and just in our dealings with all alike.

## WE DEFEND SOME VISITORS

About three weeks after the first outbreak of war the natives of the upper towns came to talk over the terms of peace. They landed at our beach as the only neutral spot, and tied their canoes to our posts. The deliberations were long, boisterous, and from the noise that came to our ears we thought two or three times that they were on the point of starting fresh hostilities. At last the palavering was over and the visitors returned to our station, and bidding us good-bye, they entered their canoes ; but just as they were pushing off the Monsembe people became excited and threatening in their attitude, and seeing that a fight on our beach was imminent, my colleague and I picked up sticks and drove the Monsembe people back from the river front. We insisted on the neutrality of our station ; we had bought and paid for the land, consequently it was ours, and we would have no fighting on it ; if they wanted to fight they must go to another part of the beach.

This attitude of ours was a revelation to our Monsembe neighbours. Here were two white men whom they had taunted with being cowards, women, etc., standing with simply sticks in their hands to oppose a crowd armed with spears and knives. Two white men with sticks only throwing themselves between them and their enemies, and demanding that no blood should be shed on their land. What power had these white men behind them ? So astonished were they that they halted in their treacherous attack on their visitors, who, taking advantage of the lull, paddled beyond reach of the uplifted spears, and arrived safely home.

After this failure to settle the terms of peace, a go-between (*molekaleku*) was appointed and approved by both parties. He was an outsider of importance and had the confidence of the clans concerned. He arranged the terms of peace : all loot and slaves should be retained by the conquerors ; but all the free folk captured should be set at liberty. This go-between selected a neutral place for the ceremony of *blood-brotherhood*, and was pledged that the meeting should take place without a renewal of hostilities by either party.

## MAKING BLOOD-BROTHERHOOD

All the preliminaries having been settled the parties met at the place and time appointed ; and then a stick called *ndeko* was procured and carefully scraped, and these scrapings were mixed with salt. The contracting parties—the head-man of each side—clasped each other's right hand with the *ndeko* between the palms ; some incisions were then made on the arms and the mixture of *ndeko* scrapings and salt was rubbed on the cuts ; each then put his mouth to the incisions on the other's arm and sucked for a few moments, after which one of the contracting parties took the *ndeko* stick and struck the wrists and knees of the other, saying : " If ever I break this covenant may I be cursed by having my nose rot off." <sup>1</sup> Then the other took the *ndeko* stick, and, performing the same ceremony, he called down the same curse on himself should he ever break the contract. These rites were accompanied by the drinking of much sugar-cane wine, and the whole ceremony was called *tena ndeko*=to cut the *ndeko* stick.

After making *blood-brotherhood* between the head-men, there was enacted another performance called *bakia lolelembe* : a medicine man took a palm frond, split it and put one-half of the frond across the path leading from Monsembe to the upper towns—the towns of the contracting parties. This was not only a sign that all that palaver was finished, but it was a fetish having power, it was supposed, to punish anyone who broke the treaty. It was firmly believed that the side that renewed that quarrel would get the worst of it by wounds and death. Perhaps this is the history of many a tribal fight in Africa—alarm, attack, defeat, pursuit, cannibal feasts, and the making of peace by blood-brotherhood.

Congo boys are the most inquisitive animals that I have yet met in Africa. Crocodiles, when boats were new to the Congo, would follow them for hours in their attempts to investigate the strange object ; goats and sheep were always ready to

<sup>1</sup> Probably lupus. There were a few cases of this disease, and it was regarded as a punishment for faithlessness in observing the oath of blood-brotherhood.

## INQUISITIVE CONGO BOYS

poke<sup>v</sup> their noses at new things that came within their purview, but their curiosity was quickly satisfied. Congo boys (and in a minor degree the girls also) were never wearied of watching us at work, following us about to see what we would do next, and asking about our tools, etc., and why we did this or that in such a way, and did not accomplish the same result by some other mode of procedure. They would stand about our table while we were at meals, and pass critical remarks on our manner of eating, slyly imitating the action of our jaws as we masticated our food, or mimic our gestures as we conversed with one another. We seemed to live, move, and pass our existence in the full glare of public gaze like fish in a glass tank.

One never-ending source of delight to them was to scan our countenances as we read. They noticed every alteration of facial expression as the "books talked to us." If we burst out laughing at some witticism in our reading they would laugh heartily in sympathy with us, and would poke one another, saying: "The book is talking some funny thing to them." When their shyness had passed away they would ask: "What does the book say to make you laugh?" Occasionally the bit of wit came within the scope of their comprehension, and of our knowledge of the language, and they would enjoy it as much as we did, showing they had a ready wit and enjoyed a hearty laugh; and we felt encouraged, for there is some hope for a people that can laugh joyously and boisterously.

At times they would creep behind us, and looking earnestly at the open page, they would cock their ears to listen intently for any sound, and seeing nothing but a blurred page, and hearing no sounds, they would insinuatingly ask: "White man, how does the book talk to you? and can you make it talk to us?" We would then explain the system of letters and syllables, etc.; but would, at the same time, express a doubt as to their ability to learn to read.

"Cannot you give us some 'medicine' to make us understand the 'book' talk?" they would pleadingly ask of us.

"No," we replied; "there is no 'medicine' that can give



## MEDICINE AND "BOOKS"

you such wisdom. You must learn letter by letter, and of course you have no brains for such work. What is the use of wasting time in teaching you?"

If we had exhibited any special eagerness to teach them, they would have held back; but chaffing them and pretending that they had not enough brains to learn had the desired effect of putting them on their mettle, and they begged us to start school right away. We showed no hurry to fall in with their wishes, and this only piqued them and made them more desirous of having a school. At last we acceded to their repeated requests, and told them that on the day that followed the next "rest-day" (i.e. on Monday next), we would begin school and hold it every morning for five days a week.

The eventful morning dawned, and with it about twenty lads arrived to enter upon the mysteries of the white man's "book." At that time I was busy building a suitable house in anticipation of my wife's arrival, so my colleague, Mr. Stapleton, took charge of the new school. His room was the school-house. We had written out the alphabet in large letters, and had prepared some slips from which they might copy. We opened a box containing some slates and pencils. The school-house and apparatus were in keeping with the scholars, but the latter brought with them a large amount of enthusiasm and determination, so what was lacking in school furniture, and in the attire of our pupils, was made up in the willingness and earnestness of the scholars.

The adults were almost as greatly excited as the boys. They watched every movement of the teacher, and tried to imitate the sounds of the various letters. As I passed to and fro at my work I could see the door and windows crowded by the throng of on-lookers, and could hear their laughable attempts at learning. Two hours at this kind of teaching thoroughly exhausted my colleague, for there were not only twenty sprightly boys to look after, but a crowd of men and women who demanded no little attention. In a week or two the newness of the school wore away, fewer adults gathered

## MENTAL POWERS OF CONGO BOYS

around the doors and windows, and some of the lads, finding that there really was no "medicine" to drink imparting to them book knowledge, no royal road to learning, but that it entailed continuous effort, gave up coming, and by the end of a fortnight only about half the original class was left—but they were worth teaching, and they persevered until they became good scholars and afterwards teachers of others.

During nearly thirty years' teaching of Congo youths, both on the Lower and Upper River, I have noticed that up to the age of fourteen or fifteen the boys and girls—especially the boys—are very receptive, and are easily taught; but after that age comparatively few make real advance in learning. By the age of fourteen they have arrived at puberty, and after that they have to make a continuous effort to retain any book knowledge they may have received. This may be due in some measure to their thoughts being centred on other matters, as trade journeys, fishing, and hunting on their own account, and later to building their houses, looking about for a wife, and procuring the necessary articles for paying the marriage money, and meeting the expenses of the feasts, etc.

The following is probably a great factor in causing their mental growth to stop practically at the above age: For generations boys on arriving at the age of fourteen or fifteen had learned all their fathers had to teach them respecting fishing, hunting, wood-craft, building, paddling, etc. If they showed a special aptitude for fishing, hunting, etc., they followed their "bent" in that particular, and became proficient simply by practice, and their successes were generally put to the credit of their charms. They never initiated new ways of building (until after the arrival of the white man), or new ways of hunting or fishing, etc., but only carried on those modes they had gained from their fathers, and which were mastered by the time they were fifteen years old. Thus their intelligence has attained, for generations, its fullest development by the above age, and now we have to help them over that crucial stage. In some cases it is very difficult, but in other cases



*Photo by]*

*[the Author*

### OUR BOAT AND ITS CREW

This boat—the gift of a friend at Derby—was used in itinerating up and down our large parish with its two hundred miles of river frontage.



*Photo by]*

*[the Author*

### A ROOM IN THE MONSEMBE HOUSE

The author's study and his wife's drawing- and reception-room. The walls are made of bamboos, scraped and varnished, and all the furniture, except the chairs, was made on the spot.



## NATIVE VIEW OF WOMEN

we can do so ; and in such there is no limit to the intellectual progress they may make. In many instances they have mastered a good working knowledge of French, Portuguese, or English, both spoken and written, and as larger opportunities are given, a large number of youths will make such mental progress as will encourage their friends and teachers.

The native in his raw state gained such an acquaintance with the languages of neighbouring tribes as to be able to communicate freely with them ; and in many of their folk-lore stories there are sentences taken from other languages and scattered through the tales like French phrases in a fashionable novel. We have found, as a rule, that lads who came to us at fourteen or fifteen made very slow progress in our schools, and seldom reached the higher classes. They lost heart at their difficulties, and left school—there were exceptions, but such as only go to prove the rule. I think it would not be difficult to prove that English lads at the age of fourteen or fifteen need constant spurring by teacher, father, or guardian, or a much larger proportion of them would lose the knowledge they had acquired in their schools.

When I had almost finished building the three-room bungalow in which I hoped to spend many years with my devoted wife, I began to build a kitchen, and the natives, seeing a smaller house being built in proximity to the larger one, said : “ That is where the white man is going to put his wife, while he will, of course, live in the large house.”

“ No,” we answered ; “ that is the cook-house. My wife will live here in this house when she arrives.”

“ You would not be so foolish, white man,” they inquired, “ as to put a woman in this fine house ? You will send her to live in that small one, will you not ? ” And there was a certain amount of anxiety in their tones rather indicative of their fear that I was going to upset the proper order of domestic life by allowing a woman to live on equality with myself.

They would scarcely believe me until they saw the stove fixed in the cook-house, and my wife installed with me on equal

## NATIVE VIEW OF WOMEN

terms in what they called my "fine house," which was only a three-roomed cottage with a verandah on two sides.

The Boloki's regard for women was a strange contradiction. I have seen them walking—man and wife—with their arms around each other's waist, as though they were a couple of English lovers crossing a common in the twilight. I never saw natives exhibit so much fondling and affection for each other as was shown among those erstwhile cannibals. Ninety per cent of their quarrels were about women, for every man who had one or more wives bitterly resented any interference with his sole proprietorship in them. They would fondle their women, yet treat them contemptuously as inferiors; they would fight to assert their rights of ownership in them, yet regard them as so greatly beneath them as to send them to eat their food by themselves out of sight; and they would slave to collect sufficient goods to pay the marriage money for their free wives, or to procure the price of their slave wives, yet the former they would thrash unmercifully, and the latter, for a whim or in a fit of temper, they would murder and fling the corpse into the river, or invite their neighbours to feast with them on the body.

## CHAPTER V

### ARTS AND CRAFTS AND NATIVE INDUSTRY

A Congo lad in England—People doing no work—Erroneous views—A condemnation of “niggers”—Its answer—White employers of black labour—Allowances to be made—Leather-work—String making—Bark cloth—Basket-work—Pottery—Dyeing and painting—Working in metal—Aptitude for learning handicrafts.

MANY years ago I brought a native lad of quick intelligence from the wilds of Congo to my home in London. He noticed the people crowding the pavements, filling the tram-cars, omnibuses, and trains; and his frequent question was: “How do all these people live, for they seem only to ride and walk about and do no work?” Later he observed that all the articles in the various windows of the different tradespeople had prices marked on them, and that money was necessary with which to buy them. He had tried to procure things himself from the shops, and had learned by sad experience that not only was money needful for that purpose, but the right amount was requisite before he could become the happy possessor of the coveted article so luringly displayed in the window; and then his question was: “How do the people get the money with which to buy all those things?”

“They have to work for their money,” I replied. “Some have to work hard for very little money, others earn more by less laborious work, and others again are fortunate enough to have had fathers who worked hard and have left their

## ERRONEOUS VIEWS

sons and daughters so rich that they have no need to work."

"Work hard!" he exclaimed incredulously. "Why, they only ride, or walk about the streets, or sit in shops eating and drinking. I do not see them at work."

I fear that if that lad had returned to his country then, he would have carried with him a very poor idea of white folk, and would have regarded us as a lazy lot who only walked or rode about the streets, or sat eating and drinking in shops. It took many a long talk to explain our system, and when later I had the opportunity of taking him behind the scenes into factories, and over buildings in the course of erection, he modified his views and came to understand that the white man *works*. At the back of his mind was the idea, very prevalent among some of the Congo tribes, that all our articles of barter are manufactured by the blacks, whose dead bodies we have bought in Africa and sent to Mputu (countries of the white people), where by the wonderful magic of the white men the bodies are resurrected, and they are now doing our work for us so that we can walk and ride about with nothing whatever to do. It is the ignorance of one people about another that causes such misunderstandings, prejudices, and erroneous judgments. The lad would never have thought of charging the traders, the missionaries, or Government officials with laziness, for he saw and understood their work; but these white folk who crowded the streets, filled the vehicles and the shops, what work did they do? He could not see it, and his superficial and mistaken opinion was that they were an indolent lot of folk.

Sitting at tea with me one day at Monsembe was the captain of a State steamer. *À propos* of nothing in particular, he exclaimed: "What lazy fellows these niggers are!"

"To whom are you specially referring?" I inquired of him.

"Well," he said, "before coming to your house to tea this afternoon I took a walk through the town and saw some men lounging about talking, and others asleep under the shade of some plantain and fig trees."



## CONDEMNATION OF "NIGGERS"

"Oh, yes," I replied; "I know them very well. Some of them have been for several weeks over on the islands, living in rough shanties, fishing all day and smoke-drying their fish over their fires during the evenings. They returned this morning after their long spell on the islands, and they are resting for a few days before starting on another fishing expedition. Another lot of men came in yesterday with that heavy canoe in the rough that you saw on the beach. They were away some weeks felling a huge tree, hollowing it out, and shaping it in the rough with their little axes—a laborious job. Yesterday they floated it home, and are now enjoying a well-earned rest before finishing the canoe and selling it. What you saw was not an exhibition of laziness, but a relaxation after prolonged arduous work."

Just then a strongly-formed, well-built young man went past the house. "There, do you see him?" asked my visitor; "I saw him asleep in his hammock-chair."

"Yes, I know him," was my reply; "he is one of the headmen of this district. His father was wealthy as natives go in this part, and left him enough to give him the equivalent of £300 a year in your money. Would you work if you had £300 a year coming in?"

"By Jove, no!" he quickly replied, slapping his knee at the very idea of possessing £300 a year without working for it. "I would have a nice little house with a fine garden, and I would sit smoking all day in the midst of my flowers."

"Just so!!!" was my comment.

The natives of Africa live in an enervating climate, with a temperature frequently nearer 95° in the shade than 70°. They dwell in the midst of a prolific nature that supplies their vegetable foods with very little exertion, and in such environments that their needs are few and easily met. In their natural state there are both lazy and industrious folk as in other countries.

When the white man arrives he engages his native workman, at so much per month, for twelve, eighteen, or twenty-four months. For the first time in his life the native has to work

regular hours, starting and leaving off to the deep notes of a bell, or the tap, tap of a drum. At first the experience is novel, and he is most willing and hard-working ; but pay-day is a long way off, his enthusiasm cools as the novelty passes away, and then the master will have to look vigilantly and constantly after his hired workman. Give him piece-work and pay him by results and you will see prodigies of labour, for every payment made on those lines is an incentive to further effort. The native as keenly enjoys money and what money brings in extra food, comforts, and prestige as the white man, and is as willing to work for them.

The employer of labour in Africa is the white man, and he desires to get as much work as he can for his money, and the employee tries to give as little of his energy and strength as he can for the pay he is to receive twelve, eighteen, or twenty-four months hence, consequently there is a clash of interests ; and while the white man has the opportunity, among his friends, of talking loudly about the " lazy niggers," let him sit with the natives round the fire one evening, and he may be surprised to learn that there is another point of view, and that not over-flattering to his fairness as a master.

I have frequently asked employers of labour in England whether they were satisfied with the work done for them by their day labourers, and while they readily allowed for exceptions, yet they spoke strongly of such men as " doing as little as possible for their pay." Every branch of work that it is possible to give out as piece-work is nowadays so arranged. Why ? The masters are satisfied, for they get done that for which they pay ; the men are better pleased, for they receive what they earn, and the quickest and most industrious man gains the largest pay, and his superior energy is not balanced against the laziest man in the shop. Let us do justice to the black man. He is the only one who in such a climate can work long hours at a time, and for months at a stretch. All the evidences of civilization on the Congo are the results of his energy and endurance directed by his white master. He is, however,

## ALLOWANCES TO BE MADE

no fonder of work than the average white man ; but like the latter he is willing to labour to increase his comforts in the house, his prestige in the village, and to meet his obligations as a man, a husband, and a father, for each relationship makes its own demands on his resources.

In 1890 we opened our Mission station at Monsembe, but previous to our arrival the natives had not had sufficient intercourse with white people either to increase their arts and industries or even to modify them by the introduction of new methods or new tools. The natives then were as they had been for many a generation, and their manufactures were limited by the materials at their disposal. In judging of the merits or demerits of the manufactures of a tribe, it is necessary to take into consideration the materials to be obtained in their district and the tools with which they are compelled, by force of circumstances, to do their work. Suppose the Lancashire people were restricted in their manufactures to such material as they could obtain from the surface of their county, and the small supplies that filtered through to them from the adjacent counties by laborious and costly transport over the hills, or by canoes on their rushing streams, we should hear nothing of the cotton mills, the weaving, the iron works, etc., of that industrious and hardy folk. It is what has been brought into the county, what has been dug from the bowels of its land, and the machinery and tools that have been imported into it that have given Lancashire the place it rightly holds in the commercial and industrial world. And what has been written of Lancashire can also be said of many another county in Great Britain, and should be recognized when judging of the merits or demerits of the arts and crafts of an African tribe.

Before the arrival of white men at Monsembe it was the practice of the natives to ornament their saucepans with a herring-bone pattern and with bands ; their knives and spears with parallel incised lines, and with herring-bone pattern ; their shields being made of basket-work material had often a border of lozenge pattern round the edge. The blades of paddles

## LEATHER-WORK

had parallel incised lines, and their canoes had the same kind of lines along the outer top edge. Handles of knives and hafts of spears were made in various shapes, and studded with brass nails, or bound round with brass ribbon. I never saw any drawings until I had been there a considerable time, and then they took to sketching on the fronts of their houses, and on letters they sent to each other. These sketches were of steamers, houses, and people. The drawings were done in charcoal, and when outlining a figure the cock's-comb tattoo on the forehead was usually much exaggerated. They had no idea of perspective, but a sense of humour was often exhibited when "taking off" a person.

The hides and skins of animals were employed for various purposes. The skin of the hippopotamus was used for cuirasses ; that of the buffalo, antelope, goat, and sheep for belts, basket-straps, and knife sheaths ; that of the monkey, sygale, monitor, mongoose and civet cat for hats, belts, small sheaths, and ornamental aprons, or for containing charms ; that of the boa constrictor and other large snakes for belts, sheaths, and drum heads. The skin was either stretched and pinned by wooden pegs on the ground, or laced on a frame. The bits of flesh were cut off, some wood ash rubbed on, and then it was left to dry in the sun. If a soft, flexible skin was desired, oil was rubbed into the skin after it was thoroughly dry. It was not the custom to take the hair off any of the skins. Leopard skins were prepared by the above mode, and were usually preserved whole as mats upon which chiefs and head-men sat.

If the owner of an animal wished to sell the flesh in open market the skin was not taken off, but the animal was so cut up that a piece of skin was left on each portion. The buyer could then see the kind of animal flesh offered for sale, and would know for a certainty whether it was tabooed to him or not. Goats, sheep, and dogs were thus cut up and hawked for sale through the villages. This custom of cutting up the animals so that the requirements of taboo might be met accounts for the destruction of a large number of skins in Africa ; but when

## STRING MAKING

a party of hunters captured an antelope it was skinned, or when a family killed a goat or sheep and did not wish to sell any of it, the animal was skinned whole, and the hide was preserved and utilized. Although the skin of the electric fish (*nina*) is more than half an inch thick, I never saw it used for any purpose; in fact, the people would not even eat the flesh. I once tried to dry the skin in the hot, strong sun, but it became putrid before the sun had any effect on it.

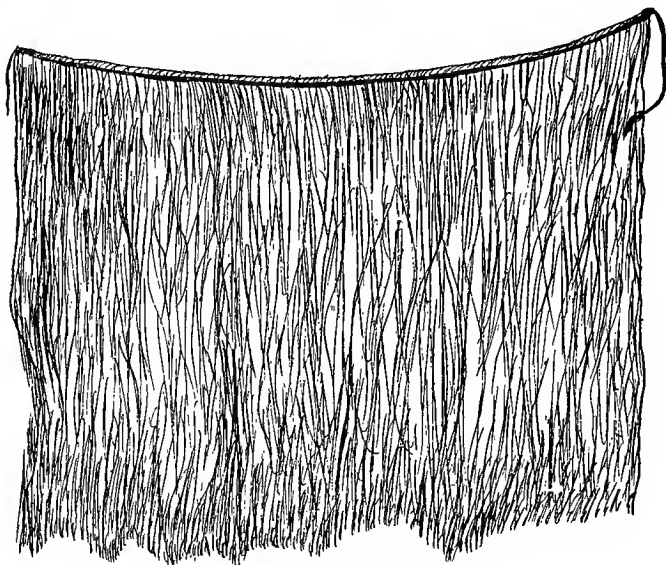
There was a great demand for string, and it was met in the following way: The bark of a water-plant, called by the natives *munkungi*, was manufactured into rope and string. The withes were cut into lengths from 3 to 4 feet long and carried into the town, the bark was then peeled off—it strips easily—carefully scraped on both sides by running it between the edge of a knife and a board, and then spread in the sun to dry. The strips were taken in the hand, length by length, and spun by twisting them between the palm of the hand and the thigh of the operator. The different threads were then plaited into a string, and these were twisted together into cords three-eighths of an inch in diameter. Sometimes the palm-frond fibres were employed for making the finer strings and twine.

The strong cords were used for tying up their canoes and bundles; and also plaited into mats about 3 feet long by 1 foot to 1 foot 6 inches wide, for crushing the sugar-cane fibre when making sugar-cane wine. The better-made strings and twines were made into shoulder-bags or satchels, and also into fighting-belts. These belts were from 9 to 12 feet long, and about 4 or 5 inches wide, and were generally well smeared with pipe clay; they were wound round the abdomen just before a fight, and afforded a good protection against spear-thrusts. The string was wound on a wooden spool, and the fish-nets, of all sizes and shapes, were made by the ordinary process of netting, the mesh varying according to the size and purpose of the net.

For some years after we arrived at Monsembe the old folk wore bark cloth. A strip of bark 18 inches long by 5 or

## BARK CLOTH

6 inches wide, and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches thick was taken from the tree—the wild fig tree, or from a tree called *ngumbu*. The strip of bark was soaked in water for a time, and then beaten with an ivory mallet as it lay across the palm of the hand. The strip of bark gradually widened to 18 inches, and lengthened to 3 or 4 feet. Some cloths were very evenly beaten,



A BANGALA WOMAN'S DRESS

This is one of about fifteen fringes that a woman wears tied round her waist. The more *chie* the wearer the shorter the fringes are cut. They are made from scraped palm leaves.

so that no holes appeared ; others were not so well done, and holes and uneven places showed in the finished cloth. *Likuta* was the name given to the finished cloth. I never saw any weaving among these Boloki folk, but they told me of an ancient native-made cloth called *pelele* ; but I never saw a specimen of it, and cannot speak of its texture.

Not many baskets were made by the Boloki folk, but the most common was a wedge-shaped basket of medium texture,

## POTTERY

and with a capacity of about half a bushel, used for carrying home farm produce. This was made of split cane, of the same thickness and style as the seat of a cane chair. It was a large oval at the mouth running down to a small oval at the bottom, and was carried on the back either by a single strap across the chest or forehead, or by two small loops through which the arms were passed. For soaking their cassava roots long conical baskets were used with lids to tie down. Occasionally I saw their large sugar-cane wine-pots covered with stout basket-work, and strong handles plaited on to them. Other kinds of baskets found amongst this tribe were made by slaves captured or bought from neighbouring districts; and their shields of basket-work were, I believe, bought ready-made from other tribes. I never saw one in the making. A very large variety of fish traps and baskets were made by these folk. Some were over 6 feet in diameter and long in proportion, while others were small enough for a child to handle. They were very dexterous in twisting canes into various shapes for their basket-work, and in making mats from papyrus.

The pottery made by the Boloki women divides itself easily into three kinds: 1. Saucepans of various sizes but only one shape. 2. Wine-pots from 6 inches high to 2 and 3 feet high and broad in proportion. 3.<sup>1</sup> Firepans or hearths for carrying fire in their canoes when travelling. These latter had three prongs overhanging the top of the saucepan, upon which an ordinary cooking-pot could be placed, and allow of a free passage of air to the fire.

They had no knowledge of a wheel, but built up their pottery on a base by rolling the clay between the palms of the hands into long pencils about the size of a finger, and then welding the strip to the base and flattening it out with the fingers as they worked round the pot. The only decorations I have seen on their pottery are "chevrons" and "herring-bone."

<sup>1</sup> No. 1 was called *lobeki*. No. 2 *mobako*, or a small size *ndubu*. No. 3 was named *lokenge*. There were many other names, but they only differentiated the sizes, and also showed whether they were well or badly made, etc.

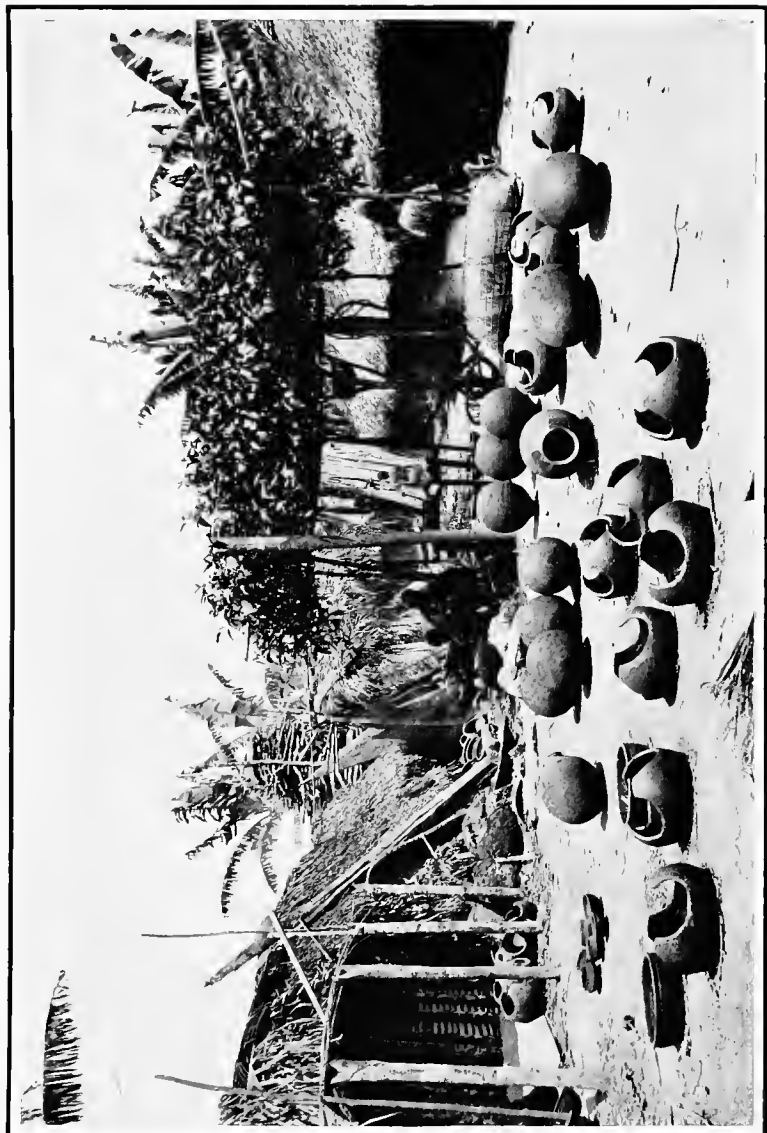
In baking their pottery no kilns were used, but firewood was laid carefully on the ground, and the pots arranged on the top, and then small firewood, twigs, etc., were thrown over the whole pile and the fire lighted.

On the Mobangi River I saw some varnishing done. When the pots were sufficiently baked, and while still very hot, they were rubbed over with lumps of gum copal. Pots treated in this way were suitable for drinking-vessels, or as dishes in which to place food ; but they were unsuitable for cooking purposes, for directly the pot got hot the gum copal caught fire. Some, before being rubbed over with the gum copal, were smeared with arnotto dye, and thus showed red through the glazing.

Iron ore was imported from the upper reaches of the Lulanga River, and smelted in native crucibles. The furnace was a hole about 18 inches deep, about 15 inches in diameter at the top, and 8 to 10 inches at the bottom. Charcoal made from hard woods was the heating medium. The smelting pot with the ore was put in the middle of the furnace, and the blast was furnished by native bellows and conducted to the heart of the furnace by a funnel-shaped tube of burnt clay. The bellows were cut out of a solid block of wood. There were two holes, each from 8 to 12 inches in diameter, which opened below into a common wooden tube which fitted into the above-mentioned clay funnel. Over each of the holes a soft skin was securely tied, and to the centre of each skin was fixed a stick about 3 feet 6 inches long. The operator worked the sticks up and down alternately, and the more vigorously he worked the more powerful the blast.

The native blacksmith made hoes and axes ; knives of various shapes and sizes ; spear-heads of different kinds, barbed for fishing-spears, small-bladed ones for fighting, or broad-bladed fancy spears for purposes of show when visiting friends and neighbours. He also fashioned large hooks for catching crocodiles, the razors for shaving the head or face, lances for killing hippopotami, knives for household use, gouges and chisels for canoe-making, and piercers for mat-





*Photo by*

# POTS AND SAUCEPANS FOR SALE. LIBINZA LAKE

*[Rev. N. H. Kyrieland*

A wheel is unknown, but the pottery is generally very perfect in shape. The pots are baked, and sometimes glazed with gum copal. Those with three prongs are used for cooking while travelling in a canoe. The saucepan of food is supported on the three prongs, and small firewood is put in the openings.



## WORKING IN METAL

making. Unfortunately the introduction of European knives, hoes, and axes has ruined this native industry.

For some time after we settled at Monsembe the blacksmith would buy up the iron bands from our bales and boxes, and work them up into hoes, knives, axes, and spear-heads. The anvil was a block of hard wood, the hammer was a bar of iron about 8 or 10 inches long, and  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches square. They had no pincers, but when the piece of iron was too short to hold while working it they made a wooden handle for it, which they slipped on and off as required. They knew the process for making steel, and could put a very fine edge on their razors, spears, and knives.

Large brass rings for the neck were made in the following way : The potato-like substance of the plantain root was cut into shape of the desired circumference and thickness ; this model was surrounded with well-kneaded clay, a funnel-shaped opening being made to let off steam, to clear out the charred fibre of the plantain root, and to pour in the molten metal. This mould, when completed, was baked in the fire, and as it baked the plantain-root model inside was burnt ; the ashes were cleared out and the liquid brass poured in. When cool, the mould was broken and the brass ring was well polished by scraping and rubbing, and " herring-bone," and " lozenge " patterns were cut on it.

Small rings were made for the legs and wrists. A ring was put on each leg, resting on the ankles ; a year or so later another pair of rings was added to the first pair, and so on, until the rings almost reached the knees. By gradually adding ring to ring the wearer became used to the weight, and the ankles became corneous. I once took more than a dozen rings from the legs of a woman, weighing 60 lbs. in all—30 lbs. of brass on each leg. When these heavy rings had been removed the woman seemed top-heavy ; her legs were now so light that apparently she had no control over them, and she crossed our enclosure like a drunken person. I have seen solid brass neck-lets weighing from 20 to 28 lbs. each. On one occasion, while

chatting with a chief, I asked him if he buried the brass rings when his wives died, and he at once replied : "No."

"How do you remove such heavy, strong rings from the neck of a dead woman?" was my next question.

He did not reply in words, but he ran his finger round his own neck, indicating that under such circumstances they cut off the head in order to remove the rings.

Long spiral leg rings were made in the following manner : A bamboo, from 12 to 15 feet long, was split (bamboo, *Raphia vinifera*, in which there are no nodes). The pith, to the desired depth and width, was taken out of one half and the molten brass<sup>1</sup> was poured along this channel. This gave the operator a long brass rod about the thickness of the index finger, and this rod was carefully beaten round, scraped, and polished ; and starting from the ankle it was wound round and round the leg nearly up to the knee, each circumference of the spiral being made a little larger than the one immediately below it. At the bottom the leglet impinged on the ankle, which bore the whole weight ; but at the top it had 2 or 3 inches' play about the calf of the leg. Brass ribbon was made by beating out the brass rods to the required width, and this ribbon was used for ornamenting spear and knife handles, the hafts of paddles, and knife sheaths.

The social position of a smith among the natives was very high, and he was regarded with as much respect as a professional man is in Europe. The natives thought that the smith was not only wise and skilful, but that he practised witchcraft in order to perform his work properly. No one was allowed to step over a smith's furnace, nor blow it with his mouth, nor spit into it, as either of these actions would pollute the fire, and thus cause bad workmanship. Any person polluting the fire would have to compensate the smith by the payment of a heavy fine. A smith taught his son or his nephew the trade, but would not take an apprentice on any consideration. He

<sup>1</sup> Copper (*dikulu*) was known, but I never saw any of it worked, and only very little worn as ornaments.



A NATIVE WOMAN OF WEALTH

She has highly-prized beads across her chest, a brass chain around her waist from which dangles a large brass bell, numerous brass rings round her arms, and brass rings on her big toes. On her legs she has spiral brass rings.



## MANUFACTURING SALT

was always known by the name of his trade, and was consequently called *motuli*=the one who *tula*, or works in iron.

How did the smith procure his brass for the making of rings, etc. ? The currency of the country was the brass rod, and the rods were also used for their brass-work. The brass-worker would collect as many rods as possible, and cut from half an inch to one inch off each rod, and thus get his material for nothing.

Before, and for some time after, the arrival of white men salt<sup>1</sup> was made by the natives burning two different kinds of vegetation. (1) The thick, succulent stems of a grass<sup>2</sup> that grew in the water along the banks of the river. This was cut in large quantities and heaped along the bank until dry, when it was carried to the town. (2) It was also made from a small plant from 4 to 5 inches in diameter, with thickish leaves, no stem, rootlets coming straight from the leaves, with the leaves arranged like a rosette. This plant floats on the river in large quantities, being torn from the banks by every storm that ruffles the river. The process of manufacturing salt with either the plants or the grass was the same. A large quantity, say of the succulent grass, or grass and plants mixed, was collected on the bank, turned over from time to time until thoroughly dry ; then it was carried to the town, heaped up, and burnt to ashes. A large funnel was made of leaves, folded and plaited together, and suspended from a stick. Into this funnel some ashes were put and water poured on them. The water dissolved the greater part of the ashes and percolated gently through the leaves into a shallow saucepan, where the moisture evaporated, leaving behind a dirty white granulated substance which was used and sold as salt. About a tablespoonful cost 1½d. I knew a semi-mad man who ate two tablespoonfuls of this salt and died in a few hours from the effect of it.

The Boloki were very fond of music, and quickly acquired

<sup>1</sup> Native names for salt, *monana* and *mokwa*.

<sup>2</sup> Called by the natives *monkoko mwa njoko*=sugar-cane of the elephant, because it was so juicy.

## SPREADING NEWS BY CANOE SONGS

a new tune. Their voices, as a rule, were loud, clear, steady, and flexible, and they sang from the chest. There were harsh, strident voices among them, but they were the exception, and at certain ages their voices broke and became falsetto. Their singing was mixed, i.e. men and women sang together, and was generally accompanied by an instrument, or by the beating of a stick on a plank, or the clapping of hands to give the time. In some ceremonies the women sang by themselves, at other times the men by themselves, and very often the two sexes together, as when travelling in their canoes. The companies sang in unison, and recitative time. Many of their songs were a combination of solo and chorus.

When paddling their canoes, either a small drum was beaten or a stick struck rhythmically on the edge of the canoe to give time to the stroke of their paddles, and to the rhythm of their songs, solos, and choruses. As a rule one sang a solo, and the others took up the chorus. Their songs were generally topical, and as they paddled up or down river they gave all the latest information of interest to the villages as they passed them. I have often been amazed at the rapidity and accuracy with which news was spread in this way. A canoe leaving Nouvelles Anvers (Diboko), where the State had a large station, would carry up or down river all the gossip about the doings and sayings of the white men of the station, accounts of their punitive expeditions, judgments passed on captives and prisoners, their treatment of the natives who had taken the taxes there, what new white folk were expected and who was leaving for Europe, etc. The white officers told their personal boys any item of news, and they passed on the items to their friends; hence in the course of an hour or two everybody on a station was acquainted with all the special bits of information worth knowing.

This singing answered another purpose: it gave warning to the village that a canoe was approaching, and that the folk in it were friendly. A canoe of any size that approached a town without singing and drumming was regarded as an





*Photo by*

#### BURNING GRASS FOR MAKING SALT

*[Rev. R. H. Kirkland]*

The proper kind of grass is collected, dried, and burnt. A funnel of large leaves is prepared, some of the ashes are put in the funnel and water poured over them. This percolates through the leaves, and when evaporated leaves a thin layer of salt.



## LEARNING NEW TUNES

enemy's canoe, and was treated as such, i.e. spears, stones, etc., would be thrown at the occupants of it.

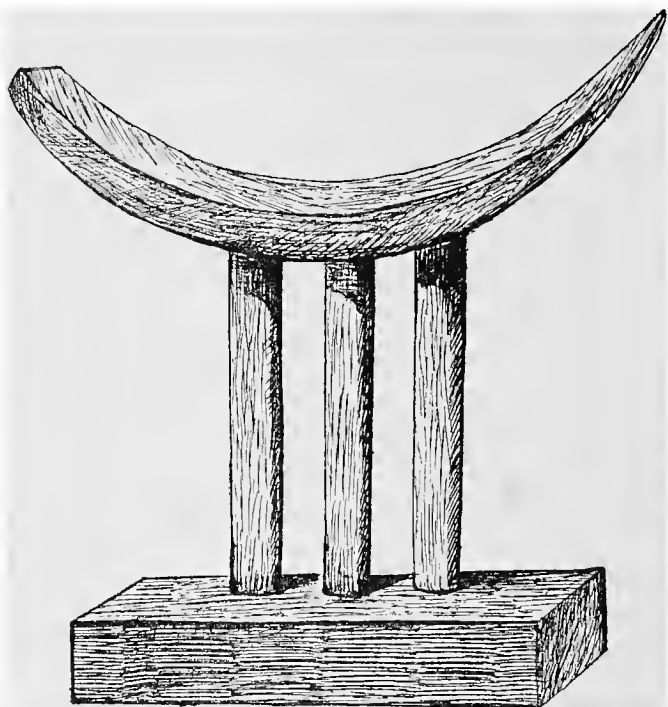
Occasionally a professional singer would visit our town and teach the young men a new tune. He charged two or three brass rods per person, but would not teach the tune unless he had enough pupils to pay him, and then he would stay a day or two until they had learned the tune perfectly ; and when once they had caught it they would set their own words to it. A few years ago I wrote in my notebook as follows : " A professional dancer and singer has recently visited the town, and, like so many of his European brethren, he was marked by some eccentricity in dress. He wore a belt of red and blue baize about 18 inches wide (the usual width is 4 to 8 inches), which made him the observed of all observers. Our professional in walking about the town put on a swagger fully in keeping with his position and dignity—his bells tingled, and his monkey and wild cat skins dangled to and fro. He received a large fee from a mourning family that engaged him to dance and sing in honour of their dead relatives."

The native songs may be divided into three classes : (a) topical, as sung in canoes while distributing news ; (b) local songs, in which the events of the daily life of the village are temporarily recorded, as the bravery, cowardice, unsociability, generosity, meanness, thievishness, etc., of the men and women of village or town. These local songs have a great effect on the people, for they crystallize the public opinion concerning an individual, and the African hates nothing so much as being sung against or ridiculed in a song. (c) Songs at funeral festivities, when the praises of the dead are sung.

They borrowed tunes freely from other tribes, and soon learned to sing all the European tunes we cared to teach them ; but I do not think that any sounds affected them like the rhythmical beat of their own drums. To that beat they would paddle vigorously for hours beneath the tropical sun ; dance perspiringly through a long afternoon, or through a long

night ; fight recklessly, or drink their sugar-cane wine until their stomachs were well distended.

They were clever in making canoes, which were cut out of solid trees, sometimes from soft woods, but generally from



A WOODEN HEAD-REST OR PILLOW

When the hair has been dressed, at the expense of much time and money, the dandy sleeps with his neck on a pillow of this kind to avoid disarranging the hair.

hard timber, such as cedar, mahogany, and even camwood. These canoes were sometimes small enough to be handled by a child, and carried by one person, and so shallow of draught that they would run easily over a few inches of water ; but they were also made large enough to take from 60 to 70

## LEARNING HANDICRAFTS

paddlers, and more than half a ton of cargo. The tree was felled and roughly shaped in the forest, and then floated to the town of the maker. It was drawn up out of the river, and a rough shelter built over it to shade the worker and keep the canoe from warping. A piece of *Euphorbia candelabra* was tied to it, and the maker was not to drink water while working on it, otherwise it would leak; and the charm kept it from cracking and warded off all evil influences from spoiling it.

They were also expert in making paddles, handles for axes and hoes, and in carving out chairs from solid blocks of wood. These latter had four legs and gracefully curving backs, but cost so much that only chiefs and head-men could afford them; and when they went to a drinking-bout at a neighbour's it was no uncommon sight to see the women carrying the chairs and stools to accommodate their lords and masters in comfort while drinking. The natives, with teaching, made good carpenters, and were always handy with tools. Our advent, with new ideas of building and with many tools the like of which they had never seen before, opened to them fresh channels of industry; and as they lost their fear of the "witch-doctor" and were set free from his accusations of "witchcraft" they gave vent to their skill by imitating our dwellings, our furniture, and other conveniences that they saw about our houses, and had seen us make out of the very materials that they had always had to their hand. They eagerly exchanged fowls and other kinds of food for our tools, and we were always ready to help them. Before our arrival the "witch-doctor," by threats of "witchcraft," killed every aspiration of the people and smothered every sign of inventive genius that exhibited itself. To make anything out of the ordinary—any new article—was to be regarded as a "witch," and trouble was sure to follow any suspicion of that kind. There was no hope for them until they burst the bonds that held them in thralldom to their "witch-doctors"; but once released from those miserable trammels, no limits can be set to their future progress.

## CHAPTER VI

### CUSTOMS: SOME CURIOUS AND SOME CRUEL

Stopping the rain—Causing the river to subside—Appeasing water-spirits—  
Saved by his wit—Debit and credit in killing—Methods of drinking—  
Purification by fire—Preventing spirits following their relatives—Burying  
women alive with their husband's corpse—Killing a man for a feast—  
Honouring the dead—Ceremonies at a grave—A monument to a chief.

**I**T was raining one day for about three hours when I noticed a rain-doctor standing on our beach trying to stop the continuous downpour. He was a tall, upright, old man of very kindly disposition, and we had often had joking conversations on this very subject of his power to stop the rain. He had frequently, with much emphasis, asserted his possession of such a power, and assured me that one day he would prove it to me. It was now raining one of those kinds of rain that seem as if it had begun at the Creation and would continue to the crack of doom. From the verandah of my house I saw the rain-doctor pluck a leaf, and going to the bank of the river, he placed the leaf on the closed fist of his left hand, and after extending the arm towards the quarter from which the wind was blowing, he waved it to and fro in a semicircle, and then struck the leaf with the open palm of his right hand. This operation he repeated several times, and at the end of an hour or so the rain began to abate and at last ceased. He then came smilingly up to my house, and said, "You see, white man, I can stop the rain."

Of course he could when there was no more rain to fall. I reminded him of his many failures, and the frequency with

## CAUSING THE RIVER TO SUBSIDE

which he himself had been caught in the rain ; but such reminders neither shook his own faith, nor the people's, in his power to stop the rain.

If a family were troubled with much sickness, and a witch-doctor said it was due to the dissatisfaction of So-and-so's spirit (mentioning the name of an important and recently deceased member of the family), because no offering had lately been made to him, then the family would kill a slave and send him with a message to their troublesome deceased relative, requesting that he would not cause them any further misfortune. If the deceased belonged to a " bush " or inland tribe, the slave would be killed and buried ; but if the departed one was a member of a riverine tribe, then the slave was tied up and thrown into the river. We induced them to stop this custom, but the more timorous ones for a time compromised the matter either by burying brass rods, equal to the price of a slave, in the grave, or scattering them in the river.

The occasion was as follows : The river was rising rapidly and flooding the low-lying town of Monsembe, and as the water rose higher and higher the head-men met together to decide what was to be done to cause the river to subside. Passing that way at the time and hearing the subject of their discussion, I listened to the conference, which lasted about three hours. They suggested one reason after another for the flood, but at last they were unanimously of the opinion that the father of one of the men present was angry with his family for slighting him so long, and to show his disapprobation, he had caused the river (River Congo) thus to rise, and the only method of securing its subsidence was to throw a human sacrifice into the river.

When they arrived at this decision I asked for permission to speak, which was readily granted. With my walking-stick I drew an outline of the Congo River, and, putting in some of the larger tributaries, I told them how the rain was falling incessantly in those parts, and that if they wanted to keep

## APPEASING WATER-SPIRITS

the river from rising, the best way was to send their rain-doctor to Stanley Falls to stop the rain, and thus end their anxiety. And as I spoke I pointed to the old man who was sitting among the other head-men.

"Oh," they exclaimed in chorus, "our rain-doctor can stop the rain falling in these parts; but his powers will not act in another district. Our only remedy is to throw an old man into the river." Old men were cheaper than young ones.

"Well," I replied, "old Mata Bwata (the old chief who was credited with the rise of the river) was a little man, and I am a big man; but one day I shall die and shall be buried here in Monsembe, and if so little a man can cause the river to rise so much because he is angry with you about a ceremony, how high do you think I shall cause the water to rise when I shall be angry with you about murdering men and women in this manner?"

"Why," they answered, "you will be able to make the water come right above our heads, and we shall all be drowned. All right, white man," they continued, "we know what you mean, and we promise not to throw anyone into the river."

We found afterwards that they compromised the matter, for when they held a mimic "naval" battle (with canoes) in honour of Mata Bwata's memory, to appease his dissatisfied spirit, they scattered six hundred brass rods in the river—the price of a slave—in lieu of a human sacrifice.

While on this subject of appeasing water-spirits I may relate a very amusing incident that came to my knowledge, the chief actor in which was well known to me. The folk in the Bombilinga district had been very unsuccessful in their fishing, and putting the cause of their non-success down to the wrath of the water-spirits who had turned aside the fish from their traps and nets, they desired to conciliate them. With this object they decided to buy a man and throw him into the river. They bought a man with one eye, who, on account of that deformity, was sold cheap, and, tying him, as they thought, securely, they hurled him from a canoe into the river.



## SAVED BY HIS WIT

By some means, however, he got loose and swam ashore, and on his landing the surprised people asked him why he had returned after being sacrificed to the water-spirits. His smart reply was: "The water-spirits did not want any one-eyed folk down there, so they loosened the ropes and sent me ashore." By his wit he saved his life, but another and more perfectly formed person was bought and thrown into the river in his stead. This happened some years before we went to live in the district, but the one-eyed man I knew very well, and more than one person told me of the incident.

Up to the early months of 1890 eight brothers lived at Bonjoko—a town three miles below Monsembe. For some unknown reason their slaves beat to death the chief of that town. Now slave-owners were held responsible for the actions of their slaves, so the brothers had to flee for their lives; but one of them was killed before he could escape, and the others came to Monsembe and built a set of houses with a strong palisade round them. They lived thus for nine months in apparent security. A chief, however, is worth two ordinary men, and the family of the murdered head-man did not forget that one more life was owing to them, but they waited their time and opportunity.

Some nine months afterwards a Monsembe slave fell from a palm tree and was picked up dead. All that day and the next the other slaves of the town danced and sang at the funeral festivities of the dead man, and during the noise of their crying and chanting dirges some Bonjoko people entered the town, rushed into the stockade, and, killing one of the brothers there, they cut open the head of another, and chased a third one into the bush, where they speared him to death.

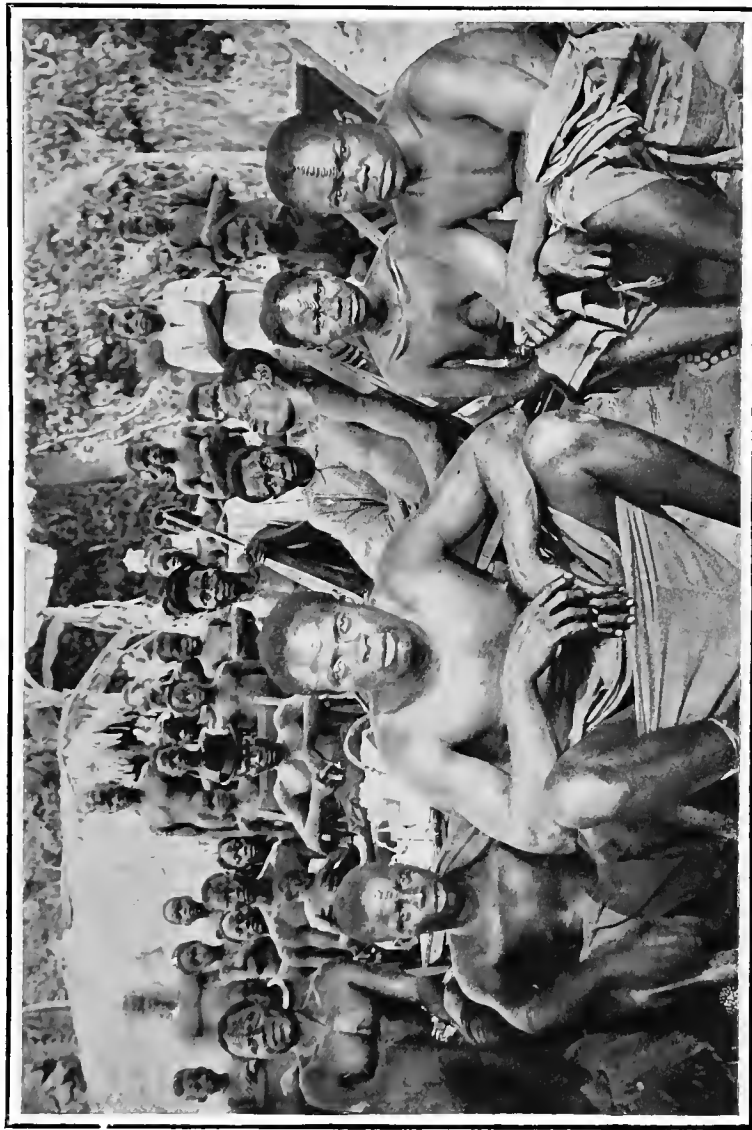
If only one brother had been killed the feud would have ended, and reconciliation between the families would have followed; but in affairs of this kind they have a credit and debit side, i.e. the chief of Bonjoko was a great man, so it needed two deaths to expiate his. The Bonjoko people had killed one brother before the family had escaped from the

## DEBIT AND CREDIT IN KILLING

town, and now they desired to kill one other only to square the account ; but being divided in their attack into two or three parties, acting independently, neither knew what the other had done or was doing, two brothers were killed, during the raid, instead of one. Thus the Bonjoko family owed one life to the brothers, and according to custom they should not have stopped hostilities until there was a clear balance-sheet. The remnant of the brothers could move about freely, and needed no longer to live enclosed in a stockade. It was now the turn of the other family to go in fear of their lives. The brothers took the bodies of their slain relatives to Bonjoko for burial ; and a short time afterwards made blood-brotherhood with the other family, and the blood feud was thus finished.

It leaked out eventually that the Monsembe head-men, who had little or no sympathy with the brothers, had received 1000 brass rods not to oppose the Bonjoko family when they came for vengeance, although the head-men had accepted large presents from the brothers on the promise of protection and the right of asylum in their town. This treachery was condemned by public opinion, but those who condemned it only did so because they had had no share of the spoils.

The principal drink, apart from water, was *manga*=sugar-cane wine. The canes were cut into two-foot lengths and the outside skin peeled off. The juicy pith was put into a long, strong, canoe-shaped trough, where it was pounded into pulp with heavy pestles. By the side of the trough was a strong cross-stick fixed to two stout uprights, and from the cross-stick was suspended by many loops a cord-plaited mat about 16 inches wide and 2 feet 6 inches long. At the lower end of the mat was a stout stick hanging from the bottom loops of the mat. The operator took a large handful of crushed fibre from the trough, and placing it on the mat he gave a twist to the lower stick, folding the mat over on to the fibre, then with both hands he turned the lower stick again and again, until no more juice could be pressed from the enclosed fibre. The juice ran from the rope mat into a conduit below, and on



*Photo by]*

Wulb

### A BOLOKI DRINKING-BOUT

*[Rev. C. D. Dodds*

Sugar-cane wine is made early in the morning, and by the afternoon it is well fermented. A native bell, or drum, is sounded, and the folk gather for the carouse. When a drinking-bout lasts several days the men have leaves fastened in their hair.



## METHODS OF DRINKING

into a large jar at the bottom. This process was repeated until all the crushed fibre had been pressed in the mat. This operation was generally begun about 4 a.m. and completed by 8 or 9 a.m. A little old sugar-cane wine was added to the new, and by 3 or 4 p.m. the whole jar, containing from eight to twelve gallons, would be fizzing with fermentation. A jar of four gallons could be bought for two yards of calico.

A man would buy a jar of wine and beat his drum in a certain way to call his friends, who, after a few minutes, began to gather from various parts of the town, each followed by a wife carrying a stool and some article out of which her husband was to drink. One had a bottle, another a saucepan, another an old coffee-pot, another a jug, another a glass or an enamel mug. A man was chosen to dole out the wine with a small wooden bailer, and no matter how large the vessel offered, the recipient only received so many dips of the bailer, and thus all shared alike.

During the sugar-cane season drinking-bouts were common and would last from eight to ten days. Different head-men would buy on succeeding days large jars of *manga*, and would beat their drums to call their cronies and friends to the "drink." They would sit in a circle round the jar of sugar-cane wine, and one would solemnly ladle it out, but no one would drink until all were served. Women, who sat behind their husbands at these carousals, drank only what their husbands gave them, and I have seen only three drunken women. This was not because the women had any aversion to drinking or to drunkenness, but because they could not procure the liquor. The making of the "wine" was a laborious process, hence, while the women cultivated and prepared the canes, the men made the wine and took care to drink it. Drinking-bouts were always followed by a certain amount of sickness, as fever and diarrhoea, and a complete loss of appetite for a time. I think the rough, sharp pieces of fibre found in the unstrained wine irritated the bowels and brought on dysentery; and the irregular lives they lived during these bouts induced fever.

## PURIFICATION BY FIRE

The majority drank in the ordinary way, but some in a manner peculiar to themselves. One sucked his wine through a reed ; another had a cloth dropped over his head while drinking ; another placed some fine-shredded grass over the mouth of his bottle and quaffed his wine through that ; another took a piece of plantain leaf and, making a channel down the middle, put one end into his mouth and poured the wine out of his bottle on to the top end of his leaf, whence it ran down the groove into his mouth. All these various modes of drinking are rigidly followed out of regard to the strict injunctions of some "medicine man," who has told them that in order to prevent the return of a sickness from which they have suffered, or to escape certain diseases, they must drink in such and such a manner, or not at all. When a man was "on the booze" he stuck a leaf in his hair to show it, and then no notice was taken of any stupid or insulting remarks he might make, or of any business transaction he might enter upon.

One day I saw an old woman whom I knew very well sitting in the centre of a ring of fire, and upon inquiry I found that she had had much to do with preparing a corpse for burial, and at the close of the ceremony she had to be purified. A ring of fire made of small sticks encircled her ; she took a leaf, dried it, crunched it in her fist, and sprinkled it on the fire, moving her hands, palms downwards, over the fire ring. When the fire had died out a witch-doctor took hold of the little finger of her left hand with the little finger of his right hand, and, lifting her arm, he drew her out of the fire circle purified. She was now supposed to be cleansed from all contamination with the dead.

Walking one day in Monsembe I saw an incident that recalled Burns' "Tam o'Shanter" to my mind. There had been a death in a family, and the relatives had just performed all the necessary rites and ceremonies, and were returning to to their homes. A small trench some twenty feet long was dug with a hoe. The relatives took up their position on the side



*Photo by]*

*[Rev. C. J. Dodds*

### A BOLOKI WOMAN AND CHILD

The parallel lines of cicatrices running from the neck to the navel are for ornamentation.  
The ring of solid brass round the neck weighs about 12 lbs., but some weigh even 28 lbs.





## BURYING WOMEN ALIVE

of the trench nearest to the grave, the medicine-man stood on the other side, and his assistant was placed at the end of the trench with a large calabash of water. At a signal the water was poured into the trench, and while it was running the medicine-man took each person by the hand, and mumbling an incantation he pulled him, or her, over the running water. When all had been pulled over, one by one, the water was allowed to run until the calabash was empty. I asked the reason of the ceremony, and they told me it was to keep the spirit of their deceased, and buried, relative from following them. It was very evident from the rites observed that they thought the spirits could not cross running water.

One evening I heard a considerable amount of shouting and screaming, and on going to the scene of the excitement I found two women strongly bound who were weeping most bitterly, and begging to be set free. I asked them the reason for being thus tied, and they replied, "You know our husband, Mangwele, is dead. He is to be buried to-morrow morning, and we are to be buried alive with his body. Untie us, white man, and save us from such a death."

I knew the custom of the district very well, but had never been brought into contact so closely with it. In every family of importance there were one or two women called *mwila ndaku*, which meant that when their husband died they were to be buried alive with his corpse, unless in the meantime they bore children, when other women took their place. Every time they heard their name it was a reminder of the awful fate that awaited them.

From my heart I pitied the women, and turning to the members of the family I pleaded and remonstrated with them in such a way, and with such God-given eloquence, that they at last said, "All right, white man, we will give up this custom." They untied the women, who at once began to dance about us, relieved that they had been rescued from such a horrible fate.

Next morning the men came and asked me to attend the

## KILLING A MAN FOR A FEAST

funeral, to see for myself that they really intended to keep their promise. I went, and for the first time in the history of that district a man of importance was buried without living women being inhumed with the corpse. Now I knew all the wives, children, and slaves of that man, and whenever I asked for them, they were able to show them—a proof that they had not secretly buried any after I had left the grave; and as only members of the family, or slaves owned by the deceased, would follow and attend upon the spirit of the departed, I felt sure that no outsiders had been surreptitiously substituted. From that time they used to request that either I or one of my colleagues would attend important funerals, to see that they kept their promise. We were exceedingly glad to stop such a cruel custom.

We were not always successful in our efforts to save life, as the following incident will show: The people at Bonjoko determined to have a great feast. They bought as fat a slave as they could procure, broke his legs and arms, and fed him for three days, while they made a great quantity of sugar-cane wine. I made every possible endeavour to save him, but utterly failed to do so, and on the third day he was killed and the horrible orgy was held. That was in the early years of our Mission; but in after years they became heartily ashamed of the whole affair.

When a man of any position died his wives would throw off their dresses and wear old rags (sometimes they would go absolutely naked), pick up anything belonging to him—his chair, spear, pipe, mug, knife, shield, or blanket—anything that first came to hand, and having covered their bodies with a coating of clay, they would parade the town in ones, or twos, or threes, crying bitterly and calling upon him to return to them. They would stop at times in their crying and say, “He is gone to So-and-so, we will go and find him,” and away they would start off in a business-like fashion in their pretended search for him. This parading they would keep up for a day or two, and then women of the town would bedeck



Photo 51

# A MEMORIAL TO A DECEASED HEAD-MAN

[See K. H. Kirkland

A shelter with an open front is erected, and lined with cloth. A rough table covered with a cloth is arranged, and on it are placed washbasins, bottles etc., and under it are put stools, large wine jars, etc. These things are all "killed," that their spirits may go to the spirit-land and be the property of the chief thus honoured. See page 106.



## CEREMONIES AT A GRAVE

themselves with climbing plants, vines, leaves, and bunches of twigs, and forming themselves into a procession they would march through the town chanting the praises of the deceased. Men would paint and arm themselves as for a fight, and would imitate the daring acts of the departed as a warrior; and if he had been remarkable for fighting on the river, they would arrange a sham canoe fight in his honour. Fifteen or twenty canoes, filled with men armed with spears, shields, and guns, would go through all the manœuvres of a mimic river fight, firing their guns, pretending to throw their spears, or deflect them with their shields, circling round each other amid shouts of their prowess, or laughter at those who, losing their balance, fell into the river. Those ashore would crowd along the bank and yell out directions, approbation, and encouragement to their friends in the canoes. It was an amusing and interesting sight, and seemed to be thoroughly enjoyed both by actors and spectators alike. They called this praising or honouring the dead.

I was asked on one occasion to attend the burial of a prominent man of the district, and was interested in seeing the following rites performed: After the coffin had been lowered into the grave, men came forward, and, taking a spear, they called upon the spirits of those whom the deceased had killed in times of war to attend their conqueror in the spirit world, and every time a name was mentioned or an order given a thrust was made with a spear. The deceased had killed seven persons, and their skulls were arranged round the base of the wild fig tree just in front of his house. Different men called on the different spirits, and so far as I could ascertain it was those who knew all the particulars of the slain, and the circumstances attending their death, that had to call on them to attend and obey the deceased. It seemed to me that he gave details of the person killed in order that the spirits should make no mistake as to who was meant, and described the manner of death that there might be no misapprehension about a claim on their service being established. Some spears

## A MONUMENT TO A CHIEF

and knives were put in the coffin, and some brass rods (the currency) were laid in the grave for the use of the departed.

Some months later a shelter was built over the grave, with a rough table under it. On this table mugs, bottles, saucepans, plates, etc., were arranged ; and at the sides, and under the table, stools, chairs, large wine-jars were put ; but everything was "killed," i.e. broken. All the natives told me that the articles were "killed " to keep people from stealing them, yet they had an idea that the things thus displayed not only served as a memorial to the deceased, but helped him in some indefinable way in the spirit land. Undoubtedly they had forgotten the reason for "killing" the articles. The stealing reason was not sufficient to meet the case, for there was too wholesome a fear of the revenge the spirits could inflict, and detection was too easy for anyone to be so foolhardy as to rob a grave. No, this display of useful goods served three purposes : it was a "monument " to the important man buried beneath it ; it was a proof of his own, and his family's, wealth ; and lastly, and probably the original object of the articles being placed on the grave, they were conveniences to increase his comfort and prestige in the spirit world to which he had gone.

## CHAPTER VII

### SOCIAL LIFE AND ORGANIZATION

Salutations—Sneezing—Land is communal—River rights—Slaves and their position—Laws of inheritance—Sons given as pawns—Masters' responsibility—Debtor and creditor—Rules for collecting debts—Rules for fighting—The evening meal—Dividing food—Greediness condemned—The village dance—The impromptu song—Its effect on various people.

**R**UDENESS, discourtesy, and lack of sociality are greatly condemned by the Boloki, and will be punished in *longa*, or the nether regions to which their spirits go after death ; hence they are very punctilious about saluting each other whenever they meet, visit, or pass one another. The following are their principal salutations.

Morning :

*Olongo O !* You are awake. Answer : *Nalongoi O !* I am awake.

*Obimi O !* You are out. Answer : *Nabimi O !* I am out.

Later in the day, when a man is passing a neighbour's house, he will say to the one sitting inside or outside his house :

*Ojali O !* or *Ol' o moi O !* You are alive (exist or sit), or, You are there. Answer : *Najali O !* or *Nal' oni O !* I am alive, or I am here.

If the resident sees the visitor first he says :

*Oy' oni O !* You have come here. Answer : *Nay' oni O !* I have come here.

If the visitor stays chatting for a little time, he says on leaving :

*Nake O !* I go. And the other responds : *Oke O !* You go.

If a man is ill he is greeted thus :

## SALUTATIONS

*Okeli boti O!* You are a little better (*bolau* is understood).

After his illness the greeting is: *Okeli bolau O!* You are good, i.e. You are better. And the answer to the first is: *Nakeli boti O!* I am a little better; and to the second: *Nakeli bolau O!* I am well.

To leave out the *O!* is for the greeting and response to lack of cordiality, and the emphasis on the *O!* and the tone in which it is uttered are indicative of the feeling those greeting one another have for each other. *Bwanda* is the word used in greeting a superior, and the answer is *Bika* (these words have lost their meaning); but a superior greets an equal with the same salutations as an inferior does an equal, i.e.: *Ojali O!* *Obimi O!* *Oy' oni O!* etc.

There is another salutation used by a person to an equal, the answer to which is very various; and, in fact, every person has his own reply according to his circumstances and the way in which he thinks his neighbours regard him at the time. One man greets another by saying, *Losako*, Blessing on you; and he replies, *Ngai nkumbaku*, I am one who is cursed, i.e. the people in the town are always cursing him, or he fancies they are. Or the reply may be, *Bansina*, They hate me, i.e. the folk in the town do not like him; or *Ngai nsu ya mai*, I am a fish, i.e. Everybody likes me just as everybody likes fish; or, *Nakalela bana ba ngai*, I am weeping for my children, said by one mourning over some great misfortune or bereavement. A vain person arrogates to himself a phrase indicative of his egotism, while a despondent one uses a sentence that does not truly reflect the attitude of his neighbours towards him, although in his humility he may think so.

There is a curious saying after one has sneezed, viz. *Ngai nya, motu mosusu*, "It is not I, but someone else," and this is accompanied by a vigorous clapping of the hands and snapping of the fingers, expressive of great astonishment. It means: I am surprised that you want to call away my spirit (the spirit is supposed to escape through the nostrils), I really am not the person you think I am, but somebody else.



## LAND IS COMMUNAL

The natives are fond of water, and bath frequently during a hot day ; and children are bathed regularly twice a day. A mother takes her infant to the river, and, gripping it tightly just under the right armpit, she dips it beneath the water. And after holding it there many moments, she will lift it out, and just as it regains its breath to start crying, down it will go again. This is repeated about a dozen times, and then rubbing the superfluous water off with the palm of her hand, she holds it out in the sun for a few moments to dry. Riverine people can remain under the water for a long time while attending their fish-nets, and this habit they have gained from those infantile experiences, when it was either holding the breath, or drinking a quantity of dirty river water.

They wash their mouths both before and after meals, and generally carry a native tooth-brush (a piece of cane three inches long and frayed at one end) about with them, and use it frequently during the day. To this habit they probably owe the beautiful white teeth so usually found among the natives. Both men and women occasionally pay a hairdresser to comb out their hair nicely, and plait it into three plaits—two standing out at right angles to the temples and one standing out above the forehead. They also frequently rub their bodies with palm-oil and camwood powder, and will sometimes blacken their eyebrows.

The land surrounding a town belongs to the people who live in the town. Certain landmarks, as streams, forests, etc., are agreed upon as boundaries. If there is a town near the boundary the land reaches right up to the boundary of the next town, but if the town is some distance from the forest boundary, then the ground between the boundaries is neutral land in which the folk of both towns can hunt, cut timber, etc., as they please. Within the boundary the people of the town are free to make their farms and build their houses where they like, provided the land is not already occupied by someone else. Priority of occupation is the only title recognized. There is no such thing as unclaimed land. It is either within

## RIVER RIGHTS

the boundary and is claimed by the town living on it, or it is between the boundaries and is for the benefit of the near towns as neutral hunting, etc., but no one can sell that land without the consent of those towns that are mutually benefited by it.

If a slave belonging to a man of the town cultivated a piece of land owned by her master's town, she had full rights over it, and her master is careful to see that those rights are not infringed. Of course, she cannot sell the ground, but she can sell the farm as a farm and the stuff growing on it, and the person who buys the "stuff" can continue to cultivate it, if she is an inhabitant of the town owning the land, if not, she can let the produce mature there, and when she has removed the said produce the land will revert again to the town.

Men, women, and children can own, for the time being, the land that they have cleared for farming purposes; and can own slaves whom they have bought or inherited. I have known a case in which a slave owned a slave, and that slave—the property of another slave—owned a slave also. When we bought a piece of land in 1890, the price given was divided among the head-men in the town according to their importance, and they gave a part of their shares to their followers—members of their family, but not to their slaves. The State told us we could take the plot of land we wanted for nothing; but we recognized the natives' rights in their land, and thus paid them compensation for relinquishing those rights to us. If we had not done so, the natives would have regarded us as interlopers who had stolen their land, and I think their view would have been the right one.

The river running by the land belonging to a town is the joint property of the townsfolk for fishing purposes. People of other towns are not allowed to fish there. There are, however, large tracts of neutral water where anyone can fish with trap or net, provided no one else is fishing in that spot. These fishing rights are so well recognized that men never think of fishing along our bank without first seeking our permission.

## LAWS OF INHERITANCE

Slaves can be sold by their owner; and they can also be killed by their master, and no one can prosecute him for murder—he has simply destroyed his own property, and “surely a man can do what he likes with his own goods.” Slaves are, as a rule, treated well, for they can easily run away, and their owner will then lose the money invested in them. It is to the owner’s interest to look properly after them—to house them, to provide them with wives or husbands, and maintain their rights as members of the community. I have known some few slaves run away; but I have known more than a few to be treated like members of the family. The better the slaves are treated, the more secure are their masters of their services and value.

The eldest son takes his father’s title, and also inherits a larger proportion of the property than his brothers. The amount depends on the number of sons—if there are three sons, the eldest takes a half, the second son two-thirds of the remaining half, and the last son the rest. The property of a woman goes to her husband, and, failing him, to her own sons, or daughters. The sons of a free woman take priority over those by a slave wife. On the Upper Congo father-right is the rule, whereas on the Lower Congo mother-right is the recognized native law.

Sons inherit their father’s widows, and in sharing them out it is arranged for a man not to have his own mother as a part of his share of the women. The son, on becoming possessed of his father’s widows, can either keep them as his wives, or, if they are slave women, he can sell them; and if they are free women he can arrange for them to marry someone else, and keep the marriage money paid for them.

Failing direct male heirs, the daughter (or daughters) takes the estate; but she gives the wives to some of her near of kin, such as male cousins, etc., but should there be no direct male or female heirs, the family clan takes possession of the estate and divides it among themselves.

When there are male heirs, and the estate is divided up,

## SONS GIVEN AS PAWNS

the daughter (or daughters) takes as her portion the women who were given to her father as her marriage money by her husband ; and these she gives to her brother by the same mother as herself, so that that brother receives his share of the estate as a son, and also the women (if still alive) given as a marriage portion for his sister. In recognition of this gift the fortunate brother will make frequent presents of sugar-cane wine and meat to his sister's husband, as this increment to his wealth has come indirectly from him.

Slaves number about 25 per cent of the population. Some were born slaves, others were seized for debt, a few were captured in war, and some had sold themselves to pay their debts, incurred by adultery, or by the loss of a lawsuit, the expenses of which they could not meet. Some were sold to pay the family debts. It is also the custom for a father to give a son in pawn as security for a loan. The status of a pawn is somewhat higher than that of a slave, for he may be redeemed at any moment, and thus again become a free person. The one who holds such a pawn cannot sell him, nor pass him on to anyone without the consent of the pawner, for the family may arrive with the redemption money, and if the pawn cannot be produced the pawnee will have to pay the family three or four times the value of the pawn.

There are no absolutely independent men and women apart from head-men and chiefs. All the rest are attached to head-men as relatives, slaves, pawns, or by a voluntary surrender of themselves to a chief. If the family of a free man dies off, or becomes very weak—too weak to defend itself against the aggressiveness of the other families in the town, such a free man attaches himself (and any relatives dependent on him) to the head-man of any one of the stronger families he may select. He then practically becomes a member of that family. Their quarrels are his, and his quarrels are theirs. His position is that of a free man owning fealty to the head of his adopted family, and he is never treated as a slave. If he had tried to stand alone in his weakness some quarrel would

## MASTERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

have been picked with him by one of the more powerful families, and eventually he and his would have become slaves. A slave is called *mombo*, from *omba*, to buy; a pawn is *ndanga*=a token; but a free man who attaches himself to a chief is called *ejalinya*, probably from *jala*=to live with.

A slave boy is not permitted to use either camwood powder or oil on his body; but should he please his master one day by bringing him a present of a fine fish, or a large piece of meat, or some cloth and brass rods worthy of his master's acceptance, his owner on receiving the offering will rub his hands over his slave's face, and say, "Your skin is very bad. Why don't you rub it with camwood powder and oil?" and from that time he is allowed to use the cosmetic so prized by all the natives.

As a rule the best dressed men in a town are the slaves, and the worst dressed men the masters. They are afraid to parade their wealth for fear of charges of witchcraft on account of deflecting other folk's goods to their own store; and also a man can more consistently and more easily refuse a loan on the plea of poverty, in old clothes, than he can if he is gorgeously arrayed. Of course, on special occasions, the masters will wear plenty of good cloth, and decorate their bodies with powdered camwood and oil. A slave can dress his hair like a free man; but if he has a beard he must leave it loose, for only free men are permitted to plait their beards.

The master is responsible for the actions of his slaves. I remember a case in 1892 when a slave attempted the life of the head-man of his master's town. His attempt failed, and he escaped to a distant town; but the master was tied up, killed, and eaten. It is not at all improbable that if the master had been a more influential man some other way would have been found to meet the case—a heavy fine—as the attempt was unsuccessful. While theoretically a master is liable for his slave's debts, yet he will repudiate them on the ground that the lender had no right to advance goods to

## DEBTOR AND CREDITOR

a slave without first ascertaining whether the master will be responsible for the payment for them or not. A slave badly treated by his master breaks the *eboko*, or fetish saucepan, belonging to a witch-doctor. Then the witch-doctor demands such a heavy price from the master, as he is responsible for his slave's action, that he prefers to leave the slave as compensation in the witch-doctor's hands to paying such heavy redemption money. The sum demanded is usually more than the price of a slave ; but public opinion is very pronounced against a slave who breaks the *eboko* for insufficient reasons. The fear of this has a strong deterrent effect on bad, passionate-tempered masters in restraining them from ill-treating their slaves.

Labour is not regarded as a degradation, and those who are skilled in smithing, canoe-making, etc., not only become comparatively wealthy, but are regarded with great respect on account of their skill. Boys like to accompany their fathers on fishing and trading expeditions ; and girls go with their mothers to the farms as soon as they can walk, and toy hoes are given them to play with while on the farm. These journeys to the farms or to the fishing camps are a change to the young folk, and are much enjoyed by them.

Among the Boloki there are neither markets nor market-places. If a person has anything for sale he walks through the town calling out its name like a London hawker. Sometimes a person catches a fish that is taboo to him, and he will hawk it through the town to try to exchange it for another that he can eat.

In their business transactions credit is frequently given, and for such credit no interest is expected. To recover a debt a creditor first duns the debtor until he is tired, then he breaks the pots and saucepans, and anything he finds outside the debtor's house, and finishes by telling him that on a certain day he will call again for the money. If the debtor then fails to pay, the creditor will collect a few of his friends, and together they will go and lie in ambush near the farms

## DEBTOR AND CREDITOR

until a wife of the debtor comes along, when they will pounce upon her and take her to their town. The woman will kick, struggle, and scream for the sake of appearances ; but she knows that she will be lightly tied and well treated.

The debtor will hear of the capture of his wife, and, supposing he owes 1000 brass rods, he will collect the money as quickly as possible, and take it with 500 extra rods, which he will now have to pay to his creditor to compensate him and his friends for the trouble of tying up the woman and the cost of feeding her. As a woman is worth nearly 3000 rods, it pays the debtor to redeem his property by paying his debt and the sum demanded for expenses.

If the debt is for 1000 rods the creditor may tie up one woman, but if he ties up two women he puts himself in the wrong, for the value of one woman more than covers the debt and expenses. If the debt is for 3000 or 4000 rods, the creditor may capture two women, and so in proportion to the debt. It is very seldom that a woman is seized for any sum less than 500 rods. If the debt is not paid within a reasonable time, the creditor can keep the woman as his wife, or if she happens to be a slave, he can sell her. If the debtor has no wives, then a member, or members, of his family can be seized on the same principle as shown above. Sometimes a creditor will tie up a person belonging to the town of his debtor ; but this is rarely done except in cases of hostility between the towns. These debts are generally incurred either in buying a large canoe, or a wife, or in losing a lawsuit.

A village may have from twenty to five hundred huts in it, and even more. The rows of houses are generally built in parallel lines to the river ; and a head-man possesses one or more lines, according to the size of his family or clan. He may have many wives, slaves and their wives, "pawns," and dependents, and consequently own several rows of houses ; or he may be the eldest of several brothers who with their wives, slaves, etc., jointly own several rows of dwellings. The former head-man is a greater man than the latter, he has more prestige

## RULES FOR FIGHTING

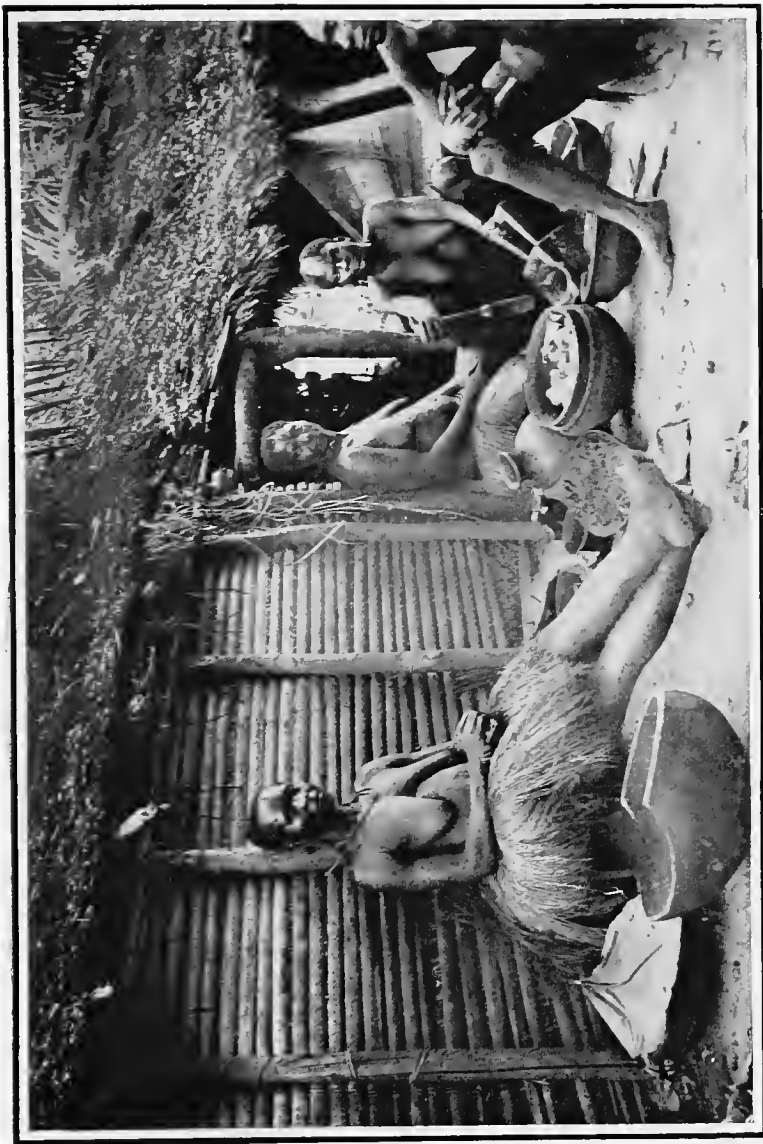
in the town, and has greater influence in its palavers, for such a man is the head of a powerful family, each unit of which may number more than the brothers, their wives, and slaves put together.

The *mboka*=village, town, locality, may consist of from 20 to 150 families, numbering anything up to 2000 or 3000 people, or it may mean only one or two families not numbering more than 50 or 60 people ; but it does not matter how large or how small the *mboka* is, it is independent, self-governing, and recognizes no over-lord. There is the head of the family, whose word is law to his own relatives and immediate dependents living in his section of the town. Then there are the heads of the families who meet together to arrange the affairs of the town, and to decide on any course of action in relation to the neighbouring towns. Some are heads of larger and richer families than others ; and such men necessarily have more influence, and their words carry greater weight than the utterances of poorer and smaller men. The lives of the people are rendered pleasant, or otherwise, according to the temper and ambitions of these head-men.

The various families forming a town live, as a rule, at peace with each other ; and if there is a dispute they try to settle it by "holding a palaver." But if the quarrel develops into a fight, then sticks are the weapons used, as guns and spears are rarely, if ever, brought out in these miniature "civil wars." They combine as a whole against a common foe.

The family that causes the quarrel leads the van in a war, and if only the offended family attacks the offending family, the other families of the offender's town stand armed ready to defend their dependents and property, should the offenders prove unable to repulse the attack. But if the offended family brings the several families of its town to attack the offenders, then the other head-men and their followers will join to repel the attack, for it is no longer a quarrel between two families of different towns, but a fight between town and town. Thus a family combines to fight a family, and a town to fight a town,





*Photo 82*

**BOLOKI WOMEN PREPARING AN EVENING MEAL**

[Rev. C. J. Dodds

The woman on the right has a mortar and pestle for pounding boiled plantain. She has a broad band of hair shaved off in the style of the day. The walls show the split bamboos used as the outer lining of the hut, then there are an inch or two of grass and another lining of bamboos inside, and the whole is tightly laced to the uprights of the wall.



## THE EVENING MEAL

and I have known one case in which a district joined its forces to fight a district.

The evening meal is practically the only meal of the day, and every effort is made to render it as tasty as possible with the limited ingredients at the disposal of the woman cook. Cassava figures as the principal article in every *menu*; and for this meal it is commonly prepared by soaking it for three days, and then after peeling, coring, and dividing it into quarters, it is steamed, and comes out looking white and appetizing. Either fish, or meat when procurable, is stewed in a small saucepan or roasted over the fire, or wrapped in leaves and covered with red-hot embers; but if there is neither fish nor meat, then a sauce of pounded leaves, red peppers, and palm-oil is concocted, and the whole is washed down with gulps of water. They prefer to keep sugar-cane wine for their drinking-bouts and for their cannibal feasts, the latter, in their view, demanding something better than water.

The food is served first to the elders (male), and if visitors are present they take precedence according to their age. As a rule the members of a family are polite to one another, and any departure from the usual forms of courtesy is regarded with disapprobation by the other members of the family. Guests are treated with hospitality, and are protected by the family they are visiting; and I never knew a guest come to harm during a visit. Men and women do not eat together, as it is accounted immodest and indecent for a woman to eat with a man; and it is *infra dig.* for a man to partake of his food with a woman. They eat by themselves at some little distance, and usually out of sight and hearing of the men.

In dividing food, such as meat or fish, the one who divides it takes the portion left after all the others have selected their shares, and in this way they have a guarantee that all the portions are equal in size and quality. If a saucepan of fish and another of cassava are put before five or six persons for them to eat, no division is made, but all help themselves

## GREEDINESS CONDEMNED

from the same saucepans, yet each will be very careful not to eat more than his fair share. But when a fish, or a lump of meat, is given to half a dozen men, or women, they appoint one to divide it into six lots, and the one to whom this very doubtful honour is given is careful to make all the lots equal—in bone, flesh, and fat—for he knows that the others will choose their portions before himself. Any greediness is condemned, and if persisted in others will refuse to eat with the offender, and he becomes an object of ridicule to the rest of the family and in the village.

The following story, which I often heard related around their evening fires, will well illustrate how the natives regarded any greediness about food :

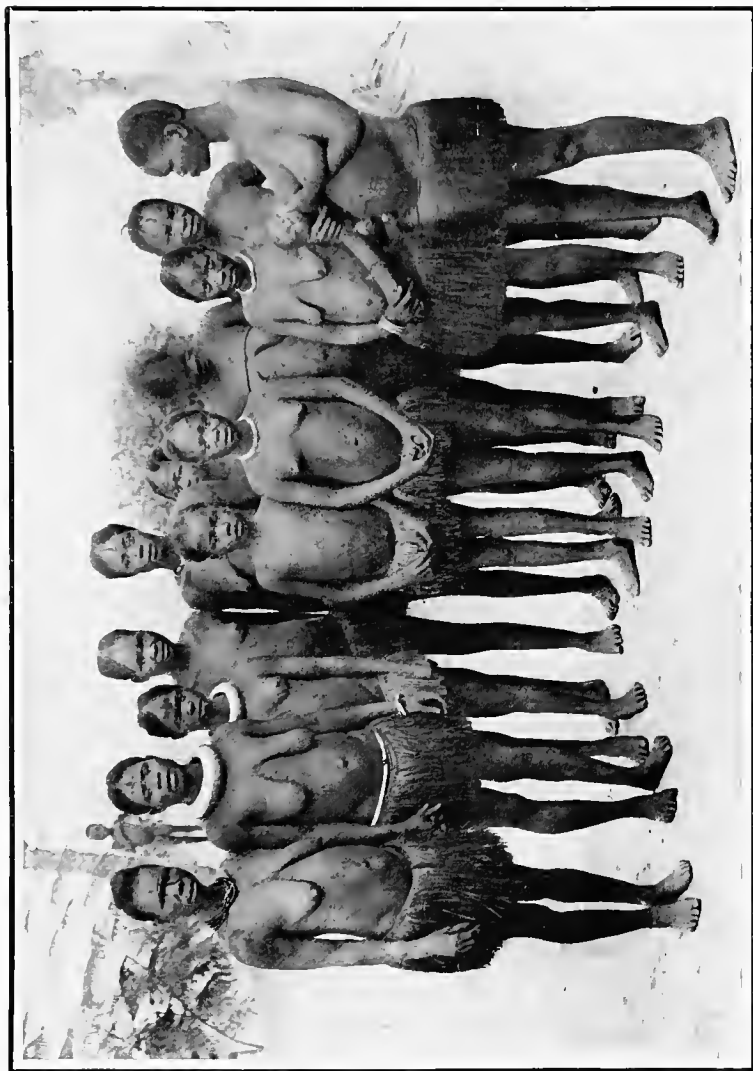
“Mokwete possessed a large number of wives ; and one day he made a trap and eventually snared an animal which he carried to his town and told his wives to cook. When they had cooked the meat they took him his share, and reserved a portion for themselves. Mokwete ate his meat alone, but it did not satisfy him, for having so many wives the portion of meat that fell to him was rather small.

“By and by he killed another animal, and he said to himself : ‘ I kill plenty of animals, but get very little meat for myself, because my wives are so numerous.’ When he reached the forest near his town he disguised his voice and shouted : ‘ Wives of Mokwete, wives of Mokwete.’

“They answered, ‘ E ! ’ thinking it was a spirit calling them from the bush.

“Then he said : ‘ When your husband comes with meat, you must not eat any of it ; if you do, you will die.’

“In a little time he picked up the animal and went on to the town. The women cooked the meat and brought it all to him. He asked them why they had not taken any of it, and they told him what they had heard from one of the bush spirits. Mokwete ate all the meat, was well filled, and congratulated himself on the success of the ruse. He repeated this trick again and again.



*Photo 63*

# GROUP OF BOLOKI WOMEN AT MOBEKA

*[a Dutch Trader]*

The women are wearing skirts of palm-fruit fibre. When "dressed" a young woman has fifteen of these skirts on, and then they stand out like a baller-girl's dress. Some of the older ones have the cock's-comb tribal mark. Those without the tribal marking are slaves. The collar on the older woman is of solid brass and weighs about 15 lbs.



## THE VILLAGE DANCE

“ One day Mokwete’s son went into the bush, and while there he heard the sound of someone coming, so he hid himself. In a little time a man arrived and threw something with a thud to the ground, and then he heard a voice say : ‘ Wives of Mokwete, wives of Mokwete, when your husband comes with meat you must not eat it ; if you do, you will die.’ ”

“ The lad, on looking out, saw that it was his father who was deceiving his mothers, and keeping him and the other children from having their proper share of the meat. He hurried home and told his mothers all that he had seen and heard, but they disputed his word. However, one of them went to look, and saw that it was really the husband who had been telling them not to eat the meat. She went and told the others, and they decided to run away.

“ While Mokwete was out hunting one day, his wives broke their saucepans, put out their fires and fled ; and upon reaching their various towns they told their families why they had left their husband—on account of his greediness—and everybody justified them.”

Now Mokwete would return to a fireless hearth, an empty village, and no one to cook for him and wait on him. And I have heard the folk snap their fingers, and say : “ Mokwete was well punished,” and there was no one to pity him. “ When a man buys a fish or a piece of meat he should share it with the wife who cooks it for him ; and when he kills an animal he should share it with all his wives.” The children received their share of meat or fish through their mothers.

While the hearth is the centre of a woman’s family life, for her children (if she is fortunate enough to have any) will gather around it at sundown to watch the bubbling saucepans on the fire, and her husband may occasionally be found there playing with his youngsters, or chatting to his wife, yet the dance is the real centre and expression of the social life of the village. Is there a death ? Then relatives and friends will show their sympathy, not by sitting around talking over the good qualities of the departed, but by dancing their best

## THE IMPROMPTU DANCE

and chanting the praises of him who has so lately gone to that mysterious *longa*, or nether regions, where all spirits find their home for a time. And standing round the funeral dances will be the whole village, applauding the agile or chaffing the awkward. Is there a marriage? Then relatives and boon companions of the old bachelor days are invited, and after the feast a dance is arranged, and although some of the legs will be unsteady, through too much sugar-cane wine, yet all present, both dancers and spectators, will be in a jovial mood.

On moonlight nights the drums will be brought out, reed rattles, ferret bells, and anything else that will tinkle, will be tied around the ankles, the men and women will form lines opposite each other, and for hours the dancers will jump, twist, and wriggle to and fro in the most approved fashion to the tap, tap, or boom, boom of the rhythmic drum. All distinctions are forgotten for the time being. The skilled and the unskilled, the poor and the rich, the slave and the free, are all mixed in indistinguishable confusion. It is the best dancer, be he poor and a slave, who is the cynosure of all eyes and the object of all their praises. And as the dance proceeds the dancers sing in unison some recitative song, while the onlookers keep time to song and dance by clapping their hands and swaying their bodies to and fro.

The greedy man, the coward, the thief, the scamp who disregards the feelings of others and rides rough-shod over the social and communal customs, the man who is accused of witchcraft and refuses to take the ordeal, and the incestuous, are all put into the songs which are sung at these village dances; and there is no more powerful factor in influencing the native to good and evil, inciting him to reckless bravery, or deterring him from committing some foolish deed, than to put his name into an impromptu song at a village dance. The paragraph in our newspaper is read by comparatively few people, and only a small percentage of those who read it know the person mentioned; but the song is sung, night after night, by all the village—the very neighbours of the one thus



## ITS EFFECT ON VARIOUS PEOPLE

held up to ridicule or honour. The village song inspires the daring deeds in time of war, it brands and shames the cowards, it considerably restrains the rascals, and maddens to the verge of suicide the fool who so badly treats his wives that they run away and leave him a cold hearth by which to sit.

## CHAPTER VIII

### MARRIAGE AND CHILD-BEARING

Young girls betrothed—The bespoke money—Marriage money—Dressing the new wife—A large looking-glass—A woman can choose her husband—Divorce—No great desire for children—Storage for baby spirits—Treatment of twins—Snake omen—Woman's totem—The mother-in-law—Polygamy and its results—Monogamy and its results—Better morality—More children—Purer women—Better home-life.

YOUNG girls and even babies are betrothed in marriage, and payments made for them long before they are old enough either to understand the contract or give their consent. On the marriage money being completed the man takes a brass bracelet, and in the presence of witnesses he puts it on the child's arm, saying, "This is my wife." When the girl arrives at a suitable age, and sometimes even before puberty, she is taken by her parents, together with some sugar-cane wine, to her husband, and handed over to him; and on the man giving the parents a present the transaction is completed. Should, however, the child die, another is put in her place; but if that is impossible, the money is returned. Sometimes a girl objects to being handed over in this way to a man whom she dislikes, and if her protests are disregarded she will run away to a neighbouring town and select her own husband, if she has not already done so, and the parents will have to make the best bargain they can in the way of marriage money with their new son-in-law. They would be at an obvious disadvantage, as their customer would already be in possession of the "goods."

## THE BESPOKE MONEY

If a man in search of a wife sees an unattached young woman whom he likes he may speak to the girl or to her father first, and if they—the girl and her parents—are agreeable, he will call his friends as witnesses and go to the father's house. The girl will then be called out, and the man will take his spear, and going into the centre of the crowd he will stick the spear in the ground, and say: "If the girl loves me, let her pull up the spear." Thereupon the girl will step forward, and pulling up the spear she will carry it to her father, saying, "*Namojinga*"=I love him.

When the girl has pulled up the spear, the man has to pay the "bespoke" money—a hoe, an axe, a blanket, a looking-glass, a matchet, and a few other odds and ends—to the head of the girl's family. The girl is then reserved for him until such time as he can pay the whole, or the larger part of the marriage money—equal to about £10, which is approximately the cost of two male and two female slaves. In the meantime he can give the girl small presents, and she may cook and send him an occasional dish of food, and often there is cohabitation before marriage, for the young man regards the girl, and speaks of her, as his wife.

A free man marrying a free woman will have to give her father or family two male and two female slaves, and neither brass rods nor barter goods will be taken in lieu of them; but as there are so many debts among them a person will sometimes (and it is not uncommon) pay this "marriage money" and marry without a single slave actually passing between them; i.e. B wants to marry A's daughter, so he will go to C and D, who each owe him a slave, and will take them to A, who accepts them as his debtors; then B will go to E and F, who each owe him a female slave, and these debtors of B will be taken to A, who accepts them as his own debtors; now C, D, E, and F have no slaves they want to part with, so they, in their turn, will look up some debtors and take them to A, who will again accept these new parties as his own debtors. This was called *bwaka nyungu*=to pass on or throw over a

## DRESSING THE NEW WIFE

debt (or credit as the case may be) from one to another. I have known more than one case in which the father of the girl has had the debt worked gradually back to himself, and in giving his daughter in marriage he has received nothing, but has paid some of his creditors.

When the time arrives for the marriage the parents take some plantain, cassava, fish, with various other kinds of food, and a calabash or jar of sugar-cane wine, and together with their daughter they go to the house of the bridegroom and hand over the girl by putting her hand in the man's hand in the presence of witnesses. These latter, after drinking the wine and sharing in the feast, will dance in honour of the occasion, and the ceremony is completed. The food and wine, given by the parents, are a proof that the girl is not sold as a slave, but is given in marriage as a free woman.

During the time the man is collecting the marriage money he will build a house, if he does not already possess one, and the girl, under the supervision of her mother, will prepare a farm. After the ceremony described above is over, the girl borrows all the finery she can of her female friends, decorates herself with palm-oil and camwood powder, and for two or three weeks walks about the town with her husband—a sign to all that she is now his wife. If the man has already a few wives, they will help to “dress her” by the loan of their own trinkets, and will lead her about the town as a proof that she is now a fellow-wife and belongs to their husband.

Hanging on the wall in my dining-room was a looking-glass 15 inches wide by 18 inches high; it was probably the largest looking-glass in that part of Africa, and it was one of the “sights” of the district. Frequently while sitting in my study I would hear the shuffling of many feet and much giggling. On going into the dining-room I would see perhaps eight or ten women all laughing and nudging one another, and there in the centre right before the glass would be a well-decorated woman wriggling about in her vain attempt to see both sides of herself at once. It was a new wife whom the older wives

## A LARGE LOOKING-GLASS

had brought to view herself in the white man's looking-glass. In the "trade looking-glass" she could only see small sections of herself, but in this large one she had an expansive view of the whole "landscape," and her remarks of wonder and surprise were causing the onlookers to giggle and to excite her to greater efforts to procure broader views of herself. They exhibited no jealousy, but regarded her as an acquisition—the new wife being one more to help keep the husband.

During this period the man buys all the food, but when the "honeymoon" is over the girl takes up her farm-work and settles down to ordinary life. From that time she brings home each afternoon some of her farm produce to prepare for her own and her husband's evening meal. The husband, however, must find her the fish for such meals as he partakes with her, and should he have a quantity of meat he must be willing to share it with his wives.

For the poor slave woman there are no preliminary gifts, no "bespoke" money, no wedding feast and dance, and no "honeymoon." The sum agreed upon is paid, and the slave woman is taken to her new owner's house, or given as a farm help to his favourite wife. The children of such a marriage are called *mbotela*=semi-slave, indicating that one of the parents is a slave. If a man cannot afford to pay the marriage money for a free wife, or even to buy a slave, he can hire a slave as his wife, and any children born to them belong to the owner of the slave woman and not to the father and mother. Or a man will sometimes borrow a wife of another man for three or six months, and will pay a fixed sum according to the length of time he has her; but any children born of such an arrangement belong to the real husband of the woman.

A man can marry as many women as he can find the marriage money for, but to each he must give a house, and all his free wives have equal rights. His slave wives are simply slaves, and he can sell or kill them just as he pleases. Polygamy is very general, and monogamy is the result of poverty. Free men, as a rule, do not marry slaves; but the slave woman

## A WOMAN CAN CHOOSE HER HUSBAND

is given in marriage to the slave man, and she thus helps to make him contented with his lot in the town and tribe ; she keeps him in food and increases the wealth of her master by bearing children, who are slaves and the property of her owner.

When a free woman does not want to marry the man who is trying to arrange for her, she will tell him frankly that if he persists in marrying her, she will run away from him. But if, in spite of this threat, he completes the arrangements, then a few days after the marriage she will escape to a neighbouring town and put herself under the protection of the chief by tearing his cloth. The chief then gives the husband notice of what has happened, and before he can claim his wife he has to pay the chief 600 brass rods=39s. as compensation for his torn cloth. If the husband does not then permit her to marry the man she wants, she runs away again and again, and every time she runs it will cost her husband 600 brass rods. A sensible man will take warning by the first threat, and will not complete the marriage.

If a free woman is badly treated by her husband, she will resort to the above method of making him pay for his ill-treatment of her, and will thus force him to use her more kindly. There is also a more drastic way of punishing a husband for outrageous conduct towards his wife. After repeated complaints of his ill-usage she will run to the witch-doctor and smash his *eboko*, or saucepan of "medicine," and in so doing she will commit a great offence. The witch-doctor will hold her until the husband redeems her by the gift of a slave, and the payment of a large sum to replace the *eboko* and make fresh "medicine." Having paid the money—for she is worth more than the total value of the slave and the brass rods—he will treat his wife better in future, or she will again break the *eboko*. A slave woman who runs away to a chief will be brought back, and her master will beat, kill her, or sell her right out of the district, so it is wiser for her to run right beyond his reach in the first instance. I have known women who

## THE WITCH-DOCTOR

successfully carried out these various modes of punishing their abusive, bad-tempered husbands; and undoubtedly the fact that the women can and will make their husbands pay in this way renders life more tolerable for them. Without some such system the wife's lot would be terrible and impossible.

Breaking the *eboko*, or "medicine" saucepan, answers another purpose: a man's wife has been stolen from him, and all other means having failed to regain her, he goes to the witch-doctor, tears his cloth and breaks the *eboko*. This action calls attention to the case and arouses widespread interest. The witch-doctor must now take up the case, or he will lose his dignity as a witch-doctor, and folk will lose their respect and fear for his *eboko*. So he places himself at the head of a movement to punish the wife-stealer, and the men who would not help the husband volunteer to fight under the witch-doctor; and when the woman is captured the husband has to pay heavy damages for tearing the cloth, breaking the *eboko*, and for the help of the witch-doctor in the fight. The husband will then try to recover all the damages from the stealer of his wife. It is interesting to note that, both to the husband and to the wife, there is such a force available in their utter need. Here and there a man treats his wife with kindness and consideration, and he sometimes displays an affection for her that is pleasing to the onlooker and an encouragement to those who are working for the uplifting of the race, for it shows of what the men are capable; but to the majority of the men the wife is a passing fancy, a brief passion which is quickly extinguished, and all that remains to warm their hearts, and keep them faithful to each other, are the cold, charred embers of a bare toleration for one another.

Above the age of five years it is impossible to find a girl who is a virgin, and it has been difficult to find a word for virgin in the Congo languages. The only thing a man can do is to see that his wife does not commit adultery after he has married her, without his consent and receiving due compensa-

## DIVORCE

tion for it. Should she do so, then the adulterer is punished, but the woman goes free. If she were punished she would not confess, and without her confession the husband is not able to enforce the fine on the lover. A woman's word is always taken against the man's most solemn oath. I have a very strong suspicion that this power is often abused, (a) by the woman to pay off a grudge against someone who has slighted her, and also to be regarded by the other women of the town as one after whom the men run ; (b) by the husband as a means of replenishing an empty purse—the fine being shared by the husband and wife. There are undoubtedly women who remain faithful to their husbands ; and there are men who treat their wives with kindness and consideration, but from what I observed they are very few indeed. Sometimes in anger two men will exchange their wives, especially if one man's wife is continually running after the other man.

If a woman does not know, or will not perform, her duties properly as a wife, i.e. will not farm, cook, etc., the man can take her back to her family and receive in return the marriage money he gave for her to her family ; but not the "bespoke" money. Should she die within a few years of her marriage the husband can claim another woman, or the return of the marriage money, for his view is that a faulty article has been supplied to him.

When a free woman wants to leave her husband, or have a divorce from him, she sends a "token" to the man of her choice, who, if desirous of possessing her, goes to the husband and tries to arrange the matter. If the husband acts unreasonably in his demands—wants too much marriage money, or desires the whole sum down at once—then she resorts to the expedient of escaping to a neighbouring chief (as mentioned above), and the husband is quickly brought to his senses. Should the "token" sent be returned, she knows that the man does not want her, and if her family are unwilling, or unable through poverty, to return the marriage money, or think she is unreasonable in seeking a divorce, she has to



## NO GREAT DESIRE FOR CHILDREN

remain with her husband. To run away, without just cause, to another town, is to make her name a byword among her acquaintances, and the native is very sensitive to public opinion, as we tried to show in the chapter on Social Life.

We have not found the same desire for children, on the part of the women, as we observed on the Lower Congo. This may be accounted for by the fact that on the Lower Congo the law of mother-right is in full force, and consequently all the children belong to the mother and her family ; while on the Upper Congo father-right is the general custom, and the children belonging to the father, the mother has no particular interest in them.

The beliefs of a tribe considerably affect their point of view, and this is seen in nothing more emphatically than in their beliefs about child-bearing. On the Lower Congo a non-child-bearing woman is the butt of the town's ridicule, she is sneered at, pointed at by all the other women, and is the object of their scorn. She feels degraded in the eyes of all, and however much she may blame her husband, or may try to prove that she is bewitched, yet her shame is bitterly felt and resented. She has failed ignominiously in her one paramount duty to her family. Her sterility is the constant theme of her husband's bickerings ; and when everything else fails to quicken her or stop her nagging tongue, he has only to hint at this abnormal disability and she is choked with chagrin and almost ready to commit suicide.

Now on the Upper Congo among the Boloki it appears that every family has what is called a *liboma*, it may be a pool in the bush, or in the forest, or on an island ; it may be a creek, or it may be a Bombax cotton tree ; but wherever the *liboma* may be it is regarded as the preserve of the unborn children of the family. The disembodied spirits (*mingoli*) of the deceased members of the family performed the duty of supplying these preserves with spirit-children to keep their families strong and numerous. They have very misty ideas as to

## TREATMENT OF TWINS

how these *liboma* are supplied with the spirit-children (or *binghongbo*), but I have a suspicion that underlying the *liboma* is some idea of reincarnation—some thought there was a re-birth of certain deceased members of the family, and others thought that the disembodied spirits had spirit-children, and these were sent to the *liboma* to be endowed in due time with bodies.

Now if a man does not have a child by his wife, then she is simply barren (they always think it is the fault of the woman), but there are no sneers, and no shame. The woman takes her sister to her husband, that he may have a child by her. But if a man has one child by a wife, and no more, he thinks someone has bewitched his *liboma* by taking the family's stock of children from it and hiding them; or, it may be that the other members of the family have bewitched her so that she may not be able to procure another child from the *liboma*, that there might be more for themselves; if, however, none of the family have more than one child by their wives, then some other family, through hatred or jealousy, has taken by witchcraft the children from their *liboma* and concealed them, for only the family to which the *liboma* belongs can give birth to the unborn infant spirits there.

Twins are not frequent, but when they do arrive they demand proper treatment and entail more than ordinary care in the observance of certain duties. Three days after the birth of twins (*masa*) the mother takes them in her arms and dances in front of her house before her neighbours, who join in a chorus in which they sing over and over again: "*Masa e maolela*"=the twins cry for you. The mother is decorated with leaves, sprays, and twigs, the same as for an ordinary birth. These are made into garlands for her head, stuck into her waist-belt, and fixed on her wherever it is possible. At this ceremony the names are given, which are the same for every pair of twins, and these names are retained through life. Other folk may change their names according to fancy, but twins never. The first-born is always known as *Nkumu*, and

## SNAKE OMEN

the second as *Mpeya*, and whenever you hear either of these names you know at once that the bearer is one of twins.

The first-born of twins is always carried on the right arm, and the second on the left arm. Whenever the mother replies to a salutation she must give two answers, one for each child ; and should she greet anyone she must duplicate her greeting, that each child may be recognized. She carries the dual idea further than that, for she must eat, not with one hand, but with both, that each child may be properly nourished. Presents are given in duplicate, or the child not receiving a present will fret, become ill, and die ; and the sickness or death of either child is supposed to arise from carelessness in the observance of these rules. The twins are expected to cry together, rejoice together, and should they lack unanimity in either of these functions of rejoicing or sorrowing together, it is because one is sulky on account of one or other of the above rules having been broken. When one of the twins dies the mother borrows a baby of the same age, and puts it with the living twin that it may not fret.

When a man finds a snake (called *Mwaladi*, a snake with red marks on it) lying by his side when he awakes, he regards it as a sign that he will have a child by his wife ; and if a woman lying or sitting observes the same snake approaching her, she remains quietly in her position, and if it passes near her she sprinkles a little camwood powder over it, and regards it as an omen that she will soon become a mother. The child born after such an augury is not treated with any special respect or interest, and no special name is given to it as on the Lower Congo.

I found that when a woman married she brought her totem with her, and then not only observed her own totem but her husband's also ; and the child born to them took the totems of both parents until there was a council of both families—the paternal and maternal branches—and then it was generally arranged that the child should observe the father's totem.

One day I was interested in watching the following cere-

## BOYS AND GIRLS

mony : The women of the village had rubbed themselves well with camwood powder, they had also decorated their bodies with leaves, and tied on sashes of a creeper with small leaves (*nkokolemba*), and danced for a considerable time to the sound of drums, then the lobe of the right ear of the child was pierced. It was a boy, for if it had been a girl the left lobe would have been pierced (the left is always a token of inferiority). This ceremony took place during the morning, and was a sign to the *boweya* spirit that that child belonged to a family in whose totem the spirit was specially interested. The pierced ear indicated to the spirit that the owner had a claim on its help and protection. These rites were only observed when the family possessed a totem that had a *boweya* spirit to preside over its interests and health, and always took place on the fifth day after the birth of the child.

The father during the pregnancy of his wife is prohibited certain foods, and he is neither to hunt nor fish during the pregnancy and confinement of his wife, unless she goes to a medicine man and is marked with different coloured pigments on the breast, abdomen, shoulders, temple, and forehead, and wears two or three charms ; these ensure for her a good delivery and a healthy child, and also allow her husband to go hunting and fishing. The food prohibitions vary considerably, and while the man is observing these taboos he is said to be in a state of *liboi*, a noun derived from the verb *bwa*=to be confined, to deliver of a child. It is very probably a remnant of *la couvade*. They have, however, no tradition of the man ever having taken the place of the woman by lying in bed during confinement.

There is no adoption into a family, but there is milk-brotherhood, and the milk-brother often receives a portion of the estate ; and there is also milk-sisterhood, and when a woman is a milk-sister it is permissible, but is regarded as very irregular, for her milk-brother to marry her.

There are two names given to illegitimate children—*mwana wa ngangi*=child of a mistress, i.e. a woman who has been

## THE MOTHER-IN-LAW

hired from her husband or family for a fixed period at a certain price ; and *mpampoka*=a child whose father is not known. In the former case the child will eventually be owned by the proper husband or guardian of the woman, unless the lover made other arrangements, that is, paid a larger fee, at the time of hiring his mistress ; in the latter case the child will belong to the woman, and hence to her family, and in both cases the child will remain with its mother until it is ten or twelve years of age.

Abortion is produced by the drinking of a decoction made by boiling *kungubololo* leaves, which is said to be very bitter, like quinine. Abortion is practised to avoid the trouble incurred by having children, or from hatred towards the husband, whom the woman may desire to divorce ; for if she has any children by him, her relationship to her husband is so complicated thereby that she cannot easily leave him for another man.

When a man divorces a wife who has a child of tender years, the child is allowed to remain with her until he or she is about ten or twelve years of age, and then is given up to the father, but is permitted to visit the mother should she be living in a neighbouring town or district. The father has the right to kill his own child, and although the act may be strongly condemned by his neighbours and his family, yet they have no power to punish him, though it may be a clear case of murder. I may say that I never heard of a father killing his child while I lived amongst them ; but the natives assured me that there had been such cases. A father, however, would not hesitate to pawn his children, or even to sell them into slavery, if he were in dire straits. As a rule they are fairly kind to their children, even to over-indulgence, for it is rarely that they punish them.

Perhaps this will be the best place in which to make a few remarks on the mother-in-law. She and her son-in-law may never look on each other's face. I have often heard a man say, "So-and-so, your mother-in-law is coming," and the

## POLYGAMY AND ITS RESULTS

person addressed would run into my house and hide himself until his wife's mother had gone by. They can sit at a little distance from each other, with their backs to one another, and talk over affairs when necessary. *Bokilo* means mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, father-in-law, sister of mother-in-law, brother of father-in-law, wife of wife's brother, and in fact any relation-in-law. *Bokilo*, the noun, is derived from *kila*=to forbid, prohibit, taboo, and indicates that all bearing the relationship of *bokilo* can have no intimate relationship with one another, for it is regarded as incestuous; and it is according to native ideas just as wrong for a daughter-in-law to speak or look at her husband's father, as for the son-in-law to speak or look at his wife's mother. Some have told me that this was to guard against all possibility of cohabitation, "For a person you never look at you never desire." Others have said, "Well, don't you see, my wife came from her womb." I am strongly inclined to the opinion that the former is the real reason.

I knew a case in which a man married his mother-in-law by marriage. The woman was not his wife's mother, but his wife's father's wife, and as such was his mother-in-law. I had seen him avoid her many times, and it was thus evident that all the wives of the wife's father are regarded as joint-mothers of the children, and hence mothers-in-law. His wife's father died, and the man wanted to have one of the wives (i.e. one of his mothers-in-law) as his own wife, so he arranged with a friend to pay the marriage money and take her as his wife, then she, by that marriage, being no longer his mother-in-law, he was able to take her as his own wife. He thereupon paid the money for her and took her to his house.

I cannot close this chapter on marriage and child-birth without putting on record my observations regarding polygamy and its effects on the Congo. Polygamy means monopoly in women, and causes great immorality among the natives practising it; and it is now fast dying out within the sphere of our influence upon the Lower Congo, and in the neighbour-

## POLYGAMY AND ITS RESULTS

hood of our stations upon the Upper. The effect of polygamy was to tie up the women to a comparatively small number of men who were fortunate (?) enough to inherit them, or had procured the wealth with which to pay their marriage money. There was a constant complaint amongst the young and vigorous men of the middle and lower orders that it was almost impossible for them to procure wives. Thus we found a small number of men possessing nearly all the women in a town, having from four or five up to twenty-five and thirty each, and a large number of young men who could not secure wives. Moreover, these wealthy men, besides having all these wives, had bespoken most of the young girls, many almost infants; for it was no uncommon thing for girls of three or four years to be betrothed to men of forty and fifty years of age; and as soon as they reached puberty the marriage money was completed, and they were passed over to their already very much married husbands.

Now my observations of polygamy, both on the Lower and Upper Congo, have led me to form a decided opinion that it does not conduce to productivity, but the contrary. Under this system I have never known a large family. One man had eight wives, and he had five children by one and none by the others; another had ten wives and no children; another had twenty-three wives and only one child; another twenty-five wives and three children only; another who had eight wives had three children. Mapwata, chief of Ntenta in French Congo, had forty wives, but only five children. In Mfumu Ngoma's village there were 87 men, 67 married women, and only 37 children. In the village of Mbela there were about 60 married women, as shown by the number of houses, and only 28 children, and so on *ad lib.*

If you ask a native chief, husband of many wives, how many children he has, he will state an absurd number, not because he desires to deceive you, but for the following reasons: All the children, of his brothers and sisters, and all their children's children, are spoken of as the chief's children, as he is the head

## POLYGAMY AND ITS RESULTS

of the family, i.e. all the nephews and nieces, the grand-nephews and grand-nieces are regarded as a man's own offspring, besides his own children and grandchildren; many of us could make up large families in this way. And again, the native has a very strong superstition and prejudice against counting his children, for he believes that if he does so, or if he states the proper number, the evil spirits will hear it and some of his children will die; hence when you ask him such a simple question as, "How many children have you?" you stir up his superstitious fears, and he will answer: "I don't know." If you press him, he will tell you sixty, or one hundred children, or any other number that jumps to his tongue; and even then he is thinking of those who, from the native view of kinship, are regarded as his children, and desiring to deceive, not you, but those ubiquitous and prowling evil spirits, he states a large number that leaves a wide margin. I have been introduced by young men to men, much older than themselves, as "my children," and there was a twinkle in their eyes, showing that they appreciated the humorous absurdity of the situation.

Among the Congo languages there is no proper word for virgin, for there was not in the old days a pure girl above the age of five. I would, therefore, most emphatically dissent from the oft-repeated fallacious statement that polygamy promotes morality among native tribes; that it has caused widespread immorality on the Congo is truer to the facts.

After carefully reviewing all the data I am forced to the conclusion that polygamy is not necessitated by the climate, but is the natural outcome of their customs, mode of thought, and view of life. A Congo man will fight, trade, carry heavy loads for long distances, and work, but he will not hoe the ground, that is *infra dig.* to him. He will dig the white man's farm, but he will not work land in his own village, so, to use his own words, he "hires" or "borrows" a woman to do this for him, and the more women he has the less likely is he to go hungry. Again, the more women he has the more important



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he is, the greater his influence and social standing; when a native wants to impress you with the greatness of his chief or the importance of the head of his family, he tells you the number of his wives, and he does not mind adding a dozen to the sum total.

Again, chiefs in receiving visits from other chiefs and their retinues had to give free hospitality for long periods. This required a large amount of food and several women to prepare it daily. Then again, for generations the women have believed that if they allowed their husbands to have intercourse with them between the time of pregnancy and the weaning of their children, those children would die. This superstitious belief has been a potent factor in keeping polygamy alive, if it did not originate it. Remember how they procure their wives, and that the woman's family must replace her in the event of death, consequently the family has been careful to see that she has not been weakened by frequent child-bearing, lest they should have to give another woman in her place. Among some tribes the man had to wait until his wife's family took him a calabash of palm-wine, and renewed their permission to him.

Some writers think, judging by the tone of their articles, that we missionaries rush pell-mell into a country, and delight in upsetting the institutions and customs of a place whether they are good, bad, or indifferent. This, however, is not true to the facts as I know them.

Our Mission on the Congo commenced its operations in 1878, and it was well on in the eighties before churches were formed, with rules and regulations for the guidance of converts. In the meantime a language had been reduced to writing, much translation work had been done, and a mass of information collected about the habits, customs, and view of life taken by the native. "Many men, many minds" is an old saying, and we found it a true one when the time came to deal with native marriage customs and polygamy in relation to church membership. There was not a single aspect of this great

## MONOGAMY AND ITS RESULTS

question but had its exponents ; and it was not until after mature consideration, and a careful study of all the pros and cons, that we came to the conclusion that monogamy was the only wise rule to adopt, and we therefore laid it down as a condition of church membership that one man should have one wife only.

It is also a rule of the church that no Christian shall receive marriage money for his daughter, niece, or ward ; and no Christian is permitted to give marriage money for his wife, except to a heathen if he asks for it. The reasons for this exception are obvious. We also insist that all Christians shall marry either by civil law or " holy matrimony." We are interested in the natives and, rightly or wrongly, we devote our lives to them ; and if we had desired numbers on the church roll to quote in reports rather than the moral and physical well-being of our parishioners, we should have made these restrictions less rigorous, and entrance to church membership more easy and pleasant for them. Our Society gives us a free hand in dealing with these great problems.

Now we find that Christian teaching and monogamy have conduced to stricter morality among the people, and also to an increase in the birth-rate. In the old days there was in every village on the Lower Congo a house called *Mbongi*, or *Nzo-a-matoko* (house for young men), where the lads and unmarried men slept. Girls from an early age had free ingress to these houses, and their mothers encouraged them to go. These houses have been cleared out of all the villages where there is any Christian influence at work, and even from heathen villages also, for they have been greatly influenced by the purer public opinion of recent years. Now that monogamy is practised by so many, the young men know that in due time they will be able to secure a wife, and they desire to receive her as pure as possible, hence the closing of these village bachelor houses even in the heathen towns. Christian parents also use their best endeavour to preserve their daughters in innocence.

## PURER WOMEN

We have within a stone's-throw of Wathen Station a Christian village where monogamy is the rule without exception. There are twenty-four married women living there with their husbands, and they have between them fifty-seven children now living (noted in 1908), and five have died, making in all sixty-two births. Some of these have only been married eighteen months or two years, and there is no doubt that as the years go by there will be many more children born to these twenty-four wives. Now the same number of women tied to one man would not have had a tenth of the children. Again, we have throughout our districts a large number of teachers, many of whom are married, and most of them have children—one, two, or three, according to the length of time they have been married. There is another noticeable thing, that in the Christian villages, i.e. the monogamous villages, there are plenty of children, while the same cannot be said of the heathen in polygamous villages. Some seem to think that polygamy spells large families and a fair state of morality ; but on the Congo, and I speak of what I know, polygamy means a very low birth-rate and an absolute lack of morality and common decency. Polygamy is giving place to monogamy, and that means a higher morality, a purer and more self-respecting womanhood, and the introduction of a truer affection between the husband and the wife which will result in a better and more healthy home-life for the children, and will lead to the coming of a brighter day on dark, oppressed Africa.

## CHAPTER IX

### NATIVE EDUCATION

Precociousness of the children—Teaching the tribal mark—Knowledge of astronomy—Divisions of night and day—Education—Paddling and canoeing—Swimming—Fishing—Hunting—Blacksmithing—The girls learned farming—Cooking—Hair-dressing—Mat and saucepan making—Charms—Taboos—First-fruits—First teeth—No moral training—Great liars and thieves—Capable of truth and honesty.

THERE were no schools to attend until the white men went to live in their district; but the lads accompanied their fathers and elders and learned by imitation, by listening to the talk on the road, in the canoe and around the camp fire, and by special instruction. Most lads of 14 or 15 knew the names of the innumerable fish in their river and creeks, their habits, and the best mode of catching them. They also knew the names and habitat of most bush animals, either by experience or repute; the names of the birds, insects, trees, plants, etc., were all well known to them and easily distinguished. The village life was so open, so lacking in privacy, that almost every function of the body was performed without any attempts at secrecy, hence observant young eyes drank in all that came within the purview of their vision, and boys and girls of a tender age were precocious in their knowledge of those matters which are left to a much later period in civilized countries.

Tattooing was begun in earliest childhood by the parents, but not more than sufficient to show that the child belonged to the tribe. Later on the boys and girls were urged to cut their own tattoos, and were taught to bear the pain unwhimper-

## KNOWLEDGE OF ASTRONOMY

ingly. I have seen boys and girls sitting by the river's edge summoning up the necessary courage to make the incisions, and when they failed to do so they were ridiculed by the others until at last they would run the knife, by the aid of a bit of looking-glass or the reflection in the river, along the old lines in the forehead. At the age of 18 or 20 the person—man or woman—who wished to be thought fashionable would work away every week or so, cutting the flesh deeper and putting wads in the cuts to cause the flesh to stand up, until they had a veritable *likwala*, or cock's comb, which would be the envy of those who had not attained to such a fine decoration.

There was another pain they were taught to bear patiently, and that was the chiselling of the upper incisors to V-shaped points. Some only had two cut, while others had all the upper incisors done. This operation was supposed to improve their appearance. I said once to a native, "Your teeth are like a dog's," and his quick retort was, "Well, your teeth are like a bat's." I suppose he preferred being like a dog, to having teeth like a bat. They paid two brass rods for cutting the teeth, and two brass rods every time they bit the operator. The eyelashes also were pulled out as an aid to beauty.

They picked up a little astronomy from their elders. Venus was called "wife of the moon"; a shooting star was "fetish fire"; a cluster of stars (Pleiades) was a "crowd of young women"; the "Milky Way" was "the road of floods and drought." Both on the Lower and Upper River the natives connect the "Milky Way" with the abundance and scarcity of rains; they say that when the "Milky Way" is bright, clear, and well seen there will be plenty of rain. Three bright stars in Orion's belt were named the "three paddlers"; and the five stars near each other in Orion were regarded as the "bundle of thunder or lightning." In the constellation Lepus there is a set of five stars thus \* \* \*, and these were said to resemble a man—the top star being the head, the two lower stars the hands, and the two bottom stars the feet. When this set of stars, called *kole*, reached the meridian the natives

## DIVISIONS OF NIGHT AND DAY

did more planting than at any other season. This *kole* was so well recognized by the natives that we used the word as an equivalent for our word year.

There is a legend that the moon was once a python and made a road for itself on the earth. Some adventurous trappers, however, snared it, but on noticing there was no more moonlight they let it go, whereupon it sprang into the sky and never again returned to earth. When there is no moon, some say that the python has gone on a long journey, and others that it dies every month. There is much shouting and gesticulating on the appearance of a new moon; and those who have enjoyed good health ask that it may be continued, and those who have been sick ascribe their complaint to the coming of the new moon, and ask it to take away bad health and give them good health in its place.

Here, as on the Lower Congo, many believe that the sun returns from the west to the east during the night to be ready to rise in the morning. They were taught that the stars were a species of large fire-flies that formerly existed on the earth, but have now gone into space, and that the comets are signs that a great chief has recently died.

Another thing necessary to the young Congo boy was to teach him, not the movements of the clock's hands, but the crowing of the cocks, the notes of the *nkuku-mpembe* (name of a bird), and the movements of the sun: 2 a.m. was "the lying fowl"; 3 a.m. "the lying bird"—because they falsely heralded the dawn which was not due until later; 4 a.m. was "the first fowl"; 4 to 5 a.m. "the sun is near"; 5.30 to 6 a.m. "the dawning"; 6 a.m. "the sun is come"; 6.15 to 7 a.m. "the first sun"; 12 noon "the meridian"; 6 p.m. "when the fowls go in," or "the sun enters"; 11 to 12 p.m. "one set of ribs," or "one side of a person," and means that about that time a person turns from lying on one side over on to the other. For all these and many other divisions of the day there were special names or phrases. Then there was a system of counting, and an elaborate mode of stating numbers with

## EDUCATION

the fingers<sup>1</sup> which I must enter into more fully under another heading ; suffice it to say that he had to learn to count from one up to ten thousand, and any amount beyond that up to one hundred thousand he had no difficulty in expressing after he had once mastered the system.

The length of time that a child remained under the tutelage of his father depended largely on the character of both, and the strength of will each possessed. There were no bachelor houses in the villages, consequently male and female children belonging to the same mother were brought up together in her house until such times as the boys were old enough to build a house for themselves, if they cared so to do. There was no age limit. I have known big lads sleep in their mothers' houses ; and I have know smallish lads of energy and initiative combine to build a hut for themselves of which they were very proud.

From his very boyhood the Boloki was a keen trader. He accompanied his father on all trading journeys as soon as he was able to beat time with a stick in the bows of the canoe, or handle a paddle. In the village he learned the value of different articles, and nothing delighted him more than exchanging what he did not want for something that he needed. While his father was bartering he would eagerly listen, and thus learn how to praise his own goods, and disparage in depreciatory terms the articles which he desired to purchase, so as to lower their prices. Before an article could be exchanged with profit to himself he had many things to learn—the first cost of the article, the time spent in hawking it, the payment and keep of those who helped to paddle him from place to place in search of a buyer—or he would find himself poorer at the end of his trading expedition than he was at the beginning. This was no small part of the lad's education.

The boy, as a part of his training, had to learn to handle his paddle with agility, gracefulness, and accuracy. There were clumsy paddlers who were the butt of their companions'

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 3, on Boloki method of counting.

## SWIMMING

ridicule, but there were others who so swung their paddles as to excite the admiration of the onlookers. As a child his father gave him a toy paddle and taught him how to back-water, to steer, and to move his paddle in unison with others. Nor was this all, for there were over fifty words and phrases he had to learn dealing with canoeing. There were the words for canoes of different sizes and shapes, from the large canoe that would take fifty paddles and a heavy cargo to the shallow marsh canoe that would skim over the surface of a six-inch pool. There were the names for the various parts of the canoe—stern, bows, middle, sides, etc.; for beaching, launching, steering, turning sharp round corners, or guiding the canoe to a landing-place. There were names for a patch on a canoe, for the usable part of a broken canoe, for the haft and blade of his paddle, and for their various sizes. These and many other things about canoes he had to know before his education was completed.

The Boloki boys, living near the river as they did, learned to be good swimmers. They started swimming at so early an age that they regarded it as a natural action as much as walking. Canoes were often upset in the storms or turned over by a hippopotamus, therefore it was necessary for a lad to know how to save himself. The hand-over-hand stroke was most common, and they kicked out with the legs. They trod the water very well; but they always dived feet first, never head first. When a canoe was upset they were very dexterous in turning it over, bailing it out, putting their possessions (such as were floating) back into the canoe, catching their paddles, and then climbing into their frail canoe again without upsetting it. This I have seen them do repeatedly, and often sent out a canoe to help them, but before it arrived they would be sitting in their canoe smiling. The girls learned both to swim and paddle; but the same skill in either accomplishment was not expected of them as of the boys.

The boys went with their fathers on fishing and hunting expeditions. They were taught how to make the various fish-



## HUNTING

traps and nets, and the best places to put them in the river, creeks, or pools, and also how to bait and cast the hook. There were curious kinds of traps to make that would allow the fish to enter, but rigidly bar their exit; long fish-fences for closing up the mouths of creeks, or run for forty yards by the river bank; nets to be woven, which when cast with the right sort of twist would entangle the unwary fish. They had to learn to watch the river for the best time for setting the traps and fixing the fences. They had to remember to address their father and the other fishermen as *Mwele*,<sup>1</sup> for if the water-spirits heard their proper names they would turn aside the fish from the nets, and they would have ill-luck in their expedition. There were the names of a score of traps, nets, and modes of fishing to keep in mind.

In hunting there was much knowledge to be gained, for not only were the habits of the different animals to be thoroughly understood, but also the proper charms to be used, and the necessary ceremonies to be observed to counteract the adverse influences of the bush-spirits who were always on the prowl to render their hunting futile. For hippopotami, elephants, and antelopes, spring-traps were made and placed in the proper tracks. Occasionally holes were dug and sharpened sticks and iron prongs were fixed upright in them, and then the holes were covered very lightly with sticks, leaves, etc. (I often shudder, even now after many years, at the narrow escape I once had while hunting from falling into one of these traps.) For hunting crocodiles and bush-pigs spears were most commonly used, and the lads learned to throw them with force and accuracy. I have seen lads stand at a distance of from 60 to 80 feet and put spear after spear, with great precision, into an upright plantain stalk not more than 5 inches in diameter.

If the lad had a blacksmith or a witch-doctor as a relative, then these professions were opened to him. The former commanded respect because of his skill and usefulness; but the

<sup>1</sup> This name is given to all fishermen while fishing, and just as they leave the river with their catch, or bad luck will follow.

## COOKING

profession of the latter was not only very lucrative, but gained the respectful fear of the people, for did he not control those evil spirits that were always troubling the folk? And again, a witch-doctor was never charged with witchcraft, hence the lad would know in learning the tricks of that trade he would never have to undergo the ordeal, and might, if he were cunning enough, live on the best of the land.

The girl in the course of her education went as a child with her mother to the farm, and with her small hoe helped her mother to weed, and as she grew older she would hoe and plant. There were the various kinds of cassava to learn, and their characteristics and appearances; the best time of the year for planting according to the position of the *kole* in the sky, and the best sort of soil, and when it was unprofitable to plant an old farm, and better to start a new one.

The girl had also to learn the sundry ways of cooking cassava—for there were several—all entailing much time and thought. The modes of boiling, steaming, grilling, smoking, or baking fish and meats. She had to become expert in making up tasty messes with leaves and palm-oil, caterpillars, palm maggots, etc. She should know how to shave the head, comb out and plait hair, massage the skin, and decorate the face and body with various pigments and camwood powder, for these would be expected of her by her future husband. She had to learn to make her own dresses from palm-frond fibre, and if she desired to be “chic,” then she must dye them to the fashionable colour. If she wanted extra pocket-money, then she might master the mysteries of papyrus mat, and saucepan making, or even turn her hand to the art of basket-making. The more she knew of these various accomplishments the better chance she had of securing the man she wanted for a husband.

What a mass of information the girl collected about fetishes, charms, and medicine men! The proper charms to protect her farm produce, to ward off the evil eye from casting bad luck on her farming; the right charms to keep her in good health, and render her attractive to the village lads. She had

## NO MORAL TRAINING

to store her mind with a knowledge of the best charms to use to allure her lover to her side, to preserve her during pregnancy, to ward off sickness from her child, to retain her position as the favourite wife, and to keep away those many evil spirits that seemed to hem her in on every side. Both boys and girls had to remember the family totems, and the family and personal taboos; what they should do and eat, and what it was necessary for them to avoid doing and eating. Then there were the first-fruits of the fish they caught, the animals they killed, the foods they planted, and the various articles they made which had to be given to their parents or nearest relatives, otherwise bad luck would follow them. The first teeth that came out had to be carefully hidden, for if they were found by anyone no other teeth would come in their place.

Although there was much physical training to make them efficient in hunting, fishing, farming, etc., and much mental training to gain a full knowledge of all that boys and girls should know, yet there was no moral training. From early age to puberty boys and girls had free access to each other. Public reprobation was only visited upon those who committed a wrong so clumsily as to be found out. I have heard them speak admiringly of one who, while working for a white man, robbed him so cleverly as not to be discovered, and such a one would bring back to his town the proceeds of his robbery and boastfully describe how he committed it; on the other hand, I have heard them call the unsuccessful thief a "fool," not bad nor wicked, but *elema*=stupid, fool, etc. We could not discover any words for virtuous or vicious; a person either had "good ways" or "bad ways," but these referred more to the presence or absence of rudeness, disrespect to superiors, or greediness, than to any moral or immoral qualities. For lying and stealing a child was not punished unless the lie or the theft inconvenienced the parent in some way. As a result of the lack of any moral training while young we found both men and women most unblushing liars and thieves. I have seen the tail of a fish sticking out of a man's cloth, and

## CAPABLE OF TRUTH AND HONESTY

he asseverating with many oaths that he had neither touched nor seen the fish, until the fisherman who had been robbed pointed to the fish-tail sticking out well in view beyond the thief's cloth ; and when convicted he laughingly said, " I don't know how the fish got there." Yet they were capable of telling the truth and being honest, as I discovered later.

## CHAPTER X

### NATIVE GAMES AND PASTIMES

Dolls—Make-believe games—Mimic war—Model of steamers—Game of hand-thrusting—Hockey—Wheel game—Flipping arrows—Lip-sucking game—Ball game—"Tip-it"—Game with palm nuts—African backgammon—Gambling game—Teetotums—Hoop game—Cat's cradle—Water games—Spear-throwing—Bull-roarers—Imitating movements of animals.

**T**HERE are not many games, but such as there are train the eye in quickness, the hand in precision, and the body in agility.

Some little girls take pieces of stick or cassava roots to represent dolls, or, as they call them, *bana*=babies, and tying them on their backs with an old rag they play with them as such. An English doll is too uncanny, too much like a human, for them to play with; they do not understand it, and put it away, or their elders take it away and sell it as a powerful fetish. Parents fond of their children make small paddles, baskets, and hoes in imitation of their own, and the youngsters play with them when they accompany their mothers to the farms, or their fathers in the canoes. Toy hoes and baskets are given to girls only, toy fish-traps to boys; but toy paddles to both boys and girls.

The boys of the village plait basket-work shields about 3 feet long and 8 inches wide, and with stout water-grass and young plantain stalks as spears and clubs, and imitation wooden knives in their belts, they take sides in a great sham fight, and amid much laughter and good-humour a mimic battle is waged until one side is driven from the field—the

## MIMIC WAR

village street. Such " fights " are interesting to watch, for the movements of the more than half-naked bodies are swift, precise, and graceful, and undoubtedly help to keep them in good form ; and the accuracy with which they hurl their imitation spears is a fine display of dexterity.

Besides mimic war, the youngsters have their make-believe games of marketing, cooking, feasting, and housekeeping. The more expert among the lads make toy steamers in imitation of those running on the river ; and it is interesting to see two lads approaching from opposite directions pulling their " steamers " behind them. As they pass each other they whistle three times as a salute to one another, then comes a long whistle as a sign to stop, and the " steamers " are supposed to stop at a beach, and the two boys, who are acting as captains and wearing any old hat they can find for the occasion, approach each other, raise their hats, bow, shake hands, and then jabber for a few moments in bits of French and any of their own syllables that sound to them like French ; then come the ceremonies of parting, and the whistling of a pretended farewell from the " steamers," and the *shu ! shu ! shu !* of the working engines. The lad pulling the steamer is engine, whistle, pilot, steersman, and captain all combined, and seems to enjoy it. The best model has the largest crowd of followers after it. These boys are splendid actors, and the whole scene just enacted is a fine, humorous imitation of the actions of State steamers and captains meeting on our beach. A hat is as necessary almost as the " steamer," for it has to be taken off when the bow is made, and if a boy does not possess a hat, or cannot borrow one, he will make a good imitation of a helmet or a straw hat out of papyrus pith and plantain leaves.

The following is a list of the games <sup>1</sup> played among the Boloki boys and girls :

1. *Ndangu*, hand-matching game. (Lower Congo *ta mbele* is slightly different.) The players form two lines (*mabenge*)

<sup>1</sup> For Lower Congo games I would refer the reader to *Folk Lore*, Vol. XX, 1909, p. 457, where the writer has given a full description of them.

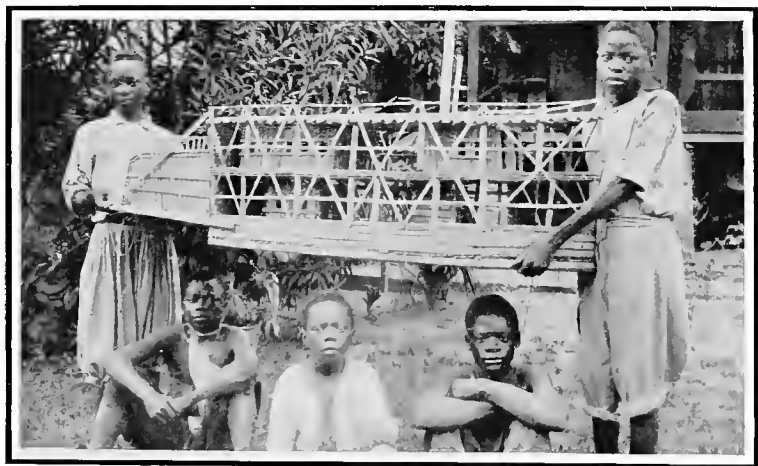


*Photo by]*

*[Rev. C. J. Dodds*

### NATIVE CARPENTER AND HIS WORKSHOP

This young man is only one of several expert carpenters trained on our Monsembe stations.



*Photo by]*

*Rev. C. J. Dodds*

### MODEL OF A STATE STEAMER

The lads holding the model made it out of bamboo, papyrus pith, and the po'ato-like substance of the p'antain root. The lads delight to pull these toy steamers through the villages, and imitate the white captains, with their make-believe salutes, etc.





## GAME OF HAND-THRUSTING

facing each other. The first player A faces the first of the opposition line B ; A throws up both hands and brings them down with a clap (*esaku*), and then darts out one hand. B does the same—claps his answers (*tambola*), and if B's hand meets A's hand, A is wounded (*ajwe mpota*), and if A receives three wounds (*mpota iatu*) he dies (*awe*). That is to say that if B is quick enough, or lucky enough, to throw out a hand to meet A's thrust, then instead of being wounded he wounds A, and three wounds count a death—A goes to the bottom of his own line. If, however, the hands do not meet, then B is wounded and A passes on to the next, and the next, until he wounds all in B's line or is himself killed ; if he is killed, then the next boy to A tries until he is either " killed " or has been down B's line. Those who are " dead " stand at the bottom of their line. After all the " men " in A's line have played, B's line starts, and should he lose any " men " they are redeemed in the following way : A's line lost, say, five, and B's line lost, say, four, A counts four of his five as redeemed, and B counts his four as redeemed, thus over the first bout B has lost none, and A has lost one " man." The game proceeds until all on one side are killed. The sharpest players stand at the top of the line, and are much admired for their prowess.

2. *Ta mbali*, or hockey (Lower Congo *ta mbadi*), is probably a recent introduction by steamer lads from the Lower Congo, as the Monsembe boys had no open spaces for such a game until they played on the cleared opening in front of our station. I found hockey played most vigorously at San Salvador du Congo when I arrived there in the early part of 1882.

3. *Nkeka*, or wheel. The potato-like substance of the plantain root is cut into a wheel, and the players arm themselves with long, sharpened splinters (*mbenge*) of bamboos ; they divide themselves into two parties, which place themselves at about 30 or 40 yards from each other. Party A throws the wheel (*kula nkeka*) along the ground towards party B at the other end (*nsuku*), and as the wheel rolls towards them the boys of B throw their splinters at it, and if all miss, side A chants :

## BALL GAME

“Thud, thud, thud, bad marksmen, die like a gazelle” (*Ju, ju, ju, bamai babi, bawa na npambi*); if some miss and some hit, those who hit sing: “We have hit the wheel right through the rim”—the most fatal part (*Yeke, yeke, nakeke na ndende na mimpesa*); if two hit they say, “Brothers truly” (*Jimi be*); if they all hit they sing, “It is absolutely lost and done for,” i.e. It is no good looking for slaves from this side (*Mampasa malambasana*). To win: Should B party hit the wheel with three splinters, then three of A party become slaves, i.e. they stand out of the game until they are redeemed; but if on the return of the wheel to A party that party hits it with four splinters, they thereby redeem their three slaves and place one of the other side in slavery. This continues until one side is in total slavery. The game excites great enthusiasm, and encourages precision in throwing.

4. *Ngenza*. A game in which small bamboo arrows are flipped at the fleshy mid-rib of the plantain leaf. Sides are taken, and the side with the best marksmen wins.

5. *Epapunga*. They make a sucking noise with the lower lip inside the upper, and the one not able to do it in unison with the others (*lembwaka lokela*) is “killed,” i.e. drops out until all are killed except the last, who becomes the winner.

6. *Ntamba*. A kind of ball game. A ball (*lingendu*) of leaves is made and thrown up, and is kept in the air by beating it with the palms of the hands.

7. *Nkulu-nkulu*. Two lines of boys sit on the ground opposite each other; the first lad of each line is called *moloji* (husband), the rest are called *bali* (wives). Each wife on the playing side interlaces her fingers, thus forming a hollow with the palms of her hands. The “husband” takes a small article and, passing his hand rapidly up and down the line of hands, he drops the article into one of the arched hands. The opposition has now to discover who has the article, and the following conversation takes place.

Opposition says:

“*Bananga-bananga*” (You players).

## AFRICAN BACKGAMMON

Players : “ *Eh !* ”

Opp.: “ *Bankutu bengi* ” (name of some leaves).

Pls.: “ *Eh !* ”

Opp.: “ *Ba nyango ya bilulu* ” (They are bitter leaves).

Pls.: *Eh !* ”

Opp.: “ *Obe na nkulu, abete mungita* ” (He who has the article make the sound of thunder).

Pls.: “ *Kilili !* ” (imitation of rolling thunder).

Opp.: “ *Bakunguika* ” (Make it again).

Pls.: “ *Kilili !* ”

Opp.: *Motu yona* ” (That person).

If the person thus pointed out is the hider of the article, he shows it, and his side loses, and the opposition side takes its turn ; if, however, he has not the article, then the one who has it says, “ *Eh ! nabuti mwana* ” (Oh ! I have given birth to a child), and shows the article. It then counts one game to them, and is called *mwana wawi*=one child.

8. *Liba*. A game with palm nuts (and this very often precedes *peke*, or backgammon). In *liba* they throw up a palm nut, and then before it falls they swoop up with the right hand as many palm nuts as they can, and put them down to catch the descending nut before it touches the ground. The one who picks up most in an agreed number of throws wins the game.

9. *Peke* (kind of *mancala*, or African backgammon). A number of holes are made in a circle on the ground, and the players either take as many palm nuts as they can in so many handfuls, or procure them as in *liba* (see game 8) ; then they put one nut into each hole, and the one whose nuts pass the holes of the other's, wins ; if his nuts fall short of the other's, he loses. The game is very complicated, and its rules little understood by any European.

10. *Lobesi*, or the game of pitch-and-toss with six counters. The counters are called *mbesi* ; the light side of the counter is *nke*, the dark side is *mpili*. The stakes (*libeta*) are taken up when the counters in three throws either fall dark side

## HOOP GAME

up (*mpili*), or light side up (*nke*), or three of each (*miu matu*=three eyes). The person putting down the stakes is *mobeti wa libeta*, the place of playing is *ekali*, and the turn to play is *ngala*, and *pula* is to demand a second set of throws with the *mbesi*. In this game there is always a large amount of gambling for brass rods and anything else of value, in fact, slaves are sometimes staked on the throw. I never knew it to be played except for gambling purposes.

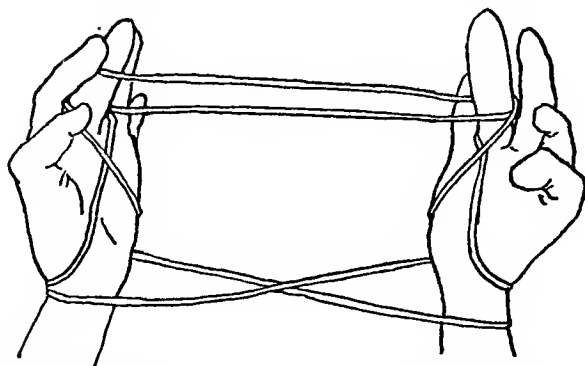
11. *Nsoko*. In this game it is necessary to make a table (*juku*) of four lengths of plantain stalks, two 3 feet long, and two 2 feet long, and these are so placed as to make an oblong, and the space is filled with earth or sand in a concave shape, and on this concave bed some pieces of plantain leaves are smoothly spread. The teetotums are made from the large Calabar (*nsoko*, hence the name of the game) beans. A hole is bored through the middle of each bean, and through the hole is pushed a splinter of wood to form a peg  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. long on the under side, and about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches on the upper. This is called the *mundindi*. The *juku* and the *nsoko* being prepared, the players, as many as can sit at the table, take their places, and one having taken the *mundindi* between the extended palms of his hands, he rubs it to and fro to give it momentum, and then he drops the teetotum on the table, where it spins rapidly. In the meantime another has done the same, and on the two revolving tops colliding, one is knocked out and becomes the property of the one whose teetotum is left on the "board." If both are knocked out they begin again. If one teetotum holds the "board" for a round, the owner of it is *monzo* (the best spinner). He who procures the most tops belonging to the others is the winner.

12. *Molangu* (hoop). The lads take sides, each side having a town (*mboka*) about 30 yards apart; and each lad has a piece of string from 6 to 8 feet long weighted at the ends. All being ready the hoop is rolled along from town A towards town B, and as it approaches a lad steps out and throws one end of his string at the hoop, and lets the string run freely

## CAT'S CRADLE

from his hand. His object is to entangle his string about the hoop. When the hoop stops and falls, he goes and picks up one end of his string and swings the hoop round his head as he takes it back to the throwing side A. If he succeeds he has repulsed the enemy, and it counts as one game to his side. If he misses the hoop, then the enemy has entered his town, and it is reckoned as one game to the town A, and the town B has to roll the hoop towards their opponents. If the hoop happens to come off the string while being twirled, then the side of the twirler loses, and he has to take the hoop back to his own town and throw it to the town of the enemy. Each lad steps out in turn for a throw of the hoop, and for a throw at the hoop.

13. *Nka*, or cat's cradle, is well known to the lads and lasses, and many an hour is spent in working out the different designs on their fingers and toes. The following are the names of a few patterns: (1) *Moleki na nkusu*, snare for a parrot, because of its similarity to a snare; (2) *Mwana muntaka*, girl, because of its large, oval shape; (3) *Mwana lele*, boy, because it has a small waist; (4) *Julututu*, spider; (5) *Nkungu*, a triangular pattern. There is a very large number of designs,



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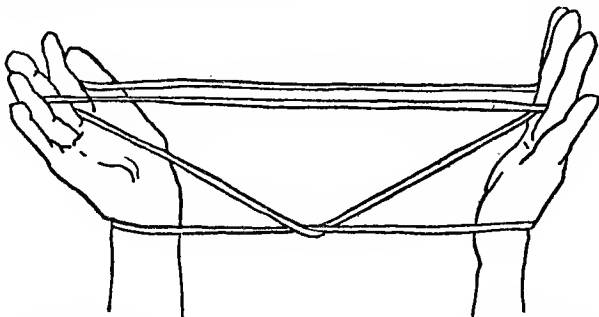
[Prof. F. STARR.

This Design is called Sanduku, or Box.

## WATER GAMES

but some children are more expert than others in forming them accurately and easily.

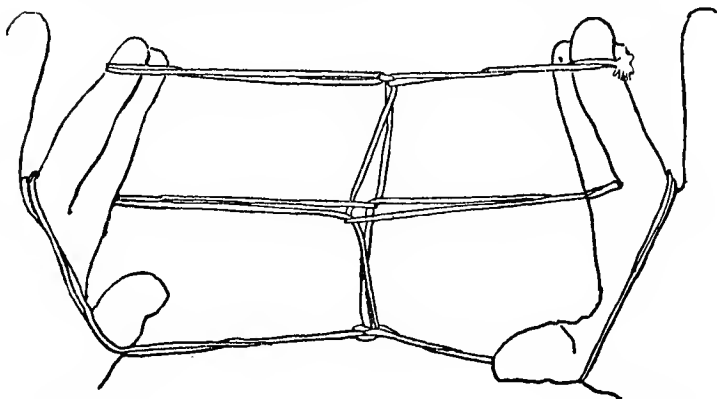
14. *Nsau ya mai*, or water games, of which the following



By permission of]

[Prof. F. STARR.

This Design is named *Ndako*, or House. If the picture is turned upside down the Pitch of the Roof will be clearly seen, the Ridge-pole and Wall-plates.



By permission of]

[Prof. F. STARR.

Called by the Natives : *Narrow Roads* through the Farms.

three are specimens : (1) *Nkoli* (crocodile). An active boy represents a crocodile, and diving beneath the water tries to catch the feet of his comrades, and others try to capture him. If they succeed in so doing they thereupon pretend to



*Photo by]*

### GROUP OF LIBINZA FOLK

*[Rev. R. H. Kirkland*

These men are having a small drinking-bout and a little music. The band consists of one drum, one trumpet, and one iron gong played by the man at the end of the row.





## BULL-ROARERS

kill him and cut him up ; but if he catches a playmate they exchange places. (2) *Tasana* (to find one another). One dives and remains quiet under the water, while another searches for him. (3) *Munteko* (game of touch in the water). If one lad fails to catch or touch another, the others sing, "*Otenda tendaka yau nzala ya nkabu*" (You will not grow, you eat greedily, but are always hungry). The boy becomes angry at this taunt, and renews his efforts to catch one of them. The Boloki are good swimmers, great divers, and can remain under the water for a long time ; and undoubtedly these water games help them to become so much at home in the river.

The elder lads often brought out their thin, well-balanced fighting spears, and having selected a growing plantain with a stalk about 5 inches in diameter, they would stand from 60 to 80 feet away and launch their spears in turn at the stalk. I have seen them pierce the stalk right through again and again. I have tried spear-throwing, and it is not so easy as it looks. There is a knack in holding the spear-haft well down across the palm of the hand, so that the whole force of the arm is conveyed to the spear. The lads, when they saw my poor attempts at spear-throwing, used to say laughingly to me, "Ah, white man, if you would fight us with spears, and not with guns, we would soon wipe you out."

*Bull-roarers* are known and made ; but the elders do not like the lads to play with them, and give as their reason : "You are calling the leopards." This is because the whirl of the bamboo makes a sound like the growling of a leopard.

The young girls have an interesting little dance in which they form a circle around one of their number, who is on all fours in the centre. As the girls in the ring sing about the different animals, as the leopard, the hippopotamus, the crocodile, the elephant, etc., the girl in the middle imitates the movements of the animal, and she receives praise or ridicule according to her ability to imitate the movements accurately.

## WRESTLING

The men and women take very little part in any of these games (except the men at *lobesi*), but they monopolize a large share in all the dances, and in most of the dances the sexes are mixed. Wrestling of a rough-and-ready kind is indulged in by the lads; and round the fires of an evening stories are told with dramatic power, and conundrums are propounded and answered. Although Congo is practically a toyless land, and so far as the adults are concerned the children are not catered for, yet from their loud laughter the young folk seem to extract a great amount of pleasure out of life. The boys delight in talking a slang language of their own manufacture, which is called *jimu*. They select a syllable, say "*sa*," and insert it between the syllables of the words they use, so *mboka*=village becomes *mbo-sa-ka*=*vil-sa-lage*. They acquire great glibness in this kind of talk, and enjoy the fun that it brings in mystifying others.

## CHAPTER XI

### A PAGE OF NATIVE HISTORY

A great inland sea—The Boloki and Bantus—The Boloki man—A native retort—Meaning of Bangala—Movements of tribes—Murder of Boloki chief—Refuge in a tree—Boloki raiding—A famous chief—Comets an evidence of greatness—Tribal marks and meaning.

THERE is much evidence in favour of the theory that the low-lying country of the Congo basin was once the bottom of a great inland sea, with here and there the highest points of land rearing their heads above the water, and thus forming numerous islands. The pressure and rush of water gradually wore down the barriers made by the ridge of rocks running across the river at *Kintamo*, and now forming the Kintamo Falls, thus draining the country and rendering it habitable. Then came another silting up, and the lower levels of the country, that had been covered in the meantime by trees and grass, were again flooded, and heavy deposits of clay were dropped on to and pressed down the vegetable growth. When the river was extremely low one year in the Monsembe district, I noticed for many miles a stratum of vegetable matter, about three inches thick, with here and there a tree of six inches diameter, a good eleven feet below the top of the bank. This vegetable layer was not fossilized, but was extremely hard, and though of a blackish brown colour, every vein in the leaves, and every line in the grass, was clear and perfect.

It is highly probable that as the Congo basin was drained the Bantus pressed down from their northern homes; and

## THE BOLOKI MAN

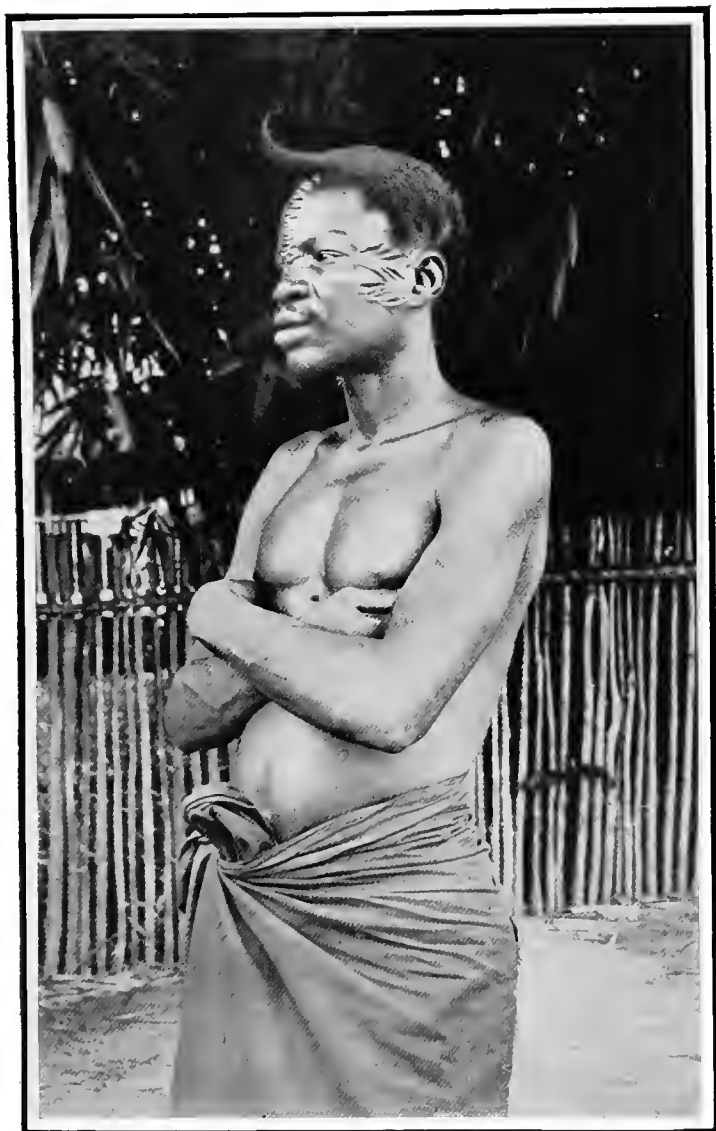
the Boloki tribe for greater security, perhaps, took possession of the Libinza Lake, and enlarged the islets they found there into places large enough to hold one, two, or more families.

The Boloki tribe belongs to the great Bantu race that stretches from 6° north of the Equator to Cape Town, and from the east to the west coast. The Bantus reach a higher latitude on the western than on the eastern side of the African continent, and here and there we find dotted over this vast tract of country small tribes—like the Hottentots, the Bushmen, the Pigmies, etc.—that are remnants probably of the aborigines of the country. These portions of tribes, speaking other than Bantu dialects, have not been absorbed, for geographical and other reasons, by their more civilized Bantu neighbours during the progress of many generations; but are there to-day like so many isolated pages of primitive history.

The Boloki man is above the average height, of sturdy frame, well-developed limbs, and splendidly proportioned body. When necessity has demanded it, he has paddled me for fifteen hours with only one short interval for food; but “on the road” he is not a good walker, for he finds his rations too heavy a burden, much more a 70-lb. load such as the Lower Congo man carries with a light heart and step for many days. In the canoe the Boloki swings his paddle with much grace, and if a drum is beaten, or a song is sung, the line of twenty paddlers will dip, bend, and raise their paddles in perfect time to the rhythm of the drum, or the lilt of the song.

The Boloki man is sociable and of a kindly disposition, but liable to fits of uncontrollable passion, and is then capable of great cruelty. He is fond of a laugh, enjoys a good joke, and appreciates a repartee, which he gives and takes in good humour.

We make more than three hundred dinners a year off fowls—they are very cheap, and are the most regular form of fresh meat that we can procure. Speaking with a native one day, I



*Photo by]*

*[Rev. G. E. Moore*

### MANGWENDE—A TYPICAL BOLOKI HEAD-MAN

Running up the forehead will be seen the cock's-comb tribal mark, above which is the plait of hair worn by the better-class men, and on the temple the palm-leaf mark.



## A NATIVE RETORT

laughingly twitted him with the scarcity of fowls and the difficulty of buying any in his village.

He at once retorted : " White man, if all the fowls you have eaten from our village were to cackle and crow simultaneously in your stomach, there would be a tremendous noise." And as he spoke there was a good-humoured twinkle in his eye as he conjured up the noisy scene.

Formerly the term Bangala was applied only to those natives who lived at Diboko (Nouvelles Anvers), and for forty or fifty miles up and down the river on either side of them ; but in a work published in Brussels called *Les Bangalas*,<sup>1</sup> the term Bangala is made to cover an area reaching far east of Bopoto, west of Equatorville, north of the Welle, and south of the Congo River for some distance. This includes a dozen or more different tribes, talking as many distinct languages, having various tribal marks, possessing in many instances very different customs, etc., and among whom there is nothing in common except their black skins and backwardness in civilization. Since seeing the above-mentioned book, I have preferred using Boloki as a more definite term for denoting the inhabitants of certain towns on the main river, on the Mobangi River, and the Libinza Lake. Inter-mixed with the Boloki towns on the Congo River are other towns belonging to a hinterland people well known to us as the Bomuna.

The Boloki folk have very hazy ideas about relationship, and scarcely any two will give the same name to all the relatives, and, moreover, if you take a list of the names of relations from a young man and put it away for six months, and then ask the same lad about the same relations in the same order as before, with your list in front of you, he will give you another set of names that will not tally with your first one in several points. I have made many attempts to draw up a complete list,<sup>2</sup> and if I had been satisfied to take one man and examine

<sup>1</sup> By M. Cyr. van Overbergh and M. de Jonghe.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix, Note 4, page 342.

## MOVEMENT OF TRIBES

him once only, I might have procured a list of the names of relations that would have been full, but it would have been inaccurate, i.e. it would have been that man's list then, but it would not have been his six or eight months later, and it would not have been anyone else's list even at the time he gave it to me. In this there was no desire to deceive us, for we found the same difficulty on the Lower Congo.

Among the Boloki there is no historical literature, for not a single member of the tribe could write until we taught them ; but although there is no written history there has been much oral communication dealing with the origin of the tribe, the place from whence it came, the approximate time of the migration, and the reason for it. Their communications have been handed from father to son, and the facts have been the constant theme of fireside conversations.

The following incidents connected with the migrations of a large portion of the tribe from the low-lying Libinza Lake district to the main river I gathered from a man of about 35 years of age, of good intelligence, and I have every reason to believe that they are the putting together of what he frequently heard around the evening fires, as well as what he learned from his father. Besides, in chatting with other folk, I have gathered various particulars that confirm his statements, and the constant antagonism shown by the Bomuna people to the Boloki, and the geographical distribution of these two tribes, all go to prove the truthfulness the main facts of this page from native history.

The Bomuna people, about the middle of the nineteenth century, came from the bush towns lying in the forest between the Mobangi and the Congo Rivers, and settled on the bank of the main river. Not being a riverine people, they had no knowledge of swimming, and possessed no canoes. They worked their way along the river's bank from the Monsembe district up-river until they came to the Ejeba stream, near the village of Nyoi, which deep stream they passed by means of a stout cane-creeper that happened to stretch across the





*Photo by]*

*[the Author*

### A MONITOR

These creatures are very scarce; but our lads killed this one, and brought it to me before cutting it up for the saucepan. It was 8 feet 7 inches long.



### A NATIVE HUT

A native house of the size and shape that we bought for 5s. rd. The old man on the right illustrates a method of hair dressing—shaving the hair so as to show a very round face and high forehead.



## MOVEMENT OF TRIBES

water from the overhanging trees. Many passed, and while others were working their way hand over hand along the cane creeper it broke, and thus severed the only means of communication between those on the opposite sides of the stream. Those who found themselves on the eastern side continued their journey, and founded the settlements of Diboko (sometimes called Iboko), now Nouvelles Anvers. Thus the ancient people of Diboko were Bomuna of the tribe of Bobanga, of whom the chief, Mata Bwiki, is the best known to fame, being the head-man who encountered Stanley, and on whose land the Congo Free State built their station of Nouvelles Anvers.

The Bomuna folk left on the western side of the stream settled on suitable town sites in the Mungala Creek above Monsembe, and along the banks of the main river below Monsembe. I knew this branch of the tribe well as being both ignorant and timid in all matters relating to water and canoes.

Between forty and fifty years ago some Libinza Lake people of the tribe of Boloki left their swampy island homes under the leadership of Munyata, and working their way in shallow canoes through the creeks, they came out on the main river near to Moboko. They paddled down the river to the Mungala Creek, which at that time was inhabited by Bomuna people. There Munyata made blood-brotherhood with Munkua, the chief of the Bomuna, and settled there with his people. The Bomuna at that time possessed no spears, but did their hunting and fighting with sharpened sticks, the points of which were hardened in the fire. Munyata presented Munkua with a spear, and received a fine young woman as a return present.

Munyata, the Boloki chief, was apparently a very grasping man, for although he had several wives he coveted more, and was always asking Munkua for one of his. For a time Munkua occasionally gave one; but Munyata let it be known that any woman who ran to him would be retained, and so much was the Boloki chief admired and feared, that one after another of the wives of Munkua escaped to him, until at last

## MURDER OF BOLOKI CHIEF

only one, his favourite, or principal (*nkundi*) wife was left, and she was eventually stolen from him by Munyata. So exasperated was Munkua by this treatment that, taking advantage of the first opportunity that offered, he speared Munyata to death.

On the murder of Munyata the Boloki folk came out in crowds from the Libinza Lake to avenge the death of their head-man, and so successful were they with their iron spears against the sharpened sticks of the Bomuna that, although more numerous, the latter gave way before their fierce onslaught. Many escaped, but some took refuge in a high bombax tree. The tree was surrounded by the Boloki, who threatened to starve their enemies to death unless they submitted; and apparently after some palavering the entrapped people had the privilege accorded to them of selecting their own future owners. Thus one would say, "I will take So-and-so as my master," and on his request being agreed to he would climb down the tree and take his place among the followers of his new master. In this way they divided themselves among their conquerors, and it seems from all accounts they were well treated by the Boloki.

Other contingents of the Boloki came out on to the main river and wrested sites from the Bomuna at Monsembe, Lobengu, Maleli, and Bokomela, and up-river at Bombilinga. In the meantime the Diboko Bomuna had increased in numbers, had become possessed of canoes, and had learned the way to manage them. Their numbers also had been greatly augmented, and their passions inflamed by those who had escaped from the Mungala Creek before, and during, the fight caused by the death of Munyata. These Diboko Bomuna so harassed and fought the Mungala Creek Boloki that numbers of them fled up-river (undoubtedly passing behind the islands to avoid their enemies at Diboko), and established themselves at Mobeka, at the mouth of the Mungala River many miles above Diboko. When first we went to live at Monsembe a very high tree that stood on the bank at the bend of the river was pointed

## LIBINZA LAKE

out to me as their post of observation when watching for the Diboko Bomuna.

The Boloki tribe in 1890 possessed the following districts on the north bank of the Congo : Mobeka, at the mouth of the Mungala River, Bombilinga, the Mungala Creek towns, Monsembe, Lobengu, situated in the Mangala Creek, Moleli, Bokomela, and Bungundu. On the south bank they owned Bokumbi, Libulula, and Bolombo. At some time or other the people of Bungundu, Bokomela, Moleli, and Lobengu were called Mangala, and gave their name to the creek in which their principal town was built. Perhaps there was a powerful family called Mangala, and this has been corrupted into Bangala ; or the Mungala River was supposed to be the original home of these people, and as *mu* means place, locality, and *ba* means people, it was easy to call the people the Bangala. I am rather inclined to the latter reason for the origin of the term among white people, but the natives themselves never used the name Bangala.

Near to Mobeka are the Ngombe people, who are also called Bokumbi, and this tribe in 1908 was becoming mixed with the neighbouring tribes ; and as they are being absorbed into them they no longer call themselves Ngombe or Bokumbi, but appropriate the names of the peoples whose language they learn and whose tribal mark they imitate. The hinterland folk of Diboko belong to the Mokulu tribe, and the Bomuna of Diboko to the Bobanga tribe ; others in between the Boloki towns down to Bokomela retain their old name of Bomuna. Below Bokomela is the Mbonji tribe that came originally from the bush. The Baloi on the Mobangi River are Boloki from Lake Libinza.

The Libinza Lake is a large sheet of shallow water that drains itself, by the Ngiri River, into the Mobangi, and retains its distinctive colour for many miles. Islands have been slowly made with great labour, and they need constant watching or they will be washed away by the annual floods. The folk drove stakes around any slight elevations shown at low water,

## A FAMOUS CHIEF

and then dug up clay and mud from the bottom of the lake and put inside the stakes, and thus formed an island. These islands are small, but they are numerous, and are often linked together by bridges. There are some large islands, but most of them are small. The lake was thickly populated in the nineties with expert fishermen and saucepan-makers ; and they often came out in parties of twenty and thirty to fish with their peculiar box-shaped nets, and to sell their fish, their saucepans, and " fire-pots " to the riverine people for cassava roots. They frequently camped on our beach, and thus we saw much of them. The Libinza folk lived chiefly on plantains, as cassava would not grow in their swampy soil, hence they always exchanged their wares for cassava ; and this may have been one of the reasons why Munyata came out from the lake, to establish a centre of exchange for cassava roots.

The tribe near the river always ridicules the tribe behind in the bush, as the Boloki laugh at the Bomuna, and the Bomuna at the Ndobbo people further behind. The Boloki are proud of their name and their origin ; and the neighbouring tribes acknowledge their courage and endurance, and prefer their friendship to their enmity. The following is an instance of their bravery and the long distances the Boloki men paddled on their raiding expeditions : In the beginning of 1891 there was a big fight in our vicinity, and on inquiring the cause we learned that the reason for the fight between these Boloki towns was this : A year or two before our arrival the Boloki of the Monsembe district paddled over 300 miles up-river and raided the Bopoto riverine towns, carrying off a quantity of loot and a number of captives ; and the unsatisfactory division of the spoils culminated in the fight that cost some few lives.

About 1870 there lived at Mobeka (one of the Boloki towns) a chief who styled himself *Monoko mwa Nkoi*, or Mouth of a Leopard, for he boasted that, like that animal, he never let go any person unfortunate enough to fall into his clutches. He was the terror of the district, and a message from him made

## COMETS AN EVIDENCE OF GREATNESS

a whole town quake with fear ; and a demand from him was instantly obeyed from apprehension of the consequences. He was a man of war, a cruel warrior who held life cheap ; and he burnt down many a town, scattered the people, or took them as slaves. On one of his raids among the Bopoto towns (which district is about 130 miles above Mobeka) he was mortally wounded and carried back to his town, where he died. About the time of his death a large comet appeared, which was described by my informant as being " like a large star with a hat on it." It was seen for three nights in succession, and was regarded as a sign of the greatness of Monoko mwa Nkoi.

Abnormal appearances in the sky are either the evidences of the death of some great chief whom they do not know, because he lived and died among a distant tribe, or are a proof of the greatness of a chief who has died within the limits of their own district. I have also known them to blame a lad, recently buried, for the tornado that was rushing across their village, shaking their huts and uprooting their plantains and bananas. They abused him in unmeasured language, and expressed the hope that he would be " humbugged " in the nether regions. Emanyia of Diboko is the name of another fighter whose cruel exploits are the subject of conversations around the evening fires.

The tattoo marks give indications of tribal movements, and also some idea of the various component parts that go to the making of a village community. I have noticed three kinds of tattooing among the Boloki. (1) A single line of elliptical punch-marks running from temple to temple just above the eyebrows. (2) A cock's comb (called *likwala*) running from the tip of the nose in some, and from between the eyebrows in others, to the crown of the head. (3) A cock's comb plus a palm leaf on each temple, or some other marking. When you look at the profile of a man his tattoo stands out like a cock's comb, hence the name.

The first kind of tattooing—line of elliptical punch-marks—

## TRIBAL MARKS AND MEANING

is to be found only on the old men and women, indicating that they are probably some of the original contingent of Libinza Lake people who forced a footing on the main river. They cling to the Libinza tribal mark, being proud of their kinsfolk and their origin. The second tattoo is seen on boys and girls, and on men and women from 35 downwards, and shows that the new marking had come into fashion when they were young, and was sufficiently in favour to supplant the old Libinza marking. On men and women from 35 to 45 there were (in 1900) slight traces of the Libinza marks, but the cock's comb was the more prominent tattoo. Whence did they borrow the cock's-comb tattoo? is a question I have often asked myself; or did they originate it as a distinctive mark of their own as they became a separate tribe and the ties binding them to the Libinza people gradually faded? The third set of marks is to be found on the slaves, who imitate the tattoo of their masters. Hence the Mongo tribal marks—lumps the size of a bean on the nose and across the forehead—will be seen on a man in conjunction with the cock's comb; or the palm leaf on the temples—mark of a tribe on the upper Lulanga River—and the cock's comb. Slaves captured or bought young allow their distinctive tribal mark to disappear, and try to work up a good-sized cock's comb like their owners, so as to be regarded as belonging to the same tribe as their masters.



## CHAPTER XII

### NATIVE GOVERNMENT AND THE NATIVES

No paramount chiefs—Head-man rules his own family—Stanley's "Lord of many guns"—*Monanga*, a term of respect—The alien is robbed—The guest protected—Arrival of canoes—Estimation of native character—Good memories—Learning to read pictures—Timid and superstitious—Lack of reverence—Pride—Greedy and mean.

**A**MONG the Boloki there are no paramount chiefs. Each town has its set of families that prefer living together, and each family has its head called *mata*, who is the eldest son, and who as eldest takes the title and the largest share of the estate. At any time a family is at liberty to break away from the rest and live by itself on a new site. The *mata* may be a man with wives, slaves, and followers numbering from 200 to 300 and even more, or the *mata* may not be able to muster more than fifteen or twenty people; yet as head of his family he possesses the same title (*mata*) as the more powerful ones.

Stanley in his books on the Congo uses many phrases about Mata Bwiki of Diboko (now Nouvelles Anvers) that favour the idea that he was an overlord, or lord paramount of the district; but that was not so. *Mata bwiki* simply means Head-man Plenty, or Plentifulness. Stanley, I think, gives as its meaning, "Lord of Many Guns," but his name then should have been, *Monanga wa bibau biki*=lord of guns many. Stanley on his memorable journey happened to go ashore at the landing-place belonging to Bwiki's family, and he as head of his family took the lead in Stanley's reception. If Stanley had landed

## MONANGA A TERM OF RESPECT

half a mile above or half a mile below that particular spot he might never have heard of Mata Bwiki.

The word *monanga* is used in a restricted way as meaning a free-born person, either male or female. It also is employed as a term of respect and means "lord," and frequently is equivalent to Mr., Monsieur, etc. It is attached to the name of any man to whom or of whom you wish to speak with deference and respect. We are always addressed as *monanga*, but never as *mata*; and many of the more wealthy natives who are not *mata* are spoken of as *monanga*, and all who are entitled to be called *mata* have a right to be addressed as *monanga*, but they prefer the former title. *Mata* is distinctly the hereditary designation of the eldest son and points to him as the head of his family, and *monanga* a courtesy title of respect.

The *mata* then governs all matters relating to his own family, and from his decisions there is no appeal. Undoubtedly he calls together the elder folk of his family to counsel him on important affairs; and these head-men of the village meet under the wild fig tree, or in the palaver house, and decide village matters as between family and family, and also their policy towards other villages in the district. There is an unwritten code of laws dealing with most offences, and by these the heads of the families judge each other and the members of their own families.

The status of a person in the family and town council depends on whether he is entirely free-born, or slave-born, or partly so. A child of slaves is a slave, and as such his advice is never sought; a child of a slave father by a free woman, or of a slave woman by a free father, is a semi-slave (*mbotela*), but the position of the latter in the family life is much higher than that of the slave, yet of course he does not rank so high as the child born of free parents. Birth alone constitutes membership of the family and tribe. A slave who redeems himself (a very rare occurrence, for all that a slave earns belongs to his master) will be tolerated in his attempts to pass himself off as a member

## THE ALIEN IS ROBBED

of the tribe ; he may affect the tribal mark, and also plait his beard, etc., and his wealth may win respect, but being of no family he will have no influence in the palavers of the village.

In dealing with an alien it is not considered wrong to rob, beat, abuse, or even murder him, unless he has come on a visit, for trade or other purposes, to someone in the town. He will then be under the protection of his host, and receiving the hospitality of his host he will also receive the hospitality of the town and neighbourhood. The host will have a *casus belli* against anyone who molests his guest ; and a village, on the other hand, will hold a host responsible for the offensive actions of his guest. Men and women travelling alone, or in twos and threes in places where they are not known, run the risk of being captured. Such defenceless travellers hide by day and travel by night to their destinations.

Green, in his *Shorter History of England*, says that "in ancient times the painted British savage on approaching a village sounded a horn to warn the villagers of his coming, otherwise he would have been treated as an enemy who tried to surprise them by stealth." Among the Boloki it is the custom that when a canoe containing six or more men approaches a town they have to beat a drum and sing to notify the folk of their coming, otherwise they are treated as enemies and lay themselves open to an attack. For a canoe of strangers from other towns and districts to approach a town unannounced by drum and song is regarded as an act of war. If their coming is peaceful, why are they afraid to drum and sing ? I have seen the crew of such a canoe badly handled for omitting these courtesies, and but for our presence some of the travellers would have been speared.

The *mata* in the performance of his duties as head-man has to guard, in the interests of his family, all those palm trees and *nsafu* (*canuarensis*) trees that have been planted by his forebears. The proprietary rights in these trees are by inheritance, or by planting them, and the rights in them are handed on from father to son in the proper line of heirship.

## ESTIMATION OF NATIVE CHARACTER

They are sources of wealth to a family, and the members of a family support their chief man when those rights are infringed.

The head-man in the government of his family holds a very difficult position when sitting in judgment on a relative, for such is the character of the family life that if he fines the delinquent he will be punishing himself indirectly—the family stands or falls together. Robbery, adultery, wounding, and murder when committed within the limits of one's own family will receive the strong disapprobation of the other members, but there is no punishment that the *mata* can inflict unless the offender is a boy, and then a sound thrashing will be administered; for will they not be punishing themselves if they insist on the infliction of a fine and to whom can the fine be paid? The fine imposed would have to be paid by the family to itself. The *mata*, therefore, in ruling his family exercises his greatest tact in maintaining the various units of which it is composed in the friendliest relation to each other and to himself. Then he has to keep a strong hand on the family slaves, for he and his family will be held responsible for whatever offences they commit against other families; and if they fight and quarrel amongst themselves, his only wise course is to sell them and buy others who may not be so contentious.

I never came across a more democratic form of government on the Congo than that of the Boloki tribe. There is no prestige of birth to help, as among the Lower Congo chiefs, for his subjects are of the same blood as himself—except his slaves, and they are his property and not his subjects. He has no position of priesthood (as the family “medicine man”) to inspire with awe those who owe fealty to him as head-man; and there is no position he can gain in any secret society that will inspire with fear of him the other members of his family. His position is no sinecure, and while his trouble is great his perquisites are few.

Perhaps this will be the best place to attempt an estimate of the Boloki folk who thus live in families each under the

## LEARNING TO READ PICTURES

rule of a head-man, and in village communities governed by elders or head-men. Their memories are exceedingly good respecting the debts owing to them, but with regard to the debts they owe they have, or pretend to have, very bad memories—it is for the creditor to keep in mind the debts owing to him, and to bring the proofs at the proper time.

There are occasionally cases of insanity among them, some caused by uterine trouble, and others are the results of sleeping-sickness. If insanity is of long duration and the patients are destructive or troublesome, they are quietly put out of the way. I only met with one man who ran amok. He had had a very serious illness, and either the illness or the decoctions given to him to effect his cure made him temporarily mad. He cut down all the plantain trees in his path, and destroyed everything he came near; the people cleared out of his way, but being a man of importance he got off without any payment of damages.

When I went first to live among the people of Monsembe I had with me a roughly bound volume of the *Illustrated London News*. It was very interesting to watch the development of their artistic faculties. At first they looked at a picture and asked what the marks were; they held the picture anyhow, and looked at it from any point that might be convenient to them without any regard to the picture being right side up, or upside down, or any other way. By and by they began to pick out the features, one by one, and say, "Why, it is a man!" They would pick out the doors, windows, walls, etc., and remark, "Why, it is a house!" After a time they would drop this spelling out, as it were, of the picture and say, "A man, a woman, a house," etc., at once. Later on, they would take in the whole of a picture at a glance. I suppose it is in this way we learn pictures in our childhood—spell them out. It was interesting to watch the same process in young men, women, and adults.

I remember one day a man was looking at a picture of the members of the L.C.C. gathered in their council chamber.

## RESPECT FOR FORCE

He asked what it meant, and I explained the significance of the assembly. He could only see well with one eye, and with that one he very carefully scanned the whole of the picture for two or three minutes, and then he asked in an incredulous tone of voice: "This is a picture of men met to talk palavers, but where are their spears and knives?" The natives never talked palavers without having their spears and knives ready to hand, hence the doubt expressed in his question and voice.

The native has immense respect for force, but totally despises gentleness. He likes to be treated with kindness and consideration, but instead of regarding such treatment as an expression of your goodness he considers it a sign of your weakness, and will behave accordingly. If you point out to him that you treat him with kindness and expect some consideration in return, he will acknowledge that that is fair and right, and will for a time try to act more thoughtfully, but soon the better feeling will pass away unless you constantly remind him of his many deficiencies—of all that he has to learn and all that he needs to become.

To teach a native that he is your equal in all things is not to incite a desire on his part to emulate you, but rather tends to cause him to regard you with disrespect and contempt. The native knows he is not your equal, and he thinks you must have a despicable twist in your vision, and some bad, ulterior motive, if you think that he is your equal and wish him also to believe the same. I teach him that he is a creature of God as I am, that the Redeemer died as much for him as for me, and that God will judge him righteously, and will show neither of us favour or disfavour on account of the colour of our skins. At the same time, the relation between teacher and taught must be maintained, and he must be made to understand in how many ways he must be changed—morally, intellectually, and socially; and that before he can take his place among civilized and Christian men he must rise out of his degrading superstitions, control his lusts, govern his passions, and strive after all that is good, noble, and beautiful. He will admit

## NOT LACKING IN GRATITUDE

that you are his superior in every way, but unless you firmly insist on his taking his right position as a learner he will conduct himself towards you with less respect than he pays to the smallest and poorest chief in his district, and in a short time your influence will be gone and you will wonder why.

Treat the native with respect, and insist on receiving the same from him ; treat him with firmness, decision, masterfulness, and he will go as a rule as far as you want him to go. Faithfully keep all your promises and fulfil all your threats, therefore never make a promise you do not intend to redeem, and never threaten a thing you are not able, on the face of it, to perform, i.e. treat the native with gentle firmness, persuasive force, and masterful consideration, and you will get the best out of him, and cause him to respect himself while respecting you.

The native can love and he can hate ; but he is neither a good lover nor a strong hater. His affections are neither steady nor permanent. He will, however, remember a wrong committed against him much longer than a good deed done to help him. He is moved more by fear of pain, by loss of material profit, and by public opinion than swayed by principles and arguments. He will float with the stream rather than continually struggle against it ; but at the same time he can obstinately and doggedly follow a course that will result in physical pain, financial loss, and ridicule if he is once persuaded that his ultimate interests lie in that direction.

He is not lacking in gratitude, but he is afraid of displaying it lest a favour be asked of him in return. When you visit him he will remind you of the fact that you mended his broken leg or cured his disease, not to make it the basis of a generous act towards you, but rather as a plea to procure something extra out of you by awakening your further interest in him.

In some districts you will find he is more a liar than a thief, and if you investigate you will discover that the fines imposed for thieving are such as to deter him from following his inclination to steal. In other districts, where the native laws are more lax, he will excel both in thieving and lying, but he

## TIMID AND SUPERSTITIOUS

will readily admit they are vices worthy of stringent punishment, and will express his regret that the thief stole either from you or from himself, and at the same time he will be doing his best to rob you.

Before the unknown and mysterious he is timid and very superstitious. He will regard you as a *god*, and yet try to fight you; he will superstitiously believe that you have wonderful occult powers that can stop the rain, cause pestilence and plagues, and yet he will not attempt to conciliate you, but will savagely shout at you to clear out of his town and take your witchcraft elsewhere. When fighting with a gun he is timid, nervous, and apparently very cowardly, because he does not understand the mysteries of gunpowder; but give him a shield and a spear and his bravery is evidenced by his boldness in a fight, and his utter indifference to wounds and death. The mysterious overawes, paralyses him, but superstitious fears will often arouse the very demon of cruelty and vindictiveness, and incite to boldness and recklessness.

He lacks reverence, but is easily filled with awe and overcome by wonder. The stars in their courses make for him no song around the eternal throne; but the smoke ascending from his great bush-fires forming a halo round the sun will make him quake with fear because it is an omen of evil. The movements of the sun and the moon awaken no admiration in him; but exhibit some poor conjuring trick, or a shilling mechanical toy, and his eyes and mouth are not big enough to express his wonder.

He is prouder than Lucifer is reputed to be, and will resent the smallest slight put upon his so-called dignity. In a fit of overweening vanity he will sacrifice everything he possesses, and destroy all his future prospects to satisfy the pride of the moment. His family may be insignificant, his town paltry, himself small and dirty, but touch his pride and he will act as though he were *un grand seigneur*. He himself must be the judge of what hurts his pride, not you. He has his own code of honour and etiquette, difficult at times for you to understand, hence you wonder at some of the exhibitions of his pride.



## GREEDY AND MEAN

His memory is well trained, and his powers of observation keen and minute ; his ability to adapt himself to his surroundings is wonderful, and his imitative faculties are remarkable ; but he lacks power of mental concentration and logical thought. His physical powers are highly developed—he will carry a heavy load, from 70 lbs. to 80 lbs., up and down hill and across broken country, or paddle a heavy canoe hour after hour, without exhibiting much fatigue ; but he cannot, or will not, follow a line of thought, metaphorically speaking, for twenty yards. His reasoning and reflective faculties are stunted, undeveloped, for they have been exercised upon nothing more profound than the very alphabet of existence. He knows that two and two make four—that certain results follow certain causes, but that a series of causes will produce a series of results complicated and wide-spreading in their effect he cannot grasp. He has no power of deduction, and little or no faculty for producing a well-developed plot or involved plan.

With those who have a right to a share of meat or cloth, etc., he will be most scrupulous in dividing the article into equal portions, forgetting no one ; but to those who have no right to a share he will be niggardly, mean, selfish, and grasping. His apparent generosity is innate selfishness, for he only gives that he may receive more in return, and be the giver black or white he will complain bitterly if the return present is not so large as his greed imagined it should be. Perhaps this trait in his character may be accounted for by his desire to have a grand funeral—the talk of the village or the countryside. For this he will save and scheme, lie and steal, rob his neighbours, his wives, and his children to hoard up cloth, etc., for his own burial, that he may have a good start in the spirit land.

He has a wonderful power of imitation, but he lacks invention and initiative ; but this lack is undoubtedly due to suppression of the inventive faculty. For generations it has been the custom to charge with witchcraft anyone who has commenced a new industry or discovered a new article of

## BENEFICIAL RESULTS

barter. The making of anything out of the ordinary has brought on the maker a charge of witchcraft that again and again has resulted in death by the ordeal. To know more than others, to be more skilful than others, more energetic, more acute in business, more smart in dress, has often caused a charge of witchcraft and death. Therefore the native to save his life and live in peace has smothered his inventive faculty, and all spirit of enterprise has been driven out of him.

In the foregoing sketch I have generalized, and have not allowed for the exceptions that are always to be found to every rule. Anyone who has lived among the natives, and has known them intimately, will supply examples of those who were kind, generous, grateful, of others who were affectionate, devoted, unselfish, and again of others who were patient, brave, faithful, and persevering ; but these exceptions show that they are capable of being possessed by the noblest virtues and swayed by the highest and purest motives. Generations of superstition and moral degradation have not entirely obliterated from among them examples of kindness of heart and generosity of feeling, and these examples assure us that with proper care and cultivation such virtues and graces may become more widespread.

Those of us who teach the native in the workshop and the school find through stirring up his moral and mental depths many undesirable qualities coming to the top, and these we repress ; but, on the other hand, pleasant traits also exhibit themselves, and these we try to cultivate. The beneficial results may not be obvious to the unseeing eye in the first generation, and perhaps not in the second, but they will manifest themselves in due course. The civilization of England is the outcome of a thousand years' teaching and training, and you cannot expect us to attain the same results in a generation or two. It is, at least, unfair of those who boast of their "superiority" to criticize us for not accomplishing in a generation with "inferior" material what it has taken a score of generations to accomplish in their own case.

## CHAPTER XIII

### NATIVE LAWS, CRIMES, AND ORDEALS

The family judge—The chief judge—Stolen property—Punishment for murder—Adultery—The Court—Native advocates—No oaths administered—Giving the ordeal—Various ordeals—An impartial judge needed—White man as judge—A selection of cases.

IT has already been stated in a previous chapter that the *mata* or head-man of the family dealt with all matters relating to his own family, and against his verdict there was no appeal; and also that the heads of the several families forming a town would meet together and arrange the affairs of their various families; but it sometimes happened that these "heads" disagreed, and there was a need to call in some outsider to settle the case.

In every district there is a chief who is appointed by the towns of the district to act as chief judge in all important matters—at palavers between family and family, and town and town. At the time of his appointment the "heads" of all the families living in the district who desired to come under his jurisdiction cut down his plantain and banana trees. This action gave him a *casus belli* against all the towns that acknowledged him as a judge. By cutting down his plantains he became the offended party, and as such had the right of aggressive action against the offenders. Now, it was the custom that the people of the offending town must not go to fight the offended town, but must wait for the offended ones to attack them—the offenders. No subsequent quarrel could be taken up until the first was settled. Hence the chief ap-

## STOLEN PROPERTY

pointed as judge might enrage a town by his decision, and might call on the other towns to help him in enforcing his verdict, yet the said town could not attack the chief judge's town because of the old-standing and unsettled palaver of cutting down his plantains and bananas. This ensured to the chief judge immunity from quarrels with the people who did not like his decisions, and his immunity from all such quarrels was a guarantee that there would be a certain amount of justice and impartiality in the verdicts given. He was paid to act as judge by those who sought his services, and the fees remunerated him for his temporary loss from his destroyed plantains and bananas.

There is an unwritten code of rough-and-ready laws to guide the head-men and chief judge in deciding cases. Stolen property found on anyone can be claimed by the owner, and the possessor made to pay a fine unless he can prove by witnesses that the article was either given to him or he had bought it. The giver or seller then paid the fine, and in addition returned the money he received of the buyer. The thief, besides returning the stolen article or replacing it, pays, as a fine, an amount equal to the value of the goods stolen, and the robbed person will retain a part of the fine and give the rest to those who helped him to enforce the verdict.

When an article is stolen the owner walks through the town calling out a description of it, and invoking on the thief all the fetish curses that come to his mind. These curses are often so frightful as to intimidate the thief, and frequently the stolen goods are secretly replaced. When it is farm produce that has been purloined, say some cassava, the robbed woman ties a piece of cassava in the cleft end of a stick, and fixes just below it a piece of *Euphorbia candelabra*, a powerful charm. This she carries through the town, calling out her loss and invoking horrible curses on the thief, and as she shouts she whacks her fetish stick, with another piece of wood, to arouse it to action against the robber.

When something valuable, such as a piece of cloth or a

## PUNISHMENT FOR MURDER

large knife or an axe, is lost, and the owner has a shrewd suspicion that a certain man is the thief, he can accuse that man, and if the man denies the theft his accuser can demand that he shall take the ordeal and thus definitely settle the matter. To refuse to take the ordeal is an admission of guilt. Should the test go against the accused he will have to replace the stolen article, pay a fine, and all the expenses of the ordeal drinking. But should the test establish his innocence, the accuser then has to compensate the accused and pay the fees of those who administer the ordeal. As a rule, there are not many accusations brought on mere suspicion; they prefer to discover the stolen property on the thief, or trace it back to him through those who have received it or bought it of him.

If a slave kills a slave, the owner of the murdered slave can demand two and even three slaves in place of the one killed; and he can then slay them all in revenge or retain them as his own slaves, just as he likes. For the murder of a free man the blood of a free man, or men, has to be shed. There is no distinction between premeditated and accidental homicide. Life has been taken, and it is regarded and dealt with as murder. Drunkenness and madness are no excuse for committing crimes.

Adultery is a personal injury, for the offender has used something that does not belong to him without the consent of the owner. The fine for adultery is from 100 to 300 brass rods—from three to nine months' ordinary wages—according to the position of the husband and the offending party. I have never heard of mutilation as a punishment for adultery among the Boloki. I have seen it stated that an ear is cut off as a punishment for this offence. I travelled constantly among them for fifteen years, and only occasionally saw either a part or the whole of an ear cut off, but I was always told on inquiry that that was a punishment for *repeated thefts*, and those thus mutilated *were slaves*. Free men were fined for thefts and adultery, not mutilated. I have known men to be financially ruined through having to pay fines for repeated

## ADULTERY

acts of adultery ; but if the ear-cutting were the punishment there would not be a single man with both ears, for there is not a morally pure one among them.

The family avenges all cases of assault on any of its members, no matter whether it is physical violence, abduction, rape, adultery, theft, or anything else ; and no one has a right to pardon the offender except the injured person or family. Retaliation in kind, when possible, is the essence of justice among the natives—an eye for an eye, a cut for a cut, a bump for a bump, and a life for a life. When retaliation is impossible, compensation by fines is enforced. I have seen a lad carefully measure a cut that he might inflict one of a like size on his enemy.

Guardians can use the women left to their wards as their own wives, and may trade with their ward's goods without paying any interest ; but when the ward reaches his majority he can demand the right number of women from his guardian, and the exact amount of goods left in his charge. If the guardian dies in the meantime, then his heir will take the privileges and obligations of the guardianship, and reserve out of his inherited estate the amount due to the ward. Uncles and heads of families will act as guardians for minors left with property, and they will have to render a proper account of the amount received when the minor becomes old enough to look after his own affairs. If a minor inherits a "palaver" from his father, the guardian cannot "talk" it, but the case has to wait until the minor is old enough to conduct the affair himself. I have known cases to be postponed for this reason for fifteen and twenty years.

Some years before we went to live at Monsembe, a free man and head of his family was accused of witchcraft. He agreed to take the ordeal, but as all the members of his family were absent from the town, he wished the trial to be postponed until their return. This the accuser would not sanction, and pressed and taunted him so that at last he took the ordeal and died from its effects. The deceased's family returned, and

## THE COURT

were astonished to learn of the death of their "head." They threatened to kill the accuser, as they contended that their "father" had not had a fair trial, and that he had a right to demand the postponement of the ordeal until their return. It resulted in a big palaver being talked, and the accuser and his family were compelled to promise fifteen slaves to the family of the murdered man as compensation. The last of the slaves was paid some eighteen years after the affair occurred, and I saw him taken by my house in 1904 to be handed over in completion of the imposed fine.

The court is generally held beneath the shade of a spreading wild fig tree. The head-men who act as jury sit at the top of the square; the plaintiff, his witnesses and followers sit on one side; the defendant, his witnesses and followers sit on the opposite side; and the bottom of the square is left open for neutrals, onlookers, and for those coming and going.

Before the proceedings begin the plaintiff and defendant will each take their party of followers on one side, but in different parts of the town, and state tersely their case to them, and then distribute from 200 to 600 brass rods among them according to the importance of the case. It is their duty to clap their hands and applaud every point made by the one who hires them, and to laugh ironically at the arguments of the other side. These followers will be gathered from any of the men belonging to the neighbouring towns who happen to be drawn together to hear a "big palaver" and pick up a few brass rods. They are in honour bound to applaud their own side, and to remain as long as the case lasts that day. If the case goes into the second and third days, then "refreshers" have to be given to the crowd of followers each day. Some who have urgent business cannot attend the second day, but there are others to take their places who were not able to be present on the first day. I have seen from 150 to 200 followers on each side, most of whom had no interest in the case beyond the three or four rods they received for shouting on one side or the other. There was a fiction that they were genuinely

## NATIVE ADVOCATES

interested supporters of the side they took ; but I have often been present when the rods were divided among them, and know for a fact that the majority did not care which side won. They always made sure of their rods before they shouted and clapped.

If the man who has a case is not a good speaker he can engage an advocate (*ntendeko*=go-between) to speak on his behalf for a fee of from 200 to 300 brass rods a day. Such men are natural orators, and it is a pleasure to hear them speak and see their graceful actions.

When all is ready the parties take up their positions opposite each other, and the plaintiff will open the proceedings by stating his case, and calling on witnesses, if he has any, to confirm his statements. The speaker holds in his hand a small bunch of palm-frond leaves, and as each point is rounded off he lays a leaflet on the ground in front of him. When he makes a telling point against his opponent his followers clap their hands, shout, laugh, and snap their fingers at each other, and the wits of the party hurl quips, jokes, gibes, and proverbs at the opposite side, and try to look as though it were impossible to lose such a strong case so lucidly stated. These breaks give the speaker a breathing time in which to collect his thoughts and gain strength for the next point. So the speaker will go on stating point after point until there are twelve or fifteen leaflets on the ground, all lying in the order of his arguments. Before sitting down he will briefly state the argument that each leaflet represents, and it is rarely that he makes a mistake in the order, and if he does those sitting close by will instantly correct him.

If not too late in the day the defendant states his case, combating his opponent's arguments, calls his witnesses, puts down his leaflets one by one, and rests while his followers indulge in bantering the other side. Interruptions are frequent, noisy, and often come to the verge of violence. At a biting sarcasm, or a bitter retort, spears and knives will shake (for all the men present are well armed), and more than once



## NO OATHS ADMINISTERED

I have been sent for to intervene at a critical moment and to stop bloodshed or a general *mêlée*. Many a time has an old chief come to my door and said : “ White man, they are fighting ; come and stop them.” And my wife has often thought I was badly wounded in the scuffle, for in pushing my way among them the red camwood powder would be transferred from their bodies to my coat, and would show up like blood on my white garment.

The jury of head-men, after the defendant has finished, withdraw to go over the evidence pro and con, and to consider their verdict ; and on their return a couple of men with fine wood-ashes, or powdered camwood on leaves, take up positions—one near the plaintiff and the other near the defendant. The appointed chief judge will sum up the case and give the verdict, say, in favour of the defendant, and instantly the man sitting near him will rub, with more vigour than gentleness, the wood-ashes or camwood powder over the face of the winner as a sign to all that he is acquitted of the charge brought against him. He will leave the mess on his face for days as a proof, to all and sundry, of his acquittal. The loser of the case refunds the winner all his expenses, pays the judge and jury of chiefs, and is a poorer if not sadder and wiser man.

There appears to be no cross-examination of witnesses, no guarantee of truthfulness, and no punishment for perjury. Each side starts away in the far-distant past, and drags in as much irrelevant matter as possible, and thus fogs, confuses and entangles the case to the best of his abilities. The ordeal is at times resorted to in order to decide involved cases, and from the results of the ordeal there is no appeal. Sometimes, after one or two days’ hearing, the jury is not able (or is afraid) to decide a case satisfactorily in favour of either side, and then it is dismissed—each side bearing its own expenses.

There is nothing resembling an oath administered to witnesses, and there are no modes of punishing perjury, hence witnesses are seldom called upon to give evidence in a case,

## VARIOUS ORDEALS

and when they are put forward no one on the opposite side and no judge accepts their statements as true. In ordinary cases the judge and jury of head-men decide the case on their own knowledge of the affair (and the arguments of the plaintiffs and defendants), for they are fully in touch with all local matters, and only local cases are laid before them. In complicated palavers they resort to the ordeals, which are as follows: (1) *Nka* (Lower Congo *nkasa*), which among the Boloki was the outer reddish skin of the rootlet of a certain tree carefully scraped off.

A few years ago I had the opportunity of witnessing a rather complicated discussion and cross-accusation settled, to the satisfaction of all the natives present, by the parties concerned drinking, or rather eating, the ordeal. The trial took place on neutral ground, i.e. in a section of the town midway between the sections in which lived the parties who were concerned. The court-house was a wide-spreading wild fig tree that threw a shade over the whole of the gathered crowd, which formed an oblong figure. The plaintiff stood at one end with his supporters, the defendant at the other with his, and the two sides were occupied by neutral spectators and sympathizers.

The case was as follows: The plaintiff had two slaves run away, and after some days he heard that these slaves had escaped in a canoe belonging to the defendant, so he accused the latter of aiding and abetting their escape, and wanted him to pay the price of the slaves. The defendant, on the other hand, desired the plaintiff to pay him back a canoe, or the price of it, as he said it had been stolen by the plaintiff's slaves. For three hours they discussed the matter and tried to arrange an amicable compromise; this, however, was impossible, as each wished to get the best of the bargain. From the very nature of the case it was impossible to call witnesses, although many persons spoke on either side. At last it was decided that the parties should take the ordeal (*nka*). Each was so confident of the righteousness of his claims that he was willing

## VARIOUS ORDEALS

and eager to eat his portion of the poisonous drug to support them. The plaintiff was a short, thick-set young man troubled with elephantiasis, and from that and his apparent nervousness he was greatly handicapped in the trial. The defendant was a tall, thin, wiry man about fifty years of age, who had, I think, often taken the *nka* before, and was inured to it.

The ordeal drug used was the outer skin of the rootlets of a tree that was to be found up the Lulunga River—a tributary that enters the Congo River on the south some forty miles below the Monsembe district. When scraped off the rootlets it is very fluffy and of a deep scarlet colour. Two “medicine men” prepared equal portions of the *nka*. There was about a tablespoonful in each portion. The accused had first choice, after which each “medicine man” with a portion of the *nka* in the palm of his hand took up his position by the side of his client, and at a given signal the portions of the ordeal were simultaneously held to the mouth of the two opponents, and at the same moment they began to chew the drug. After chewing for a few moments each washed it down with gulps of sugar-cane wine.

After taking the ordeal the men were not allowed to sit down, nor to lean against anything, nor even to touch anything with their hands. The ordeal given in the above quantity blurs the vision, distorting and enlarging all objects, makes the legs tremble, the head giddy, and gives a choking sensation in the throat and chest. In fact, it gives all the symptoms of intoxication, and a few more besides. The one who first becomes intoxicated and falls down loses his case, and the one who resists the effects of the drug and controls himself the longest wins.

About five minutes after they had taken the ordeal one of the “medicine men” stepped into the centre with a plantain stalk in his hand, about 2 feet 6 inches long and from 3 to 4 inches in diameter. He flourished the stalk about a little and then placed it in front of the plaintiff for him to step over. The plaintiff went forward boldly, stepped over the stalk, and

## VARIOUS ORDEALS

returned to his place. This he repeated six times without his feet once touching the stalk. The defendant had then to go through the same test, which he did laughingly, throwing his legs and arms about in all directions. This was done occasionally for the next thirty minutes, and by that time the plaintiff began to show signs of intoxication. His steps faltered, his eyes brightened and glared, and it was with difficulty that he raised his feet over the stalk. Then the "medicine man" began to mock him by pretending to put the stalk close to his feet and tantalizingly drawing it back. Forty minutes after taking the *nka* the climax came. The "medicine man" threw the stalk to the defendant, who caught it in his hands and carried it to the centre of the crowd, where, firmly fixing his feet on the ground, he carefully stooped forward and placed the stalk with both hands in a straight line, then slowly raising himself he returned to his place. The plaintiff then went to pick up the stalk, but no sooner did he lean forward than a spasm of pain seemed to seize him, and he would have fallen in a heap on the ground had not a man who for the last twenty minutes had followed him closely caught him in his arms and quickly carried him to his house.

No sooner did the crowd of neutrals see the fall of one of the opponents than with a bound they jumped to their feet, and with spears and knives raised in the air they danced, shouted, and sang around the winner. Some rubbed dirt, others ashes, and others red camwood powder on the fellow's face—a sign that he had won the case. They hoisted him on the back of a friend and accompanied him to his hut, and there he distributed 400 brass rods among the throng of his admirers who swore they had helped him to win his cause. He sat outside his house all the rest of the day with his face smeared, so that all could see that he had won, and could congratulate him. The plaintiff had to pay him two slaves and a canoe as damages.

The next day both the plaintiff and the defendant were walking about the town, and seemed none the worse for swallowing so powerful and dangerous a drug. They ap-

## VARIOUS ORDEALS

parently had no enmity towards each other, but chatted freely and laughingly over the events of the previous day.<sup>1</sup>

When one remembers the amount of corruption and bribery among these people—that the most familiar words on their lips are “lie” and “liar,” and the most frequent question is, “Is it true?” and the answer, “It is true, or cut my throat”—the wonder is that they can settle a palaver in any way.

To drink the ordeal and be either right or wrong according to its action settles the affair once for all, ends all possible deadly feuds and bloodshed, and saves many a man from what is worse than death, viz. an ever-present, anxious fear of what his enemy or enemies will do to him. If a man accuses another of giving him a disease, or of causing the death of his wife by witchcraft, how can the accused disprove such a charge? Not by talking, no matter how much he may swear that he is innocent. If he calls the head-men together, he knows the verdict will be given in favour of the one who pays the most; if he runs away he will soon be captured by some other town and probably sold to furnish a cannibal feast; if he runs to a friendly town he will lose caste, he will be treated with contempt as a coward, and his life rendered miserable. So he boldly steps forth and takes the ordeal and the affair is settled. Is the ordeal in his favour? Then he claims and receives heavy damages. Does the ordeal go against him? Then he pays the damages, if wealthy enough, or, if poor, he sells himself, or if he is already a slave then his master pays for him; but whatever be the result, that palaver is decided once for all. No stigma attaches to the man who is proved guilty by the ordeal, for “one can have witchcraft without knowing it.” Moreover, no one lightly brings a charge of witchcraft against another, for, if the ordeal test goes against the accuser, the damages for compensation are so very heavy as to deter frivolous accusations.

<sup>1</sup> On the Lower Congo the ordeal is given only to the accused, and if he does not vomit it, then it is fatal, and the man falling is beaten and stabbed to death as guilty of witchcraft.

## VARIOUS ORDEALS

The administration of the *nka* is reserved for very complicated civil cases and for serious charges of witchcraft; but there are other ordeals used for minor charges of witchcraft and for various other offences. They are as follows:

*Epomi* and *mokungu* are both trees. The juice from the bark of these trees is pressed out and dropped into the eye of the accused, and if the sight is destroyed the accused is guilty. The *epomi* juice is more powerful than the *mokungu*. The *nka* and *epomi* are for witchcraft and serious charges of theft and adultery, but the *mokungu* is used only in the more trivial charges. In each case the accused can refuse to submit to the ordeal unless the accuser takes it with him, hence the juices of these trees are rarely employed. When a "medicine man" charges a person with being a witch, the accused cannot demand that the "medicine man" shall take the ordeal with him.

Another test is as follows: Three boys are accused of thieving, which charge they indignantly repudiate; three young plantains are then cut—one to represent each boy—and the juice of the *mokungu* bark is pressed into the centre of each plantain stump left in the ground. Now it is usual that when a plantain is cut it will, in a few hours, send up from its centre the beginnings of a fresh growth; but if one of the three plantain stumps does not begin to sprout afresh by the next morning, the lad represented by that plantain is the guilty one; if two do not sprout, then there are two thieves, and if none sprout, then all the three lads are regarded as guilty. On the other hand, if all three sprout as usual, then the lads are proved to be innocent of the accusation. The *mokungu* juice destroys the eye, so in mercy the "eyes" of the plantain are used as substitutes for the eyes of the lads, and it is probable that the juice when well pressed in retards for a short time the sprouting of the plantain.

*Lingola* is a word denoting the giving of the ordeal to a medium (*moyengwa*), and after a certain time, when the ordeal begins to work, the name of a man who is supposed to be the witch is called out, and if the medium stumbles over the plantain



*Photo by]*

*[Rev. C. F. Dodd's*

### WHITE ANIS' NEST

White ants are a constant menace to the woodwork in houses, to stores, and to books. At one of our stations sufficient clay was procured from a white ants' nest to make 250,000 bricks. It is splendid material for that purpose.





## AN IMPARTIAL JUDGE NEEDED

stalk put in his path while this name is "on the card" the owner of the name is regarded as guilty; but if the medium does not stumble the man is innocent, and another name is called, and the process is repeated until the witch is found or the effects of the drug have passed away from the medium.

*Mai ma mungunga* = water of the bell. This is used by the "medicine man of the bell." A person is very ill and charges some members of his family with bewitching him. They deny the accusation, and he thereupon challenges them to drink water that has been dipped up in the "medicine man's" bell, which will not hurt them if they are innocent, but will kill them if they are guilty of the charge. Anyone who refuses to drink from the bell is regarded as guilty. What constitutes guilt in such cases? Simply a strong desire that a person might die; and how often in their uncontrollable anger have they wished for one another's death; hence occasionally an over-sensitive person will refuse to drink out of the bell for fear of the consequences.

By frequently drinking the ordeal drug one becomes immune from its effects, and I have noticed that old people who have taken it many times never feel intoxicated by it; but young people, who were not used to it, fell quickly from its narcotic effects on their system. I have no doubt that the administrators of the various ordeals were open to bribery and other influences, and could, and would, dilute the ordeal for one in whom they were interested.

The natives were dissatisfied with the way their "palavers" were settled. Their cost, the long time it took to talk them, and the unfair favouritism of the head-men made them wish for some better mode of dealing with their affairs. About 1897 and 1898 they frequently asked me to act as judge, as they felt that I should be absolutely impartial in my verdicts, but I objected to do so, because I had no power to compel a man to appear before me; and, again, I had no soldiers to enforce any verdict I might give, and thus I should waste my time in listening and trying to settle their palavers.

## WHITE MAN AS JUDGE

After some time it was arranged that the two persons wishing me to arbitrate on their case should each bring me a fowl as a token that they desired me to settle their dispute, and were willing to abide by my decision. This giving of a fowl weeded out the trivial cases that would have wasted my time, and yet was not prohibitive, for whereas a fowl cost only from 10 to 20 brass rods each, the payments under the old method ran into 500 rods or more. Moreover, I gave them to understand that directly I heard that a verdict had been defied, not another case would I judge until the said verdict had been honoured. I must in all fairness say that although I judged many scores of cases not a single verdict was disregarded.

The court-house was the verandah of my house, about 8 feet wide and 50 feet long. Neither knives nor spears were allowed on it or near it. I generally sat on a chair in the middle of the verandah—on either side were the opposing factions, and many onlookers were on the ground below. There was generally sitting near by a man with some wood-ashes or red camwood powder in a leaf, ready to rub it on the face of the winner.

Only one was allowed to speak at a time, and the talking was confined to the points at issue. A few questions well put would often throw such a light on the matter under consideration that the plaintiff himself would feel that his claim was preposterous. As a result of this plan very few cases took more than half an hour. When cases were talked in the town everybody was permitted to speak, and often they spoke all together. A thousand extraneous things were dragged in to the hiding and confusing of the real point, and sometimes they would be all day over a very small matter, and then not settle it. I have known them to fight over the irritating gibes they threw at each other, and I often had to separate the combatants—a little stern authority and a few jokes have quieted them down; but it was much easier and better to act as arbitrator and settle the palaver than to have frequent quarrels and rows.

## A SELECTION OF CASES

I kept a record of many cases, and I herewith transcribe a few for the benefit of my readers, as they throw considerable light on the native life and mode of thought.

Case I. The plaintiff said that many years ago his brother was very ill, and went to the defendant's father's town for medicine. When he was dying the sick man took a long flat pod and struck his friend, the "medicine man," across the ankle. For this the "doctor" demanded from the family of his deceased patient a slave, three pots of sugar-cane wine, two spears, and some brass rods. The plaintiff paid the goods at the time, but now he wished to have them returned on the ground that : (1) No medicine swa made and given to his brother, i.e. the patient died before he could be treated ; and (2) That since white people had come he could see that it was stupid to follow such customs.

The defendant acknowledged the debt on behalf of his father (the "doctor"), who was dead. He admitted that the above statement was correct, and that the custom was quite general in this part of Congo, and was recognized by all. It seemed to be one way of making a codicil to a will, or a mode of leaving property to an outsider who legally did not inherit anything, but who, on account of his technical assault, had a legal claim for compensation to be paid out of the deceased's estate.

I told them that I could not interfere with palavers that had happened so long ago ; but in future when a man was dying and wanted to leave an outsider any of his property, he was to call some of his family and direct them to give So-and-so certain goods after his death. Only such a bequest would be recognized. Their own custom was a good one, viz. : A token was given in the presence of witnesses, and the article or articles named. The eldest son was then informed of the token, the person to whom it was given, and the nature of the goods bequeathed. After the testator's death the token was taken to the eldest son, and the property handed over in the presence of witnesses.

## A SELECTION OF CASES

Case II. A man of about 45 years of age complained that a young fellow, then present, had a woman belonging to him and would not give her up. By a series of questions the following facts were elicited : The plaintiff's mother was living in a bush town ; goods were being continually stolen from her house, until at last she went and consulted a " witch-doctor " who resided in a river-side town. She desired to take the ordeal (*nka*) to discover whether she had unwittingly stolen and hidden her own property, or someone else had been the thief.

When the " witch-doctor " was about to administer the *nka* the woman was dissuaded by her friends from taking it. The " witch-doctor " thereupon went to the woman's husband and demanded a slave on the ground that he had prepared the ordeal which the wife had not taken, and by her refusal to take it she was bringing contempt on his fetish. The husband acknowledged the justice of the claim and paid a female slave as compensation. The plaintiff now wanted that slave or another returned.

The defendant admitted the facts as stated, but said it all happened long before he was born. The plaintiff said it took place before they had ever heard of white people, and when he was a little boy (or about 1868). I dismissed the case with costs—one fowl from each party.

Case III. Lokangi was a lad of about 14 years. He went one day in a canoe with some young men to take the monthly tax to Diboko (Nouvelles Anvers). While on the way a crocodile attacked the canoe, which was upset, and the whole party of six paddlers was thrown into the river. The crocodile caught Lokangi, and he was seen no more.

Lokangi's family, the plaintiffs in this case, accused the leader of the canoe party of bewitching the crocodile to take Lokangi and leave all the others ; they argued that he must have bewitched the crocodile to do so, for why were none of the others seized ? The defendant admitted that Lokangi had been killed in the manner stated, but strenuously denied having bewitched the beast to take the lad.

## A SELECTION OF CASES

I went carefully and patiently into the whole palaver of such superstitions, and at the close gave the verdict in favour of the defendant.

Case IV. Plaintiff said the defendant owed him one woman, some spears, and 3000 brass rods. The defendant denied the debt. On examination it was proved that the defendant's father owed the above-stated amount to the plaintiff, but the father was dead, and the defendant (an only son) had inherited his father's goods.

I laid it down as a principle that the inheritor should pay the debts owing by the person whose estate he inherited, and if the amount of the debts exceeded the sum inherited he should not be responsible for the whole of the debts, but should divide the property received among the creditors ; but if the property exceeded the debts, he should pay the debts and keep the surplus for himself. The case was thus settled, in favour of the plaintiff, to everybody's satisfaction.

Case V. Plaintiff said he owed the defendant 1000 brass rods, but as he did not pay up quickly the defendant lay in wait and caught his two wives who had gone together to fish among the islands ; that by right of custom he should have taken only one and let the other go.

Defendant admitted the statement made as correct, but said that he had gone so often to the plaintiff's town to collect his debt, and had been put off with such unreasonable excuses, that he was angry and took the two women instead of one.

I pointed out : (1) That the price of a woman was 2500 rods, but the debt was only 1000, and the expenses (fees to the men who helped him) only 500, making in all 1500, and the value of one woman more than covered this amount. (2) In tying up two women he had greatly exceeded the debt, and had thus put himself in the wrong.

Verdict for the plaintiff. One woman to be returned at once, and the other to be delivered up on payment by the plaintiff of 1300 rods ; the defendant to lose thus 200 rods for tying up two women when one well covered the debt and expenses.

## A SELECTION OF CASES

Case VI. Motuli, the plaintiff, said he owed the defendant a woman, and in payment of the debt he handed over a woman large with child, of which he, Motuli, was the father. The child was now two years old, and he wanted the child to be handed over to him.

The defendant allowed that all the above was true, but said that as the child was born after the woman came into his possession, the child was his.

I pointed out to Motuli : (1) That he was wrong to give his wife, by whom he was expecting a child, in payment of a debt. (2) He should have made an agreement at the time with his creditor respecting the ownership of the child. (3) That if the woman had died in child-birth he would have refused to pay another in her place, so as the creditor took her and the risks with her the child should remain with its mother. Motuli thus lost the case and was very angry.

Case VII. Bodia, the plaintiff, said he bought a wife of the defendant and had one child by her, which was now three years old ; that when his wife had a second child she died in delivery, and now the mother and second child were dead. He wanted either the money returned, or that the defendant should pay him another woman.

Defendant admitted that all the statements were true, but said that Bodia had had the woman a long time and he could not see that he was responsible for her death.

I explained to Bodia : (1) That every woman who had a child had it at some risk to her life. (2) That he had owned the woman for four years, and she had farmed, cooked, and borne him one child ; and as he had brought her into the position that caused her death, he himself must accept the loss. (3) His first child was properly born and grown up healthy, so there was no malformation of the womb. Verdict for the defendant.

## CHAPTER XIV

### MYTHOLOGY AND FOLK LORE

Ideas concerning rebirth—Ideas concerning white men—A hippopotamus spirit—A prediction—Reticence of natives—Recited round the fire—The origin of man—The sun—A deluge—The destruction of the world—Fifteen folk-lore stories.

THERE were misty ideas, but no definite belief, concerning the rebirth of their deceased ancestors. A few years before Stanley descended the Congo there was a general belief extant among the Boloki that many of their ancestors would appear in another form, and yet would be recognizable by similarity of features to those whose *appearances* the spirits took. When the white men arrived this belief seemed to be confirmed by the fact that the natives often thought they saw a likeness in the features, walk, or gestures of some of the white men to dead men whom they knew. I myself have often been surprised and amused when a motion, a glance, or some little peculiarity among these folk has called vividly to mind some person I knew at home. There was one man I never met without having a certain uncle of mine recalled to mind, and another person—a girl—always by an indescribable something reminded me of a girl I knew in England.

When we came here in 1890 my colleague was thought to resemble a chief who had died some time before, and I was thought to be like another deceased chief belonging to a family that had a hippopotamus for its omen (not totem, that is another word); and this view was confirmed by my firing on

## A PREDICTION

two successive nights at a hippopotamus that came prowling about our beach, for the animal sent me a message.<sup>1</sup>

We found a prediction extant that white men would come, and some of them would be like chiefs who had died ; but this slight suspicion of a belief in reincarnation may, I think, be accounted for by rumours of the white men having filtered through from the coasts. The Boloki thirty-five years ago were a strong, war-loving people who travelled far and wide on the river ; and slaves were bought and exchanged from widely different parts, and, of course, carried with them the news and rumours, true and false, of their last residences. This factor in the disseminating of religious belief, and the interweaving of those beliefs into what is often a patchwork system of belief, has not always been properly allowed for in dealing with the superstitions of African races.

Soon after we opened our station in August, 1890, I tried to procure some native stories from the boys, but failed in every attempt. I felt sure, however, that they had folk tales, and therefore persevered, though nearly two years passed before I was successful. One evening, in the early months of 1892, some boys sat on the floor of my house talking while I was busy writing. After a time I noticed that one was talking and the others listening intently. I made a mental note of the circumstance, and the next day I asked the lad to write out on a slate (for in the meantime we had taught them to read and write) the palaver he had told the boys on the previous evening. He did so, and I found it was a native story. I gave him a few brass rods, asked him to write some more, which he did ; and in a short time I had four or five boys writing stories on my verandah, and very often one boy who knew a story, but could not write, sat and told it to one who could, and then shared the spoil. We have between sixty and seventy native stories, and most of them were handed down by one chief who, although he died long before we came here, was spoken of to us with respect on account of his wide knowledge of the ancient

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter XIX, p. 266, for full details.



## RECITED ROUND THE FIRE

myths<sup>1</sup> and customs. Most of the stories we printed in a book and used it as a reading-book in the classes. There were many stories about men, women, and animals, and to each story a moral was attached.

The stories were told on moonless nights around the village fires when it was too dark to dance and play, or around the camp fires when travelling and fishing. The stories relate the cunning way in which some animals outwit others—generally the smaller ones outwitting the larger and more cumbersome; that the biter is himself bit, and the bully overwhelmed with ridicule. Many of the stories try to account for the peculiarities observed in nature, as why birds build nests in certain ways, or have no nests at all; the enmity among the various animals; the presence of dogs and fowls in the towns; the cause of death and the origin of fire. Some stories would well illustrate the text: “Be sure your sin will find you out”; while others are absurdly comic, and many of them dirty.

A line from some of the stories was often used as a proverb, or to call up the situation described in the story as a warning to a person not to overreach another, or he himself may fall. No European elements were to be found in them, as they were procured before we could talk freely with the natives, and certainly before our teaching had in any way influenced their thoughts and modes of expression.

Many of the stories were recited for amusement, but most of them were told as true, even the amusing ones; and they undoubtedly embody the wit, wisdom, and philosophy of life. Some are only remarkable for the way in which they account for the present state of affairs in the physical and moral worlds; others give a clear insight into the mind of the native, and his view of the spirit-world; and these stories were at times

<sup>1</sup> In the chapter on Religious Beliefs will be found some information on their ideas of a Supreme Being; and in Chapter XIX, on spirits and mythical monsters that inhabit the islands and forests.

## FOLK-LORE STORIES

narrated in their "palavers" to enforce a point and drive home a moral.

I did not meet, among the Boloki, with any stories or legends regarding the origin of man, of the sun, of a deluge, or of the destruction of the world. There were stories of folk with tails, but not of animal ancestors; of dwarfs and frightful monstrosities—all heads and no body—but not of giants. When the end of a rainbow touches a town a death is sure to occur there, and the bright red after-glow occasionally seen at sunset indicates the death of a chief. I have already given the legend about the moon having once been a python.

The following are a few typical stories,<sup>1</sup> and in translating them I have kept as near the original as possible. No ideas have been added, and no plot has been altered, but the translator has tried to give in easy English a true representation of the stories.

It must be remembered that the morals appended to the stories were put there by the natives when they wrote them down for me; and when I was sitting with them around their fires and hearing them relate the stories I noticed that the moral was always given, and frequently formed the subject of comment, and of angry curses being called down on the one who was credited with starting such bad customs.

### STORY I

#### *The Adventures of Libanza; or, a Boloki version of Jack and the Beanstalk*

Libanza and his sister, Nsongo, started on their travels in the long ago, and as they journeyed Libanza changed himself into a boy covered with yaws. A man out hunting turned aside from his party of hunters, and meeting Libanza and his sister, he exclaimed: "I have found some slaves!" He

<sup>1</sup> The stories given are of course Boloki stories; but the writer has published some forty Lower Congo stories in *Congo Life and Folk Lore*, R.T.S. 5s. net.



*Photo by*

# BOLOKI BOYS WITH WINE JAR

*(Rev. C. F. Dodd)*

This well illustrates the methods of wearing a cloth by the male folk. Either a string is tied round the waist and the cloth hung—back and front—over it, or the corners are tied at the side. The wine jar has a capacity of several gallons. There are not more than two or three in a large village; but they are freely lent.



## FOLK-LORE STORIES

thereupon took possession of them and led them to the hunting camp.

Their new master and the other hunters were there for the purpose of snaring monkeys, and although their master caught some, yet he was not very successful. So one day Libanza said to him: "Give me the snares, and let me try to catch some monkeys."

But as he appeared to be such a poor, weak boy covered with yaws, the master laughed at him, and twitted him with his smallness. However, on being repeatedly asked, the master gave the boy the snares, and he caught thirty monkeys in a very little time, and brought them back to the camp to be divided among the hunters.

While the hunters were busy dividing the monkeys, Libanza and his sister took some meat and ran away. After journeying for a long distance they came near to a large town, and again Libanza turned himself into a boy covered with yaws.

The people of the town were pounding sugar-canes for making sugar-cane wine; but a man seeing them claimed them as his slaves, and brought them and sat them on the end of the large wooden mortar in which the other men were pounding up the canes.

After a time Libanza said: "Give me a pestle,<sup>1</sup> so that I may crush the canes." But the people laughed that so small a lad should make such a request.

However, after he had repeatedly asked, they gave him a pestle, and Libanza used it with such vigour that it snapped in two. They brought him two others, and taking one in each hand he pounded so strongly that they also broke; and thus he broke all they had in the town except the last one, and with that he ran away, and the people feared to follow him.

As they travelled, Nsongo caught sight of a person in the distance and wanted to marry him; but on being called the person would not come to her. So Libanza changed himself,

<sup>1</sup> The pestles for crushing sugar-canes are like heavy clubs, made of hard wood, and weigh from 20 lbs. to 30 lbs. each.

## FOLK-LORE STORIES

first into a shell and then into a saucepan, and followed the man ; but in these disguises Libanza was not able to catch the man for his sister because he ran away filled with fear.

Libanza then turned himself into the handle of an axe, and when the man came to pick up the handle, Libanza caught him and led him to his sister. Now this person had only one leg and simple stumps for fingers ; and Nsongo, on a closer view observing these deformities, refused to have him for a husband.

Libanza and his sister, Nsongo, resumed their wanderings, and on passing a palm tree Nsongo saw a bunch of ripe palm nuts, and she implored her brother to ascend the tree and cut down the nuts. Libanza climbed the palm tree, and as he ascended it the palm tree grew higher and higher and higher, until the top was hid in the heavens,<sup>1</sup> and there Libanza alighted, leaving his sister down below on the earth.

When Nsongo was left on the earth she heard a rumbling noise, which she thought was her brother, Libanza, scolding up above. She called a "wizard," and asked him how she could rejoin her brother.

The "wizard" said : " You must call a Hawk, and tell him you want to send a packet to your brother, Libanza ; and then tie yourself up into a packet and put yourself on the roof of a house, and when the Hawk sees it he will say, ' That is surely the parcel I am to take,' and the Hawk will carry you up above."

Nsongo did as she was told by the "wizard," and the Hawk saw the bundle and picked it up ; but twice on the way the Hawk rested and tried to open the parcel, and would have done so, but at each attempt he heard a deep sigh proceed from the interior of the bundle, and desisted.

At last the Hawk reached the place where Libanza was, and said to him, " Here is a packet which your sister has sent to

<sup>1</sup> The word used here is *bolobo*=the upper regions, of which place they had very hazy ideas. About the lower regions—*longa*—they always spoke more definitely, and would describe what took place there.

## FOLK-LORE STORIES

you." Now when Libanza essayed to undo the parcel, out came his sister.

Libanza became a blacksmith, and there was in that country a person whose name was Ngombe, and because he swallowed people every day he was also called Emele Ngombe (Ngombe the Swallower).

When Libanza heard about this Swallower of people, he called his bellows blower, Nkumba (Tortoise), and they heated an ingot of iron. Now as the Swallower was passing the smithy he made the sound "Kililili," and Libanza mocked him by saying, "Alalalala." Ngombe the Swallower then asked: "Who dares to ridicule me?" And again he murmured, "Kililili." And Libanza answered him by saying: "Ngalalala,<sup>1</sup> I am anjaka-njaka lokwala la lotungi, Libanza, the brother of Nsongo."

The Swallower went at Libanza with his mouth wide-stretched to gulp him down, and as he went his lower jaw dragged along the ground. Libanza stirred the molten metal, the Tortoise blew the bellows, and as the Swallower rushed forward with his mouth wide open Libanza threw the liquid metal right into the gaping jaws, and the Swallower of people fell dead.

There are several folk-lore stories that have crystallized for us their ideas concerning Libanza, and it is interesting to note that such stories are called *Mabanza* (plural form of Libanza), and these contain a statement of some of the doings of Libanza, whereas their word for fable, parable, story is *mokulu*. The common opinion was that Libanza lived on the earth, and was the first to go into heaven. His origin, life, and adventures as told in their folk stories are briefly as follows:

Libanza's mother (names of father and mother were never given) gave birth first to elephants, the various kinds of bush

<sup>1</sup> This is the full name of Libanza. It means: The one who makes things with force and noise and runs off with them, whose scraped finger-nails are tied with cane, he who is Libanza the brother of Nsongo.

## FOLK-LORE STORIES

animals, the different varieties of flies and insects, and to the amphibia ; then his mother told him to come out, but before Libanza would do so he ordered his mother to scrape her finger-nails ; when she had done this he threw out spears, shield, a chair covered with brass nails, and finally came out himself.

Libanza's father, according to another folk story, was trapped and killed while stealing some *nsafu* fruit for his wife. And he acquainted his wife of his death by causing a fetish horn he had left with her to overflow with blood. As soon as Libanza was born he inquired about his father and the manner of his death, and set himself to punish the one who had killed him, which after a series of futile attempts he finally accomplished by slaying the murderer of his father. Then comes the story of his own adventures, which reach their climax in the destruction of the Swallower of people.

It is not at all improbable that Libanza is the name of some great chief who by his resource and courage delivered the people from great peril and oppression, and around whose name have gathered many myths, and to him is ascribed great magical power. In the original story much magic is performed to meet the various difficulties that arise, as changing himself into different shapes, making horns and saucepans move and speak, and resurrecting broken and dead animals. No moral qualities were ascribed to Libanza, but he was regarded as being very strong, and rich. When our steamer, the *Peace*, made her first journey up-river, the Boloki of Monsembe told me that they thought it was " Libanza going to Singitingi (Stanley Falls) to visit his sister Nsongo." They could hear the noise of the engines, but as they could see no paddles they thought that " the river *mingoli* (water-spirits) were pushing the steamer along."



# FOLK-LORE STORIES

## STORY II

### *The Fowl and the Hippopotamus ; or, the Cause of the Enmity among Birds and Animals.*

A Fowl, on returning from a trading journey, hid one of his legs under his wing and said : " I sold my leg for two thousand brass rods in the towns I have been visiting."

A greedy hippopotamus, hearing this, said : " If the Fowl could receive two thousand brass rods for his small leg, how much shall I receive for mine ? " So calling some of his friends they entered a canoe and paddled down-river to the towns. On arriving, the leg of the Hippopotamus was cut off, carried ashore, and sold for a large number of brass rods.

When the Hippopotami returned to the canoe, after selling the leg, they discovered that their friend had bled to death, so they picked up their paddles in great anger and returned to their town.

On arriving at their town they sought out the Fowl and charged him with the death of their friend, for they said, " Because of your lying deception he went and sold his leg."

In their anger they called on the Hawks and Kites to swoop down and carry off the chickens belonging to the Fowls ; and they told the wild bush-cat that whenever he found the door of the Fowl-house open he was to creep in and kill the Fowls.

In this way so many Fowls were killed, that in defence the Fowls called on the Crocodiles to bite the Hippopotami and wound them to death ; and they asked Man whenever he saw a Hippopotamus to hurl his spear at it and kill it. Thus, through the Fowl's one deception, enmity, quarrels, and death were first introduced among the birds and animals.

## STORY III

### *The Punishment of the Inquisitive Man*

Motu made a large garden, and planted it with many bananas and plantain. The garden was in a good position, so the fruit

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ripened quickly and well. Arriving one day at his garden he found the ripe bunches of bananas and plantain had been cut off and carried away.

After that he did not go once to his garden without finding that some of the fruit had been stolen, so at last he made up his mind to watch the place carefully, and hiding himself he lay in ambush for the thief.

Motu had not been in hiding very long before he saw a number of Cloud-folk descending, who cut down his bananas, and what they could not eat they tied into bundles to carry away. Motu rushed out, and, chasing them, caught one woman whom he took to his house, and after a short time he married her, and gave her a name which meant Favourite.

Although Favourite had come from the Cloud-land she was very intelligent, and went about her housework and farming just like an ordinary woman of the earth. Up to that time neither Motu nor the people of his village had ever seen a fire. They had always eaten their food raw, and on cold, windy, rainy days had sat shivering in their houses because they did not know anything about fire and warmth.

Favourite, however, told some of the Cloud-folk to bring some fire with them next time they came to visit her, which they did. And then she taught the people how to cook food, and how to sit round a fire on cold days.

Motu was very happy with his wife, and the villagers were very glad to have her among them, and, moreover, Favourite persuaded many of the Cloud-folk to settle in her husband's village.

One day Favourite received a covered basket, and putting it on a shelf in the house she said to her husband, "We are now living with much friendship together; but while I am away at the farm you must not open that basket, if you do we shall all leave you."

"All right," replied the husband, "I will never undo it."

Motu was now very glad in his heart, for he had plenty of people, a clever wife, and the villagers treated him as a great

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man. But he had one trouble: Why did his wife warn him every day not to open the basket? What was in that basket? What was she hiding from him? And foolish-like he decided to open it. Waiting therefore until his wife had gone as usual to the farm he opened the basket, and—there was nothing in it, so laughingly he shut it up and put it in its place.

By and by Favourite returned, and, looking at her husband, she asked him: "Why did you open that basket?" And he was speechless at her question.

On the first opportunity, while Motu was away hunting, Favourite gathered her people, and ascended with them to Cloud-land, and never again returned to the earth.

That is how the earth-folk received their fire and a knowledge of cooking; and that is also how Motu through being too inquisitive lost his wife, his people, and his importance as a big man in the village.

### STORY IV

#### *Mbungi and his Punishment*

Mbungi one day said to his wife: "Dig up some cassava, prepare it, and cut down some plantain, for we will go hunting and fishing."

The wife did as she was told, and in a short time everything was ready for the journey. They put their goods into a canoe and paddled away to their hunting and fishing camp.

After resting, the man went and dug a hole and set his traps; and the next morning he found an antelope and a bush-pig in the hole. These he took to the camp, cut up, and gave to his wife to cook. By and by when all was cooked she brought the meat to her husband, and as she was taking her portion he said: "Wait, I will ask the forest-folk (or spirits) if you may eat it."

He went and pretended to ask the forest-folk, and brought back a message that if she ate the meat the traps would lose their luck and catch no more animals. In this way the selfish

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husband had all the meat for himself and his wife went hungry.<sup>1</sup> Mbungi found many animals in his traps, and the woman, because of the prohibition, did not have her share of them.

One day the woman made some fish-traps and set them, and on her return to the camp the husband wanted to know where she had been, but she refused to tell him. Next day she went to look at her traps and found many fish in them, which she brought to the camp and cooked. Mbungi, however, returned unsuccessful from his traps; but when he saw his wife's fish he laughed and said: "Bring the fish here for me to eat."

"Wait," answered the woman, "I will ask the forest-folk if you may eat the fish." And she brought back a reply that he was not to eat the fish, for if he did so the fish-traps would lose their luck.

It was now Mbungi's turn to be hungry. Days and days passed and he caught no more animals; but his wife always had plenty of fish. He became very thin and angry. One day he drew his large knife, and cutting off the head of his wife he buried the head and the trunk together in the ground, and departed for his town.

Mbungi had not gone very far on his way when he heard a voice shouting: "Mbungi, wait for me, we will go together!" He wondered who was calling him, so he hid himself, and in a little time he saw the head of his wife coming along the road calling after him.

He went, and catching the head he cut it into small pieces and buried it again; but before he had gone far he heard it shouting: "Mbungi, wait for me, we will go together!" He cut and buried it again and again, but it was no use, it continued to follow and call after him.

Mbungi reached his town, and his wife's family asked him: "Where is your wife?" "Oh, she is coming on behind," he replied. They accused him of killing her, but this he strongly denied. While he was denying the charge of murder the head

<sup>1</sup> A person considered he had not made a meal if he had no meat or fish to eat with his cassava.

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came right into the town ; and when the family saw it they immediately tied up Mbungi and killed him.

This was how murder was first introduced into the world.

### STORY V

#### *Why the Fowl and Dog are abused by the Birds*

There was a time when all the birds and animals lived in the sky. One day it was very rainy and cold—so cold that they were all shivering. The birds said to the Dog : “ Go down and fetch us some fire to warm ourselves.”

The Dog descended, but seeing plenty of bones and pieces of fish lying about on the ground he forgot to take the fire to the shivering birds.

The birds and animals waited, and the Dog not returning they sent the Fowl to hasten him with the fire.

The Fowl, however, on arriving below, beheld plenty of palm nuts, pea nuts, maize, and other good things, so he did not tell the Dog to take up the fire, and did not take any himself.

This is the reason why you can hear of an evening a bird that sings with notes like this, “ *Nsusu akende bombo ! nsusu akende bombo !* ” which means, The Fowl has become a slave ! the Fowl has become a slave !

And the Heron sometimes sits on a tree near a village and cries, “ *Mbwa owa ! mbwa owa !* ” = Dog, you die ! dog, you die !<sup>1</sup>

This is why you hear these birds jeer at and abuse the Fowl and Dog, because they left their friends to shiver in the cold while they enjoyed themselves in warmth and plenty.

### STORY VI

#### *The Eagle leaves the Tortoise in the lurch*

A Leopard had three young children, and she asked the Tortoise to take care of them while she was away hunting.

<sup>1</sup> I have often heard these birds, and their notes quickly suggested the phrases quoted above, and undoubtedly gave rise to the story.

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"Very well," said the Tortoise, "I will nurse them for you."

So the Leopard went hunting, and after a time she returned with some meat which she wished to give to her children.

"No, no, do not open the door," whispered the Tortoise, "your children are asleep. Throw the meat in at the window." The meat was passed through the window, and the Leopard went off hunting again.

While the Leopard was gone the second time, an Eagle came to the Tortoise and said: "Friend Tortoise, let us make blood-brotherhood."

The Tortoise agreed, and the friendship was properly made. After a short time the Eagle asked the Tortoise for one of the children to eat, and one was taken, and they ate it between them.

By and by the Leopard returned again from the hunt with some more meat; but the Tortoise pretended that the children were asleep; so the meat was again put through the window, and off went the Leopard to hunt in the forest.

The Eagle then came and begged for another child, and receiving it he went and ate it on a high tree.

When the Leopard returned next time, she insisted on seeing the children, but the Tortoise said: "You stop there and I will show them to you at the window."

The Tortoise then took up the only child left, and holding it at the window he said, "That is one." He put it down and held it up again, and said, "That is two." Then he showed it again at the window for the third time, and said, "That is three." The Leopard, thereupon, went away satisfied.

The Eagle came again and asked for the "other child to eat."

"What shall I do," asked the Tortoise, "when the Leopard returns and finds all her children are gone?"

"Oh, I will take care of you," said the Eagle reassuringly; "I will fly with you to a high tree." The last child was given and eaten, and then the Eagle took the Tortoise to the branch of a very high tree.

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Shortly after the Eagle had carried off the Tortoise the Leopard returned, and finding all her children gone she wept very loudly for some time ; then looking about her she saw the Tortoise on the top of a tree.

The Leopard gnawed at the tree, and just as it was going to fall the Tortoise called out to his friend, the Eagle, to help him. The Eagle carried him to another tree. The Leopard gnawed that one ; so the Eagle removed the Tortoise to another high tree ; but the Leopard gnawed that also.

The Tortoise called for his friend, the Eagle ; but the Eagle replied : " I am tired of helping you, take care of yourself," and off he flew, leaving his friend in the lurch, and never returned again. The tree fell, and the Leopard killed the Tortoise. That is why the bush animals are afraid to hurt the Leopard's children.

### STORY VII

#### *The Kite breaks his promise to the Tortoise*

When the Tortoise and the Kite made blood-brotherhood the Kite said : " Friend Tortoise, now that we have become brothers, catch an electric fish for me."

" Friend Kite," replied the Tortoise, " when you see a skin floating on the river you will know that I have caught the fish you desire. Swoop down and take it ; and, friend Kite, thou art one who lives in the air, tie up the wind and bring it to me."

By and by the Tortoise killed an electric fish (*nina*), and set it floating on the river. When the Kite saw it he said : " Ah, there is the fish my friend Tortoise has sent me." He thereupon dropped to the river, picked up the fish, and carried it away to a high tree, where he ate it.

The Tortoise waited a long time, but the Kite never brought him the wind ; so seeing the Eagle one day fishing by the river bank he said to him, " Come here, friend Eagle," and when the Eagle had alighted on a branch near by, the Tortoise continued :

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"Well, my friend the Kite and I made blood-brotherhood, and he asked me to send him an electric fish, and I asked him to bring me the wind, and he agreed to this bargain. I have sent him his fish, but he has not brought me the wind. When you see the Kite remind him of his promise."

The Eagle met the Kite next day on the top of a tree and said to him: "When you make blood-brotherhood with a person you should keep your promise to him. Why don't you take the wind to the Tortoise?"

"I have not yet tied it up," said the Kite as he flew off.

The Tortoise waited, but the Kite not coming he went ashore, climbed to the roof of a house, and tied himself into a bundle like a parcel of fish.

The Kite, seeing the bundle and thinking it was some fish, he swooped down on it and carried it away to a tree, and while he was undoing the bundle the Tortoise said: "Friend Kite, you have deceived me, and you have broken your promise. Where is the wind you agreed to bring to me?"

The Kite was so alarmed that he dropped the Tortoise and flew away. And because of his broken promise to his friend he has lost the power to sail on the wind like the Eagle; but has to constantly flutter and flap his wings.<sup>1</sup>

### STORY VIII

#### *Why the Plantain-eater did not build a Nest*

The Plantain-eater is a gaudy-plumaged bird, not quite so large as a Cockatoo. It is called by the natives *Lukulu-koko*. Its notes are, *Kulu! kulu! kukukoko!* hence the natives say, "It is always talking about itself."

All the birds built nests so that when it rained they could enter them and remain dry. The Plantain-eater, however, never troubled to build a nest, but when the rain fell in torrents

<sup>1</sup> To break a promise made at the time of making blood-brotherhood is considered very bad, and is regarded as certain to bring punishment.



## FOLK-LORE STORIES

he went to a neighbour and said: "Let me come into your nest out of the rain."

But his neighbour answered him: "No, go and cut some palm fronds and build your own nest."

The Plantain-eater, at this reply, went off crying: "*Kulu ! kulu ! kulukoko !* Wait until the rain stops, and then I will fetch fronds to build my nest."

By and by the rain ceased and the neighbours called out: "Plantain-eater, the rain is finished, now get your fronds for nest building."

But the Plantain-eater said: "I will stop where I am, and when it rains I will raise my shoulders and put my head under my feathers, and the rain will not hurt me."

The next time it rained, however, he found it was very unpleasant to be out in it; and again he asked to be allowed to enter a neighbour's nest, but he was driven off. Thus it always happened that when it rained he intended to build a house; and when it was fine he said he did not need a house, but would put his head under his feathers.

And that is why the Plantain-eater is seen jumping from branch to branch in the rain, trying to enter other people's nests, making all kinds of promises in the rain, and only talking loudly and boasting in the fine weather of what he will do.

### STORY IX

#### *Why the Water-snake has no Poison*

When the Python had given birth to all the snakes she said to them: "You have no poison now, but another day I will call you, and give to each of you a proper share of poison."

After a time the day arrived, and the Python called all her children to receive the promised gift. The green snake, the viper, the whip-snake, the diamond-headed snake all arrived, and each received his share of the poison so as to defend himself from his enemies. Wherever these snakes went on a journey

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everybody jumped out of their way, for if they did not they were bitten and suffered much pain.

The Water-snake, however, instead of obeying his mother's call, went off to the river to fish. By and by he became tired of fishing, and thought he would go and hear what his mother the Python wanted.

As he went he met the other snakes returning, and heard that they had received their gifts from their mother. On his arrival he asked her for his share of the poison.

But the Python said: "No, I called you, and instead of coming you went fishing, so now you have lost your share of the poison through disobedience."

That is why the Water-snake is only laughed at when he bites, and no one thinks of moving out of his way, for he has no poison through disregarding his mother's call.

### STORY X

#### *How the Squirrel outwitted the Elephant*

The Squirrel and the Elephant met one day in the forest and had a big discussion about forest matters. At last the Elephant sneeringly said: "You are a Squirrel, you are only a little bit of a thing. Can you hold either my foot or my leg? No, you are too small to touch even one of my legs!"

"You may be a big thing," retorted the Squirrel, "but can you keep on eating palm nuts as long as I can?"

After much talk they decided to collect bunches of palm nuts, and when all was ready they sat down to the eating contest. Before beginning, however, the Squirrel had secreted a number of his friends in the forest near by.

The Elephant began the contest by putting a bunch of palm nuts into his mouth; but the Squirrel took the nuts one by one and ate them. And when the Squirrel was full he made some excuse and slipped away, and another squirrel took his place. In this way Squirrel after Squirrel exchanged places with each other unnoticed by the Elephant, who con-

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tinued to eat all the morning, and the big pile of palm nuts grew smaller and smaller.

At last the Elephant asked : " Are you full, friend Squirrel ? "

" No," answered the last Squirrel, " I feel as though I had only just begun."

" Is that so ? " grunted the Elephant. " Well, you are a wonderful little thing. Why, I am getting fuller and fuller."

After that they went on eating again.

In the afternoon the Elephant asked again : " Friend Squirrel, are you full yet ? "

" No," replied the last Squirrel, " I have not eaten half enough yet." And he took up some more nuts to eat.

The Elephant had not room for more than a sigh ; and towards sunset he said : " I am full, and cannot eat any more palm nuts."

Thus the Elephant confessed he was beaten, and ever after that he refrained from annoying and ridiculing his friends and neighbours because they were smaller than himself.

The natives are very careful not to taunt slaves about their condition, or to twit a person about poverty or lowly birth. It is considered to be the acme of rudeness to remind another that he is not so fine a fellow as you are, or as he thinks he is. Of course, folk often lost their temper and said bitter things to each other. The following story shows the punishment that fell to a man because in his anger he was rude to his slave wife.

### STORY XI

#### *Rudeness and its Punishment*

There was a man once who built a house on an island and went fishing in its creeks and pools. He plaited a large number of fish-traps, and set them in good places for catching fish.

One morning he went to look at the traps and found one full of fish, and among the fish was a Lolembé.<sup>1</sup> He took

<sup>1</sup> *Notopterus afer*.

## FOLK-LORE STORIES

them to his house, and then went to another part of the island to visit some other traps ; but on his return he found some food cooked and placed in a saucepan by the fire. In his surprise he called out, " Who has cooked this food ? " but there was no answer. All night he pondered this wonder in his heart, for he knew he was alone on the island.

The next morning he pretended to go to his traps, but turning back quickly he hid himself behind his house and watched through an opening in the wall. By and by he was amazed to see the Lolembé turn into a woman, who at once began to cook the food, whereupon the man showed himself to her and said : " Oh, you are the one who cooked my food yesterday ! "

" Yes," she replied. They were married, and in due time the woman gave birth to two boys and a girl ; and they lived with much contentment on the island.

One day the man said to one of his sons : " You come and help me with the fish-traps," and away they went together to look at the various traps.

The lad was a lazy, disobedient boy who would not listen properly to what was told him, so when the father wanted to empty the water out of the canoe and told him to go to the right side, the boy went straight to the left side, because it was nearer to him than the other side. The father became very vexed, and beating him in his anger, he said : " You are too lazy and too proud to do what you are told. Do you know that your mother came out of one of these fish-traps, for she was only a Lolembé ? "

The boy on hearing this went crying to his mother, and told her all his father had said. The mother soothed him, but in her heart she said : " My husband jeers at me because I am only a Lolembé, yet I have been a good wife to him ; perhaps some other day he will call me worse names, and when we return to the town everybody will know that I came out of one of his fish-traps. I will return to my own place in the river."

## FOLK-LORE STORIES

She thereupon fell into the river, and changing into a Lolembé she swam away. "Therefore," says the native storyteller, "never taunt a person with being a slave."

The next two stories are illustrative of the native reason for the loss of eternal life, or why people die, instead of continuing to live for ever on the earth.

### STORY XII

#### *Nkengo fails to obtain lasting life*

Nkengo was the son of Libuta, and he noticed that the people were dying daily in great numbers. So one day he called out loudly: "You Cloud-folk, throw me down a rope!"

The Cloud-folk heard and threw him a rope. Nkengo held on to it and was pulled up to the Cloud-land.

When he arrived there Nkengo had to wait one day, and in the morning the Cloud-folk said to him: "You have come here to receive lasting life (*lobiku*) and escape from death. You cannot make your request for seven days, and in the meantime you must not go to sleep."

Nkengo was able to keep awake for six days, but on the seventh day he nodded and went to sleep. The Cloud-folk woke him up, saying: "You came here to receive lasting life and escape from death. You were able to keep awake six days. Why did you abandon your purpose on the seventh day?" They were so angry with him that they drove him out of Cloud-land and lowered him to the earth.

The people on the earth asked him what had happened up above, and Nkengo replied: "When I reached Cloud-land they told me that in order to gain lasting life I must keep awake for seven days. I did not sleep for six days and six nights; but on the seventh day I nodded in sleep; whereupon they drove me out, saying: "Get away with your dying; you shall not receive lasting life, for every day there shall be death among you!"

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His friends laughed at him because he went to receive lasting life and lost it through sleeping. That is the reason why death continues in the world.

The following story also gives the reason for the continuance of death in the world. It was told me by a friend who lived for many years among the Balolo tribe at Bolengi (Equatorville district), about fifty or sixty miles below Monsembe.

### STORY XIII

#### *The Two Bundles*

While a man was working one day in the forest a little man with two bundles—one large and one small—went to him and asked: “Which of these two bundles will you have? This one” (taking up the large bundle) “contains looking-glasses, knives, beads, cloth, etc.; and this one” (taking up the little bundle) “contains lasting life.”

“I cannot choose by myself,” answered the man; “I must go and ask the other people in the town.”

While he was gone to ask the other people some women arrived, and the choice was put to them. The women tried the edges of the knives, bedecked themselves in the cloth, admired themselves in the looking-glasses, and without more ado they selected the big bundle and took it away. The little man, picking up the small bundle, vanished.

On the return of the man from the town both the little man and his bundles had disappeared. The women exhibited and shared the things, but death continued on the earth. Hence the people say: “Oh, if those women had only chosen the small bundle, we folk would not be dying like this!”

# FOLK-LORE STORIES

## STORY XIV

### *The Spider regrets her Marriage*

There was a Spider who lived with her parents in their town. She was unmarried, and it was very difficult to find a husband for her as she was so hard to please.

One young man asked her father for her in marriage, but he said: "You must ask her yourself." And when he said to her: "I love you. Will you be my wife?" she replied, "No," in such a way that he went back to his house very angry.

Another young man came, and she said: "I refuse all husbands, for I am going to remain as I am."

After a time another suitor came, and when the Spider declined him he said: "You refuse all offers of marriage from us; but a person will come who will not be a proper person at all, for he will have changed himself to look like a nice man. You will marry him, and you will have much trouble on going with him, for he will take you to his country, which will be far away, and you will regret that you have refused all of us."

"Be quiet!" she shouted; "you are angry because I will not marry you, and that is why you threaten me."

"Very well," said he, "you think I am telling you a lie," and away he went to his town. Now this was the Python who spoke to the girl.

The Python waited in his town for some time, and then he changed himself into another and nicer form and paid a visit to the Spider, and said to her: "Spider, I have come to marry you."

The Spider asked him: "Do you love me or not?"

He answered her: "I love you," and they were married.

After a time he said: "Spider, we must return to my town." And he deceitfully told her that he lived in a fine town, and was very rich. He also promised his father-in-law that he would return in six months—a promise he never intended to keep.

## FOLK-LORE STORIES

The Spider and her husband started on their journey, and went on and on and on for two months, and the wife became very tired with the long walk.

As they were nearing their town a person said to her: "The one who is travelling with you is not a real person, but a snake that has changed itself to look like a person. Do not believe in him."

They reached the husband's town, which she found was simply a tree with a large hole in it. The husband changed back to his snake form, and coiling himself up in the hole he left his wife to do the best she could outside.

The Spider was very angry, and repented having been so stupid as to refuse all the nice young men of her own town to be deceived by this snake from a distance. The poor Spider became very thin and would have died, only someone helped her back to her father.

The custom of making blood-brotherhood was very common on the Upper Congo. The ceremony has already been described in a previous chapter, and therefore it is not necessary to go again into detail. During the performance of the rite the contracting parties who exhibited any doubt of each other's faithfulness in properly observing the bond would put one another under a prohibition or taboo, and so long as they carefully obeyed the prohibition the blood bond remained in force.

In the following story the birds enter into this blood bond, and the peculiarities of each are regarded as prohibitions placed on them during the ceremony. There are many such stories accounting for the physical idiosyncrasies of various birds and animals.

### STORY XV

#### *The Heron and the Parrot are unbelieving*

When the Heron and the Parrot entered into the bonds of blood-brotherhood the Heron put the Parrot under a ban,



## FOLK-LORE STORIES

saying: "Friend Parrot, you must always remain in the tree-tops, and never alight on the ground. If you do so you will not be able to fly again, for you will be caught, killed, and eaten; and even if you are not killed the folk who catch you will tame you, and you will lose your power to fly again in the air."

The Parrot said: "Friend Heron, you must never build a house to sleep in it; if you do you will die."

After some time the Heron began to doubt the words of the Parrot, and he said to himself: "Perhaps my friend told me a lie about sleeping in a house. I will test his words, and if I die my family will know that the words of the Parrot are true, and they will never sleep in a house."

That evening the Heron entered a house (nest), and next morning his family found him lying dead. Ever since that time the Herons have always slept on the branches of the trees.

The Parrot also doubted the power of the Heron's prohibition, and said to himself: "I will alight on the ground, and if I am unable to fly again my family will know the Heron's words are true ones."

So down the Parrot flew, and alighting on the ground he found there plenty to eat, but when he tried to rise again he was not able to use his wings. Some people caught him and tamed him, and he remained a slave in their town.

That is the reason why the Parrots always fly high above the tree-tops and never alight on the earth, because of the prohibition of their friend the Heron.

The writer has many more of these stories, but the above are fairly typical of the lines upon which they run, although every story has its own little plot and exhibits some characteristic trait of native mind and habit.

## CHAPTER XV

### WAR

No army—The family fight—The town fight—The district fight—Procuring volunteers—"Medicine" put on spears—Poison used—No night attacks—Lips of the slain worn by the slayer—Spirit of the slain—Mode of attack—Prisoners—Women a cause of quarrels—War omens—War dance—Spears and flint-lock guns.

ONE can hardly dignify the quarrels and fights that occur among the Boloki and their neighbours by the name of war. There is no army and no organization, but all the men and lads take part in the fight that affects their family or their town. Their fights may be divided into three classes—the family fight, the town fight, and the district fight. The second and third generally arise out of the first.

The family fight. If a family has a quarrel with another family in the town neither guns, spears, nor knives are used in the fight that follows, but always sticks. I do not mean to say that no man ever draws his knife on another in a town quarrel; but that when two families in the same town deliberately fight each other they use only sticks as their weapons. They have talked until they are tired; it is not a case for the ordeal; and the ordinary methods of judging a case have failed, so they resort to sticks, and the party driven off the "field" by sheer weight of blows is the loser. The losing side then pays up and the affair is ended. The other families in the town scarcely ever take sides, but look on and enjoy the performance.

When a family in one town has a fight with the family of another town, then spears, knives, and guns are freely used,



#### HUTS BUILT FOR USE DURING WAR TIME

The Monsebie people for several weeks were threatened by some neighbouring villages with an attack, so they abandoned their houses, and built a number of these huts on the beach, and on the land side erected a strong palisade to protect themselves.



## THE FAMILY FIGHT

If family A of X town goes to fight family B of Z town, then the other families in Z will stand ready armed to assist their neighbours should they not be able to repulse the enemy ; and should the other families in Z town help the B family to drive out A family, then the other families in X town will help A family on its next venture into the enemy's town, and what was originally a family feud becomes a fight between two towns. It may happen that B family has not the sympathy of the other families in Z town, and they will stand by and see that family driven out and their houses raided ; or it may also happen that the A family has not the sympathy of the other families in X town, and they will not join forces with it to fight the folk who have repulsed them.

This is put to the test in the following way : The head of the defeated family puts a plantain leaf over his shoulder one evening and walks through the town calling out the reason for the fight, the family against whom he is fighting, and asking that volunteers who are willing to help him will meet next morning outside his house ready armed to accompany him. Very often no one turns up, and the man has to consider whether his own family has any chance of success if it prosecutes the fight alone, or whether some other way cannot be found of settling the affair.

If, however, the head of the family is an important man of known bravery who can command a large following of slaves and relatives, and there is every prospect of success, then a large number of volunteers will turn up the next morning. I have often seen a man going through the town with a plantain leaf across his shoulder calling for supporters. Sometimes they were such unimportant men that they were laughed at for their trouble.

When the families in Z town see A family returning to the assault with so many volunteers they will at once go to the assistance of their hard-pressed neighbour, for the honour and safety of the town are now at stake, and the affair now becomes a town fight.

## POISON USED

A town fight. The X town goes *en masse* to fight the enemy, leaving behind only the women, the children, the aged, and the sick. If X town is driven back by Z town and is unable to defend its position, then the women and children are carried off, the aged and sick are killed, the town raided, everything portable is removed, and the houses burnt to the ground; but if the X folk, although driven back, are able to defend their town they will set sentries for the night; and next day they will send their biggest head-man with a plantain leaf over his shoulder to call up volunteers from the other towns with whom they are friendly, and then it becomes a war between district and district.

When men go to fight distant towns their wives are expected not to commit adultery with such men as are left in the town, or their husbands will receive spear wounds from the enemy. The sisters of the fighters will take every precaution to guard against the unfaithfulness of their brothers' wives while they are on the expedition.

Some fighters put fetish "medicine" on their spears to give precision of aim; others rub them with a vegetable poison made from the burnt ashes of *munsansangu* leaves; and others go to the medicine man of the *ndemo* to render them invisible to the enemy.

It is impossible to keep the arrangements for an attack secret. There are always friends and relatives who will inform their friends, etc., on the other side, and the drums are beaten and the fighters prepare for the attack. The head of the family whose quarrel it is arranges the fight and leads the van with his own slaves, family, etc. If necessary he takes counsel with the heads of the other families helping him.

I never knew them to make a night attack. They would often lie in ambush and capture, if possible, those who fell into the trap, and kill those who tried to escape. Attacks were often made in the early morning, soon after three o'clock. No scouts were employed, but when necessary sentries were placed, and when they became sleepy they aroused two of



*Photo by]*

*[Rev. W. H. Stapleton*

### A BOLOKI SHIELD

The man is a Monsembe slave of the Mongo tribe. The shield is strongly plaited of dyed grasses and ornamented round the edge with skins. It is used more for deflecting spears than for receiving them. At the back is a wooden plate about half the length and width of the shield, to which the basket-work is laced.





## MODE OF ATTACK

their comrades to take their places. The fighting was not worthy of the name of a battle, but was simply an affray, a *mêlée*, in which there was no order and no words of command. No truce was allowed, but when one side was tired of the fight, or was getting the worst of it, they sent for a go-between (*molekaleku*) to arrange a meeting and the terms upon which blood-brotherhood could be made.

A man of conspicuous bravery who kills a man in a fight receives congratulatory presents, and at drinking-bouts the first mug of sugar-cane wine is served to him as long as he retains such pre-eminence, and he has no difficulty in procuring volunteers to aid him in any of his personal quarrels. When a man kills his opponent in a fight he cuts off his head and removes his lips, which latter he thoroughly dries in the sun, and then sticks them over with brass chair nails and wears them as an ornament with as much pride as a decoration is worn by the civilized soldier—it is the man's medal for bravery. The skull of the slain man is put at the base of a palm, or other tree just outside the victor's house, and when the victor dies the spirit of the conquered and slain man is called upon to do service to the spirit of the conqueror in *longa*, or the spirit-world.

The Boloki when attacking a town will often divide into two parties, and while one division attacks the place in front by water, the other makes a detour over land and attacks the rear. When chasing the enemy they throw their light, thin, fighting spears in the air, and these, turning, come down head first and pierce the shoulders, and I have known some to enter the top of the arm and come out at the elbow. For warding off spears they use grass-plaited shields, fine-woven cotton belts wound round and round the waist, and some have cuirasses of hippopotamus hide to cover the back. The cuirass fastens in front, and at the fastening there is generally a dagger in a sheath, which is easily drawn. There are a few flint-lock trade guns among them, but they rely on their light, thin spears and knives of various lengths and shapes. Lads who cannot

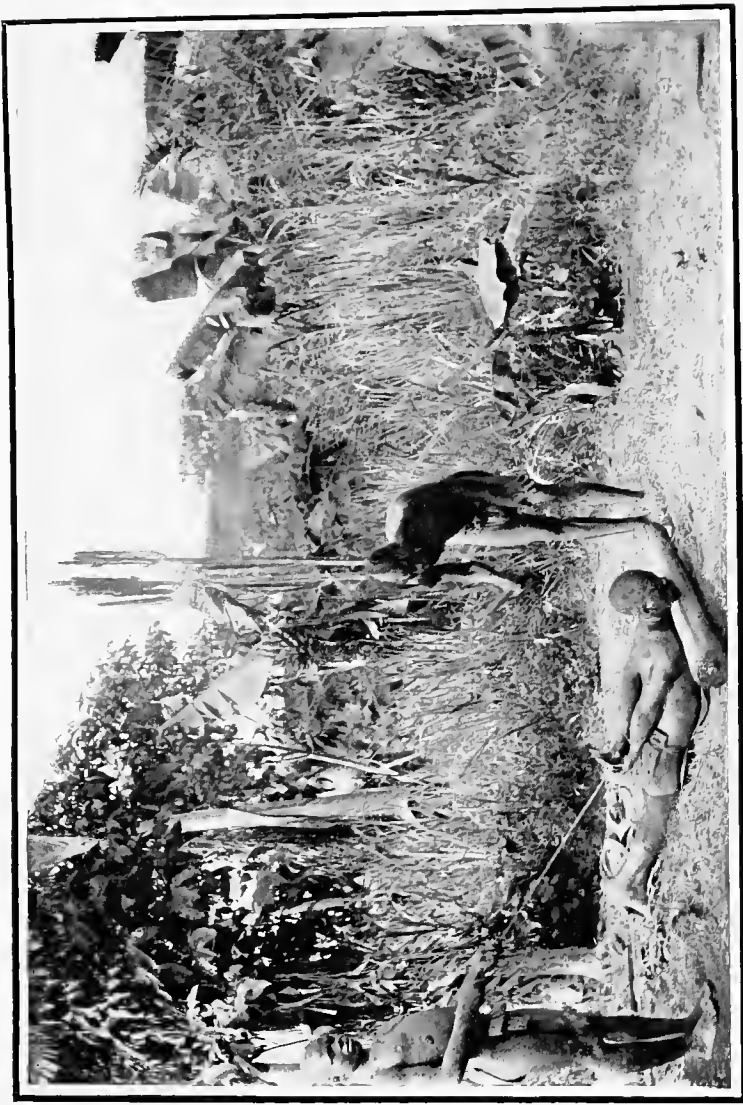
## PRISONERS

obtain spears use sticks with sharpened points that have been hardened in the fire, and with these they harass the enemy. When fighting they wear skin hats, more as a protection against cuts than for ornament ; and the whole face is blackened with a thick paste of oil and soot, or oil and burnt ground nuts, and the eyes are surrounded with circles of chalk or white clay. This is to disguise them from their enemies. The Boloki, among the Congo people, are acknowledged to be the fiercest and the bravest in a fight, and are greatly feared by the other tribes.

Prisoners taken are held to ransom, and if not ransomed they are retained, sold, or killed, according to the whim of the captor. The first prisoner taken by a man is given, as a first-fruit, to the man's father, or, failing him, to his nearest relative. Women very often become the wives of their captors. Prisoners captured in war belong to their captors, and the same applies to all kinds of spoils. The bodies of enemies are carried when possible from the " field " and eaten at a general feast. If the prisoners are not redeemed they become slaves, and while the young ones amalgamate with their conquerors, and often become a part of the families of their owners, the elder ones who have their own tribal marks well defined never take other than a servile position in the towns of their masters.

The chief cause of quarrels and fights on the Congo is about women, and although the ostensible reason may be a drunken row or a debt, yet if you push the matter to its real origin you will in nine cases out of ten find a woman at the bottom of it. Directly after blood-brotherhood is made all is friendly so far as seeming outward appearances may show ; but I know from experience that the conquered are only awaiting their opportunity of revenge.

There are certain omens that demand careful attention during war time. To some, if a snake during war goes in front towards the enemy it is a sign that success will attend their undertaking, but if the snake comes towards them the omen is against them. To others, if the *muntontwa* (a small



#### A BOLOKI METHOD OF BEHEADING

The victim here lies on the ground with a plantain stem under the neck. This plantain stem supports the neck for a clean cut through, but does not damage the edge of the knife.



## WAR DANCE

active bird with a long beak) flies towards the enemy the omen is in their favour, but if it comes from the direction of the enemy it is not to be disregarded or some calamity will surely overtake them. To most natives it will be a bad sign if a man kicks his foot against anything in the road. Sometimes the stronger-minded ones laugh away the fears of those who are inclined to turn back if the omens are against them ; but it more frequently happens that they turn *en masse*, probably glad to postpone the fight.

After a fight, in which some of the enemy are killed, only the *men* meet to engage in the *bonkani* dance. The men dance with their spears and knives, and any goats, sheep, dogs, or fowls that approach the dancers are instantly speared, cooked, and eaten. As a man beats the drum one after another of the dancers advances, and in a solo tells of his exploits during the late fight, which exploits are more often in the imagination than on the field of battle ; but they vie with one another in "drawing the long bow" on such occasions.

At times they use the following divination to ascertain the results of a proposed fight : A saucepan of marsh or forest water is procured and some "medicine" is put into it. The saucepan is placed on the fire, to which none but the operators have access, and then, after due time, they say to this *likato* (saucepan of water with "medicine" in it), "Will they kill us in the fight ?" If the water boils up and fills the saucepan, then it is an omen that some of them will be killed, so they abandon the war ; but if the water keeps low they ask, "Shall we kill some of them in the fight ?" Then if the water rises in the saucepan it is an omen that some of the enemy will be killed, and the war is prosecuted ; but if the water does not boil over it indicates that they will not kill any of the enemy, consequently the proposed fight is dropped. This test is applied several times before it is considered satisfactory.

I have seen natives fight both on the Lower and Upper Congo. On the Lower Congo flint-lock guns are used, and do almost as much harm to the firer as to the one fired at. Through

## SPEARS AND FLINT-LOCK GUNS

being so flimsily made a heavy charge of gunpowder will often cause the old gas-pipe barrels to explode, and a large number of our hospital accidents are from guns bursting in hunting and fighting. The firer holds the butt of his gun against the palm of his right hand, consequently when the gun jerks in firing, the bullet goes anywhere but at the object aimed at unless that object is very near. I have known over two hundred men fire at about thirty for a whole day and only one man was wounded in the ankle by a spent slug. Their guns will not carry far, and they stand at long distances from one another and fire.

On the other hand, the Boloki, relying as he does on his fighting spear, runs in to throw it, and many wounds are inflicted in a very short time. On the Lower Congo a person is seldom killed in a fight with guns ; but among the Boloki there is never a fight between town and town without several deaths.

## CHAPTER XVI

### HUNTING

Scarcity of animal life—Bush-burning—Game in ancient times—No bush-burning on Upper Congo—Scarcity of game—Absence of prairie lands—Large forests—Division of an animal—Mode of preserving meat—Omen of success or failure—Taboo on trap makers—Fetishing hunting-dog—Spears used for some animals—String nets for others.

THOSE parts of the Congo with which I am acquainted are not teeming with animal life, so far as my experience goes. I cannot claim the rôle of an ardent sportsman, yet I carried my gun many a weary mile in search of supplies for my table, nor did I often return unsuccessful.

The natives, both on the Upper and Lower Congo, give much time to hunting, and are fairly successful when there is game about. Undoubtedly the annual grass-burning on the Lower Congo has gradually and surely reduced the game, so that a party of hunters does not now bring home an antelope once in two months, although they might be out almost every day. In August, September, and early October hundreds of miles of bush are burnt to the ground. Every town has its own "bush," and after burning a circle round their town to secure it against fire when the "bush" is blazing before a rushing wind, the town-folk arrange to fire one "patch of bush" after another, until the whole country is black with charred grass stumps. When a patch is burnt it is surrounded by the chief and his men owning it, and they shoot down the antelopes, bush-pigs, palm-rats, gazelles, etc., as they rush by in terror from the on-coming flames. This annual bush-burning has been going on

## GAME IN ANCIENT TIMES

for generations, and accounts for the scarcity of animal life on the Lower Congo.

In a book<sup>1</sup> I have before me there are evidences that animal life was very prolific at the time of the narrator's visit to the Kingdom of Congo. He gives various accounts of the mode of hunting then followed on the Lower Congo, but does not mention any bush-burning, so apparently this mode of hunting came into vogue at a later date. He also speaks of the lion and zebra as being plentiful; these now, however, are never seen on the Lower Congo. He mentions the tiger (?) as being very numerous and fierce; but as he gives the native name—*engoi*—we know that he is speaking of the leopard, which is regarded still as a royal beast, and is always spoken of as *mfumu* (lord).

On the Upper Congo are many hippopotami—in a quiet side channel in 1890 we counted over one hundred of these huge beasts on a single sandbank; and as we passed the noise of our steamer frightened them. They took to the water, churned it in their alarm, and thumped the bottom of our steamer repeatedly. Crocodiles are very numerous, and are frequently killed from the decks of steamers passing up and down the river. They are more cautious than formerly, and make for the river on the slightest alarm. Many water-birds are to be seen along the banks, and in the quieter creeks and channels monkeys of various species sit chattering in the trees. The numerous steamers that now run up and down the river and its larger tributaries have frightened the hippo, the crocodile, and monkeys from the main channels to the smaller ones, and the hunter must now go by canoe, boat, or small launch up these unfrequented water bypaths if he is in search of sport.

There is no bush-burning on the Upper Congo, for the greater part of it is forest land, with here and there an open glade of forty or fifty acres in extent. Animal life, however, is

<sup>1</sup> "A Report of the Kingdom of Congo from the writings etc. of Duarte Lopez by Filippo Pigafetta, in Rome 1591."



## SCARCITY OF GAME

not prolific, and this may be accounted for, perhaps, by these reasons : There are no great prairie or bush-lands where animals can breed in comparative security, and the Equatorial district for hundreds of miles is periodically flooded. About every ten or eleven years the banks are under water. I have had to go about my own station in a boat, and I have eaten antelopes and bush-pigs that were caught and killed just off our station in the over-swollen river. In August, 1890, the river at Monsembe was eleven feet below the bank, but every year its highest rise was higher than the previous year, until in November, 1896, and again in 1897, the river was running under our houses. Then for a few years its highest watermark was lower than the preceding year ; and in 1903 it took the turn, and the country was flooded again in 1908. During the 1896 flood we learned from the natives that the river " was flooded like this when So-and-so was a boy that height." We judged that to be about ten years before.

These floods have undoubtedly helped to keep down the animal life of the Equatorial district, and, in addition, it is probable that forest lands are not such good breeding-places as the open veldt lands of South Africa, where the enemy cannot so easily take an animal by surprise.

There are in every Boloki town two or three men who are the recognized hunters, either because of their success, their swiftness of movement, their accuracy of aim, or their daring courage. These men are the leaders in the hunt, and always receive a larger share of the spoil than the ordinary man.

The owner of the slain animal is he whose spear first enters a vital part, and though the others have a share according to their importance, yet he takes the largest portion for himself. Various relatives, head-men, and chiefs have rights over certain parts of an animal killed by a relative or a member of the town. These portions vary considerably with the different families and towns. A child takes a leg or a shoulder of the animal slain by his father, a mother receives the belly-piece or the neck from her successful son. These bespoke portions that

## MODE OF PRESERVING MEAT

belong to the family are called *bilelo*. The head-man of the town receives the head or a leg, and his portion is called *motando*. After the fortunate hunter has met these claims, and has given his companions in the hunt a piece each, there is often not much left for himself. There is no close season for hunting.

The boundaries of the town are well defined, and the islands belonging to a town are well known to all the other towns in the neighbourhood. If an animal is killed on ground owned by a town other than that to which the huntsman belongs, he has to send a portion of it—generally the head—to the chief who claims the land.

The only mode I observed among them for preserving the meat is that of thoroughly drying it, or smoking it, over a fire. As a rule not much meat is preserved in this way, as the animal is usually eaten all up in three or four days. Those who have more than they can eat are always willing to sell some of it to the less fortunate, and buyers are numerous.

Men going to hunt carry their special charms with them, either on their person or on their spears. These charms are almost as numerous as there are huntsmen; you will scarcely find two men in a party who have faith in the same kind of charm. But there are certain ceremonies performed in which all the huntsmen take part.

In the case of a special hunt, say for killing elephants, a medicine man was called who took two or three days to perform an elaborate ritual and “make medicine.” This only occurred once during my residence at Monsembe, and then the hunt was not successful. Although I inquired about what the medicine man did, the people were too suspicious of me to inform me about his proceedings. I found later that the natives thought that the spirits of the deceased who inhabited the forests had power to turn the animals aside from the traps and thus render them ineffective, so the first thing to be done when arranging a hunt was to call the medicine man of the mat. This medicine man brought his mats, charms, some saucepans and calabashes. He set up his mat, and entering the enclosed

## FETISH HUNTING-DOG

space he went through secret rites that lasted from one to three days. During these secret ceremonies he caught the spirits of the locality where the trap was set (or was to be set), and shut them up in a saucepan, or secured them safely in a calabash.

Again, all those concerned in the hunt had to chew red pepper and the pulp of the *nsafu* fruit, and if anyone refused to eat this mixture or could not spit it out properly it was taken as an adverse omen and the hunt abandoned. When the medicine man had secured the spirits in his saucepan or calabash, and the omen was satisfactory, the man who started the proceedings and two or three friends went and put up the spear-trap. From the time of setting the trap until an animal was killed in it and eaten, these men abstained from all intercourse with women, otherwise the luck would be bad and their trap unsuccessful. The same prohibition was enforced on hunters who made traps (*motambu*=noose-traps) for bush-pigs and burrowing animals.

The natives are not good trackers. I very often hunted with them, and after a short time I was able to track the game as quickly as they. They relied more on the animal running into a trap, or into a noose, than tracking them down and spearing them. They never went tracking for long distances like the North American Indians, but simply for a mile or two round their own towns. Undoubtedly the various chiefs owning the ground and demanding certain parts of the animals killed on their land restricted the tracking and hunting to small areas for setting traps only, and consequently their tracking instincts were not developed.

The medicine man of the mat takes the dog selected for hunting purposes and puts into its mouth and nose the juice pressed from a crushed shrub called *mumpongo*, and this makes the dog keen of scent and courageous in the hunt. When such a dog dies it is not eaten like other dogs, but is buried in a mat like a child, for it is a fetish dog, and hence it is supposed to have a kind of spirit which, if not properly treated, can bring bad luck on its former owner.

## SPEARS USED FOR SOME ANIMALS

For hippopotami, elephants, and antelopes spring traps were placed across their tracks. These traps are made by putting two stout uprights about four feet apart, one on either side of the track; then a stout cross-piece is tied at about twelve feet from the ground. To the middle of this cross-piece and right over the track is fixed a heavy log of wood; and into the downward end of the log is placed a strong, sharp, heavy spear or prong. The log is so arranged that when the string which stretches across the path is touched by the passing animal, down comes the log, and four times out of six the spear enters the body of the beast. I once saw the body of a man who, while running in the forest, had inadvertently touched the spring of one of these traps. The spear caught him in the back of the neck, passed through his body, and came out between his legs. Such traps were called *mbonga*. Occasionally pit-traps are made, but it is seldom that anything is found in them.

In hunting the larger bush animals, and also crocodiles, the spear is the most common weapon, and this is hurled with great precision and swiftness. But in hunting smaller game, as the small antelopes, coypus, or palm-rats, bush-pigs, and gazelle-like animals, long string nets are employed. These nets are placed in a semicircle near where the animal is supposed to be, and then the hunters carefully beat the bush, driving the game before them into the net. Most of the hunting-spears are light, with a small blade and thin shaft, and some have barbs along either side of the blade.

## CHAPTER XVII

### FISHING

Collecting fish for the Museum—Modes of fishing—By torchlight—Fish-fences—Traps and spoon-nets—Floating buoys and hooks—Fish-spears—Fish poisons—Prohibition with fish traps—Addressing the fisherman—Penalties—First-fruits—Portion given to head chief.

FISH is very plentiful in the Congo and its tributaries. The writer was asked a few years ago by the authorities of the Natural History Museum, London, if he would undertake to collect Congo fish for them. This he readily consented to do, and was glad of the opportunity of rendering them any assistance in his power on the understanding that it should be no expense, for transport, etc., to his Society. The Museum authorities sent him the necessary preserving spirits and the tanks, The latter he filled with fish, labelled them and forwarded them to M. G. A. Boulenger, who has charge of the Ichthyological Department at the Natural History Museum. The natives themselves became interested in collecting fish, and brought me their catches to see if there was a fish among them that I had not put into the "box"; and when later the Museum authorities sent me about fifty plates, beautifully engraved, of the Congo fish that I and others had sent to them, nothing delighted the native lads more than looking over those plates and talking about the fish represented by them.

I started collecting in the following simple way: In 1893 we had no fish-hooks on the station, but the boys asked my wife to give them some pins with which to make hooks. This we did, on the condition that the young fishermen brought their catches to us and allowed us to take one or two fish for my

## MODES OF FISHING

bottle. The fish they caught by such primitive means were, of course, rather small, about the size of one's fingers ; but I soon had two pickle bottles full of various kinds of fish. These bottles I brought home in 1895 and gave to the Natural History Museum, and several new species were found in that small, unpretentious collection. This led the Museum authorities to ask me to collect larger fish, which I gladly did.

I was much interested in noticing the various modes of fishing pursued by the different tribes on the Congo, and will here give the results of my observations : (1) Fishing by torches at night. Fishermen in twos and threes would light a bunch of grass, or an old mat, on a dark night and would walk quietly along the river's bank, holding the light well up with one hand so as to attract the fish, and having in the other hand a long knife or spear well poised, ready to strike any fish that was attracted by the bright light. I never saw them catch a fish in this way, but they must kill one occasionally, or they would not trouble to spend their time in this manner. This mode of fishing was common to all the peoples right along the river. (2) During certain seasons of the year—May and November—the Congo itself and its numerous tributaries, inlets, and creeks are flooded with heavy rains. The watershed of the Congo River is extensive enough to benefit by the rainy seasons both north and south of the Equator ; hence the two rises in the year—May and November.

At flood times fences are built across the smaller creeks and streams. These fences are so closely woven that none but the smallest fish can pass. As soon as the water falls, which it generally does in six or eight weeks, those who built the fences go and search the shallow water and mud for any fish that may have been shut in the trap. In this way large quantities of various kinds of fish are caught, which, being cleaned and thoroughly dried in the smoke over a slow fire, help them much by rendering their sour cassava more palatable. During the time that the river is subsiding the people catch snails, and cut them up to feed the fish in these creek traps, and also in any

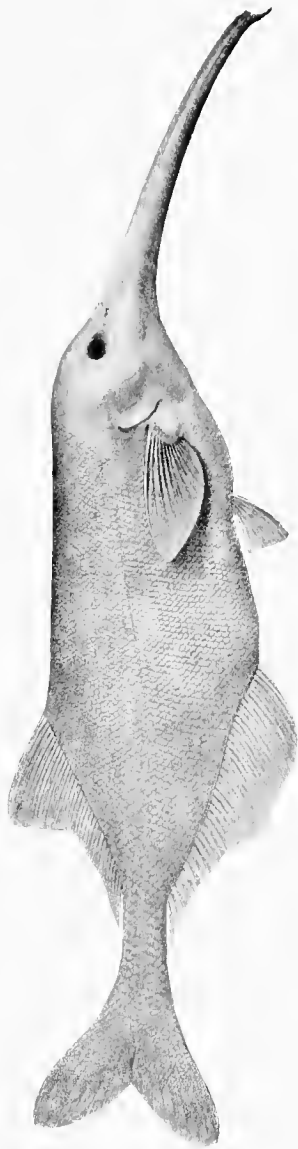


*By permission*

#### TETODON MBU

[Musée du Congo Belge]

This fish has the power, when irritated, of distending itself enormously, and becomes covered with small spines. This is its mode of defence, for when swallowed by a larger fish it at once inflates itself in its enemy's throat, who has either to expel it or choke.



*By permission*

#### GNATHONEMUS NUMENIUS

[Musée du Congo Belge]

This curious fish, with a proboscis like an elephant's, is to be found on the Upper Congo. The long snout is used for searching for snails, worms, and insects in the mud. The eyes are protected by a transparent covering.





## TRAPS AND SPEAR-NETS

ponds and pools left on the islands by the receding river. At flood time many of the islands are one and two feet under water, and as the river goes down large pools are left in the hollows. These are claimed by those people who, as the water shallows, fatten the fish with snails and cassava parings, and in due time they bail the remaining water out of these pools



A LONG FISH-TRAP

The mouth is put up-river, and partitions in it are so arranged that fish can enter, but cannot get out. See page 241.

and catch the gasping fish left on the muddy bottom. The mud-fish and siluroids are caught in large quantities in these pools and ponds. Both these modes of fishing are common to the whole river above Stanley Pool.

(3) On the Upper Congo, where the water is shallow and the banks slope gradually and regularly, the natives select a suitable place and drive in a number of wooden stakes forming a large semicircle, the ends of which touch the bank at from 15

## TRAPS AND SPEAR-NETS

to 20 yards from each other. They then fasten long bamboo nets to the stakes, thus enclosing a large sheet of water. A large number of light branches and leaves are loosely thrown over the surface of the enclosed water; the up-river end of this fish-trap is left open for the fish to pass in where they find shade. Snails and cassava parings are cut up and thrown in to fatten the fish and induce them to stay. As the river rises more branches are thrown on the enclosed water, and the fish gliding along the bank enter, and are charmed by the cool shade and food they find there.

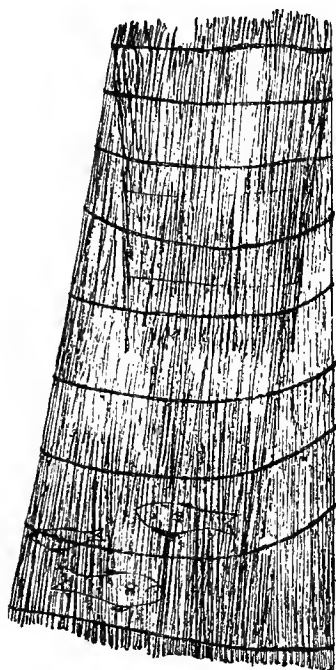
As soon as the river begins to fall below the top of the net the opening is shut. At this stage the natives frequently spear fish by probing with their fish-spears among the branches and grass inside the trap. In a few weeks the river falls, and the branches are carefully removed, and a number of women and boys and girls enter the water with cone-shaped baskets about 2 feet high, 18 inches in diameter at the mouth, and an 8-inch opening at the top. These baskets they lift up and down in the water, placing the bottom firmly each time on the river-bed, and from the feel they can tell whether a fish is enclosed or not. They catch fish frequently in this way, and then they put their hand through the top opening and grip it. If the fish is too large for that, then a spear is passed through and the fish pinned to the ground. See page 239.

Around the outside of the fence will be a number of canoes, occupied by men and lads fishing with large string nets fastened to stout canes of calamus palms. With these they spoon the water and often bring up a fish. After a time the large bamboo-net fence is slowly pulled up the sloping bank, sweeping before it and enclosing in its narrowing space any fish that may have escaped the spears, nets, and traps, until it is drawn right up the bank. The whole scene is very animated, men and women, boys and girls—a score or more of them—laughing, jesting, joking most noisily, splashing each other, scrambling, swimming, kicking, fighting, and diving in their efforts to catch the fish they feel gliding between their legs or slipping

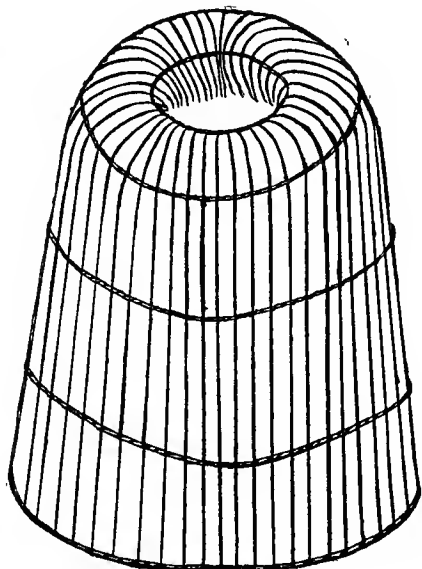
## TRAPS AND SPEAR-NETS

through their fingers. Many go as much for the fun as for the fish.

(4) Fish-hooks, probably first introduced by white men, are in general use all along the river. The hook is baited with



See page 241.



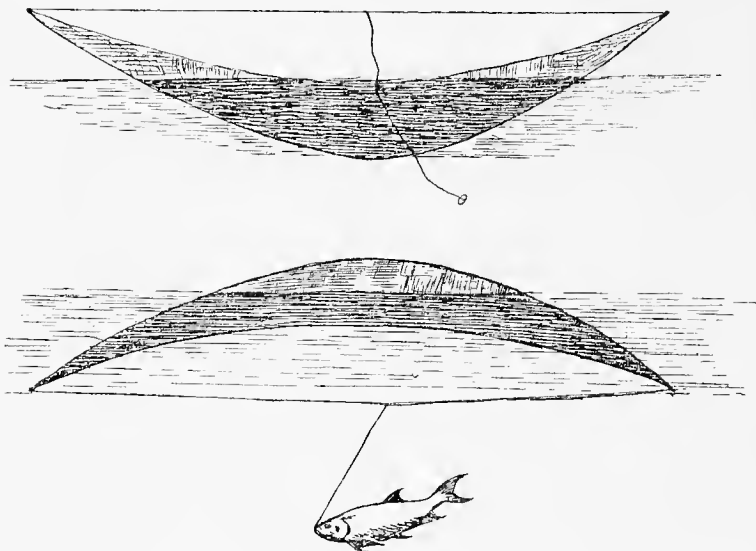
See page 238.

cassava, or earth worms, or the entrails of fowls. It is thrown into the river to lie on the bottom until it is found and swallowed by a hungry fish. I have seen a fish weighing 20 pounds caught in this way. The end of the line is a running noose placed round the angler's wrist. I once saw a boy about 14 years old jerked off the bank into the river by a fish that had swallowed his hook, and then in fright had suddenly

## FLOATING BUOYS AND HOOKS

started off. The boy, taken by surprise, lost his balance and toppled into the river; he and his fish, however, were soon pulled out.

The following is another mode of using the fish-hook: A crescent-shaped float of light wood (generally ambash) is prepared, and a cord is fixed across from horn to horn; from this cord hangs a string with the baited hook at the end.



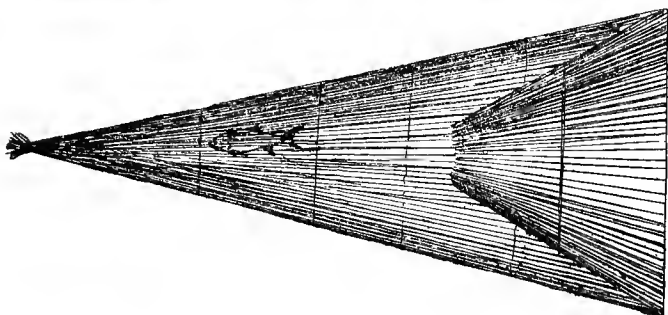
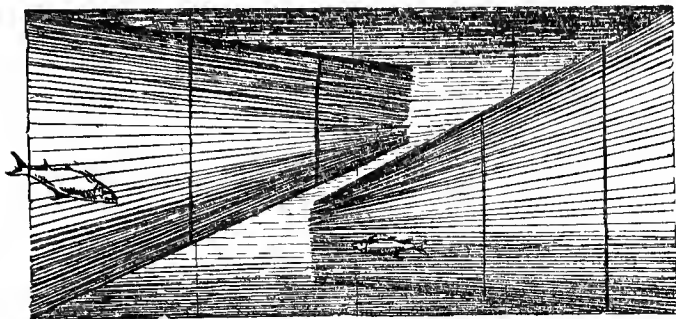
ANCHORED FLOAT WITH BAITED HOOK

This float has a heavy stone fastened to it at the end of a long cord. The fisherman goes into the middle of the river, drops the stone anchor (to keep the float from being carried away by the current), arranges the float and hook, and returns to land in his canoe. As long as he sees the horns of his float above water he knows that no fish is on the hook. When a fish takes the bait and swallows the hook, it overturns the float in its attempts to escape, and when the fisherman sees the rounded bottom of his float above water he knows that a

## CONE-SHAPED TRAPS

fish is caught on the hook. I have seen fish weighing close on 40 pounds caught by this ingenious method.

Throughout the whole length of the river the natives use



SINGLE AND DOUBLE FISH TRAPS  
See pages 241-2



FISH SPEAR WITH DETACHABLE HEAD

large cone-shaped traps made of split canes and bamboos. These traps vary in size from 6 feet to 12 feet in length, and from 2 feet to 7 feet in diameter at the mouth. The sides run straight for two-thirds of the length, and then taper off to a

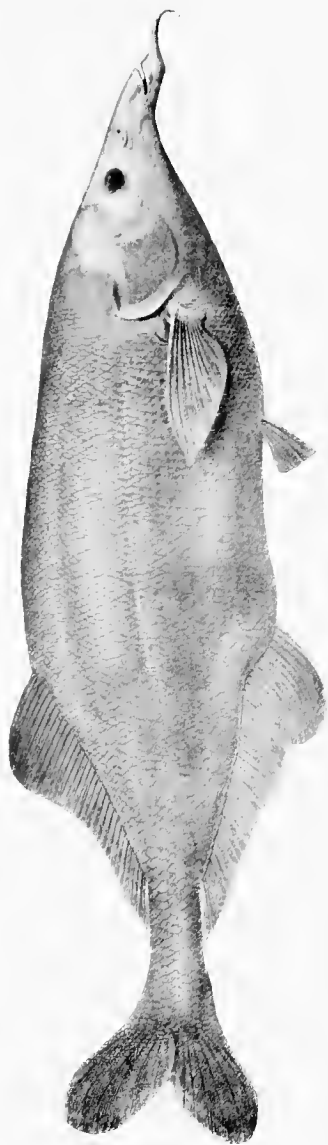
## FISH POISONS

point. Inside are several partitions running in semicircles and at an obtuse angle to the sides, so that it is easy for the fish to enter; but if they try to escape, the sharp, irregular ends of the canes forming the partitions probe them, and effectually turn them back. These large basket-like traps are weighted and dropped into deep water with their mouths up-stream. Some have only one smaller circle of canes arranged inside a larger. There is also another trap having the same diameter for its whole length, and a mouth at each end with a smaller cone-shaped partition arranged in each opening, so that fish coming from opposite directions can enter.

Fish-spears are of different shapes, but their hafts are always long—from 10 to 12 feet—and tapered towards the end. Sometimes the handles are of sticks, and sometimes of bamboos. The fish-spear is often a simple prong, sometimes an ordinary spear shape, but the commonest form is the barbed—single, or double, or triple. The two former are always tightly fixed in their handles, but the barbed kind is always detachable, having two or three yards of string loosely wound round the handle near to the spear-head. This allows the barbed head of the spear to remain in the fish, and the handle to float and show its whereabouts. I think the only reason for this difference is that the barbed spear-heads are scarce and costly, and on account of the detachable handles they are not so likely to lose them.

Fish poisons are used. One was the milky juice of a leguminous, hairy plant, called *botoko* (probably *Tephrosia toxifera*), which was crushed and thrown into the streamlets and creeks and has the effect of partially stupefying the fish. The other was the juice of the *Euphorbia*, named by the natives *kokotulu*.

(5) The Libinza people, to whom I have referred several times, make the largest nets, and fish in a more business-like way than any tribe I have seen on the Upper Congo. These nets are of a large mesh, and are made entirely of native string. In shape the net is like a box without a lid. It is 15 feet long, about 8 feet wide, and from 3 to 4 feet deep.



By permission

[Musée du Congo Belge]

#### GENYOMYS DONNVI

This remarkable fish is to be seen in different parts of the Upper Congo. It feeds on molluscs, worms, and maggots. Its eyes are protected by a transparent covering which permits it to probe among heaps of river refuse.



By permission

[Musée du Congo Belge]

#### PROTOPTERUS DOLLOI

The mud-fish—partly fish, partly reptile, with its rudimentary fins, breathes by gills and lives like a fish when there is plenty of water in the creeks and river; but when the river subsides it burrows in the mud, which soon bakes into a hard cake, and there the mud-fish passes the dry season rolled up and in a torpid condition.





## FISH POISONS

This is a fair average size ; there are many larger than this, and some smaller.

Soon after dark the Libinza fishermen select a suitable place—a sandbank with three or four feet of water on it. The net is fixed by one end and the two sides, being tied to stakes driven in the sand ; the other end was allowed to lie on the bottom of the river. Having fastened the net, they form a wide semicircle at some distance from the loose end of their net, and at a signal they begin to beat the water with their hands and feet, gradually working up to the open end and driving the startled fish before them. This operation is frequently repeated through the night, and as a result large quantities of all kinds of fish are brought to the town next morning. For this kind of fishing the river must be fairly shallow.

(6) The Basoko people have another mode of fishing by means of a string net 30 feet long and 5 feet high. The two ends are fixed to sticks ; along the upper edge of the net were floats of pith-wood, and along the bottom edge were weights of burnt fire-clay. The men go out in a canoe, and at a likely place the net is unrolled, and one man slips over the side of the canoe with one end of the net which, by means of the stick, he fastens upright in the bed of the river ; the other man then jumps into the river with his end of the net and makes a wide detour—the floats buoying up one edge and the weights sinking the other. The second man having made as wide a detour as the length of the net permits, sweeps round the fixed end and winds the net closely round and round, entangling in its meshes any fish caught inside the circle of its sweep. I have seen many fish caught in this manner.

(7) The Bopoto people have another mode, which appears more clumsy than it really is. A light frame of poles about 8 or 9 feet square is covered with a fine mat of bamboo laths closely woven together. One side of this frame is hinged to the side of the canoe so that it moves freely. The two upper corners of the frame have ropes attached to them. The two

## ADDRESSING THE FISHERMAN

fishermen hold the frame upright while a third paddles them into mid-stream ; then the frame is lowered by the ropes until the top end is 12 or 14 inches under the water, and the canoe is then allowed to drift with the current. By and by a fish swims over the submerged net, and the men, who are watching, pull quickly at their ropes, up comes the net, and down tumbles the fish into the canoe.

It is a curious fact that one tribe never imitates another in its principal mode of fishing. I have seen an Upper River native make and use a cast net such as he had seen the Accra carpenters use ; but I never saw a man of one tribe imitate a man of a neighbouring tribe in his peculiar mode of fishing. They have traps common to all, but each tribe has its own principal mode peculiar to itself. I have twitted a native of Monsembe about not following, or even trying, the successful mode of fishing pursued by the Libinza people, and he has replied : “ We could not catch fish like them even if we tried ; that is their way, and we have ours.”

Fishermen while making their traps (*moleke*) are prohibited from all intercourse with women, and this prohibition continues until the trap has caught some fish and the said fish has been eaten, otherwise they will have no luck in fishing. This abstinence may last some few weeks, or only a few days. The Boloki folk in the old days often threw old men or women into the river to appease the water-spirits (*mingoli*), that they might be more successful in fishing.

While a man is fishing, and immediately on his return from fishing, he is called *mwele*, no matter who he may be. The river is supposed to be full of spirits, and if these hear the proper names of the fishermen they can so work against them that they will catch little or no fish, consequently the fishermen desire to hide their identity under the general name of *mwele*.

Again, when a man lands with his fish the buyer must not address him by his proper name, but as *mwele*, or the spirits will hear it, and either mark him as one against whom they

## FIRST-FRUITS

will exercise their influence another time, or they will impoverish the fish just caught, so that the man's chances of a good price will be lost. Hence the fisherman can make the person who breaks this rule either pay him heavy damages, or compel him to sell the fish in the village at a good price and thus restore his luck.

The first-fruits of a lad's fishing are given to his nearest relatives. When this is not possible, then other fish are given later on. Very often a share of the first catch of every season is similarly given to the parents or nearest relatives. A part of the fish caught is given to the head-man of the town to which the fisherman belongs. This was regarded as one of the perquisites of his position, and the non-observance of custom is bitterly resented.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Ideas of a Supreme Being—His various names—Views of the spirit life—Fetishism—Medicine men and spirits—Black and white magic—Origin of the term fetish—Native crusade against fetishes—Bundle of charms—Its contents—Sacrifices to fetishes—Rise and fall of witch-doctors—An attempt to define fetishism—Natives very religious.

WE have found a vague knowledge of a Supreme Being, and a belief in Him, very general among those tribes on the Congo with which we have come into contact. In each case the natives' ideas of the Supreme Being were gathered and noted long before our teaching had influenced their views or increased their knowledge concerning Him. Before we could preach our views we had to learn their language, and while learning their language we necessarily received—in the definitions of the words we were learning from them—their ideas of that great Being who created the world. We found their knowledge of Him was scarcely more than nominal, and no worship was ever paid to Him.

On the Lower Congo He is called *Nzambi*, or by His fuller title *Nzambi a mpungu*; no satisfactory root word has yet been found for *Nzambi*, but for *mpungu* there are sayings and proverbs that clearly indicate its meaning as, most of all, supreme, highest, and *Nzambi a mpungu* as the Being most High, or Supreme.

On the Upper Congo among the Bobangi folk the word used for the Supreme Being is *Nyambe*; among the Lulanga people, *Nzakomba*; among the Boloki, *Njambe*; among the Bopoto

## HIS VARIOUS NAMES

people it is *Libanza*, which word is also well known among the Boloki people, and was probably introduced by slaves from Bopoto. At Yakusu, near Stanley Falls, the word used is *Mungu*, which is a shortened form of the Swahili word *muungu*, and this may contain the root of the Lower Congo word *mpungu*. It is interesting to note that the most common name for the Supreme Being on the Congo is also known, in one form or another, over an extensive area of Africa reaching from 6° north of the Equator away to extreme South Africa; as, for example, among the Ashanti it is *Onyame*, at Gaboon it is *Anyambie*, and two thousand miles away among the Barotse folk it is *Niambe*.

These are the names that stand for a Being who is endowed with strength, wealth, and wisdom by the natives; and He is also regarded and spoken of by them as the principal Creator of the world, and the Maker of all things. Some think Him so perfect in all His works that semi-sane people, crooked sticks, and deformed persons and animals are placed to the credit of a subordinate divinity — a demiurge called *Kombu*.

But the Supreme Being is believed by the natives to have withdrawn Himself to a great distance after performing His creative works; that He has now little or no concern in mundane affairs; and apparently no power over spirits and no control over the lives of men, either to protect them from malignant spirits or to help them by averting danger. They also consider the Supreme Being (*Nzambi*) as being so good and kind that there is no need to appease Him by rites, ceremonies, or sacrifices. Hence they never pray to this Supreme One, they never worship Him, or think of Him as being interested in the doings of the world and its peoples.

During the whole thirty years of my life in various parts of the Congo I have heard the name of the Deity used in the following four ways only: Among the Lower Congo people, when they desire to emphasize a statement or vouch for the truthfulness of their words, they use the name in an oath.

## HIS VARIOUS NAMES

When in extreme trouble they cry out: "I wish *Nzambi* had never made me!" or when in great distress: "*Nzambi*, pity me!" Also on the Lower Congo there is the phrase *lufwa lua Nzambi*=death by God, i.e. a natural death as distinctive from death by witchcraft; but this view of death is not so frequently heard on the Lower Congo as among the Boloki people, where *awi na Njambe*=he died by God, i.e. there is no witchcraft about the death of the deceased, nor anything pointing to witchcraft about the accident that caused the death, is often heard. These are the only phrases which suppose that the Supreme Being has anything to do with the world. They are generally employed in the case of poor folk when they die, as no one wants the trouble and expense of engaging a witch-doctor to seek out the witch.

About four years ago I asked a most intelligent native, whose age was about 45, if he could recall any prayer that was offered to the Supreme Being (*Nzambi*) by his family or any natives before the coming of the missionaries. He sat quietly for a few minutes and then answered: "No, but a woman in great distress would say, '*Nzambi*, pity me,' not because she thought she would receive pity, for we all believed *Nzambi* was too far away to hear us or think of us, but because it was a saying amongst us for such times of distress."

Among the Lower Congo people the belief exists that when there is a halo round the moon it is a sign that the Supreme Being is there confirming the residence in that cool place—hence state of happiness of some spirits which have just arrived; and when the halo is round the sun, then those who have recently lost relatives or friends by death will tremble and wail, because that halo round the sun is an indication to them that the Supreme Being (*Nzambi*) is there confirming the punishment that has consigned the late departed to the hot place—hence state of unhappiness. There is a proverb that shows the lastingness of this punishment: "The bad people are tortured like a locust on the burning grass; it wants to die, but is kept alive." These comprise the only ideas concerning

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the Supreme Being that I have ever heard expressed, either on the Lower Congo or among the Boloki natives.

On the other hand, there is a seeming contradiction of the moon and sun theory, as stated in the preceding paragraph, by another belief extant among the Lower Congo people, viz. that all the souls of the departed go to a great spirit-town in the forest, and that is the reason why burials take place at sunset. The natives argue thus : During the day folk go to farms, to market, to work in the forests, etc., and the town is left empty ; in the evening the inhabitants have returned from their different occupations, and are ready to accord a welcome to any visitor ; thus also the spirit-town : all the spirits are away at their different employments and do not return until the evening, and if the deceased were buried during the morning or early afternoon there would be no one in the town to welcome him. These differing beliefs appear to be co-existent, and the natives, if they perceive their inconsistency, have not offered any explanation. I once pointed out the contradictory nature of these beliefs to a smart native with whom I was conversing on the subject, and his reply was : "Some believe one thing, some believe the other, and some people believe both."

Among the Boloki people there is a general and firm belief in a spirit-world, or nether region (called *longa*). It is supposed to be somewhere down below. From many natives I have received the same direction, always accompanied by the same action and words, viz. they have pointed with their fingers to the ground, saying, "It is down underneath there." In the nether regions the conditions of existence appear to be similar to those in the villages and town, with this exception, that a man may be too high in the social scale to be punished on earth, but he cannot escape punishment in the nether regions for the disagreeable qualities he has exhibited on earth. Within a few hours of an unpopular head-man's death, I have heard the ordinary natives laughingly say to one another as they have snapped their fingers in glee : "He is being punished

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now." Who allotted the punishment and saw to its infliction I could never ascertain. Juries of head-men on earth sat to decide difficult cases ; and it may be that they thought juries in the nether region sat on cases and allotted the necessary punishment.

The firing of guns, shouting, wailing, beating of drums and such noises are heard in the nether regions, and give notice to the inhabitants there of the approach of another disembodied spirit. The louder the noise the greater is the expectation of those in the spirit-land of seeing a great man arrive. The spirits of the departed wait about the entrance to the nether regions to greet the one about whose departure for their abode so much fuss is being made.

The soul of a living person is called *elimo*, but on the person's death his soul becomes a disembodied spirit named *mongoli* ; and the Boloki spirits after sojourning for a time in the nether regions leave that place and wander about the rivers and creeks, doing all the harm they can to the living by flooding their villages and keeping the fish from entering the nets and traps. The spirits of the Bomuna people, and of the bush people generally, are supposed to roam about the forests, turning the animals from the traps and nets set to snare them, not to save them from death, but to show their hatred of the folk living in the towns.

Are these disembodied spirits turned out of the spirit-land as a punishment ? Natives believe that the spirits of bad men are punished in the nether region—by bad they mean a disagreeable, unsociable, disobliging, greedy, rude, discourteous person. The ghost of such a one will return to trouble his whilom neighbours, and it is against his disagreeable qualities as a man that they have to guard now that he is a spirit. There are many stories about the doings of the disembodied spirits—their tricks and their mode of revenge—which will be related in subsequent chapters. The foregoing paragraphs give, I trust, a clear statement of the natives' ideas of the Supreme Being and their views of existence after death, so far as I



## FETISHISM

have been able to collect their thoughts and beliefs during a long and intimate intercourse with the people.

We now come to a larger subject—larger because it holds a more important place in the life and thought of the native—I refer to fetishism. If fetishism is a form of religion, then the Boloki people, like all other tribes on the Congo, are a very religious folk. In obedience to fetish taboo and custom they exhibit a devotion and persistency worthy of a better cause; in subjection to the demands of their witch-doctors they cut themselves, deny themselves many kinds of pleasant food, and pay heavy fees, even to the impoverishment of themselves and families. But all this is done through their abject fear of the various malignant spirits who, so their medicine men inform them, have power over them for the time being. It may be one spirit to-day and an entirely different one next month, according to the sickness, misfortune, or particular kind of bad luck from which the man is suffering; or a man may for twenty years possess good health and good fortune, and consequently he will need neither the medicine man nor his rites and ceremonies; or it may be that a man thinks “prevention is better than cure,” and in such a case he will fee the medicine men to appease on his behalf such evil spirits over whom they profess to exercise control, or to prepare for him certain charms to destroy their wicked designs.

No single witch-doctor pretends to control all the evil spirits, or confer immunity from all diseases, or remove all misfortunes, or impart every kind of good luck. Hence on the Lower Congo there are about fifty different kinds of medicine men,<sup>1</sup> and among the Boloki some eighteen varieties of them, each supreme in his own particular branch. The order is not confined to men only, for many women are to be found in its ranks. Some medicine men are supposed to be stronger than others, and, controlling more powerful spirits, they either avert greater evils or confer larger benefits, and con-

<sup>1</sup> See *Folk Lore* for Dec. 31st, 1910, p. 447, for a complete list of Lower Congo medicine men and their various functions written by the author.

## BLACK AND WHITE MAGIC

sequently receive more respect and richer fees for their services.

It is a misrepresentation to depict the Congo native as "bowing down to wood and stone." He never worships his fetishes; he exhorts them to do his bidding; he commands them to do that for which they were made, and he is not backward in arousing them to alertness by whistles and explosions of gunpowder, or to activity by whacking them with a stick.

No native of any tribe I have met ever assigned creative powers to his fetishes, or respected them as the representatives of a deity. The fetishes were made yesterday at his bidding and expense by the witch-doctor, and to-morrow, if they fail in their purpose, they will be consigned to the rubbish heap, or left neglected on some shelf in his house. The native lives and moves, so he believes, surrounded by evil spirits which, on account of their own malignant natures or at the instigation of his enemies, are constantly trying to work him harm, and the only means known to him of counteracting the evil, or of appeasing the malignant power, is the medicine man with his powerful fetishes, charms, and ceremonies.

There are two phrases that contain the whole theory and practice of the Congo medicine man's black and white magic. By the black magic he professes to incite an evil spirit by means of a fetish to inflict a sickness or some other misfortune on an enemy; and by white magic, to appease the evil spirit through the medium of the fetish, so that the sickness or bad luck shall be removed from one's self or one's family and friends. The same medicine man uses the same fetish to curse a man with disease, or to cure the man so cursed, hence he often draws fees from both parties.

To curse a person by the aid of a fetish is called *loka e nkisi*. The fetish is beaten with a stick, informed what it is to do, and then hung up outside the invoker's house, and the spirit of the fetish flies off to obey its orders. This is the simple *modus operandi* followed by all the witch-doctors on the Lower

## BLACK AND WHITE MAGIC

Congo, who invoke their fetishes to employ their various powers against the enemies of their clients.

To soothe and appease the spirit of the fetish so that it will remove the curse from working by so conciliating the fetish power, or the spirit the fetish is supposed to control, that it will work for the medicine man's client and not against him, is called *lembola e nkisi* (=to soften, tame a fetish), and the ceremony is as varied as there are medicine men, for each branch of the profession has its own special rites to observe.

Now fetishes on the Lower Congo are either images, bundles, or large horns, and these as a rule are owned by the medicine men. Smaller fetishes and charms are made by them for various purposes and sold to the natives. Sometimes a wealthy man will buy a powerful fetish and use its power entirely for himself; at times a poorer man will pay a good fee to a medicine man to borrow his fetish, or the rich man's fetish for one or two days, so that he may have the entire attention of the spirit it controls. A rich man will sometimes buy a powerful fetish as a speculation, and make a good profit by hiring it out for a fee, and the poorer man will pay the fee, hoping to reap good results to his bodily health or to his prosperity by having the undivided interest of the fetish at his service.

The term fetish comes from the Portuguese word *feitiço*, and the early navigators of the West African Coast were Portuguese, who carried with them amulets and charms, i.e. *feitiços*, in the form of crosses, beads, images, etc., that had been blessed by their priests. And when these ancient navigators saw the natives wearing shells filled with some mixture, or displaying on their persons some articles with which they were unwilling to part even for costly gifts, what was more natural for them than to regard such objects as something akin to their own *feitiços*? And "as they discovered no other traces of religious worship they concluded that this outward show of regard for these *feitiços* constituted the whole of the negro worship."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to F. Max Müller for much in this paragraph. See *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 61. 1878.

## NATIVE CRUSADE AGAINST FETISHES

The native word on the Lower Congo for fetish (*nkisi*), and among the Boloki (*bonganga*), means an image, a horn, a shell, a saucepan, etc., and, in fact, anything into which a medicine man has put a part of his "medicine" from his store bundle; and it is not an effective fetish until it has been through the hands of the medicine man and received its power from him. No one witch-doctor makes all the fetishes, but every one has his own speciality, in the making of which he is accounted an expert.

On the Lower Congo the native offers periodic sacrifices to his fetish to keep it in a good humour, otherwise through sulkiness it may refuse to help him; or he returns it to a medicine man to renew its energies when it proves too weak for his purpose; he explodes gunpowder around it to arouse it to proper alertness that it may attend to its owner's affairs; or he beats it to make it subservient to his wishes, but he never worships it, nor does he ever pay homage to it. Among the Boloki sugar-cane wine is poured over the fetish to render it amenable to its owner's wishes, and it is threatened if it does not act quickly on its owner's behalf; and while the Boloki fears his fetish in a way, yet he never worships it.

"About 1872 some natives of Loanda came through the country preaching a crusade against fetishes of all kinds, inducing the natives in town after town to destroy all their fetishes, assuring them that since death and sickness came by the exercise of the black art, which everyone fully believes, if then every fetish were destroyed and no more made there would be no more suffering and death. Far and wide the most strenuous efforts were made to accomplish the destruction of all fetishes to that happy end."<sup>1</sup> In 1909 a man with whom I was conversing told me that he as a child was shaken over the fire during this campaign to destroy any fetishes he had about his person. He well remembered this crusade against fetishes, and said that when the people became ill and died

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Bentley's Appendix to the *Dictionary and Grammar of the Congo Language*, 1895, on p. 849, under the word *Kiyoka*.

## BUNDLE OF CHARMS

as usual, the originators of it said: "It is because some of the people have not destroyed all their fetishes."

On the Lower Congo every witch-doctor has a bundle of medicines or charms (called *ebunda dia mfula*) which is the source of his power and the spring from which he draws his supplies for making his own great fetish, and the charms, amulets, and minor fetishes for his clients. This bundle is a conglomeration of powdered chalk, crushed red pepper, wood ashes, bits of the skins of strong animals, claws and beaks of strong birds, heads of snakes, poisonous plants and beans, various herbs, and any other mess the medicine man can collect together. A portion of this bundle is put into the head of the fetish image (and sometimes into the stomach), and becomes the brains, intelligence (*nkinda*) of the fetish.

When a medicine man uses his fetish on behalf of a client, he takes a little of the bundle and puts it into a horn or shell and ties it round his patient's neck, telling him that while wearing it he must not eat this or that article of diet, or he must not do certain things. In due time the medicine man goes to receive his fee, and on receipt of it he removes the special charm from the neck of his patient, and at the same time takes off the taboo. If the person does not pay, then the medicine man leaves him under the taboo, and perhaps adds others. The Congo medicine man never has any bad debts.

No native thinks the fetish he uses is possessed of divine power, nor does it represent a deity to him, and he uses no language about it that would lead one to suppose that for a moment he in his own mind invests it with divinity. What is the fetish to him? It is something in which a portion of the *mfula* bundle has been put which has imparted to it its own mysterious power—to him any portion of the bundle contains the power of the whole.

What then is the bundle? It is composed of the skins of strong animals which are thereby represented, and their combined strength is conserved in it; there are pieces of the skins of cunning animals, and their united craftiness and

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cuteness are imparted to it ; there are portions of strong, swift birds that sail on tireless wings through the air, and they give to it their power of flight ; there are various poisonous plants and beans that lend their qualities of harming the human body when used against the enemy of a client ; there are beneficial herbs and powders that are supposed to cure the person who uses it for his recovery from a disease ; and there is generally powdered chalk, symbolical of brain matter, that gives intelligence to the whole mass. I do not think the native mind goes farther back than the *bundle*, which contains for him representations of all those qualities that he fears and admires, and whose combined forces overawe him. And should he go beyond that bundle it is only to the animals—the lion, the leopard, etc., whom he fears ; the eagle, the hawk, and the falcon whom he admires and wonders at for their flight through space ; and to those plants and herbs whose mysterious powers he dreads.

The native supposes that the medicine men have some occult method of so mixing these qualities and forces together in the bundle that they become active agents in flying through the air and seeking out the enemies of their clients, or of destroying those who are bewitching them, or of curing those who seek their aid. All the medicine men do not have all the skins, powders, herbs, etc., in their charm bundles, but each procures what he thinks will make the desired combination for his purpose. It is quite probable that the medicine men and the more intelligent natives believe that by mixing the skins, plants, chalk, etc., in different ways they induce different spirits to take up their abode in the various fetishes, because they like the mixture prepared for them, and in thus taking up their residence in them, or being influenced by them, the medicine men gain power over them.

This view is supported by the following considerations : The fetish when first made is only a piece of wood and can be bought for a few pence ; but after the witch-doctor has put a portion of the charm bundle into it the price for it is con-

## SACRIFICES TO FETISHES

siderable—from a few shillings to a few pounds—according to what it is expected to do. Sacrifices are offered, not to the piece of wood, but to the spirit now dwelling in it, or over which the charms in it have some influence. These sacrifices range from an occasional drop of blood from a frog's foot to a goat every new moon, the blood of which is poured over the fetish, and the flesh of the sacrificial goat must not be sold, but eaten by the sacrificer and his family and friends—the larger the benefits expected, the more costly and regular the sacrifice. The sacrifices are to keep the spirits in good-humour. The portion of the bundle put into the fetish is after a time played out, becomes stale, and loses its power of attracting the spirit to it, i.e. the fetish becomes ineffective, so the owner of it takes it to a medicine man to have it refreshed by renewing the charms from the bundle; and then if it is still inactive, i.e., if the owner's luck is still bad, or his health continues unsatisfactory, he throws the fetish on one side and tries the fetish of another branch of the profession, thinking that the former's mixture of ingredients has no further power to attract the spirit to his fetish, or the fetish does not influence the particular spirit that is able to help him.

The Boloki medicine men have a "bag of tricks" made of very similar ingredients to the charm bundle, and regarded in much the same way. The only difference being that on the Lower Congo the witch-doctors largely use images (called *teke*<sup>1</sup>) into which they put the portions of the bundle, while among the Boloki the fetish power is imparted to any article that comes conveniently to hand. During fifteen years' residence among the Boloki people I saw only two very crudely made images in use (they are now in Horniman's Museum), and those I bought easily for a few brass rods, showing that they valued them very lightly as receptacles for fetish power.

<sup>1</sup> The Kiteke people are experts in carving figures of men and women, and many of the images so frequently found years ago on the Lower Congo received the name *teke* for that reason. The Bakongo also make their own images, but they are cruder than the Kiteke ones.

## RISE AND FALL OF WITCH-DOCTORS

As already stated, there are nearly fifty different kinds of medicine men on the Lower Congo, and about eighteen among the Boloki. It is not to be thought for a moment that all these medicine men sprang simultaneously into existence, or that they are the product of only one tribe; they are undoubtedly the evolution of many generations, and a free appropriation from neighbouring tribes of fetish ceremonies, etc., that appealed to them through being made widely known by some famous medicine man of the time. The Congo native has always been ready to try a new fetish, hoping thereby to gain some advantage to his fortune and health.

The following is probably the rise of many branches of the medicine man's profession now, or recently, in vogue: A quick-witted, observant man noticed that a certain herb, or a certain mode of procedure, such as massage or inducing perspiration by steaming, was beneficial to a patient suffering from a certain disease. If he had given the herb in a simple way without any hanky-panky, or had done a little medical rubbing without any ceremonies, or had given a vapour bath without ostentatious and mysterious rites, the natives would not have regarded him as a *bona fide* medicine man, and he would have procured very little business. In order to protect his discovery and to draw patients he surrounded it with the hocus-pocus of fetish rites and ceremonies, and thus started a new class of "doctors" that had its day. It is more than probable that many medicine men and their fetishes have risen in power, have had wide fame and much popular support, have then fallen into disrepute and have been abandoned in favour of new ones; and, if the truth were known, as many if not more kinds of medicine men have been forgotten than are now remembered.

The following is an account of the rise and fall of one fetish order in very recent years: A few years ago a medicine man appeared in Portuguese Congo with a new fetish called *nkisi a kiniambe*=the divine fetish. The witch-doctor and his fetish with its high-sounding name visited all the towns round about



## AN ATTEMPT TO DEFINE FETISHISM

San Salvador. The ceremony was a form of communion prepared with small slices of cassava, pea nuts, and palm wine. The recipient had first to pay one string of beads for a child and five strings for an adult, and he or she confessed all their witchcraft palavers, i.e. all the evil desires they had in their hearts, for the sickness or death of anyone. After this confession the medicine man gave them a piece of cassava, a pea nut, and drop of palm wine, and he also gave them a promise that they should never die. When, however, the recipients died the witch-doctor said it was because they had not made a full confession of their witchcraft. He and his accomplices reaped a large sum of money from the natives' fear of death and the promise of immunity from it ; but the medicine man promised too much, and consequently his fetish was soon in disrepute and quickly neglected.

While we find a dim knowledge of a Supreme Being among all the Congo tribes, we also find co-extensive with it an elaborate system of fetishism, which I would define as those means employed by the Congo natives for influencing the various spirits by which they believe themselves to be surrounded, either to act on their own behalf by giving them good luck and good health, or to act against their enemies by sending them misfortune, sickness, or death. Their system of belief has its basis in their fear of those numerous invisible spirits—invisible to the ordinary man, but not to the medicine man—which are constantly trying to compass their sickness, misfortune, and death ; and the Boloki's sole object—and the same may be written of his near and distant neighbours on the Congo—is to cajole or appease, to cheat or conquer, and even destroy the troublesome spirits, hence their witch-doctors with their fetishes, their rites, and ceremonies. If there were no spirits to be circumvented there would be no need of medicine men as middlemen, and no need of fetishes as mediums for getting into touch with the spirits.

Theologically speaking, the Congo natives are utterly<sup>ly</sup> void of religion, for they neither worship the Supreme Being nor

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their fetishes as representing a deity ; but if “ the belief in and a measure of obedience to a potent being or beings not ourselves is an early minimum of religion,”<sup>1</sup> then the Congo folk are very religious, for they carefully obey the taboos put on them by their witch-doctors in the name of their fetishes ; they invoke the power of the spirits by exploding gunpowder around their fetishes, and by whistling to them and beating them ; they try to appease them by frequent sacrifices ; and they have dances about some of the fetishes, during which they call upon them, or the spirits they influence, to protect their fighting-men and destroy their enemies.

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. Andrew Lang in *Folk Lore* for December, 1911, p. 412.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE BOLOKI WORLD OF SPIRITS

Surrounded by spirits—The soul leaves the body—Dreams—Bewitching folk—Losing one's shadow—Disembodied spirits or ghosts—Ghosts enter animals—Deceiving the ghosts—Spirits of disease—Spirit of wealth—Spirits of crocodiles—Leopards—Spirits of unborn babes—Monsters on the islands—Forest sprites—Cloud-land folk—Spirits in spears—In canoes—In trees.

THE Boloki folk believe they are surrounded by spirits which try to thwart them at every twist and turn, and to harm them every hour of the day and night. The rivers and creeks are crowded with the spirits of their ancestors, and the forests and bush are full also of spirits, ever seeking to injure the living who are overtaken by night when travelling by road or canoe. I never met among them a man daring enough to go at night through the forest that divided Monsembe from the upper villages, even though a large reward was offered. Their invariable reply was: "There are too many spirits in the bush and forest."

In the following pages I shall attempt to give, as succinctly as possible, an account of the various spirits that trouble the Boloki world, their powers and their limitations. The information has been gathered from various natives in conversation around their fires, or from talks when travelling with them by canoe and boat; and may be accepted as reflecting the native opinion respecting those spirits by which they suppose themselves to be surrounded.

The embodied spirit or soul (*elimo*) is dreaded almost as much as the other spirits. In dreams the soul visits various scenes, and no matter how quickly the dreamer is aroused the soul

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can always return in time to take its place in the awakened person. With regard to dreams, some of the natives believe in them, and bad dreams are often accepted as omens to warn them against going on journeys, and fishing and hunting expeditions that would be either fruitless or disastrous.

When a person faints, or becomes unconscious, massage with water is used, and on the patient reviving it is said that the soul has returned. The soul travels about to bewitch people, and some of their charms are made on purpose to destroy such wandering spirits. These wicked souls travelling about with such sinister motives are regarded as witches worthy only of death, and some of their witch-doctors reap a rich harvest in trying to kill them. A seriously sick person fancies he sees a relative or neighbour in a dream, and at once believes that the witch-soul of his relative has come to throttle the life out of him, so he pays a witch-doctor a goodly fee to kill the prowling spirit, or protect him from its malignant assaults.

I noticed that the mouths and nostrils of the recently dead were always plugged and tied, and to my questions on the subject I always received the same reply: "The soul of a dying man escapes by his mouth and nose, so we always tie them in that fashion to keep the spirit, as long as possible, in the body."

The shadow of a person, his reflection in water, or in a looking-glass, and more recently a photograph, is called by a word (*elilingi*) that is often used interchangeably with the word for soul (*elimo*). They repeatedly informed me that a "dead person casts no shadow," and that therefore he has no soul, hence to say that So-and-so has no shadow is, with them, equivalent to saying that he has no soul, i.e. that he is dead. These two words were frequently employed when speaking of the soul, and also of the shadow of a person; but the word for soul (*elimo*) is never used for the shadow of a tree, house, animal, etc., but they speak of a fallen house or a fallen tree as having no shadow, i.e. they cast no shadows—a sign that they are dead.

## DISEMBODIED SPIRITS OR GHOSTS

If for some reason a man does not see his shadow reflected when he looks into some water, he thinks someone has taken his spirit away, and that he will soon die. Even if at midday he does not see his shadow, because he is standing on it—the sun being absolutely vertical at noon so near the Equator—he will go to a witch-doctor, who will make medicine that he may recover his shadow or soul. I once asked a chief to sit for his photograph a second time, and he laughingly refused, on the ground that I had sent his soul once to the white man's country, and he could not let me have it again. And it was a considerable time before he consented to sit again.

The most troublesome spirit, however, with which the native has to contend is the disembodied spirit (*mongoli*). Directly the soul (*elimo*) leaves the body it becomes a disembodied spirit (a *mongoli*), and this distinction should be carefully borne in mind.

It is generally believed that the disembodied spirit of a good man—good according to the native code of morals—remains in the nether world (*longa*); but that of a bad man is punished in the nether regions and driven out. Then if the spirit belongs to a member of a bush-tribe (or to one whose family originally came from the bush), it will inhabit the forests or bush-lands, and unless properly appeased by gifts or conquered by charms it will turn aside animals from the hunting-traps and try to spoil all hunting operations. If the spirit belongs to a member of a riverine tribe, then, after being turned out of the nether world, it haunts the river and creeks and endeavours to hinder successful fishing. Hence it is no uncommon thing, when a village fails in its fishing, for the inhabitants to join their brass rods together to buy an old man or old woman—old and therefore cheap—and throw him (or her) into the river to conciliate the water-spirits. Hence, also, all the care taken by a fisherman to conceal his name while fishing under the general term *mwela*,<sup>1</sup> lest the disembodied spirit of an enemy

<sup>1</sup> The natives can give no meaning to this word, and from their use of it to hide a name it is something like our phrase : Mr. So-and-so.

## DISEMBODIED SPIRITS OR GHOSTS

should hear it and, recognizing him, keep all the fish from his traps and nets.

Sometimes these spirits can be heard walking through the forests, and the noise they make is called *bie-bie* ; and at times they visit the town and cause " a rustling in the grass roofs, as though searching for a place through which to drive their spears." The land and water are full of these disembodied spirits, hence the timorous folk are afraid to travel by night. Certain witch-doctors can see these spirits, and when they are mischievous they pretend to capture them and secure them in saucepans and calabashes.

Men may become the mediums by which these spirits hold communication with the living, generally to the advantage of the medium, as the following incident will illustrate : Baloli, the head-man of his family, died, and was buried in the usual way. Some time afterwards his younger brother, Mangumbe, became subject to frenzies, during which his brother Bololi spoke his oracles through him. Mangumbe admired and coveted the wives of a certain man in his town and tried to buy them, and failing in that he desired to exchange others for them, but their husband refused all offers.

One day Mangumbe worked himself into a frenzy, and when he was supposed to be under the influence of his brother's spirit he said that a certain man (giving the name of the man whose wives he coveted) must get rid of his wives or they would cause his death by a serious and fatal illness. Then Mangumbe went to a friend and told him to treat with the husband for the wives. The husband, now thoroughly afraid of his wives, was quite willing to sell them at a cheaper price than Mangumbe had previously offered for them. By this cunning trick he became the owner of the women he wanted.

On one occasion Mangumbe wanted to buy my arm-chair. I told him the price as a bit of information, as I had no intention of selling the chair. He doubted my word. I told him that I had heard that he held communication with his brother's spirit, and if he wanted to know the price of goods in England



*Photo by*

### A MUNGALA CREEK VILLAGE

*[over. C. J. Dadas]*

At the time the picture was taken the folk were dispirited by heavy taxes and many deaths, hence the neglected appearance of the houses. Meeting the demands of the taxes in food, etc., left them little or no time to look after their own affairs. These taxes are better adjusted now to the number and condition of the people.





## GHOSTS ENTER ANIMALS

he had better ask his brother's spirit to go there, learn all it could, and come back and inform him of the prices of the various articles. Mangumbe shook his head sadly and said : " His spirit cannot travel so far, it keeps just around this district only."

The people firmly believed that Mangumbe held counsel with his brother's spirit, and when he acted as a medium they were quite willing to accept all that he said. Ordinarily he was little respected by the people ; he was of mean appearance and of petty, shabby ways, and had no command even over his own people, and yet when acting as a medium in a *séance* he was feared, obeyed, and his word received without the slightest demur.

When a spirit is speaking through a person, who is usually a member of the disembodied spirit's family, the medium does not always talk in the language of the present day, but in the archaic language known only to the old people. When the medium is a youngish man, i.e. one not familiar with the ancient language, he then expresses his oracles in the ordinary speech, but with sufficient of the archaic forms to lend mystery to the communication.

I have seen the medium work himself into a frenzy, shout, tremble all over, his muscles quiver, his body undulates, perspiration breaks out on his forehead, and foam gathers about his mouth, and his eyes roll ; and when thoroughly under the spell of the spirit he gives utterance to oracles that are implicitly believed by the people. All these *séances* are performed in the open and in broad daylight, the medium sometimes sitting alone in the centre of a crowd ; but when much agitated and swaying considerably, he has one or two of his wives near to catch him should he fall.

Sometimes one of these spirits takes possession of a hippopotamus and visits the towns on the river-banks, and when that occurs the family to whom the spirit is supposed to belong puts a small saucepan of sugar-cane wine and a little food for its refreshment on its nightly visit ; and as the food and wine

## DECEIVING THE GHOSTS

are both gone in the morning (there are plenty of dogs about), the natives assured me that the spirit in the animal had partaken of them. The spirit also, at times, enters a crocodile and visits a town; but the hippopotamus is the more common form.

On one occasion a hippopotamus came off our beach for a few nights. I could only hear it, as it was too dark to see it; but on the chance of wounding it fatally I fired in the direction of the sound. I fired on two successive nights, and during the next day some natives came and told me that that particular hippopotamus was possessed by the spirit of a member of such and such a family, and that the said spirit had sent a message to the head of the family, telling him that he was to inform me that I should only waste my bullets as it was impossible to kill a spirit-possessed hippopotamus, and asking him to request me not to fire again, as he (the hippopotamus) only wanted to visit the town peaceably for his offering of sugar-cane wine and food.

I told them that I would have another shot or two; but they assured me that I should not hit it. They did not doubt my marksmanship, as they had seen me bring down many birds on the wing, and they knew that I scarcely ever went to shoot monkeys and guinea-fowls without bringing one or more back with me. They did not doubt my skill with the gun, but they doubted the power of a bullet to kill a spirit-possessed animal.

The hippopotamus, however, never came again, consequently I had no further opportunity of testing the point at issue. I was much interested in learning from this incident that spirits not only took possession of hippopotami, but could thus communicate with their living relatives.

According to the native idea these spirits (*mingoli*) are everywhere, and are ever ready to pounce on any living person, and either carry him away captive or inflict a disease on him, or kill him; consequently his life is one long drawn-out fear of what the spirits may next do to him; and his many witch-doctors, fetishes, and ceremonies are to control, appease,

## SPIRITS OF DISEASE

circumvent, and perhaps conquer the spirits. The spirit of a deceased enemy can inflict an illness on a family, a member of which had wronged him when in the body. Fortunately, these spirits are limited in the area of their operations and can be deceived. The witch-doctor can cork them up in calabashes, can cover them with saucepans, and when necessary, if the fee is large enough, he can destroy them.

A man I knew well was sick for a long time with some internal complaint, and after other means had failed to cure him he was told by a witch-doctor that he was troubled by a bad spirit, and he advised him to go right out of the district beyond the sphere of its operations and remain there until he was better. The man had no friends to whom he might have safely gone, so he left his house at dead of night, taking only two of his wives with him, and telling no one of his destination lest the spirit should hear it. He went as far as he safely could from his own town and donned a woman's dress, and assuming a woman's voice he pretended to be other than he was, in order to deceive the spirit should it search for him.

This also failed to cure him, and in time he returned to his town, but continued to dress and speak as a woman, and every time he ate or drank he first scattered a portion of his food and drink behind him for the spirit to eat, and eating be appeased. The food best liked by these spirits is the heart of any animal, but it must be boiled, minced, and mixed with cassava.

The witch-doctor can see the disembodied spirits, and those persons who have the occult power (called *likundu*) can also see them. The natives tell me that these spirits are like people in appearance—they come into view, pass, and are lost to sight like ordinary beings. They have quiet voices, and eat monkey peppers (*amomum*), and drink sugar-cane wine; but if the stems of the monkey pepper are put across a path the spirits cannot pass over them. It is a curious belief that these spirits may eat the fruit of the monkey pepper, and yet cannot step over the stalks of the same plant. On the Lower Congo red peppers are used for the same purpose of blocking a road to

## SPIRITS OF DISEASE

spirits ; and in ancient Britain the red holly berries were used for keeping evil spirits out of the huts and houses of those who feared them.

There are indications that the sight of the spirit is very defective, but its hearing is very keen, consequently a man's name is never mentioned while he is fishing, for fear the spirits will hear and turn the fish from his traps. One would think that if the spirits can see and recognize a fish they could also recognize a fisherman ; but there are many gaps in native logic.

As the spirit of a bush-man is supposed to wander in the bush after leaving the nether world, any human offering made to appease it is buried on the edge of the forest ; but an offering to the spirit of a riverine man is thrown into the water.

These offerings are made with the object of gaining the goodwill of a father or grandfather ; but there is no ancestral worship, as beyond the fourth generation the ancestors are forgotten, or are regarded as being ineffective in their anger. There is no regularity in these offerings, but they are made when other means have failed to avert a calamity, such as the flooding of a river, or to ensure a positive good, such as a large catch of fish.

A homicide is not afraid of the spirit of the man he has killed when the slain man belongs to any of the neighbouring towns, as disembodied spirits travel in a very limited area only ; but when he kills a man belonging to his own town he is filled with fear lest the spirit shall do him some harm. There are no special rites that he can observe to free himself from these fears, but he mourns for the slain man as though he were a member of his own family. He neglects his personal appearance, shaves his head, fasts for a certain period, and laments with much weeping.

Abnormal events are often placed to the credit of the spirit of a man recently deceased. A few hours after the death of a young man whom I knew a furious storm broke on the town, blowing down plantain trees and working great havoc in the

## SPIRITS OF DISEASE

farms. It was stated in all seriousness by the folk that the storm had been sent by Mopembe, the lad's name. We had for dinner one day the shoulder of an antelope, the history of which will further illustrate the above statement : Three days before we had that piece of antelope on our table, Mumbamba, an old head-man, died. After his death his relatives came from various towns to mourn at his grave. On the morning of our antelope dinner three canoes of men and women were coming up-river, with the object of expressing their grief at the grave, when they happened upon a large antelope caught in the grass of an islet that had lodged against a fallen tree in the river. The mourners killed the antelope, dragged it into the canoe, and gave Mumbamba the credit of sending them an antelope to eat as an expression of his favour ; thus spirits can send good as well as evil upon those who are left on the earth.

We find, then, among the Boloki three words for soul, spirit, and ghost. The first, *elimo*, is the embodied soul that is able to leave the body during sleep, it visits people and places in dreams, travels about, and performs actions, as throttling an enemy. This, I believe, is the only word they have for soul. There is then the *elilingi*, a shadow, shade, reflection that a dead man, or dead thing, does not possess, and a living man can lose and have restored by a witch-doctor, and this word is also used in a restricted sense as being synonymous with *elimo*. And, lastly, there is *mongoli*, a disembodied soul, a spirit, a ghost of the bush, forest, and water that sends evil and good upon the living—more often evil than good—which it is necessary to appease with offerings of food, of trade goods, and of human beings.

The natives are subject to various serious sicknesses which they think are caused by spirits, and each sickness has its own spirit (or *bwete*, plural, *mēte*), hence the native names<sup>1</sup> for debility, anæmia, rheumatism, sciatica, ague fevers, and sleeping-sickness are not only the names of diseases, but really denote the names of those spirits responsible for sending them. They

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 5, p. 345, for the native names of the diseases.

## SPIRITS OF DISEASE

cannot tell me from whence these spirits emanate, but the only means of luring them out of the body of the patient is to set up for some of them specially prepared posts, for others a saucepan of small sticks, and again for others a saucepan of medicine water.

For debility, rheumatism, sciatica, and ague they erect a post (called *etoli*) about 4 feet long, peeled of its bark, shaped to a point at one end, and daubed with yellow pigment; this is marked with red and blue spots, and stuck upright in the ground with about 2 feet 6 inches showing. For the spirit of sleeping-sickness they prepare a saucepan in which they put small sticks, and the whole is decorated with yellow, red, and blue spots and stripes. For the spirit of another form of sleeping-sickness a saucepan of bush-water is prepared, and the pot ornamented with various colours. The saucepan of sticks is called *muntoka*, and that of the bush-water is called *eboko*. The latter is broken, as described in another chapter, by a badly treated slave, or an ill-used wife, to obtain redress for his or her wrongs.

These decorated fetish posts and saucepans often have little shelters built over them which are coloured with various paints, and every time the owner takes a meal he throws some of his food on the roof of his house for the spirits to eat. From time to time he pours sugar-cane wine over the posts, or into the saucepans. There is no ancestral worship in this, but an appeasing of the spirits of the diseases. Not to make these offerings is to invite a return of the spirit or spirits to the body of the owner, i.e. to have a relapse. I have known a man to have four of these posts and saucepans. This indicated that he had had several complaints, or had had his one and only complaint wrongly diagnosed. Persons who have never suffered from these serious illnesses, and they are numerous, never trouble to prepare either a saucepan or a post.

When there is much sickness in a family, not confined to one or two members only, but a kind of family epidemic, it is said

## SPIRIT OF WEALTH

to be caused by a spirit (named *mweta*) left, or sent, by a deceased relative as a punishment for failing to observe some fetish taboo, or for not having shown due respect for the deceased when he was buried by having a proper ceremony, or for not keeping his memory alive by occasional mimic fights on land or water, or by the gifts of brass rods and slaves. Sometimes the family is conscious that they have properly observed all these things, and then they know that their deceased relative has sent the spirit of family sickness maliciously, or through jealousy of their apparent prosperity.

These spirits, when they are troubling a family, can be driven into animals by the witch-doctor and killed by him ; and as a proof of his prowess he will exhibit a bleeding head, and assure the family that they need no longer worry as he has killed the animal which was possessed by the spirit, and it is therefore punished, killed, and will not bother them again. Sometimes the witch-doctor will drive the spirit into a saucepan, or calabash, and either kill it or imprison it.

The Boloki man, like folk of other climes and colour, is not averse to wealth, so he has his spirit for giving wealth (called *ejo*). Now a man who desires to become rich pays a large fee to a certain kind of witch-doctor, who then uses his influence with the spirit on behalf of his client, who must in all future gains set apart a portion for it ; but should he fail to do so, the spirit has power to punish him. The goods are given to the witch-doctor to pass on to the spirit.

This spirit can assume any shape it pleases, and entice a person down to the river, where it returns suddenly to its proper form and jumps into the river with the enticed person. This person is then either killed by the spirit, or held at ransom for a slave or his equivalent. How the ransom is paid no one could tell me, although I put the question to various natives at different times. The person thus enticed is he who has not paid his proper dues to the spirit.

When a person has received the medicine or charm of this spirit, and has become wealthy by its luck-giving power, he takes

## SPIRITS OF CROCODILES

the nail-parings and hair-cuttings<sup>1</sup> of a woman and makes medicine with them; the woman then quickly dies, and her spirit goes to the wealth-giving spirit as an offering for its help. He is said to pass her on as a gift to the spirit of wealth. If a man is saved, when a canoe is swamped and his companions are all drowned, he is regarded as having given them to the spirit (*ejo*) to save his own life. Should a man be successful in fishing or trading without any apparent reason, and shortly after his success his wife falls ill and dies, he is said to have given his wife to this spirit as an acknowledgment of his increased wealth. The ordeal is often administered to prove or disprove these accusations; but marvellous stories are told about the wealth-giving power of this spirit, and as only rich men can afford to pay the fee to the witch-doctor in the first instance, the fact of their wealth fosters the superstition.

That some men are stronger than others in wrestling, and able to overcome those who try to hold them, is well recognized by the natives, but instead of its being an indication of greater strength and fitness it is placed to the credit of a spirit (called *embanda*). When this spirit takes possession of a man it enables him to throw his enemy; it strengthens the legs of its possessor, and weakens by pain the legs of its owner's opponent. He who possesses this spirit is always successful in capturing one or more prisoners in a fight, and can cause the death of many members of any family he hates.

The word *jando* stands for the peculiar characteristics of the animal to which it is prefixed, i.e. a man successful in fishing is said to have the peculiarities of a crocodile, for this creature is regarded as being quick in catching fish; and a person swift and cunning in fight and flight has the qualities of a leopard. These qualities or spirits are not gained by eating either of these creatures, but are procured, for a few, from the witch-doctor by some occult intercourse with the crocodile and

<sup>1</sup> This is one of the reasons why a person always hides his, or her, nail-parings and hair-cuttings, as "powerful medicine" can be made with them to the disadvantage of the owner.



## MONSTERS ON THE ISLANDS

leopard. It is also affirmed by the natives that a person can become so possessed by the spirit (*jando*) of a crocodile or of a leopard that he will let himself loose occasionally on his neighbours, and thus preying in spirit on them many will die.

One of the functions of the disembodied spirits is to supply certain places in the forests, or trees, or creeks with the spirits that are to enter unborn children. These spirits of unborn children (called *bingbongbo*) can make boys and girls thin and weak, but are to be appeased by the proper kind of medicine man preparing a suitable feast for them. These spirits are supposed to crowd the pools in the forests, the shallow ponds on the islands, the many creeks of the river, and even to people the great bombax trees to be found here and there along the river's bank. Every family has its own special preserves (called *liboma*) where the spirits are waiting for bodies in which to appear as babies.

Next to the spirits in the terror they cause to the natives is a mythical monster (*engenenge*) inhabiting the islands. He is represented as having many heads and no body, and is greatly dreaded by those who have to camp on the islands during fishing and travelling; and the natives tell many stories of visits they have received from him. Next to this many-headed monster is a mythical person or spirit (named *nyandembe*) who is mentioned in the folk-lore stories as having caused the death of Libanza's father, but was eventually killed by him as a punishment. He is thought by the natives to have been very strong and rich; but being dead he is no longer feared.

There is a race of folk who live somewhere above, as the word indicates (*ba*=people, and *likolo*=above), but up-river and all the country east of them is also called *likolo*; and it is most probable that the word *likolo* in the above phrase had originally that meaning, but as the natives pushed their journeys higher and higher up the river and heard of peoples like themselves still higher up, they removed the *balikolo* from a locality beyond their district to a place *above them* in the sky.

These Cloud-folk are said to have tails, and are very fond

## FOREST SPRITES

of ripe plantains, and in the folk-lore stories they descend on the banana farms solely to eat and carry off the ripe fruit. There is a legend that the Boloki people bought their first fire<sup>1</sup> from the Cloud-folk in exchange for a young woman. Previously to that "we cooked our food in the sun, or ate it quite raw." These Cloud-land folk are not regarded as spirits, but the natives always speak of them as a great nuisance, and as something uncanny and in possession of supernatural power.

There is a class of supernatural beings that inhabits the forest and bush (named *baijamba*=people of the bush). They are often appealed to in the folk stories to decide what a person should or should not eat; and also to judge on a point of etiquette or custom. They are not looked upon with much dread, and no one speaks of them as having done any harm to the folk who visit the forests. They seem to be friendly spirits, or sprites, that are always at hand when wanted, and they just as readily give their verdict in favour of a mean trick as support a ruse to outwit the meanness.

When a man is under the sway of the disembodied spirit he takes his spear and, tying some dried plantain leaves to it, he holds it before him with his left hand; and as he trembles with the excitement of the spirits in him the spear shakes and rustles the leaves until the spirits go out of him into the spear, and it then becomes a fetish spear and his luck is bound up in it. This spear, henceforth, may not be touched by anyone but himself, and it is carefully guarded by its owner, for to lose it is to fail in all his undertakings. These spirits are passed into hunting-spears, fighting-spears, and fish-spears, and although they are especially effectual in their own particular line, they also have a general influence on the man's luck. It is also asserted that a rich man who has the spirit of wealth (*ejo*) passes that spirit into his canoe, and this enables him to make successful trading expeditions and other journeys to his own advantage.

<sup>1</sup> See also the folk-lore story, "The punishment of the inquisitive man," page 205.

## IN TREES

I found only one tree that is supposed to have a spirit, and that is the tree used for ordeal purposes. When a person wants to take the rootlets of the ordeal tree (*nka*), he first selects the tree, then spreads a leaf on the closed fist of his left hand, and strikes it with the palm of his right hand. If the leaves on the tree tremble in response, he knows the tree is strong and fit to use ; but if they remain quiescent, it is a sign that the ordeal property (*nka*) is weak and unfit for its purpose, so another tree is sought, until he finds one that responds in sympathy to the striking of the leaf.

The life of the native, surrounded as he is by all these various spirits, would be intolerable, unthinkable so, were it not for his many witch-doctors, who have power to control the spirits, and even kill them, and his many charms that protect him from their many malignant designs, or enlist their power on behalf of the wearers and users of them. Which came first—a belief in the spirits, or the witch-doctors to circumvent them ? I am disposed to think that the witch-doctors are largely responsible for the creation of these various spirits to account for their numerous failures in warding off sickness and death. With these witch-doctors, however, we must deal in another chapter.

## CHAPTER XX

### MEDICINE MEN AND THEIR MAGIC

Number of medicine men—How to become a witch - doctor—Mayeya and his long dive—Makwata and his talking spear—A simple trick—Female witch-doctors—Three kinds of witchcraft—Discredited witch-doctors—Fear of the witch-doctors.

THERE is not so great a variety of medicine men (*nganga*)<sup>1</sup> among the Boloki as among the Bakongo of the Lower Congo, nor is the *modus operandi* of bewitching people and of removing the witchcraft so well defined. Among the Boloki the medicine man is much in evidence, but he is not regarded with much awe or respect. The office is hereditary, and it is difficult for a person to become a medicine man who has not already a near relative in the profession. The old medicine man teaches his son the tricks of his trade free of all charges ; and when a novice is considered efficient he undergoes the following test : Something is hidden and he has to find it, and having discovered the secreted article he must then perform a magic ceremony, such as killing an animal possessed by a spirit—a trick he has easily learned from his father, and after that he blossoms out as a fully qualified medicine man.

If a person in whose family there has been a medicine man desires to join the profession he goes to an old witch-doctor, and on paying a heavy fee he is taught as though he were a son, but he must pass the usual tests as above ; if, however, a person in whose family there has never been a medicine man wishes to join the profession, he is deterred from so doing by being

<sup>1</sup> *Nganga* means medicine man, witch-doctor, doctor, wizard, soothsayer sorcerer, magician, etc.

## MAYEYA AND HIS LONG DIVE

told that he must first kill all the members of his family by witchcraft, as offerings to that spirit (*mweta*) of the particular branch he desires to join. This results in the man refusing to become a witch-doctor, and even if he were so callous as to still wish it, his family would not allow him to proceed, as they believe they would fall victims to his witchcraft. Thus the secrets of the profession are retained in a very few families. Still, I have known a slave belonging to a Boloki man become a great medicine man by pretending to perform a wonderful feat, which was as follows :

Mayeya, for that was the man's name, went one day with a lad in a canoe across the river. By and by the lad returned without Mayeya, and on being asked where he was, the lad replied : " Mayeya fell from the canoe into the river, and since then I have not seen him."

Seven days after this Mayeya walked up from the river into the town dressed in his best cloth, etc. The people gathered around him asking him where he had been, and he solemnly informed them that he had been under the river for the whole of the seven days, consulting with the water-spirits, and that now he was a witch-doctor. The people believed in him, and flocked to him with cases from all the neighbouring villages, towns, and districts, and by his many and large fees he became so wealthy that he was able to pay ten men and two women—one woman is equal in price to four men—for his ransom, and then became a slave-owner himself and a man of wealth.

One day I heard Mayeya boasting outside my house of the seven days he had spent under the water in company with the water-spirits ; so going to him I said : " Mayeya, I hear you have lived under the river for seven days."

" Yes," he said, " I have."

" Well," I replied, " I will give you five thousand brass rods "—the currency of that district—" if you will remain under the water here in front of my house while I count them."

He answered : " I cannot do it just now, but I will return on another day and do it for you." Whenever I met Mayeya

## MAKWATA AND HIS TALKING SPEAR

after that I always reminded him of his promise to stop under the river while I counted the rods.

The people at last used to urge him to accept my challenge and offer of 5000 brass rods. They argued with him, saying: "You have remained under the water for seven days, surely you can stay under it while the white man counts five thousand, for you know he counts very quickly. Go and get your five thousand rods, and then you will be able to buy two more wives."

Mayeya, however, put them off with first one excuse and then another, until at last they chaffed him about it, laughed at him, and expressed the doubt as to whether he had stayed under the water half a day, much less seven whole days and nights.

As he still continued to make excuses the natives lost faith in him, his practice fell off, and the last I saw of Mayeya was his coming to borrow of me 100 brass rods, for he was in difficulties. To his request I replied: "No, you have cheated many people out of their money, and done to death many a person by your false accusations of witchcraft; I will not lend you a single brass rod, but there are five thousand waiting for you if you will only remain under the water while I count them."

I was seated one day among some natives when they began to talk of the wonderful things Makwata (who was present) could do in making his spear shake and talk.

Now I never laughed at the pretensions of the natives, no matter how absurd they might be, nor did I ridicule their views, thoughts, and expressions. Perhaps that was the reason why they spoke so frankly to me, and tried to explain their ideas about things in general. I always dealt with them seriously and sympathetically.

I turned to Makwata and asked him whether he could do the wonderful things his companions were talking about or not. He very emphatically asserted that he could "make his spear shake and talk."



*Photo by]*

#### A LIBINZA CHARM FOR PROTECTING A VILLAGE

*[Rev. R. H. Kirkland*

Spirits causing sickness have been driven out of the patients into this hut, where food is thrown to them. The sticks forming the walls are dyed red, and ornamented with yellow spots. The elegance of the hut and the daily sprinkling of food help to make the spirits contented with the place.





## A SIMPLE TRICK

"I suppose," I said, "you will stand near the spear, or put the spear in a lot of grass."

"No," he replied, "I will stick my spear on the bank by the river, and I will sit here."

"Very good," I answered; "I will give you five hundred rods if you do it."

"I can do it in my town," he asserted, "but not here."

"All right," I said; "I am coming to visit your town next Sunday, and will bring the rods with me." But when I went to the town at the appointed time, Makwata was not there; he had, however, left me a message to say that he would bring his spear up to Monsembe and do the wonderful performance there.

Several weeks passed away, and while talking to some natives on the verandah of my house I saw Makwata pass, so I called to him and asked if he had brought his talking spear, for the 500 rods were ready.

"No," he replied, "I have not brought my spear."

Turning to my native companions I said: "Your witch-doctors will never do their tricks before me, although I offer them many brass rods; but my wife and I will do a trick before you without payment. I will put three articles on the verandah, my wife shall go into her bedroom, and when she comes out she will tell you which article you touched."

"Oh, no!" they said in chorus; "she is not able to do that."

The articles were arranged in a line, my wife went to her room, one of the things was touched, and she came and pointed out which they had touched. "Let her do it again," they requested. It was done again and again, until one young man thought he had fathomed the trick, and he, with much excitement, said: "Mama looks through the window. Let someone go into the room with her."

"Certainly," I at once acceded to their request, and two native women accompanied my wife, and on their return the natives asked: "Did Mama look through the window?"

"Oh, no," the women replied; "she went right to the other side of the room."

## FEMALE WITCH-DOCTORS

My friends were nonplussed. They could not see through the trick, and many came in ones and twos afterwards and asked me how many fowls or goats did I want to teach them the trick. They never again boasted in my presence of what their witch-doctors could do.

There are some quasi "doctors." Men and women who have recovered from a serious complaint set up to cure that particular sickness. They use massage with hot or cold water, or no water at all, and simple herbs, and there is no doubt that they do a considerable amount of good.

There are female witch-doctors who perform the same rites as the male ones, such as the witch-doctors who conduct their ceremonies either enclosed in a mat or out in the open; but the one who cures anæmia and debility, makes the necessary "medicine" for pregnant women, attends confinements, and takes certain cases of sickness among men is always a female. Each is more or less famous in his own line, and with one or two exceptions rarely goes beyond his own limits.

There is the general practitioner, who is not a specialist as the other medicine men are. He is regarded, however, as knowing more than the others, with the exception of the one who performs in a mat. He uses all kinds of herbs, prepares the different charms for warding off diseases, and cures divers complaints; but he never attempts to exorcise spirits or to find witches. He is called by the natives *nganga ya mono*, i.e. the medicine man who uses medicines, herbs, or charms. His fees are comparatively small, and he is consulted in the first stages of an illness in the hope that he will be able to effect a cure, and thus save the larger fees demanded by other branches of the profession.

When rain is falling, and for some reason or other it is not desirable, the rain-doctor takes a small leaf and puts it on the closed fist of his left hand, and extending the arm in the direction from which the rain is coming he waves it to and fro in a semicircle; he then strikes the leaf with the open palm of the right hand, and should the leaf burst at the first smack

## THE RAIN-DOCTOR

the rain will stop in "one paddling," i.e. the time paddlers paddle on one side of a large canoe before changing to the other side—this is about twenty minutes ; if the leaf does not burst at the first smack but at the second, then the rain will not stop for "two paddlings," i.e. forty minutes, and so on ; but if the leaf does not burst at all after repeated slaps, then the rain will not stop for a very long time. When rain is threatening, this ceremony is performed in order to ascertain how long it will be before the rain will fall. If the leaf breaks at the first blow the rain will begin to fall in twenty minutes, and so on to two blows and three blows. They will start a journey or remain at home according to the indications of this performance. The lads have often asked me to postpone a journey because the divination of the leaf predicted rain.

When a storm threatens to break during the funeral festivities of a man the people present will call the beloved child of the deceased, and giving him (or her) a lighted ember from the hearth with a vine twined round it, they will ask him to stop the rain. The lad steps forward and waves the vine-encircled ember towards the horizon where the storm is rising, and says : "Father, let us have fine weather during your funeral ceremonies." The son after this rite must not drink water—he may drink sugar-cane wine—nor put his feet in water for one day. Should he not observe these prohibitions the rain will fall at once.

When it is desirable to have rain the native takes down from the shelf some sticks which have "medicine" bound round them and plunges them into water mixed with arrowroot leaves, and then the rain will soon begin to fall. It is rarely that they have to resort to the rain-doctor to bring rain, as the rains fall with great regularity all the year round ; they employ him more frequently to predict when the rain will stop, or to stop it with his charms. On the Upper Congo throwing salt on the fire will cause a superabundance of rain to fall, but on the Lower Congo salt is a charm for stopping the rain.

## TALKING TO THE SPIRITS

When a family is troubled with much sickness or frequent deaths the medicine man of the mat (*nganga ya bwaka*) is engaged, who, on his arrival, puts some stakes in the ground and ties a mat round them, thus making an enclosure in which he sits while performing his ceremonies. A string is stretched from the roof of his client's house to one of the stakes of this mat enclosure, and the end of the string drops inside; dried plantain leaves, twigs, etc., dangle from the string, and outside the mat sit some young men and lads with drums and horns, and the various folk interested in the rites stand or sit around.

When all is ready the medicine man enters his enclosure and pulling the string, he shakes the leaves and the lads beat their drums and blow their horns, and the men and women sitting around chant a chorus in admirable time. Directly the leaves stop shaking the drummers and singers understand it as a sign for them to remain quiet. The medicine man then begins to speak to the various spirits, and answers himself in assumed voices, thus pretending to hold conversations with them. As often as he feels tired with his efforts he shakes the leaves, and the drums are beaten, and the folk chant until he has recovered his breath, whereupon he starts the pseudo-conversations again. These conversations he maintains through the whole day (sometimes for two or three days), but generally towards the afternoon of the second day he comes out of the enclosure holding a bleeding head in his hand, and assures the family that he has killed the animal in which the troublesome spirit was residing, and now the family will no more be afflicted with sickness and death. To vary the ceremony the medicine man sometimes rushes out of the enclosure into a house, or behind a house, or into the adjacent bush as though in chase of something, and he returns with a bleeding head, and says that he has slain the spirit-possessed animal.

It is this medicine man who searches for the witch (*moloki*) in the family of the sick one. If a layman charges another with witchcraft the accused can demand that the accuser shall

## DESTROYING THE SPIRITS

drink the ordeal with him ; but if this witch-doctor charges a person with witchcraft he himself will not take the ordeal, and no one expects him to do so. The accused must take the ordeal alone, and should he (or she) fall repeatedly he is condemned, and is left either to die as the result of the large doses of ordeal or is hung on a tree. The corpse is left unburied—it is the body of a witch, the most hated being in all Congo-land.

This medicine man of the mat in killing a spirit troubling a family works hard and earns his money. After spending several hours a day in the mat discussing with the spirits and trying to discover which is menacing the family, he at last decides on one, and when the right moment arrives the medicine man makes a terrific noise inside the mat, as though he were fighting for his life. Shouts, screams, derisive laughter, whacks, thuds, and smacks proceed from the interior of the mat, and at last the witch-doctor rushes out panting and sweating profusely, holding in his hand a bleeding head, and declaring that he has killed the animal possessed by the particular spirit that was troubling the family. With the bleeding head he rushes to the river and throws it far out into the running water. The family is supposed now to recover its health, the medicine man pulls down his mats, receives his fee, and departs.

What is the bleeding head ? On one occasion some of our school lads chased one of these medicine men who came from his mat with a bleeding head. He ran for the river, but they headed him off, and in desperation he ran to a pool of water and threw the head into it. The boys entered the water, and bringing it out they found it was a lizard's head. On another occasion it was a rat's head. Thus the family had paid a big fee to have a rat or lizard killed, and the bleeding neck shown to them. Up to that time the folk had always believed that it was some mysterious animal which the medicine man dug up from the ground inside his mat, killed by his occult power and threw into the river so that it could never more harm his clients.

## CHASING THE SPIRITS

This medicine man who operates in a mat is the most feared and respected of all the witch-doctors. It is believed that he can see the disembodied spirits, i.e. ghosts, also the souls of people, and the different spirits of disease, and hold communication with them. He bottles in calabashes or imprisons in saucepans the local spirits that will otherwise hinder the hunters trapping the wild animals; he makes the dogs keen hunters with his charms and medicines; he gives the reasons for the floods, and indicates the best way to cause them to subside; and he also has very close dealings with the spirit of wealth.

There is another class of medicine men that scorns to perform its ceremonies inside a mat, but practises its craft in the open before all the people. These are called (*nganga ya libanda*) medicine men of the open, outside. A family suffering from much sickness has called in one medicine man after another without experiencing relief, and they may have had even the "mat witch-doctor" and felt no better after having paid him his large fee, so now they try again with this one who works in the open.

He arrives dressed in monkey skins, bush-cat skins, etc., and well decorated with charms. Men beat drums, sing chants and choruses; the medicine man dances about, working himself into a frenzy. He peers here, there, everywhere, looking for the spirit that is troubling the family. He sees it in a plantain tree, hurls his spear at it, but no, he misses it; he sees it on the roof of a house and away darts the spear, only to miss it again. He prods his spear into the different parts of the outside of the house, but he misses the elusive spirit every time; he is, however, working it towards the doorway. At last the spirit takes refuge in the house, the medicine man springs forward with alacrity, enters the house, darts his spear in all directions, yelling loudly and screaming terrifically; then a frightful cry is heard, and in a few moments the medicine man comes out with the blade of his spear well smeared with blood. He has killed the spirit, or rather the animal possessed by the spirit.

## DIAGNOSING A COMPLAINT

I have often watched this performance, and they always killed these animals possessed by spirits *in* the house. I often wondered why, and from whence came the blood on the spear. The son of one of these medicine men told us that when his father wanted blood to smear over his spear-head, he dug his finger-nail into his gum and procured from thence the blood for the purposes of this trick. On showing the spear thus stained with blood he asserted that he had destroyed the spirit that was troubling the family, he received his fee, and went. The semi-darkness of the native hut rendered a trick of this kind quite possible.

We have seen in the preceding chapter on spirits that certain spirits cause certain diseases, and that the names of many diseases are really the names of those spirits that are supposed to cause them. To deal with the spirit of extreme debility there are "doctors," who are always women, and these are engaged to treat both men and women suffering from this complaint. The "doctor" in dealing with this spirit dances, chants, and shakes a rattle, until the patient says he has the spirit (*bwete*) of debility stirring in him; he knows it by the way it jerks and sways his body. The medicine woman prepares the post (*etoli*) and invites the spirit to go and reside in it and not trouble the patient any more.

These female "doctors" attend the women of certain totem families, whose children five days after birth have their ears pierced; such families are supposed to be patronized by a parturition spirit (*bwete bwa boweya*) that will help the child to grow strong, fat, and healthy if its ears are pierced on the fifth day with the proper dance and ceremony; but will cause the child's death if the mother when *enceinte* does not use the proper medicines under the guidance of this female "doctor," or does not have its ears pierced in the proper way.

When a man is troubled with a sickness which has failed to yield to other means, or one in whose family there has been a death and he cannot afford to hire a witch-finder, he goes to a medicine man whose fee is comparatively small, for his

## FORETELLING FUTURE EVENTS

operations are simple and his paraphernalia small. He, on being hired, brings out his fetish saucepan of water, and placing it in a good position he pours some sugar-cane wine by its side, for souls or embodied spirits are very fond of this drink. He then calls the spirits by putting a leaf on the closed fist of the left hand and striking it with the palm of the right hand; thereupon they show themselves one by one in the fetish saucepan (*likenge*), into which only the witch-doctor is allowed to look.

A spirit appears, turns, and shows its face when challenged to do so, and shakes its head negatively, and as the showing of the face is regarded as a proof that it belongs to an innocent person, it is told to pass. By and by a spirit appears in the saucepan that persistently refuses to show its face after being repeatedly ordered to do so by the medicine man, therefore he stabs it with a splinter of bamboo, and the owner of that spirit, who is the witch, is now supposed to die very soon, and thus release this medicine man's client from its malign influence. It is interesting to note that a person's soul can be called from him by a witch-doctor, for the word used in this connection is *elimo*, and that means the *soul* of a living person. It is also noteworthy that they expect more truthfulness in the soul of a person than in the person himself.

The Beloki folk, like others more advanced in civilization, are very anxious to know about the future, so they have a soothsayer whose special function it is to predict coming events. This diviner dances to the beat of drums and chants, the chorus being taken up by all who are present. When he has worked himself and his audience up to a certain pitch of excitement he looks into his fetish bag of medicines, and from what he sees there he foretells war, or the reverse, its success or failure, and other events, such as the success or non-success of a trading expedition, fishing and hunting parties, etc.

The natives, both male and female, are not always successful in their love affairs, hence they have a special medicine man who makes their love philtres. A woman takes the nail-parings,



## LOVE PHILTRES

hair-cuttings, and chewed pith of the sugar-cane of the person whose love she desires, to this particular "doctor." He makes them into a medicine which, after well drying, he pounds into a powder. This powder the woman takes and blows over the object of her love while he is asleep.

The man procures the nail-parings and hair-cuttings of the woman he loves, and carries them to this maker of love philtres ; but instead of the powder being blown over the sleeping object of his passion, he mixes it with sugar-cane wine and gives it to her to drink. A slave will use the same method to gain an easier time from his master or mistress ; and this philtre is also used on people to cause them to forget a wrong or grant a request.

There are to be found among them witch-doctors to help them in every emergency of life, and not the least curious is the one who aids them to vanish in the midst of danger. The medicine man who thus serves them takes his name from the charm he makes, which is rubbed on the body, or tied on the wrist or leg of his client, who, when thus protected, can walk right among his enemies, and if they catch him they find only his cloth in their hands, for the person in the cloth has vanished. This charm (called *ndemo*) is largely used in times of war, as the possessor of it can fight and kill without being seen by the enemy, and it is also in great favour with thieves. The charm consists of a yellow pigment rubbed on the temples, or "medicine" mixed with the pigment and fixed to brass wire and tied round the wrist, the leg, or the waist.

They frequently told me of the wonderful power of this charm in rendering a thief invisible ; but they never accepted my challenge to put the matter to the test. I offered to allow any one of them to keep any article he could steal in my rooms ; the conditions were that I was to be in the room and the thief was to take the article while I was present and yet be invisible to me—I should simply see the thing move, apparently of itself, out of the room. They said it could be done, but they never proved it.

## SPIRITS OF UNBORN INFANTS

came no better for tonics, bromide of potassium, etc. I was then told about this kind of "doctor," and finding there was nothing really objectionable in his mode of procedure I asked the girl if she would like to undergo his treatment. She readily expressed her wish to be put under him, and seemed to have great faith in him. The girl went, and I watched the treatment with much interest. At first she brightened up under the pepper massage, but at last she died in our house, for finding the treatment failed we brought her, at her own desire, back to our house.

It is needless to say that I never came across a single case of true sleeping-sickness cured by this class of "doctors." There are some curious contradictions about this complaint. In some cases there is loss of appetite, and in others a ravenous hunger ; in some great drowsiness, and it is almost impossible to keep the patient awake, in others entire insomnia ; in some saneness to the last, but others exhibit insanity and even violent madness.

When a boy or girl is very thin and weakly, his father kills a monkey, or buys a large piece of meat or a big fish and sends for the medicine man, who has a reputation for conversing with the spirits of unborn children (called *bingbongbo*), and interpreting their demands. On his arrival he shuts himself up in one of his client's houses and is heard to speak with these spirits. After a time he comes out and tells his client that the spirits complain because he has never given them a feast, and that if he desires to see his son improve in health he must at once prepare one for them.

The father gives the monkey, meat, or fish he has procured ready for this demand. It is cooked and the medicine man takes the food on a plate into the house, puts it down on the floor and, coming out, shuts the door. After a time he again enters the house, brings out the plate and shows that the food has partly disappeared, and that the edge of the plate is smeared with the food (there are always plenty of rats and mice in a native hut). This is accepted as evidence that the spirits have partaken of the feast, and the patient will get better as the



*Photo by]*

*[Rev. R. H. Kiehlund*

#### A CHARM FOR INCREASING THE BIRTH RATE

The scarcity of children in the Lilinza Lake villages alarmed the inhabitants considerably, so they paid a large sum to a witch-doctor to set up this fetish that their progeny might be increased.



## THE WITCH-FINDER

offering has been accepted. The medicine man gives the patient a new name—if a girl, Bolumbu, and if a boy, Loleka.

The spirits of unborn babies are supposed to be supplied to the family preserves (called *liboma*) by the disembodied spirits of the deceased members of the family. These are responsible for keeping the preserves well filled with spirits awaiting birth. The preserves may be a pool on an island, a pond in the bush or forest, or a great bombax tree.

The "doctor" who deals with madness has simply a saucupan of water in which he mixes some medicines, and the patient immerses his face every day in it, and then he drops some juices from plants into his eyes until the person is cured of his madness. Madness is called *mokalala*, and the "doctor" who treats it is named by that title also—the "doctor for madness."

When the death of a prominent man has occurred, and the "doctor for witchcraft" has inspected the entrails of the deceased and has stated that the departed one was bewitched to death, the family then calls in the witch-finder to point out the person guilty of that detestable thing called witchcraft. The usual fee is one slave, but if the witch-finder is a very famous one he will demand and receive two slaves. He insists on receiving his fee before he begins operations, as he may have to rush off with undignified haste directly he has pointed out the witch, for the accused person does not always take the charge quietly, but sometimes rushes off for spear or gun to kill his accuser, hence the demand for the fee first.

The people gather on the appointed day in a large circle, and the medicine man, dressed as a woman in skins and cloths fantastically arranged, his face, legs, and arms decorated with pigments of various colours, takes his place in the centre and dances throughout the whole of the first day to the beat of drums. Towards the end of afternoon of the second day he points out the witch, and then hurries at once to his waiting canoe. The accused must take the ordeal and abide by the result. The "doctor of the mat" very often performs this ceremony of discovering the witch.

There is another class of medicine men who scrape their

## WITCH SPIRITS STEALING SOULS

eyes with the sharp edge of the sugar-cane grass, which operation clears the vision and enables them to see spirit witches afar off and frustrate their evil designs. He pretends to see the witch at night running off with the soul of a person, and this soul he rescues and restores to its owner. The next day the medicine man will go to the owner of the soul he rescued and say : " Last night I saw a witch spirit running away with your soul, and I stopped it or you would be dead by now." And then he demands a present, which is at once given through fear ; for if they refuse to satisfy this medicine man he will allow the witch spirit to escape another time with the soul, and death will be the result.

Now a man who has many and powerful enemies needs someone to help him, and there is a special branch of the profession created on purpose to render him assistance. Such a man goes to a proper medicine man, who will give him a medicine that will overawe or soothe his enemies so that they will no longer desire to work him any harm. They will become subject to his will and influence. This medicine man (he goes by the name of *nganga y' elembia*=overawe, subdue, soothe) also initiates his clients into various tricks for striking awe into the onlookers that they may fear their power, and respect them accordingly.

When a man is ill, or has lost a relative by death, he may in his vexation accuse the other members of his family of witchcraft. They of course indignantly deny the charge, so the accuser challenges them to drink the water from a fetish bell. Should anyone refuse to drink from the fetish bell he is regarded as guilty of witchcraft. If, however, they agree to accept the challenge the particular kind of medicine man who operates with the fetish bell is called, and on his arrival he gives to each person a draught to drink from his fetish bell. And it is firmly believed that the one guilty of witchcraft will soon die from the effects of the bell medicine, whereas the innocent will suffer no inconvenience from it.

It will be seen from the above-mentioned medicine men that the natives have a medicine man to help them in every emer-

## THREE KINDS OF WITCHCRAFT

gency of life, and also one to control, soothe, or destroy every kind of spirit that is likely to do them any harm personally, and bring any sort of misfortune or ill-luck upon them. However, witchcraft is at the bottom of all their fears, and it will be noticed that the majority of the different branches of medicine men deal with, or pretend to avert, that most dreaded and hated thing witchcraft.

There are three kinds of witches among the Boloki people, viz. the *active*, that is the person who fees a medicine man to kill his enemy or procures some medicine to do him to death. The *passive*, that is the person who in a temper, or because of some grievance, wishes So-and-so were dead, or in a curse shouts at his tormentor and oppressor: "May you die quickly"; but takes no active measures to procure the death of the said person. There is scarcely a person who has not wished for the death of one or more persons; and when the ordeal of the fetish bell is administered and the drinker of the "bell water" has not desired the death or illness of that particular person he feels secure; but if he has desired the death of that person he feels nervous, doubtful, refuses to drink the ordeal and is accused of witchcraft or drinks it and perhaps dies from sheer fear. The third kind of witch might be called the *self-inflicted* one, that is, a person in utter misery desires to die, and the witchcraft works in him and he dies; the natives think that many people die by their own witchcraft. On the Lower Congo I found no idea of suicidal witchcraft among the people.

I think many of the medicine men thoroughly believe in themselves; and even those who assert that they see spirits or have performed such wonders as living under the water for seven days, or making their spear shake and talk relate the incident so often that they come to believe that they really did it. Many of the people before we went there had no faith in the medicine men; but they were afraid to oppose or ridicule them for fear of being charged with witchcraft, so they pretended to accept all that was said and done by them. Our presence inspired many with the courage to test the witch-doctors, and finding them frauds they turned from them with contempt.

## CHAPTER XXI

### TABOOS AND CURSES

Variety of taboos—The totem taboo—The permanent taboo—The inherited taboo—The temporary taboo—Circumcision taboo—Canoe-maker's taboo—Mourner's taboo—Cursing a wife—Taboo of sympathy—Father's curse on a child—Kicking a person's foot—Various curses—Different oaths—Giving tokens.

**T**ABOOS are the prohibitions and restrictions put on things and actions by the witch-doctor during and after an illness, by the family totems, and temporarily by the individual himself. They are the "thou shalt nots" of fetishism. To disobey them is to risk dire consequences to health of body, to success in expeditions, and to one's luck. Among the Boloki the outraged spiritual powers are supposed to avenge themselves on the breakers of the taboo. The taboos send their ramifications into every part of native life, thought, and action. There is not a single article of food that is not taboo to someone, there is not a place that has not been tabooed at some time or other, and there is not a possible action that has not been, or is not, affected by taboo. When a witch-doctor tells his patient that he is not to eat goat's meat, then goat's meat to that man is tabooed, forbidden, unlawful for that man to eat; and should he break the taboo by eating goat's meat, then he believes that a serious relapse will follow and probably death.

The taboos are many and various, but most of them fall under the following heads: The *totem taboo* (called *mokumbu*) is not so evident to the casual observer among the Bololi people,



## THE TOTEM TABOO

and I might say among Congo people generally, as it is in other parts of the world. One family that I know may not eat a certain snake, and another may not eat fowls. If the men of these families kill and eat their totems they will become thin and weak ; the women will not only become thin but sterile ; and the pregnant woman who breaks her totem taboo will be delivered of a weak child, who will remain thin and undersized all his life.

To another family' a tree with small edible fruit (named *mwenge*) is a totem. The tree must not be cut down, nor its fruit eaten, and if by any mistake a woman of this family burns it while pregnant she carefully saves the ashes, i.e. instead of throwing them away she puts them in a special place apart from the usual heap of refuse, otherwise her child will be born emaciated and weakly. Strange to say, the boys and girls of the family before puberty may eat the fruit of this tree without any evil consequences.

Another family has a plant with red leaves (called *nkungu*) as a totem. When a woman of this family becomes *enceinte* for the first time a *nkungu* is planted near the hearth outside the house, and it is never destroyed, or the child will be born thin and weak and remain very small and sickly. The healthy life of the children and family is bound up with the healthiness and life of the totem tree as respected and preserved by the family. The killing of a fowl by a member of the snake family, and vice versa, does not affect the family whose totem it is.

When a free woman marries she takes her totem with her and observes not only her own, but also her husband's totem. And any child born to them takes the totem of both parents until there is a family council of the paternal and maternal branches, when it is generally arranged that the child shall in future observe its father's totem.

These notes contain all the information I could gather relating to their totems ; and I received the impression that the totem taboo is gradually dying out. This is also the impression I have about the totems on the Lower Congo, where one finds

## THE PERMANENT TABOO

only a vestige of what was once probably a potent factor in their family life.

Then there is the *permanent taboo* (called *ngili*). This taboo is put on any kind of food, as, "You must not eat goat's meat"; or, on going to a certain place, as, "You must not go across the river to a particular island"; or, on performing a particular action, as, "You must always drink sugar-cane wine through a reed, never straight out of a vessel of any kind." This taboo must be carefully observed by the person under it as long as he lives or serious consequences will follow the breaking of it, such as a return of the sickness from which the person was suffering when placed under this taboo, or a loss of property and life, or the sickness and death of a child.

Every kind of food is *ngili* to someone, and it is no uncommon sound to hear a person going through the town crying out: "Exchange for piece of antelope." That means that someone has come into possession of a portion of antelope to whom it is taboo, so he (or she) is trying to exchange it for fish or something else that is not taboo to him with someone to whom antelope is not taboo.

This permanent taboo (*ngili*) is very frequently an inherited one. A man has, say, elephantiasis and the "medicine man" says he is not to eat either elephant or hippopotamus flesh (both these animals have stout legs), and the man will pass on this taboo to his sons, who will carefully observe it lest their legs become "swollen like an elephant's."

Milk is tabooed by all and regarded with great abhorrence. Anyone drinking it is considered unclean (*bosoto*) for several days, and is not allowed to eat with his family. They may touch milk, for they milk our goats and sheep and carry it to us without suffering any defilement, but it must not touch their lips. A house boy of mine was known to have drunk some water out of a milky glass, and he was not permitted to eat with his family for five days. The natives could give no reason for this, but only stated that it was their custom. The eating of raw eggs is also tabooed by all, and the breaker of this taboo is

## THE TEMPORARY TABOO

not allowed to eat with his family for a few days. They eat well-cooked eggs no matter how unsavoury they may be through age. I may say in passing that the more ancient an egg is the better it is liked by the native, and they do not appreciate our preference for fresh eggs. If a native gives an aged egg to a white man as an expression of gratitude it does not mean that he is giving it because it is bad and worthless to himself, but because it is to him better than a fresh egg, and he thinks it is so to you until he learns better, and then he will bring fresh ones.

The *temporary taboo* (*mungilu*) covers a large number of different circumstances that, according to the native view of life, call for a taboo. During pregnancy a woman is placed under a taboo, generally that she is not to eat a certain kind of food—not the same article of food to every woman, but according to the momentary whim of the “doctor”—and this she observes until the medicine man removes it either on the birth of the child or when it is weaned, or the first time the child has its hair cut.

Some pregnant women are told not to throw the ashes of their fires away until their children reach the age of twelve or fourteen. The ashes are therefore carefully gathered and put into a special place. These women, however, belong to families which have trees and shrubs for totems, and for fear of scattering the ashes of their totem trees inadvertently burnt they have to put all the ashes of their fires in a particular place, thus honouring all ashes to avert the possibility of being disrespectful to the ashes of their totem trees.

A witch-doctor may say that on account of a certain sickness the patient must not eat a particular kind of food, and the food he may eat must be prepared in a special way, say, cooked in forest water and not in water taken from the river. When, however, the man is better a feast is prepared, and then all kinds of food are cooked in the ordinary way, including the interdicted articles, and the patient partakes of them and the prohibitions are removed.

## CURSING A WIFE

Lads who have been circumcised must remain indoors until the wounds are healed, and during that time they are not to eat the heads and tails of fish. When a man is making a canoe he ties a piece of a cactus-like plant to the log he is working, and while working on it he must not drink any water, otherwise the canoe will leak. The charm also wards off evil influences and keeps the canoe from warping. Members of a deceased person's family are forbidden to sleep for two or three weeks on their ordinary beds, and must sleep on leaves spread on the ground. After the mourning they have a drinking-bout of sugar-cane wine, to which all the town is invited, after which they return to their ordinary sleeping-mats on the raised frame. The prohibitions on fishermen and hunters have already been mentioned.

Sometimes a man in a rage will put himself under a taboo. A wife by her conduct has irritated him beyond all endurance, and at last in anger he strikes on the ground with a stick, and says: "May I be cursed if ever I eat food cooked by you." He is now under a taboo (*mungilu*) not to eat food from that woman's hands. Such a mode of procedure will bring the woman to her senses, for undoubtedly the taboo and curse go further than the mere non-eating of food cooked by her. It means that he has put a taboo on her and will have nothing more to do with her, or the curse will come on him in the form of a severe disease.

By and by the woman is sorry for her conduct, and begs the husband to remove himself from under the curse by removing the taboo of having nothing more to do with her. Should he after a time relent, the curse is removed by the following ceremony, which is called reversing, or undoing, of the beating of the ground: A trench is dug while some women sing: "Remove the curse, the curse of beating on the ground" (*Bondola bondo mobondo bondo*). A spot of red camwood powder is rubbed on the woman's chest, or as they say, "over the heart," the taboo and curse are removed and the pair are reconciled.

## FATHER'S CURSE ON A CHILD

Men and women to express their sympathy with a sick parent or relative will make a vow, saying: "I will not eat fowls," or, "I will not go to *Lulanga* until my father is better." Should the father die, then the person who made the self-imposed taboo must not eat any more fowls, or must never go again to *Lulanga*. These vows are very carefully observed, or a disease will result from breaking them.

A person therefore can be under four taboos, viz.: (1) The totem taboo (*mokumbu*) of his family. (2) The taboo (*ngili*), because of a serious illness and the desire to avert a relapse. (3) The inherited taboo (also *ngili*), to avoid a complaint from which the father suffered. (4) The temporary taboo (*mungilu*) of anger and sympathy.

This may be the best place in which to mention their curses, for they are often interwoven with their taboos. A very common curse employed on most occasions is to strike on the ground with a stick, and at the same time mention the name of the person cursed; and the person thus cursed will have a very bad form of dysentery, and the curser may say: "May I be cursed if ever I do such and such a thing"; thus the curser will become subject to the disease should he break his word.

A person curses an adult relative in the following manner: He rubs his thighs, bends down, and turns his back towards the one to be cursed and shouts: "Be accursed." This is also done in the face of an enemy as an insolent curse on them. Early morning is said to be the best time for making it effective. I have seen this performed several times, and the person so cursed has hurled his knife or spear at the curser.

A father, or guardian, curses his child by words, and then the child will neither grow properly nor become wise or rich; but this is only resorted to on great provocation. Should the child become penitent and apologize for his evil ways, he takes a large fish or monkey or a goat to his father and begs him to remove the curse. The father accepts the present, and then chewing the stem of a certain shrub (called *munsangasanga*), he expectorates the pieces out on to the palm of his child's

## VARIOUS CURSES

hand, saying ; “ What I said I said in anger, and I now remove the curse.” The child is comforted and the two are reconciled.

To kick or touch a person accidentally, while passing him, with the foot is equivalent to cursing him. The person must turn round and slightly kick again the person whom he touched with his foot, otherwise bad luck, etc., will come upon the person kicked. Where we apologize they kick again, and the phrase used for the second kick means, “ to reverse the effects of the first kick.” They are exceedingly careful not to touch a person with the foot in passing—that brings bad luck, and not to step over a person—that is an insult. A person moving out of a sitting crowd of folk shuffles his feet along the ground so as to avoid stepping over anyone, and will tell those squatting around to draw their feet up out of the way so as not to touch them.

There are other curses used by old and young alike during fits of passionate anger, as, “ May you die by witchcraft ” ; or, “ May you die by euphorbia poison ” ; or, “ Cry for your mother,” i.e. May your mother die. The last is a curse bitterly resented, and is only uttered when a person is greatly exasperated. When a person is undergoing any ordeal test he repeatedly uses the word *ngambu*, which means : “ If I am guilty, let the ordeal work against me ; but if I am innocent, then let my accuser be accursed and die.” The *ngambu* curse is greatly dreaded by all natives.

Promises and oaths are ratified by each contracting party putting a curse on the other should he break his oath ; and illness and bad luck are often regarded as due to unfaithfulness to one’s oath. Sometimes taboos are put on one another by the contracting parties, and so long as the taboos are carefully observed they are reckoned as faithful to their promises and oaths. This is specially so in the covenant of blood-brotherhood, and to disregard the taboo is to court either death or some great disaster. Many of their folk-lore stories are illustrative of the evil consequences resulting from the breaking of blood-brotherhood taboos.

## GIVING TOKENS

Oaths are freely used by the Boloki in their conversation, and such liars are they that they feel it necessary to back their statements with, "I swear it" (*ndai*). The commonest form of oath is, "Cut my throat" (*tena nkingu*), and is always accompanied by the speaker wetting his finger and drawing it across his throat. "By my mother" (*nta mama*), and "By my father" (*nta tata*) are very strong oaths and are felt to be binding on the user of them, otherwise disaster will follow if the statements to which they are affixed are not true, or the promises to which they are attached are not fulfilled. "Truly so, by my mother" (*bwele unko mama*), and "Truly so, by my father" (*bwele unko tata*), are not regarded as being so strong as the former two, but they infer that the speaker pledges himself that his words are true, otherwise his mother or father will suffer.

A piece of stick, tin, or anything handy is cut into pieces, and each combatant or disputant takes a portion as a token that all matters of dispute are finished, and he who again starts one of the old quarrels calls down a curse upon himself. This cutting of a token (*tena ndanga*) is also done by the party who loses a case. He gives a portion of the cut token as an earnest of the payment of expenses, and of the fine imposed by those who judged the case, and if he does not redeem it he is under a curse and will suffer accordingly.

## CHAPTER XXII

### NATIVE CHARMS AND THEIR USES

A general name—No sacrifices to them—Preventive charms—Thief's charm and antidote—Charms for rendering the owner attractive—Helpful charms in war—Modes of dealing with witchcraft—Certain charms for certain spirits—For success in fishing—To detect a murderer—To preserve goats in health—Giving ordeal to a son.

THE general name for fetish, charm, amulet, talisman, mascot, etc., is *bonganga*; and this is also the word for the skill or art of the medicine man—that which constitutes him a member of the profession. It is, however, difficult to decide whether this skill arises from his own inherent intuitions or is imparted to him by his own powerful fetish—the word *bonganga* favours both views. The prefix “*bo*” can indicate the thing into which a medicine man has put his power, hence a charm, fetish, etc.; and it also denotes a noun of quality, and thus points to the skilfulness, art, etc., or that quality by which the witch-doctor is able to perform his magic. It is very probable that both views are necessary for a complete understanding of the word—it is a thing into which the medicine man has put his power, and it is also the skill, art, power, etc., by which he imparts it and by which he works as a witch-doctor.

No offerings are presented to charms, and there is no mode of *refreshing* them as on the Lower Congo; but when a charm does not act as it should the owner takes it back to the medicine man to have some more “medicine” put into it, as it is thought that the old has become ineffective through being played out. Images are not used among the Boloki, but various articles are employed to conserve the fetish power imparted to them.



## NO SACRIFICES TO THEM

The charms belonging to the witch-doctors have been handed down from time immemorial and the various "doctors" make the amulets, charms, etc., for the people. The larger the fee the more powerful the charm.

In writing about the Boloki charms it is very difficult to classify them, for they so frequently overlap each other in their operations. I have collected the names of a large number of their charms, etc., and when describing some of them I shall have to repeat a little of the information given under the heading of "Medicine Men and their Magic"; but I will avoid more repetition than is necessary to put the reader in touch with the supposed powers of the charm.

There are those charms that *help them in dire distress*, and among the most potent of them is the *ekando*, which really means a snag hidden under the water. The owner of this charm can cause a snag to break the canoe of his pursuing enemies. In the excitement of a chase the paddlers do not always look where they are going and will run on a hidden snag, and the impact will split the canoe and the charm has the credit for it. Many trees topple from the bank into the river, and by and by the jagged end of a large branch will be just under water as the river rises and falls, and this favours the belief in the powers of the *ekando* charm. I have been nearly thrown out of my canoe two or three times from running on a covered snag, and they are a source of considerable danger to river steamers.

The owner of this charm has the power also to call on the hippopotami and crocodiles to help him when hard pressed by his foes. Hippopotami quite unintentionally, in coming up to breathe, overturn a canoe; and crocodiles have the trick of coming up suddenly by the side of a canoe and causing the paddlers to start so violently that they upset the canoe. The crocodile takes a man and goes off.

Another charm with curious power is the "fetish axe" (*ekoko*). The possessor when desirous of eluding his enemies takes the "axe" in his hand and beats an island with it, where-

## THIEF'S CHARM AND ANTIDOTE

and also to protect the produce from thieves. The charms then employed seem to be almost anything ; but those most frequently seen are large univalve snail shells, bivalve shells like mussels, pieces of cactus, bits of rags, old calabashes, etc., these are all tied on sticks stuck in the ground and the charms dangle to and fro in the breeze.

When a woman runs away, her husband takes her nail-parings and hair-cuttings, which he has gathered for this and other purposes, to a medicine man, who puts them into a skin with medicine and returns them to him. The husband with this charm in his possession takes a leaf, spreads it on the closed fist of his left hand and strikes it with the palm of his right hand, and says : " If my wife stops to eat at the place to which she has run, let her die quickly." The same ceremony is performed to ensure the return of a runaway slave, or to inflict harm on anyone with whom the owner of this special charm (named *likunda*) has quarrelled ; consequently natives carefully destroy all their hair-cuttings and nail-parings so that no one may gain power over them.

The thief has a charm—a simple yellow pigment—to rub on his temples to help him steal cunningly and successfully ; but if a man desires to protect his property from this kind of thief he procures a very long, broad-bladed knife with curved points, and on this he smears stripes of yellow pigment, and then a serious sickness will come upon the robber who steals from the owner of such a powerful charm (named *lingundu*). This charm is also used for two other purposes : when it is put near the door of a sick man it will kill the witch that tries to enter ; and a medicine man also uses it to cut the soul (*elimo*) in half to cause the death of his client's enemy. As the yellow pigment renders the thief invisible, so it also renders the knife invisible, so that the witch not seeing it blunders on it and fatally cuts itself ; and the soul cannot see it, and can be executed by it when in the hands of the witch-doctor.

How does a native account for a man (or woman) being successful in his undertakings, fortunate in his circumstances,

## HELPFUL CHARMS IN WAR

and acceptable and popular with folk generally ? Well, the secret of it is that he has a charm (named *montala*) which operates powerfully in his favour. It is a bundle, a horn, or a hollow piece of bamboo with medicine in it. It renders its owner very attractive to women, to slaves, and to the people, and thus he is successful. Handsome, healthy, prosperous men are supposed to be what they are on account of the benefits bestowed by this charm.

When a son or daughter is about to leave home for another town, or to travel and trade, the father or near relative chews the leaves of a certain shrub, spits them out on to another leaf and mixes some camwood powder with the mess, and the son, or daughter, has to rub a little of this mixture (*makako*) on his body every day, otherwise he will not find favour with those among whom he may live or travel. Neither a son, nor a daughter, will travel without his charm. The ingredients of the love-charm, or philtre, have already been given (see the chapter on Medicine Men), and also the methods of effectively employing them.

It is also necessary, according to the native view of life, to have charms to help them in war, in rows, and among their enemies. There is a class of charms that enables them to go into the midst of their foes and yet escape, although they wish to capture them. By one charm the native bewitches the enemy ; by another he excels the enemy in craftiness and cunning ; by another he overawes and fascinates them so that they forget their hatred ; and by another he becomes invisible to them. Each man patronizes his own particular charm, some having more faith in one than in another. There is also a charm, specially procured from a spirit and costing a goodly fee, that always enables its owner to capture one or more prisoners in a fight, and then helps him to disappear with his captives if too closely pursued by the enemy. The mud-fish is called *njombo*, and this name is given to a charm that imports the slippery characteristics of the eel-like mud-fish. The owner of this useful charm is as difficult to hold as an eel, and conse-

## CHARMS FOR CERTAIN SPIRITS

quently it is much in demand by fighters and thieves, as it enables them to slip out of the hands of their captors.

Witchcraft plays a large part in native life, therefore we find among them various means of finding witches and counter-acting their malignant powers. The simplest and cheapest method is to give a drink of water from the fetish bell to the suspected persons—the innocent are not hurt and the guilty one dies. Then there are the fetish saucepans of water used by the medicine men, in which the witches and evil spirits are supposed to appear and those proved guilty of witchcraft are destroyed. In each case the different spirits are called to the ordeal of the saucepan by the witch-doctor putting a leaf on the closed fist of his left hand and striking it with the palm of his right hand. If the leaf bursts, the spirits have heard and come at his bidding; but if the leaf does not break after three smacks, he desists, as the spirits are recalcitrant. When he wants a particular spirit he calls its name as he strikes the leaf.

When there is much sickness in a family the medicine man of the mat is sent for and he, after studying the matter, says: "There is a charm working against the family." He erects his mat to form an enclosure and goes through a ceremony of much drumming and chanting, and by and by digs a hole inside his mat and gets out the charm (named *ekundu*), which is a saucepan containing animal and fish bones and brass links.

The pot and contents are said to belong to the evil spirit of a deceased relative who desires to trouble the family. The brass links, one or more, represent those members of the family who have been done to death by the evil spirit (*mweta*) since the decease of the wicked relative. (The medicine man knows how many have died in the family since the death of the said relative.) After removing the malignant charm from the ground, the evil spirit of the departed one has no more power over the family. Sometimes this ceremony is performed in the open, but it needs more cunning to deceive the spectators.

There are three charms that are regarded as being very acceptable and pleasing to the spirits of disease, so much so,



*Photo by]*

*[Rev. R. H. Kirkland*

### A BOPOTO FETISH ENSURING GOOD HEALTH TO TWINS

When twins are born the placentæ are put into two old saucepans that are then raised on forked sticks and placed on either side of the road leading to the village. This is a sign to passers-by that twins have been born, and to destroy any evil influences entering the town that might harm the twins.



## FOR SUCCESS IN FISHING

that by a little persuasion the medicine man can coerce them to leave their patients and take up their residence in the charms provided for the purpose. The medicine man procures a four-foot post, removes its bark, shapes it bluntly at one end, and paints it yellow with spots of red and blue. This charm (*etoli*) is erected near the house of the person who is suffering from either debility, or rheumatism, or lumbago, or ague fever, and the spirit of the complaint goes into the post, and in order to keep it there, i.e. to avoid a relapse, the man throws some food on the roof, protecting the post from the weather, for the spirit to eat, and pours some sugar-cane wine over the post for the spirit to drink, and occasionally a little camwood powder is rubbed on the post to keep the spirit in a good humour. As these charm-sticks are the resting-places of spirits, the nicer they are made the better satisfied will the spirits be to reside in them instead of troubling the patient.

Besides the charm-post there are two charms made of saucepans for receiving the spirits of disease and holding them in pleasant captivity. They are both decorated with spots of yellow, blue, and red. One (the *eboko*) is simply filled with water from the bush, and the other (*muntoka*) has a number of small sticks in it. The former is used for retaining the spirit of a virulent form of sleeping-sickness, and the latter for that of a milder type. In both cases food, drink, and camwood are supplied to the spirits residing in them; and small roofs of grass are built over them to protect them from the weather. Especially in the case of the coverings for the saucepan charms, the protecting shelters look like miniature huts, and a casual observer could easily believe that they have something to do with ancestral worship, whereas they are simply the dwelling-places of disease-giving spirits, and are charms to protect their owners from having serious relapses.

When a man is very unsuccessful in spearing fish, although his opportunities have been good, he thinks that this lack of success is due to a pregnant woman in his family who has not performed the rites called *mumbamba*, in which small cuts are

## TO DETECT A MURDERER

made on certain parts of the body and camwood powder and medicine are rubbed into them. When this ceremony is observed his luck will change, so he thinks. If, however, he cannot discover such a woman in his family, he believes that there is one who is hiding the fact, and consequently the charm is against him. This is often a way of covering one's ill-success.

Murder is a very rare occurrence among the Boloki, i.e. secret murder. I never heard of a case during the fifteen years I was with them. Open fights and murder were not at all infrequent, but I suppose that there must have been cases of secret murder, or they would not have a ceremony (called *moselo*) for detecting the murderer. This fetish ceremony is performed in two ways: (a) A relative takes the nail-parings and hair-cuttings of the murdered man to the witch-doctor, who makes some medicine with them, after which he says that the man was murdered by someone in the village. A saucepan of water is taken and placed on the ground in the said village, and each inhabitant holds his or her hand over it, and the one whose shadow is seen at the bottom of the saucepan is the murderer. (b) The nail-parings and hair-cuttings of the murdered man are rolled in palm gossamer, tied and laid on the ground, as representing the unknown murderer, in front of the witch-doctor, who says: "If this man eats, or drinks, or walks in this country again, let him be cursed by this ceremony." Then the witch-doctor brings his knife down and cuts the bundle (*moselo*) in half. If shortly after this a person becomes suddenly ill of a serious complaint and dies, he is regarded as guilty of the murder, and his death is taken as a proof that the spell has worked.

When cassava roots are dug up from the farm they are put into a water-hole to soak for a few days until they become soft. Should a woman find that her roots are being stolen from the hole she takes a piece of gum copal, and fixing it in the cleft of a split stick she puts it on the side of her cassava hole, and at the same time calls down a curse on the thief. Should the thief be a man he will henceforth have no luck in fishing,



## TO PRESERVE GOATS IN HEALTH

and should it be a woman she will have no more success in farming.

Every canoe before being launched for the first time is struck on the stern by the maker or owner with his axe, "to take away the weight." It will then be light to paddle, easy to beach or to launch, for its dead weight has been removed by the blow with the axe.

There is no distinct word for evil eye, but one person is able to bewitch (*loka*) the farm of another so that the produce, maize, cassava, sugar-cane, etc., will not grow. To counteract the effects of this bewitchment the owner of the farm calls a witch-doctor, who knocks a stake into the farm, and if a person is bewitching the farm the stake is supposed to enter that person, and she or he will soon die unless they abandon their wicked designs.

When through this same form of witchcraft goats die off, or will not breed, the owner seeks someone who for a consideration will look after them, and the owner will then *pretend* to sell them to him, so that the one who is bewitching them will stop his evil practices, as they now belong to someone else. It often happens that the goats being removed to new pastures become more healthy and breed, and this is sufficient proof that someone was formerly bewitching them. If, however, the owner cannot find anyone whom he can trust to look after his goats he calls a medicine man, who takes a young palm, splits it into two equal parts, and places one on each side of the road ; and then when the witch-spirit comes that way and passes between the pieces of palm it will become sick and die.

The general belief is that only one in the family can bewitch a member of the family ; and who will go to the trouble of bewitching one of his own family unless he is to benefit by the death of the bewitched person ? And who benefits by the death of a father or a brother ? Why, the son or a brother. Consequently, when father is very ill, the son is regarded with suspicion, and after trying all other means, such as calling in the various medicine men to drive out the sickness, the patient

## GIVING ORDEAL TO A SON

will, as a last resort, give his son the ordeal, but not enough to kill him. Should he vomit it he is innocent, that is proved beyond doubt and no harm is done ; but if he does not vomit the ordeal, and becomes dazed and stupid—well, he is simply the medium by which the occult powers are working on his relative, and the ordeal will clear such dangerous powers out of his system, and being no longer able to work through him as a medium the father or brother will recover. The lad is tended until the effects of the ordeal drug have passed away, then he is warned not to allow his body to be used again for such purposes and he is set free ; and he is looked upon by his playmates in the village with as much curiosity as a boy just out of hospital with a broken leg. The boy's excuse is, and it is readily accepted by all, that he was full of witchcraft and did not know it.

I know a case of a cheeky urchin who received a box on the ears from his uncle, and the youngster turned round and said : “ I will bewitch you.”

Shortly afterwards the uncle fell sick, and in spite of remedies and “ doctors ” he continued ill ; but at last he made the boy take the ordeal, and not vomiting it he was considered guilty of bewitching his uncle. The boy was well thrashed, and his father had to pay 200 brass rods to the medicine man for administering the ordeal. This punishment was inflicted not because the ordeal proved that the lad was guilty, but because of his insolent threat, and to teach him to let other folk alone. The uncle pulled up his houses and went to live at the other end of the town beyond the lad's influence.

This uncle soon after married another wife, who had a young brother who was a scholar in my school. One day the uncle came asking me for this lad that he might give him the ordeal. I refused to hand him over for such a purpose, and “ Besides,” I said, “ he does not belong to your family,” for I had not heard of the marriage.

“ Yes, he does,” the man replied ; “ I have married his sister, and he is bewitching me through his sister, who is now

## GIVING ORDEAL TO A SON

my wife. My nephew, who took the ordeal some time ago, says that he has passed on the witchcraft to my young brother-in-law." It thus appears that a mischievous boy can say that he has passed on his witchcraft to another lad and so bring trouble on that youngster. This uncle was continually bothering me about these lads, and at last, to avoid further trouble, I sent them, with their full consent, to work on one of our other stations many miles down-river, and the uncle was much relieved.

The uncle in his new locality surrounded himself with many charms, but he did not live many years. He was not physically strong, and every charm he possessed was to guard him from a complaint, or to preserve him from witchcraft.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### DEATH AND BURIAL

Three causes of death—By act of God—By another's witchcraft—By one's own witchcraft—An explosion—Decorating the corpse—Fee to view the body—Smoking the body—Making coffins—Three kinds of graves—Killing slaves—Burying women alive—Signs of mourning—The nether world—Suicides—Funeral dance for a man—Dance for a woman.

THERE are three causes of death well recognized among the Boloki: To die by an act of God; to die by another's witchcraft; and to die by one's own witchcraft. On the Lower Congo the first and second causes of death are acknowledged, but I never heard there of a person dying by his, or her, own witchcraft.

In cases of accidental death, as caused by the swamping of a canoe in a storm, they say that God has caused the death. There is a certain amount of fatalism in this statement; but other accidents in which they observe what they consider exceptional circumstances, as the upsetting of a canoe by a hippopotamus or by a crocodile, they place to the account of witchcraft. Thus a canoe swamped in a storm is "an act of God," but a canoe upset by a crocodile is "an act of witchcraft," as no crocodile will upset a canoe unless it is told to do so by a witch, or unless a witch has gone into the creature and compels it to commit the outrage; therefore it is necessary to discover the witch and punish the person who harbours such an evil spirit. The word for sorrow is *nkele*, which really means anger, indignation, and the idea is that they are "angry" that their relative has been done to death by the witch. I tried very hard, but I found no other word for grief, sorrow, etc., at the death of anyone than this word *nkele* or anger—a very suggestive sidelight on the native view of death.

## BY ONE'S OWN WITCHCRAFT

On the death of a sick man the body is opened, and the arteries connected with the liver are examined by a witch-doctor, and if they are full, or only one is empty, then the deceased was bewitched to death, i.e. he died by witchcraft (*awi moyengwa*); and consequently someone is accused, and the ordeal is administered to one person after another until the guilty party is discovered, i.e. until someone succumbs to the ordeal, and falls intoxicated by it to the ground.

There is another view of death held by the Boloki folk, and expressed in the phrase *awi na likundu*, which means that the person died by his own witchcraft, or he (or she) tried to kill someone else by witchcraft, and the other person's protective charms, etc., were too strong, and it has resulted in the bewitcher's own death. The word *likundu* literally means smartness, craftiness, skill, occult power, being too clever.

The witch-doctor decides the matter, for he holds a kind of post-mortem on the corpse, and if the arteries near the liver are empty, then the man died as a result of his own witchcraft. If one artery only is empty, that counts for nothing and is disregarded, but if four or five are empty the witch-doctor says: "That," pointing to one, "is the secret power by which he so skilfully made canoes, or worked at his smithing" (according as the man was a canoe maker or blacksmith); "that one is the power by which he was successful in fishing" (or hunting, and so on); "and that other one is the power by which he bewitched people, hence someone with stronger occult power has overcome and killed him, or he has died by his own witchcraft."

If only one artery is empty, that is allowable, as a man must have skill to do ordinary things like other folk, but if several are empty, then he had more than his share of cleverness, or occult power, and no one pities him in his death.

The following is an illustration of the wide-reaching effects of witchcraft among the natives of Africa: Some years ago the steamer *Matadi* was lying off the English Trading House at Boma, and one night the whole town was aroused by a

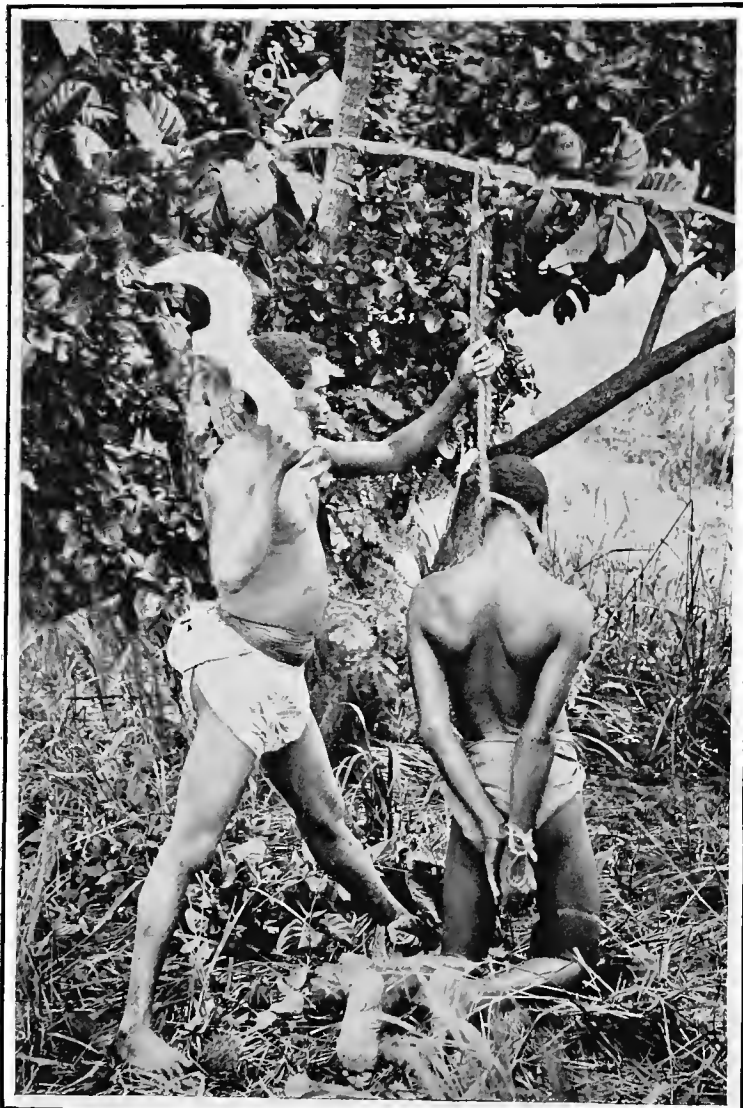
## DECORATING THE CORPSE

terrific explosion. It was found on investigation that the gunpowder on board the s.s. *Matadi* had exploded, and two' or three white people and forty "Kroo boys" (men engaged on the Kroo coast to work the cargo) were killed. During the inquiry that followed it came out that the "Kroo boys," while searching the hold with a naked light, had accidentally set fire to the powder. Many months afterwards we heard incidentally from other "Kroo boys" that a big witch palaver had been held in the Kroo country and over fifty people had been done to death for bewitching the "Kroo boys" to death on the s.s. *Matadi* by causing the explosion of the gunpowder by their witchcraft. The Kroo coast is many hundreds of miles from the Congo, and the probability is that not one of those who died by the ordeal in the Kroo country had ever been in Congo-land.

Relatives attend the sick and nurse them faithfully ; and it is a sign of true friendship to visit a sick acquaintance, or to send regularly and inquire after his health. The women are so fond of attending the sick, i.e. sitting in the house, suggesting charms, remedies, etc., and giving advice, that they often neglect their farm work and various duties.

When a man of any importance dies, those who are expert in the art of decorating corpses attend and decorate the body with coloured pigments, beads, cowry shells, and fine cloth ; and the artists charge two brass rods per person to view the body. The family supply the cloths, pigments—arnotta dye, chalk, red camwood powder, blue and yellow earths, beads, shells, bottles, and looking-glasses. The figure is often fixed in a sitting position with a bottle in one hand, as though drinking, and a looking-glass in the other, as though he were admiring his decorations. They aim at posing the figure in as natural a position as possible, but the effect is ghastly on a civilized mind.

The artists give their time and skill to the family for a small fee, and take as their perquisites the brass rods paid to view the picturesque (?) corpse. The side of the house is removed



#### A METHOD OF BEHEADING ON THE UPPER CONGO

This scene was arranged for the photo. In the real thing a sapling is pulled over and the rope tied, so that when the sapling is released it springs up and draws the neck of the victim taut.





## SMOKING THE BODY

to give more light on the body, and the wall removed forms, with several mats, the screen enclosing the decorated corpse. People come from miles around to view the sight, and the more original the pose the richer the harvest of brass rods gathered by the lucky artists. The pigments and barter goods on a decorated body cost approximately 1000 brass rods, or about £3, a very large sum for these people, but from their point of view it is worth the expenditure, for by giving the deceased such a fine send-off to the nether regions they give no excuse to his spirit to trouble them later with diseases and misfortune.

As a rule the body is buried within three days after death, and by that time it is very necessary. When, however, for various reasons—as lack of means to provide a good funeral—it is not convenient to bury the deceased so soon, they take out the entrails and bury them, place the corpse on a frame, light a fire under it, and thoroughly smoke-dry it; and in this way they are able to keep it for a more convenient time—this may be a matter of weeks, and even months. The dried body is tied in mats, put in a roughly-made hut, and a fire is occasionally made under it. Another mode is as follows: The body is tied in mats and buried in an ordinary but shallow grave, a big fire is made on the top of the grave to dry up the moisture in the body, and to preserve it. At a more suitable time a coffin is made and the corpse buried properly; this is called *likaku*.

Coffins are often made out of old canoes by men who go about the district for that purpose. Considering the material and tools they are well made, the various pieces fitting closely together.

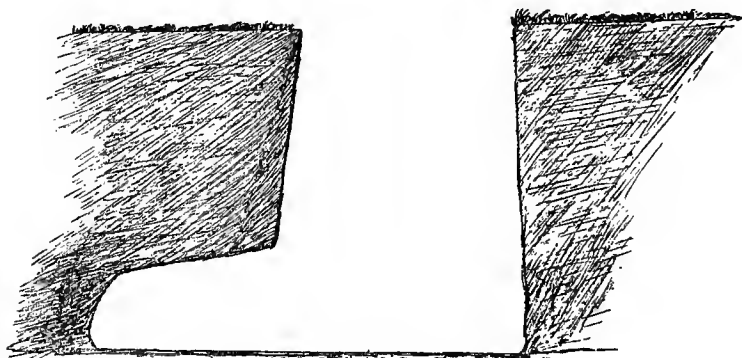
These native “undertakers,” on arriving at the place where their services are required, put up a fence of mats so as to make a private workshop. They charge so much for the job and are kept in food and drink, and any dogs, goats, etc., that push open the mats and enter the workshop are liable to confiscation if their inquisitiveness causes them to persist in entering after they have been driven away twice.

## THREE KINDS OF GRAVES

The coffins are sometimes lined and covered with cheap cloth, but more often they are stained with arnotta dye and ornamented with yellow and blue pigments. All the materials are supplied by the family. Clumsily-made native nails, or wooden pins, are used, unless they can procure nails from the nearest white man. Sometimes the parts are laced together. Poorer folk are rubbed with oil, and red camwood powder, bound round with cloth, and tied up in a mat ; and those who are very poor are simply tied in their sleeping-mats ; a corpse is rarely thrown into the river or bush.

When the time for burial arrives the coffin is carried round the town on exhibition, then the corpse is placed in it, and men convey it to the place of interment, followed by relatives, male and female—not wives—friends and townsfolk generally ; the wives remain behind to continue the mourning. A person often dies away from his house, and sometimes away from his town. The body is brought home and buried—if a free man or woman—in his or her house ; but a slave is buried on the edge of the bush, or in any convenient place.

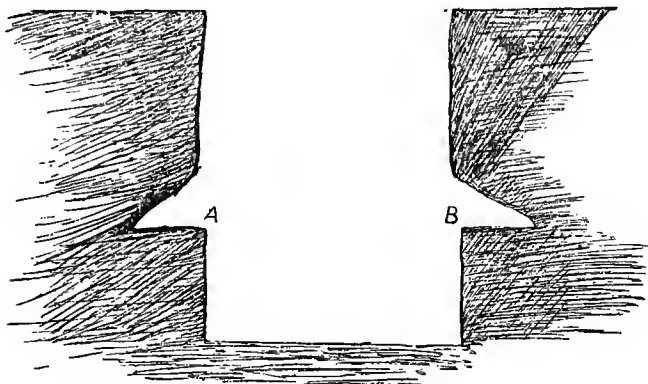
The graves are of three kinds : (1) When the grave is dug deep enough a cutting is made at the side in which to lay the corpse so that the earth does not press on the body, thus :



GRAVE FOR A WEALTHY MAN

## KILLING SLAVES

(2) A notch is cut in the earth along the two sides about two feet from the bottom of the grave, and planks or sticks are laid across after the body is put in position, and the earth is thrown on the sticks. (A and B are notches or ledges to take planks or sticks.) By this means also the earth is kept from contact with the coffin.



GRAVE FOR A WEALTHY MAN

(3) An ordinary straight-sided hole, and the earth put on the body. 1 and 2 are for important men—those whose families can afford to pay for a coffin, and they do not want it spoiled at once by having the clay—generally very wet—thrown on it; and No. 3 is for the common people.

There is no special time for burying, and no particular position for the grave and corpse. I have known them to bury their dead at different times, in the morning, afternoon, and evening. Mostly bodies are buried in one or other of the houses (or very near to them) belonging to the deceased, consequently the position of the grave depends on whether the house runs east and west, or north and south, or whether the row of houses owned by the deceased is parallel or at right angles to the river.

In the old days it was the custom to kill two slaves and put

## SIGNS OF MOURNING

one under the head as a pillow and one under the feet of the corpse. In every family of importance there was a slave wife who went by the name of *mwila ndako*, and it indicated that she was to be buried alive with her dead husband. If, however, this wife had a child before her husband died, then another woman took her place—a young woman was generally selected for this doubtful honour. The number of wives buried in the grave was in proportion to the man's wealth and importance, but he always made certain of one—the *mwila ndako*. We were able eventually to persuade them to abandon this custom, but it was not until we had gained their confidence and goodwill by long residence among them.

A man while mourning for a relative or a wife wears rags, or an old string fish-net, and allows his body to go unrubbed with oil and camwood powder. Utter disregard of one's personal appearance is a sign of great grief for the departed. At times men wear women's dresses instead of their own in token of their sorrow, and they shave off only half the hair of the head, or tie the hair up in little bunches or knots and shave the hair off the spaces between the knots; and some rub their bodies with clay. The modes are many and various, according to the nearness or remoteness of the relationship. In some cases they exhibit real sorrow, but in the majority of cases there is more noise and show than true grief.

Rarely does a man give way to crying; and if his dearest friend dies (not his relative) he exhibits no sign of mourning, not because he does not feel sorry, but because he does not desire to attract attention to himself as a person who mourns for one who is not his relative. It would be most unusual, and besides, if he has signs of mourning about him, the folk will be constantly stopping him and inquiring of him which of his family is dead.

During the first few hours after a woman's death nearly all her female relatives and neighbours cry as though their hearts are broken; but the next day they commence dancing, and



[100 b]

[Rev. R. H. Kirkland

### HEAD-MAN AND HIS WIFE

This man was, to some extent, responsible for the transport of State goods and messages between Nouvelle-Anvers on the Congo and Bossera on the Lake. The woman has the spiral rings on her legs, and her feet are greatly swollen by reason of the heavy rings.



## THE NETHER WORLD

continue to do so at short intervals for five or six days. The husband hires a professional dancer to act as master of the ceremonies.

Upon the death of a man his widows cry and drink water mixed with clay, either dress themselves in a few leaves or strip themselves absolutely nude and rub dirt on the body (sometimes only half the body is covered with clay and the other half left its natural colour, giving a very grotesque appearance to the mourner), then taking something belonging to their late husband they parade the town in pretended search for him.

After the funeral they sit in their houses, or inside a rough grass screen, for five or six days, until the sister of the deceased man gives them permission to leave their houses, and then for about six weeks or two months they walk only in the "bush," and if they hear anyone coming they hide, and during this time they may not walk about the town. Then for another three months they wear long, untidy-looking grass cloths. If their late husband was a great hunter, then the widows will not eat meat during the period of mourning; but should they during this period "live well," the deceased man's sister or daughter will upbraid them for not mourning properly, and the folk in the town will regard them as callous, hard-hearted women, and the public opinion of the district will condemn them. The new widows are not supposed to go to the farms or engage in any of their former occupations, and as their visits to the farms are very irregular their supply of food is meagre, so they are said "to fast" during the period of mourning. At the end of the mourning and fasting they wash, don their better dresses, and are distributed among the heirs of their deceased husband, i.e. among his sons.

At the funeral of a man there is more or less firing of guns, according to the importance of the deceased. This they say is to ensure for him a good entrance into the nether world, a place situated somewhere below. The departed spirits in the nether world, hearing the firing, gather about the entrance to welcome the new arrival. Some say that the spirit of the

## FUNERAL DANCES

deceased "hovers near the entrance" (others say "near to the body,") while they decorate the body, dig the grave, kill the slaves, prepare the wife who is to accompany him; then comes the firing, the entrance to the nether world, and the welcome. If the deceased was a great fighter the family arranges a sham fight in his honour, and these sham fights occasionally take place for two or three years.

The names of the dead are freely mentioned for a few weeks after death, and such names are even passed on to children if there is any likeness of the child to the deceased; and some natives have a misty idea of the possibility of the re-birth of the deceased in the child who bears the likeness.

If a slave commits suicide his master will throw his body into the river; but a free man who commits suicide is buried in a shallow grave with little or no ceremony, because he has died by his own hand. Suicide, however, is extremely rare among the Boloki. Women are buried with the same ceremony as a man, and in accordance with their position in the town.

There are two dances that should be mentioned in connection with their funeral rites: The first is named *ebala*. Directly a man of any position dies the family orders sugar-cane wine, which takes a few days to prepare in any large quantity. As soon as the wine is ready a large hardwood drum is beaten, and the men and women dance for three days and nights, or as long as the wine lasts. Lines are formed and a man leaves the line and advances, and a woman leaves the line opposite and advances to within a yard of the man, there they wriggle, shuffle their feet, shake their bodies for a few moments, and return to their places, and another couple advance, and thus all down the line over and over again. It is a regular wake, accompanied by much drunkenness and immorality—the former openly, the latter under cover.

The second dance is *muntembe*, from *ntembe*=stems of cassava plants. When a woman dies who is held in much honour by the other women in the town as a good farmer, one



## FUNERAL DANCES

who has taught them much and frequently about farming, and under whose leadership they have been successful in their operations, the other women will, a few days after such a one's death, form a procession, decorate themselves with leaves, twigs, and creepers, and dance and chant her praises through the town. At the close of the dance they go in a body to the farm of the deceased woman and hoe and plant a large patch of cassava for the use of her family. The family supplies the dancers with sugar-cane wine for this festivity.

In 1890 I saw in Bonjoko—a town just below Monsembe—the entrance, 6 feet by 8 feet, to a house paved with skulls; and it was customary not only to use skulls in this way, but also to put the skulls of enemies at the base of palm trees and to use them as foot-stools. The desire was, by these indignities, to insult the fallen enemy and to maintain some hold on the spirits of those slain in war that they might attend their conqueror in the spirit land.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### NATIVE DISEASES AND THEIR TREATMENT

White and black magic—Albinos—Causes of disease—Those easy to diagnose—Non-professional healers—Discovering a troublesome spirit—Various remedies—Cupping—The clyster—Ligatures for snake-bites—Snake-men—Rubbing things out of a patient—Ignorance of physiology—White man's difficulty—Dangers of buffalo-hunting—Ravages of crocodiles—Escaping crocodiles.

THE medicine man's white magic, i.e. those means employed for curing the people of their mental and bodily ailments, may, to us, seem foolish and inadequate, but there is nothing to condemn in its practice except that it often deceives the people. Whether the medicine man deceives himself—believes in himself or not—is another matter.

Undoubtedly, through generations of inherited knowledge concerning herbs, etc., they possess some remedies that do their patients good; and there are many faith cures—the results of an implicit belief in the medicine man and the means he uses. I have noticed that the Congo medicine man cures just that class of ailments that the different branches of "faith healers" cure in Europe and America.

The Congo system of *white magic* is founded on quackery, but like quackery in other parts of the world the remedy sometimes meets the disease, and such successes are remembered and talked about, while the many failures are forgotten. *Black magic*, i.e. those means employed for inflicting pain, misfortune, and death on an enemy, is to be found in all parts of the Congo. Although *black magic* is so widely practised,

## ALBINOS

yet it is condemned by the natives in as strong language as that used by the white man. Every native condemns it in everybody else, and excuses it in himself. Those who practise it must do so in secret, or the hatred of the village and the district will fall upon them.

In the Appendix will be found a fairly complete list<sup>1</sup> of the diseases from which the people suffer. In addition to the complaints there mentioned, the natives suffer from stomach-ache, toothache, soreness of gums, sympathetic buboes, ulcers caused by jiggers (chigoes), etc., the children from wind, teething, convulsions, etc.

There are rare cases of albinos (*yeme*), and they are regarded with respect, and although they marry, yet there are many women who, through fear, refuse to have them. The skin is a dirty white with a distinct tint of pink in it. The hair is curly and very light, with a glint of red, and the eyes are red and intolerant of light. Albinos are somewhat repulsive looking, and one is glad to turn the eyes quickly in another direction. Those I have seen were men, well developed and healthy looking, except that the skin had a pimply rash on it, which may have been due to the strong rays of the sun on a delicate skin. They suffer considerably from the direct rays of the sun on their skin, probably as much as a white man would suffer who had to go about in tropical Africa in a nude condition.

Among the people there are cases of auburn hair, but the eyes are not different from those of other people. With the exception of supernumerary toes and fingers, the deformities I have seen have been due to disease. People with a sore on the under part of the heel often walk on the toes, or side of the foot, so long that at last they are unable to walk properly.

The Boloki attribute diseases to several causes, such as broken taboos, curses, witchcraft, to disembodied spirits (*mingoli*), to the spirits of disease (*m̄te*), i.e. those spirits that give individual complaints, to those spirits (*mieta*) that give family complaints or epidemics, and to the spirit (*ejo*) of wealth,

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 5, page 345.

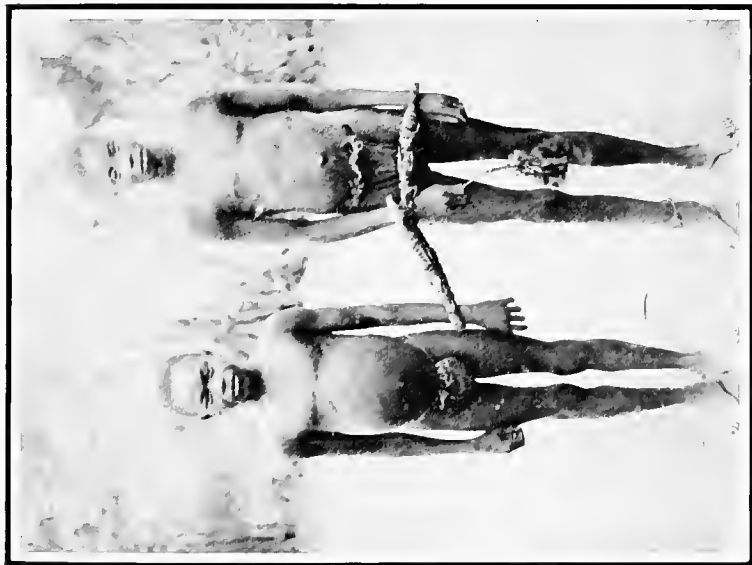
## EASY TO DIAGNOSE

which inflicts severe diseases, and when the sufferer dies he (or she) is regarded as taken by this spirit, or, as sacrificed to the spirit of wealth.

The general name for medicine is *mono*, and it may mean a daub of simple pigment on the affected part, a poultice of leaves, or a complicated concoction that has taken a long time to prepare and some thought to arrange.

It will be seen from a study of their diseases that they fall into two classes: (1) Those of which the symptoms are observable and easily diagnosed, as diarrhoea, insanity, etc.; and (2) Those of which the symptoms are difficult to diagnose, as great debility, sleeping-sickness, etc. The former are regarded as simple sicknesses, called *bokono*; but the latter are put to the credit of the various spirits, or to the malignant influence of witchcraft. When the sickness is simple (*bokono*), herbs are employed, medicines prepared, and taboos imposed on the patient; when, however, the illness is caused by one or other of the spirits, then a medicine man whose work it is to deal with that particular spirit is called. The functions of the various witch-doctors have already been described, and also of the spirits that either send or impart diseases. Some sicknesses are especially regarded as the result of breaking a covenant and falling under the curse that follows, as dysentery; or as the result of a broken treaty, as wounds and death in a fight; or as the consequences of a wife's unfaithfulness while the husband is away at a fight, as severe wounds.

During my residence among the Boloki, although many folk submitted to the ordeal for various reasons, and among others for bewitching people, yet I heard of only one or two taking it for bewitching a person to death. The verdict generally given by the witch-doctor is: He died by his own witchcraft while trying to bewitch someone else. And many a time I have heard the friends of the deceased protest against this charge—for they considered it an insult to the memory of their departed friend—and insist that he died “by an act of God.”



*Photo by*

#### METHOD OF SECURING A PRISONER

*[the Author]*

The taller had tried to escape from his master, but was captured and handcuffed. The smaller had, whose loyalty was undoubted, was a slave of the same master. For several weeks they were fastened to each other.



#### A BOLOKI WOMAN DRESSING HER HUSBAND'S HAIR

It is one of the duties of a wife to comb out and plait her husband's hair. Sometimes she shaves the head, forming crescents, squares, diamonds, etc., according to the pattern in fashion at the time.



## DISCOVERING A TROUBLESOME SPIRIT

In simple complaints medicines are prepared from herbs for inward and outward applications, fomentations are applied, and massage is employed, and in many cases charms and amulets are supplied to the patient. In the more serious kinds of illness, as smallpox, dropsy, etc., a person who has recovered from the sickness very often sets up as a healer of the same—for who knows better how to cure an illness than he (or she) who has had it ?

These healers of specific diseases are not witch-doctors, nor are they, by the natives, respected as such ; and if they fail to cure, the patient is removed to a medicine man as the last resort. The fees of the former are as moderate as a quack doctor's compared with the fees of a professional man. Of these healers there is a large number, and it is impossible to give an outline of their practices, for each follows his (or her) own method, and tries to keep that method a secret ; and even when fomentations or herb decoctions are used, the ingredients are known only to the compounder. Simple massage is a favourite operation, and seems to be much enjoyed by the patients ; and its curative qualities are not placed to the credit of friction, warmth, or magnetism, but to the fetish power of the rubber.

As stated above, most of the diseases in the list are regarded as *bokono*=simple sickness, illness, complaint ; and it is only when they do not yield to ordinary, simple treatment that they are viewed more seriously as the result of witchcraft, or possession by one or other of the spirits, e.g. an ulcer shows itself, and is treated with fomentations, etc., but it happens that the ulcer spreads and drains the strength of the patient ; a medicine man is called in, and the cause sought for either in witchcraft, the breaking of a taboo, the operation of a curse, or in the malignant action of a spirit. The complaints called debility, sleeping-sickness, very bad rheumatism, ague fever, or boils, are supposed to originate in one of these ways, and it is the object of the medicine man to discover in which way, in order to use the right means.

## VARIOUS REMEDIES

The witch-doctor beats his drum near the patient, talks excitedly, chants various phrases, the sense of which the people often do not understand, but the lilt of the metre, together with the rhythm of the drum, causes the patient to sway to and fro and has an hypnotic effect on him.

When he is worked up to the right pitch the medicine man asks him: "Have you eaten anything?" i.e. Have you broken a taboo? The patient takes no notice.

"Have you done anything?" i.e. Have you broken a covenant and so come under a curse? is the next question, but the man takes no notice.

"Are you bewitched?" or, "Are you bewitching anybody?" To these questions no answer is given.

"Have you a spirit (*bwete*)?" The patient jerks and twitches his body, beats his arms, and sways more vigorously, and thus it is known that the sufferer is possessed by a certain kind of spirit.

The next thing is to discover whether the spirit is that of debility, sleeping-sickness, etc., and that point being decided by the jerking of the patient's body as the questions are put to him, the medicine man proceeds to make the necessary charms and put the man under the proper taboos. The whole of this ceremony of diagnosing a patient's case is called *mobalu*.

There are modifications of this ceremony in which only rattles are used, and not drums, and many women sing and shake rattles round the patient, who lies in the middle of the ring, well anointed with oil; or there may be only a few present, and the drum is beaten and the patient taken inside a mat enclosure with the medicine man, but the principle is the same.

The following are some of the remedies employed: *Kuta* is to heal quickly the cuts of a badly wounded man by placing him on a shelf and lighting a fire under him, so that the smoke enters the wounds. *Ngele* are leaves for drawing boils and abscesses to a head. *Moteba* leaves are boiled and rubbed on a person suffering from sleeping-sickness. *Longele*=a brass



## LIGATURES FOR SNAKE-BITES

rod ; some medicine is tied to a brass rod, and it is then worn to strengthen the arm or the leg—some wear it for rheumatism. *Makulu matuki* leaves are good for sores and wounds, and the juice of the leaves is dropped into sore eyes to heal them ; and some eat the leaves to induce pregnancy. *Makalala* are small sticks of powerful “ medicine ” for soothing the violently mad. There is a word, *yengola*, which means to kill or drown a person who is too ill to recover.

Cupping (*nyunya*) is often practised. Sometimes it is simple bleeding by snicking the part affected, and at other times it is cupping proper with horn and suction. The part to be benefited is cut with a knife, and the large bottom end of a horn, which has a hole at the small upper end, is put over the cuts. The operator puts a pill of clay or soft wax into his mouth, sucks at the hole, and with his tongue puts the wax pellet over it. This he repeats until the air in the horn is exhausted, and then the blood will run freely from the cuts.

The clyster (called *njango*) is used for relieving pains in the stomach. A calabash is filled with water in which some herbs have been boiled. The patient lies on his stomach and a reed is inserted, and the liquid in the calabash is poured into the reed ; but sometimes they use a calabash with a very long neck, and this is inserted, and the liquid allowed to gravitate into the bowels.

Ligatures are tied—one above and the other below the wound—for a snake-bite, some bitter plant (*bololo*) is given to the bitten person to chew. A medicine man also “ scrapes the wound to remove the teeth left by the snake.” There are persons, and even families, who handle snakes with impunity, and these are supposed to possess snake medicine. Such a person is called if the patient is suffering severely from a snake’s bite, and on his arrival he and the bitten person clasp each other’s right wrist, and the snake-man will beat the other’s arm to drive the poison (*ngenge*) from him into himself. I have never heard of a death from a snake-bite, but I have seen nervous people very much scared after being bitten by a snake.

## IGNORANCE OF PHYSIOLOGY

There is another mode of curing a sick person called *bowa*. The patient lies on his back and the medicine man, taking a saucepan of boiling water, kneels by the side of his patient. He shakes some leaves over him, dips his hand into the water, rubs the stomach of the sick one, and in a short time shows a palm nut, as having come from the patient. This performance is repeated again and again, and each time a palm nut, or a stone, or a piece of iron is shown as coming from the patient, and is taken as evidence that the sickness is being expelled.

Natives endure the heat much better than the cold. The palm-oil and red camwood powder used so freely as a cosmetic protect their bodies from the direct rays of the sun, and are also, I believe, a protection from the cold air and light showers of rain ; but a really cold, sunless day seems to crumple them up, and they lose all energy. Blood-poisoning is very rare, and wounds from knives and spears heal rapidly.

The natives are practically ignorant of physiology, and their firm belief for generations that diseases are due to witchcraft and evil spirits has kept them from making any progress in the study of that science. I remember many years ago a man coming to me complaining of an acute pain in his side, which he regarded as the presence of an evil spirit in him. After due consideration I thought it was probably due to a touch of pleurisy, and administered a flying blister (a lotion applied with a feather) to the place, and told him to go to bed. Early next morning the man came hurrying to me, and pointing to the blister that had come up in the night, he said : " White man, look where the evil spirit has come out." He thought that as all pain had gone, and there was a blister over the place where it had been, the evil spirit had come out there, and the blister was the result of its exit.

One of the greatest difficulties we encounter on the Congo is that of diagnosing a disease. The natives have never been in the habit of describing their symptoms, consequently when we commence medical work in any new district we are at a great disadvantage, and it takes long training before the people

## DANGERS OF BUFFALO-HUNTING

will clearly state the nature of their pains, or anything that will really help us to diagnose their complaints. While in the language we find the names of a large number of diseases, yet it is very poor in words describing symptoms, and this paucity of symptom-words arises from the fact that for centuries the witch-doctors, in their own interests, have fostered the belief that complaints are caused by evil spirits which they alone can drive out of them. Not only is there this lack of words describing symptoms, but there is a reticence on the part of the patient to explain his pain, etc., as he thinks that the "doctor" who has any pretension to healing a person should certainly be able to discover what is wrong. Their witch-doctors do not closely question their patients, but at once proceed to the cure; why, therefore, should the white man make so many inquiries?

On the Lower Congo we have a large number of gun accidents. The cheap, common guns, the barrels of which are usually made out of old gas-pipes, frequently explode and do much damage to the firer. Occasionally during the hunting season one hunter mistakes the rustling in the grass made by another hunter as the movements of an animal, and fires in the direction of the noise, only to find, when too late, that he has wounded a fellow-hunter. Very often when crawling through the grass after game the hammer of the gun catches in the grass, and in pulling it free the gun goes off, and the man behind receives the full charge into his body, and the lifeless corpse is carried back to the town; or, if severely wounded and not dead, the man is brought to us for treatment.

Both on the Lower Congo and the Upper there are serious accidents from buffalo-hunting—more to be dreaded than leopard-hunting. One case brought to us on the Upper Congo was that of a man who had fired at a buffalo which took refuge in a clump of trees. He thought, after waiting a time, that he had killed it, but on venturing to investigate too closely the infuriated, wounded animal came out at him and tossed and tumbled him about in its rage as a cat does a mouse. It was

## ESCAPING CROCODILES

at last frightened away by the hunter's companions, and when they brought him to us it took me nearly an hour and a half to sew him up and bandage his many wounds—he querulous and abusive all the time, complaining that I was giving him more pain than the buffalo did. He, however, made a good recovery and was duly grateful.

On the Upper Congo the crocodiles inflict the greatest damage on the natives. Here is a canoe with a few folk paddling quietly along, when a crocodile shoots up by its side so suddenly that the occupants are startled, and leaning too much to one side to get as far as possible from the ravenous jaws, they upset the canoe, the brute takes one and goes off. There is much wailing, a charge of witchcraft, and perhaps another death is the result.

A considerable amount of fishing is done by the women in the shallow waters, and while they are thus busily occupied the crocodile has its opportunity. I have often met women who have asked me for medicine for wounds on their legs, and on looking at them I frequently found that the wounds were teeth marks. On inquiring how they came by them, their answers, generally given nonchalantly, were always the same: “A crocodile caught me by the leg while I was fishing.”

“How did you escape from the creature?” would be my next question.

“Oh, I rammed my thumbs into its eyes,” was the invariable reply, “and it let me go, and I was able to escape.” And suiting the action to her words the woman would turn round and show me how it was done. It needed great presence of mind, and undoubtedly those who did not possess it were carried off; and those also who were caught in such a way that it was impossible for them to turn, were dragged under water, drowned, and eaten at leisure.

One morning a woman left Monsembe in a small canoe to fish on the shallow bank of a neighbouring island. As she had not returned by sunset about twenty men came to borrow our large canoe that they might go in search of her. About



*Photo by]*

*[Rev. C. F. Dodds*

### THE AUTHOR DOCTORING A CROCODILE-BITTEN HAND

The native was working at a log in the river running by his village when a crocodile came up by the side of the log and caught his hand.



## ESCAPING CROCODILES

9 p.m. they returned, and by their shouts in the distance we learned that they had found the missing woman. On landing her we discovered that she was severely wounded with crocodile bites—the worst case I had ever seen. We set to work to clean the wounds, and sewing up some we bandaged her and left her as comfortable as we could for the night. We afterwards heard the story of her adventures.

It appears that while fishing she saw a crocodile coming for her, so she ran for a tree, and as she climbed the brute raised itself and snapped at her, tearing her fingers, her thighs, and legs, but not getting a sufficient grip of her to pull her down. There she sat, wounded, bleeding, and faint with hunger and loss of blood, through the long day, with the crocodile lying in wait at the foot of the tree. Occasionally she cried out, but there was no one near enough to hear her shouts. She at last heard the paddles of the canoe and the calls of the men, and, responding to them, she guided them to the tree where she was sitting. As the men neared the tree they heard the splashing of the water as the brute made off in the darkness. She fully recovered, and after a time seemed none the worse for her painful experience.

At Boma I saw the skin of a crocodile that measured 25 feet long. The trader who killed it showed me twenty-two brass armlets and anklets, weighing  $11\frac{1}{2}$  lbs., that had been taken from its stomach, a proof that in the course of its life it had killed and eaten several people. But there are times when the laugh is on the other side. A colleague of mine fired from a steamer at a crocodile that apparently was asleep on the sandy bank of the river. The bullet struck the head, and as the beast did not move everybody thought it was killed. Some of the steamer's crew jumped into the water, swam ashore, and just as they caught hold of the tail to turn the creature over preparatory to cutting it up, the crocodile regained consciousness (for it had only been stunned by the bullet grazing the top of the head) and started for the river. Such a tug-of-war was never witnessed before—there was the crocodile struggling to gain the water

## ESCAPING CROCODILES

and some men hauling it back by the tail, while others, quickly procuring some chunks of wood, were beating the reptile's back to break it. The men won the contest, and that night feasted on their enemy the crocodile.

At all our stations we have good dispensaries, and at some, well-equipped hospitals; and we do our best to alleviate suffering and save life. As non-medical missionaries we can always comfort ourselves with the thought that what we do medically for the natives is far better than they can do for themselves, or have done for them by their medicine men. We are glad, however, to say that we have now three fully qualified doctors in our Mission, whose up-to-date scientific knowledge, joined to their kindly sympathy with the natives, is doing much to relieve pain and save life. Our only regret is that we have not a doctor on every station.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 6, page 346, for statistics of white people's health.



## APPENDIX

### NOTE 1.—ON YEASTS OR FERMENTS

#### *Bread-making*

ON the Lower Congo, where palm-wine was easily procurable, I have often made bread by using one tumbler of palm-wine to one of lukewarm water, with some sugar to counteract the sourness or acidity of the wine, and salt to taste. This was mixed with flour into a dough about 8 a.m., divided into two lumps, put into two well-floured or greased tins, and placed out in the sun to rise, with a cloth over them to keep away dust and dirt. About 11 or 12 o'clock the loaves would have risen well, and were ready for baking.

If palm-wine can be bought regularly, then it can be used for every batch of bread ; but if the supply is doubtful, or very irregular, then a knob of the dough—about the size of an egg—should be taken from the dough before it is divided into loaves, put into a mug, covered and placed on one side. This lump of dough will rise, and in two or three days, when the next batch of bread is required, it can be thoroughly mixed with a pint of warm water, a tablespoonful of sugar, some salt (and, if you have it, a pinch of bicarbonate of soda), and the process is completed, and with this yeast you can make the bread as though using fresh palm-wine.

At Monsembe, however, there was no palm-wine, but plenty of sugar-cane wine, so we used that with very good results. Sugar-cane wine should be strained through a fine cloth before using, otherwise the fibres left in the wine will irritate the stomach and give rise to serious consequences.

The following, however, is the most satisfactory leaven that has yet been discovered on the Congo, where it is becoming a general favourite, and is fast ousting palm-wine as a leaven : Take a pint bottle and put into it two tablespoonfuls of flour, one tablespoonful of castor sugar (or its equivalent in lump sugar), a teaspoonful of salt, nearly fill the bottle with warm water, thoroughly shake until well mixed, lightly cork, and

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stand it in a warm corner of the house. Occasionally stir the mixture, and on the fourth or fifth day it will sing with fermentation.

I found the following the best method for making bread with this leaven : When the contents of the bottle were singing with fermentation I took the bottle in the evening (about 5 or 6 o'clock), and, well stirring the fermenting mixture, poured it into a wash-hand basin, leaving at the bottom of the bottle some of the liquid—about two fingers deep. Into the basin was then put a half-pint of lukewarm water, a small teaspoonful of salt, and two lumps of sugar ; the cook boy thoroughly stirred into this mixture some flour to the consistency of a batter. He generally beat the batter for ten or fifteen minutes—the more it is beaten the lighter will be the bread. A towel was spread over the basin, and it was put away in the cupboard.

I then took the bottle, measured into it flour, sugar, salt, and warm water as before, shook it well, and put it back in its place. On account of having left in the bottle a little of the old leaven the new preparation would be ready in two days, and it should be used then, or not later than the third day. A family of two or three persons will soon find how much bread they need for two days and can add more or less water to the leaven poured into the basin.

It will be found next morning that the batter or sponge put away in the cupboard has almost filled the basin with a fine dough. To this sponge add flour, well knead it into a medium stiff dough, put in two tins, place out in the sun (or if a cloudy day stand near the kitchen fire), drop a thin cloth over the tins to keep dust away, and in three or four hours the dough will be well risen, and then bake. This always gave us splendidly light bread. An occasional pinch of bicarbonate of soda dropped into the bottle will neutralize acidity. A good, neutral bread is a great boon, and helps to keep one in good health.

### NOTE 2.—ON BOLOKI VERB

THE verb in the Boloki language has the eight following forms : Active, Passive, Stative, Causative, Prepositional, Reciprocal, Reflexive, and Repetitive.

Active	.	.	.	kanga=to tie.
Passive	.	.	.	kangama=to be tied.

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Stative . . .	<i>kangwa</i> =to be in a tied state.
Causative . . .	<i>kangija</i> =to cause to tie.
Prepositional . . .	<i>kangela</i> =to tie for or with.
Reciprocal . . .	<i>kangana</i> =to tie one another.
Reflexive . . .	<i>mikanga</i> =to tie oneself.
Repetitive . . .	<i>kangelela</i> =to tie again and again.

The moods of the verb are : Infinitive, Imperative, Indicative, Subjunctive, and Purportive.

Infinitive mood is made by prefixing *lo* to the verb : *najingi lokanga*=I desire to tie.

The imperative is *kanga*, and a more emphatic form *kangaka*=tie. The imperative hortative is formed by *leme*=let, followed by the present subjunctive, as *leme nakanga*=let me tie.

The indicative is *nakanga*=I tie.

The subjunctive, (*te*) *nakanga*=(that) I may tie.

The purportive, *naye nokakanga*=I am come to tie.

The tenses are as follows :

Indicative pres. indefinite	<i>nakanga</i> =I tie
"    "    "    continuous	<i>nakakanga</i> =I am tying.
"    "    perfect	<i>nakangi</i> =I have tied.
"    "    "    "	<i>nakakangi</i> =I have been tying.
Indicative past indefinite	<i>nakangiki</i> =I tied.
"    "    "    "	<i>nakakangiki</i> =I was tying.
"    "    perfect	<i>nakangaka</i> =I had tied.
"    "    "    "	<i>nakakangaka</i> = I had been tying.

The past imperfect and progressive tenses made with the aid of the verb "to be" are as follows :

*Nabeki nakangi*=I tied in time near past.

*Nabeki nakakangi*=I was tying in time near past.

*Nabaka nakangi*=I tied in time far past.

*Nabaka nakakangi*=I was tying in time far past.

Indicative future indefinite	<i>naakakangi</i> =I shall tie.
"    "    "    continuous	<i>naakakanga</i> =I shall be tying.
"    "    perfect	<i>naakakangaka</i> =I shall have been tying.
"    "    immediate	<i>naikakanga</i> =I am just about to tie.

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Narrative tense		<i>ekangele</i> =I tied.
„ „	continuous	<i>ekakangele</i> =I was tying.

There are only three conjugations to be found, and these are formed on the final vowel of the root :

SIMPLE VERB.	PERFECT.	PASSIVE.
<i>kanga</i>	<i>kangaka</i>	<i>kangama</i>
<i>bete</i>	<i>beteke</i>	<i>beteme</i>
<i>kolo</i>	<i>koloko</i>	<i>kolomo</i>

It will be interesting to the reader, before closing this very short note on the verb, for me to give an idea of the number of verbs that can be built up on a single verb by the aid of affixes which can all run through the various tenses already mentioned. The seven given in the first paragraph of this note are not repeated here :

Active transitive. *Kanga*=to tie.

Passive and prepositional. *Kangemela*=to be tied for (a purpose).

Passive and causative. *Kangimija*=to cause to be tied.

Passive, prepositional, and causative. *Kangemeliya*=to cause to be tied for (a purpose).

Active, reciprocal, and prepositional. *Kangenela*=to tie one another for (a purpose).

Active, reciprocal, prepositional, and causative. *Kangeneliya*=to cause to tie one another for (a purpose).

There are many other combinations in use, but these twelve will give some idea of the possibilities of the verb and its prefixes and suffixes. It will be noted that although the passive of *kanga* is *kangama*, yet in the above examples the vowels sometimes become *e* and sometimes *i*, this is because the vowel *e* in *ela* (see first example, the passive and prepositional form given in the preceding paragraph) changes the final *a* of *kangama* into *e* as *kangamela*, and has a retro-active force in turning the initial *a* of the passive suffix also into *e*; *kangama* is really *kangaama*, but as one *a* elides another it becomes *kangama*, and *kangemela* is really *kangamaela*, but *a* elides before *e*, so it becomes *kangamela*, and the *e* in the penultimate demands that the other *a* of the suffix should become *e* also, hence we have *kangemela*. The same euphonic law demands that *kanga-ama-ija* should become *kangimija*, and *kanga-ana-ela* should become *kangenela*.

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There is also an intensive form of the verb that is best expressed in English by a suitable adverb :

*Kata*=to hold ; *katatala*=to hold tightly ; and this has a causative *Katitiija*=to cause to hold tightly.

*Kana*=to push in ; *kanalala*=to be pushed in too much, *kaniniija*=to cause to go in too far.

*Ama*=to press ; *amamala*=to be pressed too far : *amimija*=to cause to be pressed too much.

*Tamba*=to stand out ; *tambambala*=to be standing out conspicuously, and the causative *tambimbija*=to cause to stand out well in sight.

In the above are very good examples of what I call, for the lack of a better word, the retro-active power of their euphonic laws for harmonizing the vowels.

By the aid of so plastic a verb we had no difficulty in expressing the finest shades of meaning in the New Testament—a part of which is translated into the Boloki language—and in translating other books for the benefit of the natives.

### NOTE 3.—ON BOLOKI METHOD OF COUNTING

THE numerals from 1 to 5 are declinable. The letter in brackets is the particle that changes according to the class of the noun used, e.g. two persons would be *batu (ba) bale*=persons two but two cloths would be *bilamba (bi) bale*=cloths two.

The numerals are : 1, (*y*) *arwi* ; 2, (*i*) *bale* ; 3, (*i*) *atu* ; 4, (*i*) *ne* ; 5, (*i*) *tanu* ; 6, *motoba* ; 7, *nsambu* ; 8, *mwambi* ; 9, *libwa* ; 10, *jumu* or *mokangu mwawi*=one tying ; 11, *jumu na (y) arwi* ; 12, *jumu na (i) bale* ; 20, *mikangu mibale* ; 30, *mikangu miatu* ; 40, *mikangu mine* ; 50, *mikangu mitanu* ; 60, *mikangu motoba* ; 70, *mikangu nsambu* ; 80, *mikangu mwambi* ; 90, *mikangu libwa* ; 100, *nkama* or *munkama* ; 200, *minkama mibale* ; 1000, *nkutu yarwi* ; 2000, *nkutu ibale* ; 10,000, *mokoko* ; 20,000, *mikoko mibale*.

The meaning of *mikangu mibale* (20) is, two tyings. 10 is often called *mokangu mwawi*=one tying, from *kanga*=to tie. It is the custom of the natives to roll their 15-inch brass rods (the currency) into a series of rings about 1½ inches in diameter, and these they run one on another, like split rings, until there are ten linked together, and they call that *mokangu mwawi*=one tying=10.

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The ordinal numerals are :

*Motu wa bo* =The person who is first, or the first person.

„ „ *bane* = „ „ four „ fourth „

„ „ *motoba* = „ „ six „ sixth „

*Motu wa libwa*=the person who is nine, or the ninth person.

„ „ *mikangu mibale na wawwi*=twenty-first person.

To use a word of another class we will take *elamba*=cloth.

*Elamba ya bo* =the cloth that is one, or the first cloth.

„ „ *bine* „ „ four „ fourth „

„ „ *motoba*= „ „ six „ sixth „

*Elamba ya mikangu miatu na bibale*=the cloth that is thirty and two, or the 32nd cloth.

The fingers are constantly used in counting. If a man wants to say thirty-four he will say *mikangu* (=tyings=tens) and hold up three fingers for those to whom he is speaking to say *miatu* (=three), *na*=and, hold up four fingers for them to say (i) *ne* (=four). The letter in brackets changes according to the class of the noun understood. By this means they ensure their hearers following and understanding them, and no one can afterwards plead that they did not hear the price properly, as any discrepancy between the number mentioned by the hearers and the number of fingers held up would be corrected at the time.

The way in which the Boloki folk use their fingers is somewhat irregular, and for the sake of clearness I draw two hands and number the fingers 1 to 10—1 to 5 left hand, and 6 to 10 right hand. 1 and 10 are the thumbs. The right hand is used more than the left.

*One* is expressed by doubling 6, 7, 8, and putting 10 over them, thus leaving 9, the index finger, standing alone.

*Two*, by doubling down 6 and 7 and putting 10 over them, thus leaving 8 and 9 standing.

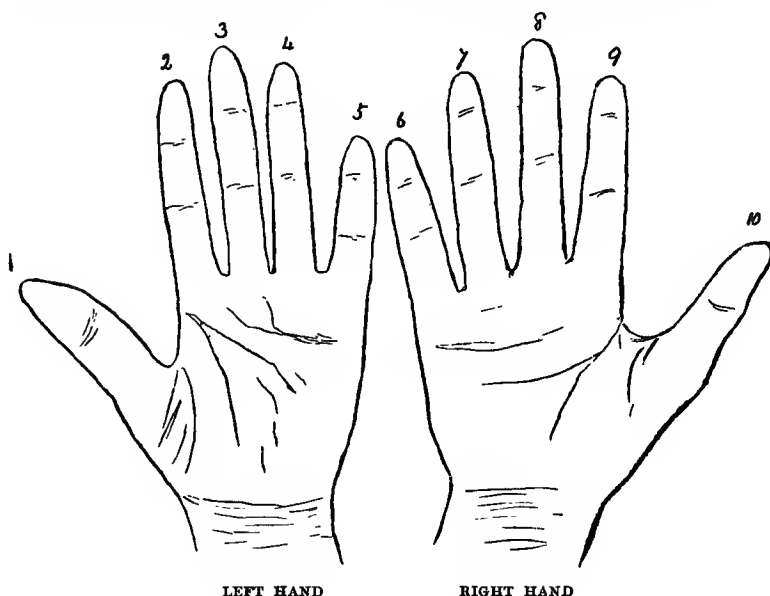
*Three*, by doubling down 9 and putting 10 over it, leaving 6, 7, and 8 standing.

*Four*, by putting 10 at the bottom of the division between 7 and 8, that causes 6 and 7 to come forward a little, so the hand is turned about that the two sets of two fingers may be clearly seen.

*Five*, the whole of the fingers of the right hand are left standing with the palm turned towards the person to whom you are speaking.

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*Six*, by doubling down 2 on the left hand and putting 1 over it, so leaving 3, 4, and 5 standing, and doubling down 9



on the right hand and putting 10 over it, so leaving 6, 7, and 8 standing, thus making two sets of three fingers.

*Seven*, the same as 4 with the right hand and doubling down 2 on the left hand and putting 1 over it, thus making a 4 and a 3.

*Eight*, by working the right hand as under 4 and putting 1 at the bottom of the division between 3 and 4, and twisting the hands about so that the four sets of two fingers may be clearly seen.

*Nine*, by holding up the fingers of the right hand as under 5 and putting 1 at the division between 3 and 4, and twisting the left hand about to show the two sets of two fingers.

*Ten*, by holding all the fingers of the two hands with the palms towards the auditors, and every folding down of the fingers and re-spreading of them means another 10. *Second way*—by clapping the hands together, and every clap stands for 10. *Third*, and more frequent method—by holding

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out the fist of the right hand, and every decided shake of the fist stands for ten.

*Eleven*, by shaking the right fist and holding up one finger as described under one.

*Twelve*, by shaking the right fist and holding up two fingers as described under two ; and so on.

The toes are very rarely used in counting. I have only seen them used when counting 20,000, and then the man stretched down and put the fingers of both hands on the toes of both of his feet and said : *mikoko mibale*=20,000. Sometimes, when trying to give me an idea of vast numbers, they would say : "It will take all our fingers and toes to tell you," i.e. tens of thousands.

For addition and subtraction under 10 they use their fingers, but for higher numbers they use palm nuts, or anything suitable to hand. This is not because they are incapable of adding and subtracting mentally, but because they are so suspicious of each other that they want an ocular proof that the sum is right, and that neither one is getting the better of the other. Those who know figures and can run through their arithmetical tables accept each other's sums, but in transactions with the untaught they resort to the fingers and palm nuts for counting.

They always count by fives and tens, e.g. if a person wants to make up 26 brass rods he will take 3 rods and then put 2 with the 3 and push that 5 on one side, he will make another 5 in the same way, and then put the two fives together, making 10, and then make two more fives and put those together, keeping, however, the tens separate, then another 5 is made by the 3 and 2 process, and at last 1 put down. Then the two tens are counted, and the 5, and lastly the 1.

### NOTE 4.—ON BOLOKI RELATIONS OR KINSHIP

THE accompanying lists I received about the same time from two different young men of fair intelligence, and after I had written the two lists down I called both the young men and read over to them their different names for the same relative. They each argued that what they had given was the right one, and the other was wrong. I have found the same difficulty on the Lower Congo. It is impossible to procure a list of any real value. My colleagues find it much the same among other tribes.

The natives of Monsembe are unanimous respecting the



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terms for mother=*nyongo* ; father=*ango* and *tata* (*ango* is only used by a son to the one who begot him, *tata* is used by a slave to his master, by a son to his father, and I have heard it used by a mother to her son. It seems to be a term of respect in its wider use) ; brother=*nkaja* ; sister is also *nkaja* (a sister calls her brother *nkaja*, and a brother calls his sister *nkaja* ; but if a girl speaks of her younger sister, or elder sister, she uses the words *mojimi* for the younger one and *motomolo* for the elder only ; the boy uses the same words for younger or elder brother) ; younger sister or younger brother, *nkaja mojimi* ; elder sister or elder brother, *nkaja motomolo* (*nkaja* is never used in speaking of the same sex as the speaker, i.e. by a sister of a sister, or a brother of a brother) ; wife=*mwali* ; husband=*moloi* ; child=*mwana* ; male child=*mwana lele*, i.e. son ; female child=*mwana muntaka*, i.e. daughter ; grandparent=*nkoko* ; great grandparent=*nkokolele* ; great great grandparent=*ndalola* ; but a grandchild is *nkoko*, and so with a great grandchild=*nkokolele*, and great great grandchild=*ndalola*.

All agree in the above names for the relationships indicated, but the farther you get away from those degrees of relationship the more confused the native becomes, and the more contradictory will be his statements. The terms of relationship are employed in addressing each other, but personal names are also used without any hesitation. The only exception is this : When two persons of the same name speak to or of one another they never mention the name, but say, *ndoi*=namesake. The names of the dead are freely mentioned, and even passed on to children. No genealogies are kept, and in two or three generations all ties of near relationship are lost ; and if, here and there, remembered, are non-effective except where a man can get a drink of sugar-cane wine, or a feed by recalling kinship.

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## LIST OF WORDS FOR RELATIVES

ENGLISH	WORDS GIVEN BY LUTOBA	WORDS GIVEN BY INTONGOI
Mother's brother	<i>mojika</i>	<i>mojika</i> and <i>nso mama</i> <sup>1</sup>
Mother's brother's son	<i>nso nyango</i> <sup>2</sup>	No name, but takes name of <i>mojika</i> on his father's death
Mother's brother's son's son	<i>nso nyango</i>	Called by personal name until death of father and then <i>mojika</i>
Mother's brother's son's daughter	<i>nkaja</i>	No distinctive name
Mother's sister	<i>mama</i>	<i>mama moti</i> <sup>3</sup>
Mother's sister's son or daughter	<i>mojimi</i> or <i>nkaja</i>	No distinctive name
Mother's sister's son's son	<i>mojimi</i> or <i>nkaja</i>	No distinctive name
Mother's sister's son's daughter	<i>mojimi</i> or <i>nkaja</i>	No distinctive name
Father's sister	<i>tamwalimoto</i>	<i>tamwalimoto</i>
Father's sister's son	<i>bola</i>	<i>mwana wa tamwalimoto</i> <sup>4</sup>
Father's sister's daughter	<i>nkaja</i>	<i>mwana wa tamwalimoto</i>
Father's sister's son's son	<i>wa mwa nyango</i> <sup>5</sup>	No distinctive name
Father's sister's son's daughter	<i>nkaja</i>	No distinctive name
Father's brother	<i>tata</i>	<sup>6</sup> <i>ta mungwende</i> , or on his father's death he is called <i>tata</i> or <i>tata elenge</i> <sup>7</sup>
Father's brother's son	<i>mojimi</i>	No distinctive name
Father's brother's daughter	<i>nkaja</i>	No distinctive name
Father's brother's son's son	<i>mojimi</i>	No distinctive name
Father's brother's son's daughter	<i>nkaja</i>	No distinctive name
Brother's child	<i>mwana</i>	<i>mwana</i>
Brother's child's child	<i>mwana</i>	<i>mwana</i>
Grandfather, grandmother, grandchild	<i>nkoko</i>	<i>nkoko</i>
Great grandfather, great grandmother, great grandchild	<i>nkokolele</i>	<i>nkokolele</i>
Great great grandfather, great great grandmother, great great grandchild	<i>ndalola</i>	<i>ndalola</i>

<sup>1</sup> *nso mama* and <sup>2</sup> *nso nyango* are practically the same, as the second word in each phrase means mother, and *nso*=bowels; and the idea is: the one who comes from the same womb as my mother; the word *nso* is only used of maternal relatives.

<sup>3</sup> *mama moti*=the little mother.

<sup>4</sup> *mwana wa tamwalimoto*=child of *tamwalimoto*.

<sup>5</sup> *wa mwa nyango*=of or from the little mother; *mwa* is the diminutive particle.

<sup>6</sup> *ta mungwende*=one who stands in place of another.

<sup>7</sup> *tata elenge*=young or boy father.

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*Mama* is not an introduced word, as we found it in full use on our arrival; and although it was often used about one's own mother, yet it had the same meaning, as applied to a female relative, mistress, or mother, that *tata* has to a male relative, master or father.

By "no distinctive name," I mean no term indicative of relationship. They were known by their personal name only.

### NOTE 5.—ON NATIVE DISEASES

#### *List of Native Diseases and their Native Names*

1. Scrotal hernia, *liboke* denotes an early stage, and the word also means a parcel, bundle; *benda* is a later stage when the hernia is large; and *likuku* the last stage when the hernia reaches the knees. I have seen two or three examples of the last stage.

2. Paralysis from sickness, *boboku*. I never saw a case of this.

3. Smallpox, *kokotu*. We had an epidemic of this disease in 1893. Some people died, and others carry the marks to this day.

4. Bad diarrhoea, *bolete*, is supposed to be the result of a curse.

5. Bleeding at the nose from any cause, *bolongo*.

6. Insanity, *bomwa*; mild insanity in which there is extreme foolishness, *lemanana*.

7. Madness of a violent character, *mokalala*.

8. Idiocy, *bowewe* and *ewelewete*.

9. Asthmatical wheezing, *yoko* and *likoko*.

10. Cough, *ekokôtu*. Coughs and colds are very common.

11. Crack in skin, *etena*. This is common and very troublesome, especially when on the sole of the foot, as the hard skin takes months to heal.

12. Crippled limb, *etengumwi*. This is very rare and results from a wound received in a fight, or from a burn, or from walking on the toes, heel, or side of the foot when there is a crack in the sole.

13. Nervous condition, *jita-jita-jita*, i.e. twitching.

14. Bad fever, *molungi juku-juku*=heat, or fire plenty plenty. Fevers are common among the natives and yield to simple treatment. The temperature often goes very high.

15. Great debility, *lela*.

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16. Poor state of health, indicated by frequent crops of boils breaking out on various parts of the body, *libembe*.
17. Patches of pustular sores, *lifwanja*.
18. Sore throat, *lilele*.
19. Yaws, *lingala*, mostly used in the plural, *mangala*.
20. Puffy condition of the body, probably a form of dropsy, *lontutu*.
21. Blindness, *lulanda*; not common.
22. Sleeping-sickness, *luwa*, *yobi*, and *makwata*.
23. Form of non-infectious leprosy in which the skin becomes a sickly white, indurated, cracked, and peeling. It is found generally on the hand and the arm below the elbow, *munkana*.
24. Very bad rheumatism, *yambaka*. Persons suffering from this complaint must not burn the wood of a certain tree called *lobaka*, or the pain will become more acute.
25. Intestinal worms, *munsobi*, and *munsembe*.
26. Dysentery with much blood, *mwajakongo*.
27. Ague fever, *nyankili*.
28. Chest complaints of all kinds, as pleurisy, pneumonia, etc., are called *ntulu*=chest; to feel or suffer from such is *oka ntulu*=hear, i.e. feel the chest. It is also called *mobanji*=side, ribs.
29. Elephantiasis, *mungita*; not very common.
30. Abscesses and severe boils, *litunganaka*.
31. Umbilical hernia, *muntolu*; very common.
32. Scabies, *mputu*.
33. Fits and convulsions, *bonsinga*.
34. Sciatica, and extreme debility, *yombi*.
35. Boil, *ndala*; very frequently found.
36. Mild form of rheumatism, *mokoko*.
37. Cataract of the eye, *elalei* and *molondo*; common.
38. Blindness in one eye, *muntelele*; occasionally found.
39. Ganglion on back of hand and wrist, *etati*.
40. Deafness, *lōko*; very seldom noticed.
41. Dumbness, *mbubu*. I never met with a case, but the fact that a word is known for it shows that the complaint is occasionally to be found among the people.
42. Venereal diseases, *lisabu*.

### NOTE 6.—ON HEALTH OF WHITE MEN ON THE CONGO

PERHAPS the following statistics respecting the health of white people on the Congo will interest the reader. I have kept careful notes during the last thirty years, and the figures may be

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accepted as accurate. The figures refer only to Missionaries of the Baptist Missionary Society.

One hundred and ten men have joined the Mission since its inception in 1878 until December 31st, 1911.

Of these : died . . . . .	38
Left for various reasons (not through health)	8
„ through personal health . . . . .	15
„ „ wife's health . . . . .	6
	<hr/>
	67
Still in active service . . . . .	43
	<hr/>
Total . . . . .	110

Died during first year on the Congo	13
„ „ second „ „	3
„ „ third „ „	7
„ „ fourth „ „	3
„ „ fifth „ „	1
„ „ sixth „ „	2
„ „ seventh „ „	2
„ „ eighth „ „	1
„ „ ninth „ „	1
„ „ tenth „ „	1
„ „ twelfth „ „	1
„ „ sixteenth „ „	1
„ „ twenty-sixth „ „	2
	<hr/>
	38

Of the above men, died of hæmaturic fever . . .	9
„ malarial „ . . .	19
„ dysentery . . .	2
„ other diseases . . .	6
Died in a London Hospital from cancerous growth in the stomach . . . . .	1
Died in England from embolism (clot in the blood- vessels of the brain) . . . . .	1
	<hr/>
Total . . . . .	38

During recent years we have found it advisable for men to remain out only for a first term of two years instead of three

## APPENDIX

years, and afterwards four years instead of five years as formerly.

During the same period 79 ladies have joined the Mission. Of these :

Died . . . . .	19
Left as widows . . . . .	11
Left for personal health . . . . .	11
Left for husband's health . . . . .	4
	<hr/>
	45
Still in active service . . . . .	34
	<hr/>
Total . . . . .	79
Died during the first year on the Congo	5
„ „ second „ „	1
„ „ third „ „	2
„ „ fourth „ „	5
„ „ sixth „ „	1
„ „ eighth „ „	2
„ „ eleventh „ „	1
„ „ fourteenth „ „	1
„ „ twenty-sixth „ „	1
	<hr/>
	19

Of the above ladies, died of hæmaturic fever . . .	5
„ malarial „ . . .	7
„ puerperal „ . . .	3
„ meningitis . . .	1
„ abscess on the liver . . .	1
Died from typhoid fever at Eastbourne . . .	1
Died from some brain trouble in America . . .	1
	<hr/>
	19

During the first years of our Mission we lost the most of our men through bad houses, poor food, and ignorance of the proper treatment of fevers, etc. From 1878 to 1890 we lost in *twelve years* 20 men by death ; but during the *twenty years* from 1891 to 1911 we have lost 18 men, although we have had in the field on active service twice, and sometimes thrice, as many men as in the earlier twelve years. The first years cost

## APPENDIX

us most dearly while we were buying our experience. I might say that we are total abstainers, but are willing to take alcohol medicinally; and the smokers and non-smokers are about equally divided. Every man and woman must undergo a very strict and careful medical examination before being accepted by the Committee of the Society.

It will be seen that the first year of a man's life on the Congo is the most crucial one, and the next trying year is the third, i.e. at the beginning and end of a man's first term of service. We have altered the first term to two years. In the case of the ladies the first year and the fourth are the crucial ones. The ladies' first term of service has always been two years, then one year at home. The figures point to the early months of the first and second terms as being most fatal. It will be noticed that the ladies have stood the climate better than the men; but they have never roughed it as the men; nor do they ever have to expose themselves in doing the kind of work that necessarily falls to the men—looking after building, transport, etc.

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## MAP FOR "AMONG CONGO CANNIBALS."

