The LEOPARD HUNTS ALONE

CONWAY T. WHARTON

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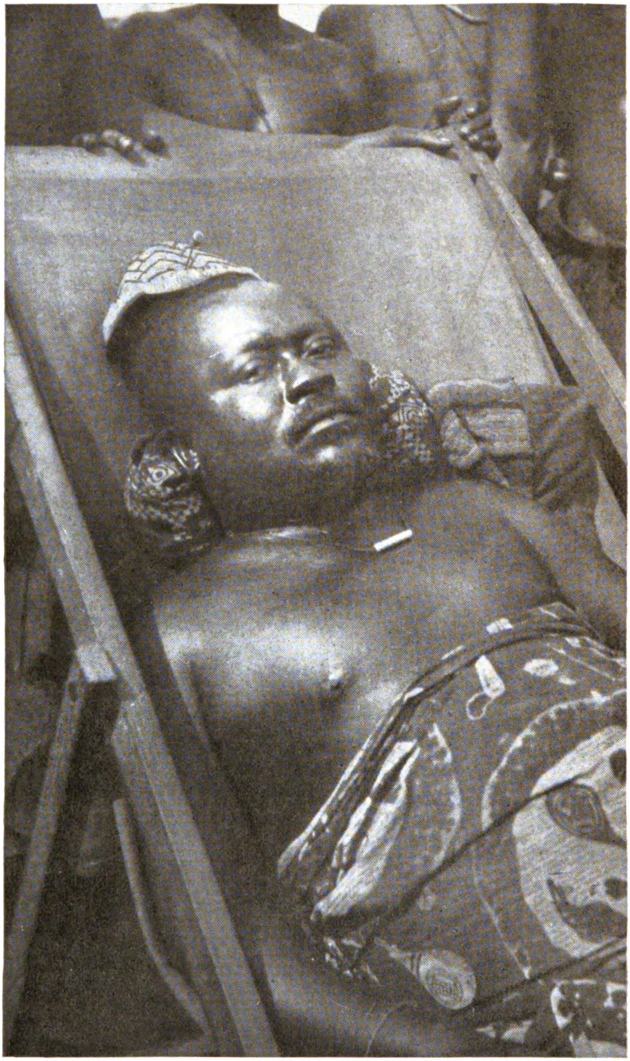

KING KWETE MABINCHI

"The Leopard hunts alone!"

See page 137.

The Leopard Hunts Alone

THE LIFE AND WAYS OF THE SAVAGES OF THE CONGO AND
HOW CHRISTIANITY WAS WELCOMED BY THEM

By
CONWAY TALIAFERRO WHARTON
*Author of "Paraphrase of the Scriptures in
Bakuba;" Translator and Editor of
"The Bakuba Hymn Book."*

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To My Father,
TURNER ASHBY WHARTON, D.D., LL.D.,
Whose Life and Ministry have been the
Pattern and Inspiration of my Own,
this Book is affectionately
dedicated.

PREFACE

THIS means is taken to acknowledge most gratefully the assistance rendered by several friends in the preparation of this book.

The ethnographical notes by Mr. E. Torday have proved invaluable, being the only serious scientific study ever made of the Bakuba.

The unfailing courtesy and helpfulness of Mm. Schoteden and Maes of the Musée du Congo Belge did much toward making the book possible.

Warmest thanks are accorded Messrs. Roome, of the British and Foreign Bible Society, C. R. Stegall and A. L. Edmiston, of the American Presbyterian Congo Mission, for the use of photographs.

Certain information procured by W. H. Sheppard, D.D., one of the first two missionaries sent out by the Southern Presbyterian Church to Africa, has been most useful.

To my father, T. A. Wharton, D.D., and to my brother, the Rev. T. C. Vinson, heartiest appreciation is due for their help in criticising and revising the manuscript.

C. T. W.

The Belgian Congo,
S. Central Africa.

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I

THE BAKUBA IN THEIR NATIVE HAUNTS

"A nation tall and smooth, a people terrible from their beginning onward."—Isa. 18:2.

I

INTO BAKUBALAND BY HAMMOCK

AH, the land of the rustling of wings which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia!" Thus spoke Isaiah, with bated breath, of Africa seven hundred years before the birth of Christ. And all the ensuing centuries have failed to break the spell that broods over the Dark Continent. Mystery and fascination breed in her dark swamps, lurk in her trackless jungles and hover over her vast plains. The lure of the wild, the unknown, as it is embodied in Africa, still makes its subtle but powerful appeal to the imagination.

This charm of mystery which has lain for centuries over the Continent has no more fascinating focus than is to be found in a certain strange tribe of people locked away in the very heart of the Congo Basin. We speak of the Bakuba, than whom there is no more interesting people in all Africa. To locate them more specifically, they are found in the angle formed by the confluence of the Kasai and Sankuru Rivers, some twelve hundred miles inland from the West Coast. This will be found to be nearly in the centre of that great Equatorial Colony known as the Belgian Congo.

The Bakuba are a people of whom the world knows almost nothing. The first white man that ever penetrated the Bakuba Kingdom was Wolf, a member of the Weisman Expedition of 1884. It was only a little more than six years later that the Southern Presbyterian pioneer missionaries, Lapsley and Sheppard, beached on the shores of this inland kingdom. Even today the foreigners who have been in close enough contact with the people to acquire any adequate knowledge of their language could probably be counted upon the fingers of one hand. Their land has remained thus a comparatively *terra incognita* for so long for the reason that from the outset they bitterly resented the invasion of the foreigner, and did all in their power to keep their kingdom inviolate.

The matter with which we are most vitally concerned is the dramatic story of the opening of the Bakuba Kingdom to the preaching of the Gospel. This can best be accomplished, however, by first furnishing a background of the life and customs of these people as they were in their primitive state. Such a study in itself cannot fail to be of vital human interest. Hilton-Simpson, English traveller and author, has this to say of the Bakuba: "The *Bushongo* (Bakuba) are a most interesting people; I believe Torday's[1] work among them has shown them to be quite one of the most interesting tribes of Central Africa."

Earliest travellers arriving at the headwaters of navigation, on the Lulua River, soon began to receive reports of a strange city lying inland from the right bank, a distance of two or three days' *trek*. It was said to be the village of the great King "Lukenga," who ruled over no inconsiderable kingdom; the name of this capital city was given as "Mushenge." We must make our way to Mushenge, and though we may not find the rumoured vast stores of ivory said to be there, we shall find something more wonderful still; we shall find a people whose customs, arts, crafts, are in a marvellously developed state when we recall that for countless generations they have been shut away to themselves in their inland kingdom.

---

[1] Mr. E. Torday is a Hungarian explorer sent out under the auspices of the British Museum, in 1907, to make an ethnographical study of certain Central African tribes. His ethnographical notes are the one outstanding source of information on the Bakuba.

We go by hammock, carried by native porters; there was no other means of travel in the early days. A smooth ten-foot section of the pith-filled frond of the swamp palm, light but very strong, a cloth or woven vine hammock suspended from pegs set one near each end of the pole—such was the original African Pullman. Each end of the pole rests on the shoulder of a lithe, powerful young native and one's weight swings just a few inches above the trail as they glide swiftly along. The carriers are stripped to a scant loin cloth; bodies, glistening with perspiration, shine like polished bronze; beneath a silky skin every movement displays a wonderful play of rippling muscles. Four to six others trot swiftly behind, waiting for their turn at the pole; sibilant rattles bound at each knee produce a rhythmic buzz as the bare feet strike the sandy trail in unison while from time to time the plains and forest echo to their wild songs of the trail. Thus, encouraging and inspiring each other, they swing forward with a stride that will cover ten, fifteen, even twenty miles in a day. These are the aristocrats, and joy in their work, scorning the lowly box-men who plod on behind with the heavy gear.

Look at the pole-men now,—pole left unheld to nestle between the base of the neck and the outer bulging pad of shoulder-muscle,—arms widespread and weaving in snakelike rhythm to the stamp of feet and burr of rattles, even their heavy breathing keeping the time. The outspread hands snap in against the pole with a sharp smack, a grunt, a heave, and now the pole is resting upon the other shoulder almost without a pause in the stride. Ah, the lure of the trail, who, having experienced it, will *ever* forget it!

But the hammock is doomed, as is the method of transporting heavy boxes on a pole between two natives. Rapidly opening and improving trails mean that soon a passing caravan will no longer leave the air resounding with the romantic note of their trail songs; in its place there will hang heavy on the air the pungent odour of burned gasoline, harbinger of what a transcendental change in jungle-land!

As we strike inward from Luebo we find ourselves passing through rolling plains relieved, from time to time, by strips of forest. The lifting of the early morning mists shows the plains to be clothed with a heavy, coarse grass and dotted with gnarled and stunted trees some ten or twelve feet in height. Tassels of the long grass drenched with the heavy morning dew reach out across the trail to slap your face with clammy fingers. We travel early so that we may, at least for a while, leave the heavy sun-helmets off and wear lighter and more accustomed head-gear. It will be hot on these plains once the sun is well up! Here and there in the midst of the plains we see queer little patches of miniature forest, often not a hundred yards across. Small as these patches are, they boast quite large trees sometimes, and beneath is to be found a heavy tangle of undergrowth inextricably bound together by cables of thorny vine.

Maybe you flush a flock of wild guineas in the plain and snatch your gun from a panting bearer. You cannot afford to miss a chance at a guinea—it is one of the best meats in Africa. You know where it went even if you could not hear its staccato calls; they almost invariably make for the nearest of these miniature forest patches and light in the top of the tallest tree in the very centre. Creeping up carefully to the edge, you are often able to reach them without having to penetrate the thicket. If you get one, he will fall in the very midst of the tangle and your boy has a not very pleasant task of worming him out.

The guinea-fowl looks much like his cousin of this country in external appearances; cooked, however, the flesh of the heathen guinea is as white as that of a partridge. Yes, and these same plains afford a counterpart of our home partridge. The markings are much the same, but the African is much larger and not so delicate in flavour. They are nearly always seen in pairs; often in the very early morning or late afternoon you will round a bend of the trail to find a pair of them ahead of you, dusting themselves. They are up and gone in an instant with the roar of short, powerful wings. Not many animals in these plains—a disappointment this—for we had expected every other bush to yield at least one animal. Arduous search will reveal scattered antelope of several different varieties, and a few buffalo. This is not one of the famous big-game regions.

From time to time we find the way blocked by the dark wall of a forest, and we plunge into its cool depths, grateful to escape the pitiless glare of the sun, against which the plains afford no protection. Sometimes it will be an hour before we emerge onto the plains again; sometimes two, three, four, or more hours, dependent upon the size of the particular forest. But these forests, dense as some of them are, must not be confused with the endless, profound depths of the vast Equatorial Forest, where one may travel for weeks with scarcely a fair view of the sun. Usually, not long after entering the forest, the way begins to trend downward, slowly at first and then more steeply until we come to the edge of the last almost sheer drop of a hundred feet or more to the little stream in the gorge below. We clamber down the semblance of a trail, holding by root and branch, cross the stream of swift, clear water, and begin to climb almost from the water's edge. Perspiring men will drop behind to plunge in to bathe and drink. Often a half-mile swing would have carried the trail around the head of the gorge on level ground and thus have avoided the arduous climb down and up again. This way lie the motor trails of the future. But the original trails were made by the native, and coming in heavily loaded and hot from the plains he plunges straight down to the stream the nearest way possible. The forest trails are tediously winding and crooked, for it is easier to make a way around a fallen tree than it is to remove the obstacle.

Strange bird-calls echo in the depths of the forest; sometimes a startled double-beaked Toucan thrashes away with the wheezing sound of heavy wings peculiar to his flight. From time to time we hear, to right or left, the rushing swish of small limbs suddenly bending to the impact of hurtling grey-brown bodies as a herd of startled monkeys disappears with express speed into the safer depths of the forest, chattering and grunting as they go. Sometimes the forest is broken by a clearing and our way leads down a smooth-swept avenue fifty feet or more wide, flanked on either hand by a row of low palm-leaf huts,—a small Bakuba village. Occasionally in the depths of the forest the trail will be pitted for a few hundred yards with great frying-pan indentations several inches deep, eloquent of the passage of a wandering herd of elephants.

And so, camping two nights in the path, traveling by forest and plain we came, on the morning of the third day, to Mushenge, first village of the great Bakuba Kingdom and abode of King Lukenga.

II

MUSHENGE

WHEELING into sight of Mushenge, lying in the midst of the plains, one is instantly struck with a marked difference between this Bakuba village and all others. Mushenge is fenced. An eight-foot palisade apparently runs unbroken all about the city, only the palm-thatch roofs of the houses showing above the outer wall. Not only is Mushenge fenced, but it is veritably a city of fences; there is almost more of fence than city. Ezekiel saw a vision of wheels within wheels; Mushenge presents a vision of fences within fences. On closer approach it is found to be not an open village surrounded by an outer palisade, but a compact cluster of distinct enclosures, each of which is fenced off to itself, and in turn subdivided by interior fences of its own. The connecting arteries of the village are formed by the spaces left between the walls of the different sections. Thus as you pass down one of the avenues your view is confined to the blank walls on either side of the way. The total effect is a veritable labyrinth of blind passages in which one is quickly confused. These sections of village, with their resulting passages between, are laid out in regular order and by measurements which are carefully preserved by certain dignitaries in charge of the construction work in the capital. The lines are remarkably straight and the corners are nicely squared.

Upon examining a section of the fence or palisade one finds that it has been constructed of rows of straight saplings set a foot apart in the ground and lashed together by horizontal runners. On this upright background is laid a flat coat of dried swamp-palm leaves, cleverly interlaced and battened firmly down with strips of palm-splint. So skillfully is the lacing together of these materials done that the outside ties, showing flat against the fence, are seen to trace neat patterns and designs. So close is the construction that it is impossible to see through the completed fence. Many of the entrances through these fences are so low as to cause one to bend double. A hostile native within would thus be given a splendid chance at the back of the unsuspecting neck of anyone entering. In the very centre of all rises a much higher fence than the rest, enclosing a great rectangular section of the heart of the village; this is the royal enclosure surrounding the king's quarters and the harem.

The houses are built of much the same materials as the fences and appear to be almost as delicate as though the walls were of brown paper; yet so cunningly are they anchored to the ground that they successfully withstand the wild fury of the tropical storms. They cling to the ground much as a frail bird-nest clings securely to the thrashing limbs of a tree. Some of the houses of the more important people of the place are quite large and commodious, being from thirty to forty feet long and fifteen wide, with the ridge-pole fifteen or more feet from the ground.

As in the case of the fences, the tying on of the battening-strips is so done as to leave beautiful designs in relief against the outer walls. Access is had through a large rectangular opening in the centre of the side wall, set about a foot above the ground. This opening is divided in the middle by an upright wooden piece which, in the finer houses, is skillfully carved into lacelike patterns. To protect this entrance there are two doors—the outside one, a simple roll-up screen of palm-splints, while the inside one is a rigid door sliding in a groove. The interior is divided into two or more sections by partitions. There are no windows, but a second small door is placed at the rear.

Large decorated houses were formerly not the prerogative of the royal people only, as is now the case. At a comparatively recent date they were common all over the kingdom. The press of enforced activities incident to the coming of the foreigners has made the common people content themselves with smaller and smaller houses, quickly built, until the usual type is now a mere one-room hut. There is also abundant evidence of a gradual decadence among the people themselves from a former far higher state of development. In the village of Misumba, across the Lubudi River, three or four days' trek from Mushenge, may still be seen the trim ornamented houses once common throughout the kingdom.

But why is Mushenge built of such light materials? The answer is not far to seek—every

Bakuba village, from the capital down, is movable. The houses are cleverly constructed in sections so that in a few minutes a slash or two of a sharp knife will leave them in a shape that easily admits of their being taken apart and transported, a section at a time. Almost, they can fold their tents like the Arabs and silently steal away (with this reservation, that an African does very few things silently). According to long established custom, the capital is moved every time a new king comes to the throne. Not only so, but the new king gives his capital a new name. The general title of "Mushenge," or capital, is retained for convenience, but the Bakuba proper call it by the name given it by the reigning king. A few slaves are usually left to guard the former site where often the king lies buried. The country is dotted over with these lonely little villages.

It might be well to call attention here to the fact that the term "Lukenga" is one that has been given to the Bakuba kings by the widespread Baluba tribe; it has the same significance to them that the general title "Pharaoh" had to the Egyptians, or "Cæsar" to the Romans. The Bakuba themselves use their own word "Nyimi" to denote their ruler and follow it by his name, as "Nyimi Kwete." Also the name "Bakuba" is of Baluba origin and the people themselves use the term "Bushongo."

Not only is Mushenge unique in that it is the only fenced village of the kingdom, but also in the nature of the people that dwell behind its fences. The type of population has no counterpart anywhere else in the kingdom. The class divisions of the inhabitants remind one of the various strata of society formerly found in ancient Rome—patricians, free-born citizens, plebians, and slaves. So Mushenge has her royal people, free-born Bakuba, plebians (subjects from outlying sub-tribes called in to reside for months at a time at the capital, doing gratuitous work on royal houses and fences), and finally the slaves. These latter are generally Baluba and comprise a large percentage of the population of the capital. As a rule, they are well treated and a few of them hold places of great influence and power due to favour of the mighty ones.

Children of slaves are accounted free-born citizens. We might mention yet one other class, the prisoners; for usually there are several strings of these unfortunate ones bound together by chain or rope from neck to neck. They have come to this pass through some crime, real or fancied, committed either by themselves or some relative; for Bakubaland boasts a vicarious type of justice that contents itself with seizing a near relative of the real culprit when the latter, for reasons of prudence, is not available. The patricians, or royal people of Mushenge, are a class that for the most part toil not neither do they spin, but are kept in a state of decorative idleness through the expedient of levying taxes upon the people at large. The population of Mushenge is not large, probably less than two thousand souls in all.

The village is laid out in conformance to the divisions of the population mentioned above, the great central section being reserved for the royalty.

Here are to be found the enclosures of the king, of the heir apparent, or "Buemi," and of the mother of the king. In this latter enclosure are to be found also mothers of former kings, sisters of the present king or of former ones, and the children born to all of them. The section running across the front of the village is next in point of honour; here are domiciled, in their separate fences, high dignitaries of the court, many of whom are sons of former kings. Finally, at the back of the village, is the slave section.

The palisade about the king's enclosure is much higher and more ornate than any of the others. The main entrance is guarded by sentries day and night, no admittance being granted until one of the sentries has reported to the king the name and business of the caller. Only upon receiving the royal permission may one enter. Examination of the sentry-house at this main gateway reveals a queer custom; the house is divided into two sections, and one of them is reserved as a place of honour for any twin, or pair of twins, born in the kingdom. The giving of birth to twins is considered a most praiseworthy act, and the king sets the seal of his approval by reserving this place of honour at his gateway for them. What a contrast between this treatment of twins and that recounted by Mary Slessor in Old Calabar, on the West Coast! There the phenomenon of twins was viewed with superstitious horror, and the unfortunate infants were thrown aside in the bush to die.

The endless ramification of fences is nowhere so elaborately exemplified as in the royal enclosure.

There are many houses in this great central court and each is walled off to itself with a small court about it. There are several houses in which the king lives; he is said to sleep in a different one of three or four "palaces" each night. It may be that this is done to outwit possible assassins. Some of these houses are enormous, and it must require hundreds of natives to move them, even when divided into sections. One of the royal dwellings is very striking in appearance, having a curved semi-circular roof instead of the usual two-pitch, pent roof.

In certain of the houses are stored the royal treasures, some of which have been accumulated during the present reign, some inherited from former kings. The treasure-trove consists in many varieties of things; there are vast quantities of cowrie shells, great stores of elaborate royal embroidered cloth, armlets, anklets, head-dresses, beautiful long-tasselled and dyed dress costumes, elaborately-patterned mats in colours, great supplies of cam wood in large slabs, and formerly there were many elephant tusks. In addition, there are skins of leopards and other animals, and probably many other curious objects of which no foreigner has yet caught a glimpse. Some of the chests in which the treasures are kept are most beautifully carved. Another small group of houses shelters the one or two favourite wives of the king, while yet others are "medicine houses." Here and there about the various courts one encounters carved images and fetishes with curious plants growing about them.

Finally, there is the "Nduengi," or harem, occupying the largest subdivision of the royal premises. Where we have been pausing to wonder or admire, we here pause to pity. One is prepared to expect that this section of the royal fence would have special care lavished upon it and that the inhabitants would be objects of great favour, but such is far from the truth. Several score houses are huddled together helter-skelter, and with none of the orderly alignment that characterizes the construction of most of the village. The reason for this neglect is that the inhabitants of the harem are not held in esteem by the king; most of them probably never see his face. Custom demands that the king must preserve his prestige over common mortals by having, at least in name, several hundred wives where others have one. Many of these women have been inherited from former kings, others have been exacted from the out-villages by way of fines when the village in question has incurred the royal disfavour.

Two specially-appointed officers are responsible to the king for the preservation of the harem; any other man caught in the confines of this enclosure formerly paid the price of his life. Even when the village is moved to another site, the women must move their own houses and set them up again as best they can. Their strength does not admit of their transporting large houses, hence the hovels. Their gala days are when they put on their carecully-preserved best costumes and sing and dance for the king. Their days are spent in grinding the red cam wood to powder on great stones that the king may not lack a supply with which to adorn his body and to dye his clothes; this, or else sewing and embroidering for him the patterned, velvety cloth for which they are famed.

Originally the Bakuba were undoubtedly monogamists, and the introduction of polygamy was at no very distant date. According to Bakuba tradition, the harem itself was an innovation brought in during the reign of one Mbong'Elenge. On the whole, the "Nduenge" is a pitiful and unhappy place. It is difficult to say how many pseudo-wives the king has, certainly several hundred, for, in addition to the inhabitants of the harem, there are many more nominal wives scattered about in the outlying villages. These last are certain ones which, for some reason, have received the doubtful honour of being called an "Ngadi Nyimi," or slave-wife of the king; no other man may marry them. There are only one or two who are in any real sense wives of the king and whose children are recognized as the true royal offspring. Such a wife is a "Muamisha," as distinguished from the "Ngadi," mentioned above. Strange to say, the son of the king can never inherit the throne. He has certain prestige and powers, in fact certain important offices can only be filled by sons of kings, but the inheritance of the throne is on the female side exclusively.

In our round of survey of the different sections of the capital, we now leave the king's premises and enter that of the "Buemi," or heir apparent. This important dignitary will inherit the ancient throne of the Bakuba, if he lives. We will not pause to study his menage in detail; it is a modest replica of that of the king, except that there is no harem. This man is held in awe and respect by the people in a degree only slightly less than that with which they regard the reigning king.

We now pass into one of the most interesting of all the divisions of the capital, known as "Ngela Mbimi." The large sentry-shed at the entrance attests the fact that this is a place of importance. None is more so, for this is the abode of the mothers of former kings as well as the mother of the reigning one. Few terms in the Bakuba tongue are heard with greater respect than that of "Inana Nyimi," "Mother of a King." Their prestige is enormous. Scarcely less important are other inhabitants of this "fence," the "Bahangi Nyimi," "sisters of the king." After them in importance rank the "Bana ba Hangi Nyimi," or children of the king's sisters." These are the true blue-bloods of the kingdom, and they show it in every gesture and movement. It is from the offspring born in this court that the future kings are to come. These royal women imperiously choose for themselves as husbands the tallest and finest physical specimens to be found in the kingdom, regardless of rank or other qualifications. The male children in due order of precedence become the future kings of the Bakuba, and as long as they are minors they remain within the confines of "Ngela Mbimi." Female children remain in this fence to grow up and in turn become mothers of kings. The fathers of these children often go back to their own villages with the honourary title of "Father of a King," in which inheres little more than the honour of the title. I have seen instances where some royal task was languishing in the hands of the workers when, without a word or threat, one of the fat " mothers " would waddle out and take her seat near the neglected task. Feverish zeal would immediately be manifested by the workers; no man dares to court the ill will of these mighty ones. Certain of them have definite official positions in the government machinery and carry symbols of rank just as do the men. A type of woman suffrage has been in effect among the Bakuba and some of their subtribes for countless generations. For instance, the village council of the Bakete numbers always, along with the male chiefs, certain women chiefs who safeguard the female interests of the tribe.

We will not pause to examine in detail the two remaining main sections of the capital. As has been said, the front section is taken up by the individual menages of certain dignitaries of the court, among whom are several who are sons of former kings. The remaining section, found in the rear of the village, is occupied by the humbler dwellings of the slaves.

III

"A PEOPLE TALL AND SMOOTH"

THAT same veiled prophecy in the eighteenth of Isaiah which mentioned "the land that lieth beyond the rivers of Ethiopia," also spoke of "a people tall and smooth, a people terrible from their beginnings onward." The first phrase might almost have been intended to be a physical description of the Bakuba; the latter, as will be found in a later chapter, finds itself justified in the light of some of their ancient customs. For the Bakuba are a tall race as compared to any of the tribes about them, and are probably well above the average height of any of the Central African tribes. The brimless conical hats which the men wear make them appear even taller than they are. Many of them exceed six feet, and the general average of the males must not be very far below that; this is true only of the Bakuba proper, for several of the sub-tribes are not at all remarkable for their height, and the Batua hunters grade downward almost to pigmy dimensions.

Usually the Bakuba are broad of shoulder and carry themselves splendidly. They are strikingly smooth, both men and women shaving their entire bodies at frequent intervals. The effect of smoothness is enhanced by their habit of anointing the body with palm-oil. The razor employed in shaving is a straight thin piece of metal sharpened across one end; the women are the barbers, and keep the razors sharp by stropping them against the heel or the hand. It is noteworthy that the art of plucking or shaving the eyebrows to a thin line, which has had a certain vogue in this country, has been practiced by the Bakuba women for years.

The features of the Bakuba are not unpleasing, their faces being long and oval with noses that are not too flattened and lips not too prominent. As a rule, they are friendly and very hospitable, and a pleasant smile adds to their attractiveness. It must be remembered that the Bakuba are not of the true negro type, but are negroid. The colour of the skin varies from a reddish bronze to a clear black.

The cloth of which their costumes are made is skillfully woven in a loom of their own invention, in which they use the fibre of the raphia palm. The length of the fibre admits of the weaving of a piece about a yard square at a time. This cloth is a little rough as it comes from the loom, but they have methods of softening it; afterwards the men sew it into suitable lengths for the costumes. The men do all the sewing for both themselves and the women. A man's full-length costume is about twenty yards in length and a little more than a yard wide. He gathers this about his waist in graceful folds, securing it under a leather thong or length of pliable vine. Thus it hangs upon him much like a Scotch kilt, covering his body from a little above the waist to just below the knee. On their special cloths they sew an artistic fringe to add to its beauty. This cloth is either left its natural colour, a soft cream, or is dyed a rich crimson by means of cam wood powder; or again it may be stained black. The cloth worn by the women is wider and not so long. The most graceful way in which they wear it is to fasten it just below the arms, letting it fall nearly to the ankles.

The women always go bareheaded, while the men wear, as has been said, a small conical hat. This is fixed in place by means of a long hat-pin with a little ornament at the end. Other ornaments are added on special occasions, such as various types of head-bands, amulets, bracelets or anklets. These may be of metals, product of the blacksmith's art, or may be woven in brightly-coloured raphia cloth studded with a pattern of cowrie shells or beads. Some of their costumes are very artistic, others are merely grotesque, and a few are hideous. When working or when not inspired by some special occasion they will usually go very much more lightly clad, especially the little children. Only the royal people at Mushenge go habitually garbed in their finest clothes. It might be well to warn the reader that this elaborate picture of the people at their best is not typical of the whole kingdom. As a whole, one would find that the population strike a predominant note of squalour. Yet it is a true and far more colourful picture to remember these people as tall and smooth, dressed in their crimson costumes, sauntering about the labyrinthine passages of the capital, moving with that haughty swing so characteristic of the free-born Bakuba.

IV

GOVERNMENT

TO study the Bakuba is to wonder at the advanced state of their civilization, in view of the fact that they have been secluded for countless centuries in the fastnesses of an Unknown Continent. In no particular is this more true than in the remarkable development of the governmental system. Study of the tribal government common to most primitive people in no way prepares one to expect the highly ramified system which one encounters in the case of the Bakuba. The governmental system of other Central African tribes is most elementary, being a loose-jointed affair with one big chief at the head and lesser ones over the individual villages. "Lukenga," of the Bakuba, is not merely a big chief in the sense that is true of the chiefs of the surrounding tribes; he is truly a king; almost every prerequisite of a real kingdom finding faithful, if limited, reflection in the Bakuba kingdom. They even hold to the belief in the "divine right of kings;" maintaining that the great Creator of all things Himself appointed the first "Nyimi" to reign over His people. The Bakuba kings still arrogate to themselves the title of "Ncemi Kunshi," meaning "The Creator's earthly representative."

Behind the king is a powerful and well-organized body of elders known as the "Bankoloma." These are of various degrees and rank, holding certain definite offices with their corresponding duties. Upon this council, with the king at its head, devolves the administrative work of the kingdom. To facilitate this work, the Bakuba are first divided into a number of distinct sections, each of which is composed of several villages and has a responsible head. The chiefs of the individual villages are responsible to the section heads, who are in turn accountable to the king and "Bankoloma." Still closer individual accountability is secured by further subdivision within the village into families or clans having their headmen responsible to the village chief. By this carefully ramified system the king is able to keep in vital, controlling touch with every individual in the smallest village of his kingdom. Only in this manner could he possibly hold them responsible individually in levying tribute, in administering justice, and in drafting men in time of war. We mention the Bakuba proper first, because the governmental system is more carefully worked out among them than in the case of some of the subject tribes. Strange to say, the Bakuba form a very small minority of the king's subjects. There is no doubt that the secret of the power of this comparatively small tribe to dominate so many others, and to hold in subjection such a widespread territory, is found in their remarkably developed form of representative government. It will be readily seen that such a tribe would easily dominate a much greater tribe which has nothing to give it coherence of action.

In addition to the Bakuba, there are seven other tribes which owe allegiance to "Lukenga." These may be divided into two classes—those who are offshoots of the original Bakuba tribe, and those who have either been subjugated or have voluntarily become tributaries under the king's protection. Of the former there are three large tribes, the Bangendi, the Baphianga, and the Bangongo; of the latter class there are four tribes, the Bakete, the Bashoba, the Batua, and the Bakele. Two other fairly distinct tribes are the Bena Chionva and the Bakuambilai, but these are really subdivisions of the Bakete. Some of these tribes, especially the former class mentioned above, have their own tribal organization, but with the head that is directly responsible to the king. Usually there is a particular member of the "Bankoloma" who has oversight of each of these tribes. Others, notably the Bakete, have only the village organization, each village court being responsible to the "powers that be" at Mushenge. Every village of the kingdom is expected to pay periodically certain tribute; this varies with different localities; some bring building materials, others furnish wild game, others raphia cloth and cam wood. Whole villages are often drafted to do construction work at the capital and are kept there for months at a time.

A closer examination of the court and of the governing body at Mushenge will show yet more clearly why the Bakuba may be called a kingdom. For instance, there is the heir apparent, or

" Buemi," who corresponds to the Prince of Wales, and the next in order of succession, the " Chuala," finds his counterpart in the Duke of York. Also there is a dignitary who occupies the place of Prime Minister, known as the " Kikama." He acts for the king when the latter is away from the capital. To be eligible to this high office he must be the son of a former king; he carries a special staff and other symbols of rank and on ceremonial occasions it is his to walk with his hand upon the shoulder of a young lad (a human " swagger-stick "). Two other most important courtiers, who must also be sons of former kings, are the " Mbami " and the " Mbengi," the head speaking chiefs; these represent the king on important embassies. They carry, as their official symbol, a queer staff so carved as to represent four spears bound together.

The official Minister of War is the " Nyibita," and his chief symbol is a great iron war-gong which in times of peace is stuffed with cloth to keep it silent. In connection with this last official there is a woman chief, the " Katenge," who wears a bow-string about her neck; when war is officially declared by the king, she removes this bow-string and presents it to the Nyibita. Without this ceremony the war cannot proceed. Probably we would have less war ourselves if our women had some such string on the proceedings!

Yet other court officials are the Treasurer and the Court Jester. Yes, there is even a jester! He is known as the " Mashamboy," after the masque he wears; his services are usually requisitioned when the capital has been undergoing a long period of mourning. When royal sanction is given to conclude this gloomy period, the people shave and dress in their finery, and once more the dance-drums boom their monotonous note on moonlight nights. Then the " Mashamboy " is called upon to help make merry the hearts of the king and his people. Arrayed in a most grotesque costume and masque, he rushes about amid shrieks of laughter and mock fear, hurling mimic darts at all who come in his way. He may even burst into the sacred presence of the king unrebuked, and sometimes ventures into the harem with his antics.

There is another court official whose office is so striking as to demand a separate discussion; this is the " Moididi," or historian. It is almost unprecedented for a primitive people without any semblance of a written language to make any definite effort to preserve an account of their past. But the Bakuba have this historian, whose duty it is to preserve a memory record of the names of the kings of the Bakuba, as well as of different events signalizing their respective reigns. He also keeps the record of the names of the mothers of the kings. Their annals show a list of over a hundred kings who have occupied the Bakuba throne; even granting that they lived only a few years apiece, we find what is marvellously ancient history to have been preserved by a primitive people. It is true that after they get back some little distance into the past it becomes increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between authentic history and mythology. Yet this very effort to preserve a history of their past and their pride in the achievements of their race probably furnish an explanation of the superior morale which has enabled them to rise above the average Central African tribe.

To most such tribes the days of their grandfathers are ancient history, and they seem to have no ambition to leave any kind of footprints upon the sands. It has long been the custom with the Bakuba to require their kings, before acceding to the throne, to recite the names of former kings and mothers of kings. These names are also preserved in song, and each month, with the coming of the new moon, one may hear, for hours at a time, a throbbing of drums in the midst of the seried fences and the accompanying voices of many women chanting. Over and over again, in the monotony so dear to the heart of the African, we hear the chant, but each time a new name of a king or mother of a king is inserted. Thus, beginning back in the mists of admixed mythology and history, they come down to the present king and his mother. There is no describing the spell of Mushenge as the new moon lifts its slender crescent for the first time against the delicate tints of the dying sun. A hush prevails over the village as fresh and gripping as though they had never before seen the new moon; you can hear them asking each other in awed whispers, "Have you seen it?" Mushenge, at the new moon, a vivid skein in the weaving of Africa's spell!

It would be inexpedient to mention all the officials at Mushenge for the reason that, if we include the various assistants of the principal officers, there would be well over a hundred.

But one other class of representatives is so striking that we cannot afford to overlook it. Most of the activities and industries of the Bakuba are represented among the " Bankoloma " by their duly titled officials. For instance, the " Tanchona " represents the blacksmith industry; and so others represent respectively the wood carvers, the cloth weavers, the mat weavers, the hat makers, the salt makers, the canoe makers, net makers, palm-oil makers, cord makers, the hunters and the fishers. This reminds one of the Trade Guilds of London.

We must mention one other official, humble but most picturesque, the town crier. The town crier of Mushenge must always be a twin. Late at night and early in the morning, he may be heard as he wends his way about in the mists, giving out, in a queer, loud voice, the edicts of the day. He has his counterpart in almost every village in the kingdom; this is the daily press of Bakubaland.

V

THE KING OF THE BAKUBA

THE ruler of the Bakuba is too important a personage not to receive a more detailed notice than the passing glance that has been so far accorded him. The usual type of king is large and handsome, which fact is probably accounted for by the laws of eugenics; the royal women of "Ngela Mbimi," where all the kings are born, are as a rule the best-favoured of their tribe, and they choose for husbands the finest of the Bakuba men. It is only natural that these royal children should be fine specimens of manhood and womanhood.

The king wears no crown, but in lieu of this a single eagle-feather is inserted into his hair at the inaugural ceremony. No one but the king is allowed to wear ornaments of brass except a few of the royal blood. He habitually wears, half-concealed at his belt, a great conch shell, this also being taboo to the common subject.

Each king is supposed to invent or adopt a special pattern to which he gives his name; this is used upon his mats, his house, his clothing, and is even engraved by the blacksmiths upon his metal ornaments. Some of these designs are very artistic. Late in 1920 two missionaries rode the first motorcycle into the Bakuba capital; you can imagine the furore of excitement which attended the event. The king reigning in Mushenge at the time was Kwete Mabinchi; he was greatly interested in the machine, but what caught his attention most of all was the pattern left in the sand by the tread of the tires. He called some of his people and had them preserve a copy of the imprint, declaring his intention of adopting it as his official design to bear the name "Kwete Buina" (Kwete's pattern). It is an odd coincidence that the pattern does not accord badly with their other designs. One can imagine a later historian reciting, in connection with the name of Kwete Mabinchi, the fact that he was the first Bakuba king to behold a "majua" (motorcycle).

The traditions of the Bakuba show that their former kings were never permitted to touch the ground. The king was carried by his subjects wherever he willed to go; when a halt was called they first spread mats that the royal feet might not come into contact with the polluted soil which ordinary mortals trod. In emergency, a subject would throw himself on the ground as a seat while another provided his lap by way of a footstool. The royal conveyance was a kind of palanquin fashioned of antelope hides laced upon a rectangular boxlike frame some six feet long by four wide and two deep. Loops were attached to the sides through which long poles were inserted; the carriers grasped these poles and raised them to their shoulders. Against one end of the interior reclines a back-rest fashioned by lashing four ivory tusks together. This royal car is still in existence and is brought forth on ceremonial occasions only; for ordinary purposes the kings are now carried in the usual hammock.

Another type of back-rest, used when the king is seated flat on a mat, is a large bolster carved from a solid piece of a tree. These bolsters are not only carved but are hollowed out to a shell-like thinness to render them portable. Long contact with skins treated with palm-oil and red cam wood powder imparts a rich colour and polish to the rests.

Here and there about the kingdom, one may still see great tusks of ivory planted point downward in the soil. These are usually so old and weathered that they scarcely resemble ivory any longer. Each of these is mute evidence that a Bakuba king has at some time deigned to hold court at this spot. Seated on a slave or a mat, he has had the tusks so placed as to afford a rest for his back. This was the nearest approach to an ivory throne. When he broke up his court the tusk was invariably left buried in the ground as a monument to mark the spot where the king had held court. The valuable trophies were as safe as they would be in a vault; no native would dare lay his hand on property of the king.

When seated in court the king is attended by an official fly-swatter, whose duty is to keep any chance insect from annoying his highness. From time to time the assembled court will give a rhythmical succession of hand-claps, signifying their entire approval of some word the king has spoken. So ingrained is this custom that they will sometimes spontaneously clap when the king has inadvertently sneezed. Any individual addressed by the king reverently claps his hands and ejaculates, "O-la!"—a term of respect and assent. He must cheerfully go through with this farce even though the king has just passed upon him some harsh and undeserved punishment. "The king can do no wrong!"

In spite of this exaggerated respect and awe in which the Bakuba habitually hold their sovereigns, cases have been known of the people arising against their ruler and demanding his removal. There are other cases where the removal of a reigning Lukenga has been caused by the intrigues of heirs impatient at being kept too long out of the coveted place of supreme power. As no king must have any living contemporary of equal rank with himself, they knew no abdication save that of extermination. When the death of a ruler had been determined upon he was usually allowed to die by his own hand, for even though they desired to be rid of him, the old respect and awe still persisted. Accordingly, when it had been made clear to the luckless sovereign that he was a *persona non grata* he chose usually to die by his own hand rather than commit himself to the tender mercies of the mob. He literally may be said to have died by special request.

However, evidence is not wanting of more direct methods having been employed on rare occasions. A certain king, grown senile in office, yet showing no signs of making way for younger aspirants, became the object of a deep conspiracy. On a certain night the royal enclosure was to be fired and men placed at the entrances with drawn weapons were to strike him down as he fled from the flames. Tradition says that a faithful slave heard the plot and warned the king, who fled in disguise to a nearby village. One of the slaves dressed himself like the king, and when the fences burst into flames he rushed out and was killed by the assassins. In the darkness they did not discover their mistake, but took themselves off in the assurance that they had accomplished their purpose. At break of day they were startled by the clangour of a war-gong and, rushing out, were paralyzed to see their king, apparently risen from the dead. Clanging his gong, he enlarged in no uncertain terms upon the perfidy of his subjects. So benumbed were the people, first by his apparent resurrection, and later by his audacity in returning into the midst of his would-be assassins, that they permitted him to reign for a space unmolested.

Finally, a Delilah was found in his own house who agreed to help in putting the king out of the way. This was his favourite wife, and as the king slept she adjusted a noose over his head, the other end of which had been previously strung through the side-wall of the house next to the royal couch. When she was ready, she tapped upon the wall, where eager " Philistines " waited to pull the cord. This time there was no bobble in the proceedings—" The King is dead, Long live the King! " Such an impression did the first escape and reappearance of the old king make upon the people that to this day they have a small enclosure just back of the main village that bears the name of the village where the fugitive ruler found refuge. Of course the coming of the white man did much to put a stop to such gentle pastimes as the above.

As has been said, however, these incidents must have been rare even in the old unrestrained days; in the main they have a most exaggerated respect for the person of the king, looking upon him as a being apart from ordinary mortals. This respect extends to even the small children who are in line for the throne. Time and again I have seen subjects drop to one knee and clap their hands as a mere stripling passes by. He will some day be king, and kings have long memories; no one wants to reflect on the possibility of the heir apparent having placed a sliver of palm-frond in the side-wall of his house to remind him of some real or fancied crime committed against him in the days of his youth.

VI

AN ARISTOCRACY OF ARTISANS

THE brief glance we have already had into some of the customs and traits of the Bakuba has almost sufficed to mark them not only as unique among all surrounding tribes, but to give them some title to the distinction of being the aristocrats of Central Africa. This title is greatly strengthened by a study of some of their arts and crafts. It is pre-eminently true in the case of their most highly honoured art, that of wood-carving. Many interesting and striking curios are to be procured among the Bakuba, but none more so than the products of the wood-carver's art. Not all the Bakuba are wood-carvers by any means, only a favoured few being endowed with this talent, which is considered a great gift by their fellow-tribesmen.

The sense of proportion possessed by some of these artisans is remarkable. There is a touch of ancient Greece in the contour of some of their tall wooden drinking-cups. On the outside of the cups they carve in base relief the many intricate and artistic patterns so dear to the hearts of the Bakuba. They carve and thus decorate many different articles, including sword-hilts, large chests and smaller boxes, ranging down to the tiny containers for their razors, back-rests of several sizes and designs, centre-posts for the doorways of the mighty ones, huge drums and lesser ones, and pipes into which they fit a monkey-bone stem. There are certain small figures that constantly appear in their finest carvings, figures that seem to be particularly sacred to them. Among these is a conventional likeness of a small scarab or beetle; this design they call "Ncemi," the same word they use to denote the Supreme Being.

Most remarkable of all is the fact that they have even ventured into the field of sculpture. There are at least three extant examples of their attempt in this field, purporting to be statues of ancient kings of the Bakuba. These statues were greatly prized, and it was several years after the advent of the white man that one was ever permitted to see one of them. However, an ethnographical expedition sent out by the British Museum in 1907, headed by Mr. E. Torday, succeeded not only in seeing these treasured statues, but in purchasing two of them. One of the most effective arguments brought to bear upon Kwete Fay, the king of the Bakuba, was that these statues, if left where they were, might be burned up or destroyed by white ants! Whereas, if sold to the Expedition, they would be forever preserved in great buildings where they would be viewed by wondering multitudes. These two I have seen, one of them in the British Museum in London, the other in the Musée du Congo Belge, near Brussels; the third is in the possession of a private individual in Belgium.

Probably the best of the three statues is the one in the British Museum; it is the statue of Shamba Bula Ngonga, greatest of all the Bakuba kings, if the stories and traditions of him, recounted with great pride by the people, are to be credited. He seems to have been the national Hero of Bakuba-land. A most careful study of all available evidence by eminent ethnographers places the reign of Shamba in the opening years of the seventeenth century. This statue, or rather statuette, for it is only about two feet in height, is smooth and polished and is stained a deep rich crimson, a shade which seems to have the same significance to Bakuba royalty that purple had for the Romans.

The Bakuba carve other rude images used in their fetish-worship, as do other African tribes, but this crude work is not to be confused with the bona fide attempt at sculpture such as that exemplified in the statues of these kings. In 1919 it was my privilege to be in the home of Mr. Torday, in London, on several occasions. It is noteworthy that in all his collection of ethnographical specimens he has kept not a single article as a personal possession, holding that it is unjustifiable to deprive the primitive peoples of things sacred to them for any lesser motive than the advancement of science. He could not resist, however, the temptation to have at least a plaster model of the statue of Shamba, which he considers one of the most wonderful articles which scientific research has yet unearthed in Central Africa.

Another industry among the Bakuba, scarcely less respected than that of wood-carving, is blacksmithing. Where did these people learn the art of smelting metal from its ore! They have their own traditions about it, but certain it is that the first foreigners ever penetrating their country found this to be an old-established art with them. Space does not admit of a detailed description of the more or less crude but efficient paraphernalia with which the blacksmith works. Suffice it to say that he turns out splendidly wrought tools, weapons and ornaments. Some of them even do delicate inlay metal work on the hilts of their weapons. Often in making a tool or weapon the smith will work upon it some of the artistic patterns so extensively employed in weaving and carving.

The blacksmiths, like the carvers, are limited in number and are community institutions. A little incident will serve to show this last point. A fellow-missionary requested me to procure a full set of blacksmiths' tools for him to take to America. I was on most friendly footing with one of our local village smiths and it seemed simple enough to call him in and strike a trade. He came readily enough, and was sore tempted by what was offered him, but said that he had no authority to part with his tools, that it was a matter to be decided upon by his whole clan. Accordingly, his clan was called, including several of the most influential chiefs of our local village. Much palavering took place, in the course of which they explained as follows: "The blacksmith is our life! We look to him for the weapons with which we fight and with which we kill game in the forest; we look to him for the tools with which we work the soil and get our food." It was only after my explaining that it was far from my mind to rob them of the services of such a useful citizen and offering to replace the coveted tools with far finer metal with which to make others, that they finally agreed to the trade.

The comparative advancement of Lukenga's people is seen also in their cloth-weaving industry. Not content to go unclothed, or to resort to grass skirts, or even to the skins of animals, they have at some point in their history invented or introduced a simple but ingenious loom or weaving frame upon which they turn out a very creditable type of cloth. This cloth is woven from the delicate filaments from the inside of tender leaves of the raphia palm. Unlike the two aforementioned industries, cloth-weaving is not the special prerogative of a favoured few; from boyhood the people of Lukenga know how to weave their own cloth. The weaving falls to the male element of the population, and the sewing as well, though fine embroidery work is done by the women only.

One of the most characteristic scenes of the kingdom is that of a native sitting cross-legged behind his loom, as the staccato clatter of his weaver's beam is one of its most characteristic sounds. The length of the fibre employed precludes the weaving of a piece larger than about a yard square; these squares as they are cut from the loom are neatly trimmed and the raw edges hemmed; these can then be joined together to give any desired length. The raw cloth is a little stiff and rough, but they have several processes for softening it. For everyday wear they do not take so much pains with the cloth as they do in case of their finer costumes. In this latter case the carefully softened cloth is either left its natural creamy colour, dyed red, or stained black. Elaborate fringes are sometimes added.

The women of the kingdom have a method of embroidering this cloth in several different colours, working out their striking patterns. The finest and heaviest of this raised style embroidery is done by the people of Mushenge and is royal cloth as distinguished from the less valuable types. This embroidered cloth, strange to say, is usually in small pieces and is seldom worn, but has a fixed value as currency. Sometimes a dance costume is made more resplendent by tucking a square or two of this comparatively expensive embroidered cloth under the belt. The production of this little-used and expensive cloth seems to be simply an expression of an innate sense of the artistic in the people.

The Bakuba weave not only cloth, but mats also. These latter are not woven in a loom, but by hand, using twisted threads of the raphia upon a background of narrow and pliable strips of vine. Here again they work in their ancient patterns, sometimes in two or three colours. The finished mats are used to sit upon in the day time and as a bed at night. Larger ones are made and preserved to become the owner's coffin at death.

A fourth distinct industry, and one which again marks the Bakuba as of a high order of intelligence, is that of salt-making. They discovered the fact that certain swamp plants had a saline taste and succedeed in evolving a process for the isolation of crystalline vegetable salt. Here and there in the depths of the forest along some small stream can be found the salt camps; in the salt-making season the worker, with his family, will live for months in his rude camp, only going back to the village when he has secured the desired amount of the precious seasoning. He gathers and burns great quantities of the plants of the swamp, dissolving the resulting ash in water. This solution is then run through a great cone-shaped filter constructed of leaves. and the resulting liquid is boiled in little bark troughs until the moisture is driven off, leaving the blackened salt crystal. The salt is firmly tamped into rectangular-shaped cakes, wrapped in large flat leaves, and stoutly tied with withes of vine. These blocks are kept of a fairly uniform size and pass from hand to hand as currency. Of course some of it is used in their food.

There is a tragic side to the salt industry that mars one's appreciation of the ingenuity of the process. Many of the swamps where the salt is produced are infested with the tsetse fly, whose bite inoculates the victim with the germs of the dread sleeping-sickness. Great numbers of natives succumb to this disease. Congoland has few more pitiful pictures than the rude little shelter alone in the plain which marks the spot where a sleeping-sickness patient has been left to face the coming of the final sleep. This is not cruelty on the part of the natives, it is reasonable self-protection. They go daily to the place to leave food and water, and when the patient is no longer able to keep himself from falling into his lonely little night-fire they erect a lattice-work between him and the flames.

VII

DAILY LIFE IN BAKUBALAND

HOW do the people live? What do they eat? To begin with, all the subjects of Lukenga are agriculturalists to a certain extent. Each family has its small plantation where they grow enough produce to supply their immediate needs and maybe a little surplus to sell at the market. The Bakuba always plant in the forest and the heavy work of felling the trees and undergrowth and of burning it off falls to the lot of the men. If this preparatory work is done properly, the soil is ready for planting without further cultivation. The soil is light and loamy, and the fierce heat of the burning off serves to destroy the seed-bed of weeds and undesirable plants, so checking Africa's terrific fecundity of growth long enough for them to plant and harvest the season's crops. The women then come in and do the planting by simply striking in their hoes at irregular intervals and dropping in the seed. The principal crops are maize, millet, peanuts, and manioc. They also raise a species of ground-nut, small patches of tobacco, sweet potatoes, and sugar-cane.

What an uproar in the village! Shrill whistles split the morning air, many small yellow dogs scurry wildly about giving mouth to their peculiar whine, men are seen diving into the low doorways to reappear in a moment with knife at belt and razor-edged, needle-pointed spear in hand. Some carry bows and arrows; here and there man or boy has wrapped about him a great coil of wide-meshed net. In a moment they have disappeared, single file, into the forest. What is it all about? Is a fight on? It can't be that, else the shrill cries of the women would have been added to the general hubbub. No, it is only a hunting party. Some early-stirring native has found the forest trail scored with the sharp imprints left by a passing drove of wild hogs and knows that they cannot be very far away. Forgetting whatever task had taken him abroad, he races back to the village and sounds the alarm.

Once in the forest, the hunting party splits into two sections; one of these swings in a wide detour ahead of the game, the other section dropping back to follow in its wake. The party in front deploys in a wide-flung thin line, uncoiling the long nets and draping them lightly on the bushes like a fence. Wide gaps are left between nets, with several men to guard each opening. In the distance can be heard the other party beating up in the rear of the startled quarry and soon can be heard the grunting of the hurrying porkers. The men at the net line keep perfectly still until the game is almost upon them, when they set up an uproar of shouting. The bewildered and scattering animals now usually seek desperately to dodge to right or left of these new foes and so strike the hunting-nets, which drop lightly upon them, enmeshing them in its strong folds. The moment they strike the nets, hurtling bodies are upon them with spear and knife. Sometimes the drive brings down with it one or more of the several species of forest antelope.

They sometimes hunt monkeys in drives, but without the nets. In this case the party ahead man the ground and trees, armed with bows and quivers full of slender arrows poisoned at the tip and so notched that this tip will break off in the victim. When the beaters bring a drove of frightened monkeys ahead of them, the waiters open fire with a storm of deadly poisoned arrows. Most of the monkeys, fleeing with incredible swiftness through the tree-tops, make their escape, but some are struck with the poisoned darts. These last may manage to struggle on for a little space but quickly the virus numbs them and they drop with a thud to the ground, to be seized by the dogs. There are many varieties of monkeys, and it is a favourite meat with the natives, who do not appear to be disturbed by ancestral considerations.

Besides these community drives they also hunt individually and trap as well. Their traps are many and ingenious and are varied to suit the game; some are for birds, others for animals ranging in size from small forest rats up to the lordly king of the jungle, the elephant. As a people they have a strong superstitious belief in the powers of medicine charms, supplied them by the witch doctors, to aid them in the chase.

Fishing is not so universally practiced throughout the kingdom as hunting, because only a part of the population lives in proximity to the larger streams. Many of Lukenga's subjects make it a regular occupation, and by means of their varied types of traps they take great numbers of fish. These vary in size from that of our sun perch up to enormous types. Those living near the streams and catching fish as a trade, cure them by smoking over a slow fire, and in this dried form they are sold throughout the kingdom. There is a certain type of fishing that is practiced by the women and girls of the entire country; this is done in the small streams that are to be found near every village. Their method is to go in groups to the stream and there build a small dam until quite a pool is formed. They then divert the stream and proceed to bale out the water from the pool, capturing the small forms of water-life left struggling in the bottom.

Besides the meat derived from their hunting and fishing, they also have some domestic animals and fowls, such as chickens, goats, ducks, pigs, and sheep. The three latter are comparatively recent innovations, having been introduced into the country by the Portuguese traders and others. The women of the tribe will not eat this domestic meat for certain superstitious reasons. Possibly the men have fostered this superstition so as to preserve the easy meat for themselves. They may enjoy the forest hunting, but at best it is tremendously arduous work.

The main staff of life is the heavy pudding-like bread made from manioc flour mixed with either cornmeal or millet. The manioc or cassava plant grows to some five or six feet in height, and has roots that are sometimes as large as a man's fore-arm. These roots, when mature, are dug up and soaked for three days in water; they are then dried in the sun and the bark scraped off, revealing an interior of almost chalk-like whiteness. The prepared root is now broken into fragments, thrown into a mortar, and pounded to flour; by means of round basketwork sieves the stringy débris is removed, leaving a fine flour. The soft, doughlike bread made from this flour is eaten when hot, if possible, as it is much more palatable than when cold. They twist off steaming chunks and dip it into the pot of greens or meat. Properly prepared under sanitary conditions it is not bad eating, even for a foreigner.

They have several varieties of greens, the most common of which are the tender leaves of the same manioc plant which supplies the bread. The Bakuba employ great quantities of fiery red pepper in their cooking. A red oil derived from the pulp of the palm-nut is also extensively used in their cookery. Peanuts, parched corn, ground nuts and a number of other things are used as adjuncts to the main diet as described above. Often various types of carefully discriminated caterpillars, grasshoppers, palm worms and other dainty tidbits are added to the family pot. Of fruits, they raise plantains, bananas, pineapples, and find many wild varieties in forest or plain.

There is one universal beverage in Bakubaland—the sweet cider procured by tapping the palm trees. One of Congo's most picturesque scenes is that of a native silhouetted against the sky as he literally walks up the bole of a towering palm. This is done by means of a belt passing about the tree and around the body of the climber; he leans comfortably back in this broad, stiff belt with his feet braced against the tree, and so goes up, shifting the belt upward as he ascends. The tree is tapped just beneath the feathery fronds at the top; a cluster of nuts would have been produced here except for the tapping. Having removed the full gourd, he replaces it with an empty one and descends. There are four different types of palm that they tap and the method varies with each one. If allowed to stand long enough, this sap will ferment, and if then taken in great quantities, will intoxicate. However, one seldom sees a native who hasn't more judgment than to put something in his stomach that will rob him of his brains.

Contrary to some of our preconceived ideas of native life, they love to play, have a keen sense of humour, and a ready smile or outright laugh. The national pastime of the Bakuba is dancing in the moonlight in the broad, smooth open space in the centre of each village. Here again we have one of these colourful skeins with which Africa weaves her spell; who will ever forget those brilliant moonlight nights resonant with the ceaseless throbbing of drums and the rising and falling cadences of the chants of the dancing natives! Many of these dances are as innocent as our old square dances, others are not so innocent, and still others are revolting. The type of dance varies with the occasion, whether a moonlight frolic, a ceremonial dress occasion dance, like that indulged in from time to time as groups of the "young bucks" come to their majority, a medicine dance, or the celebration of a funeral. As far as our part of Africa is concerned, Isaiah might have more appropriately sung "Ah, the land of the throbbing of drums!"

The children have many little games with which to while away the long, hot days. One of these consists in striking a small, light object up into the air with their open palms, passing it from one to the other without letting it stop its flight or touch the ground. Some penalty is exacted of the unfortunate one who fails to keep it going. The smaller ones will set up opposing rows of palm-nuts in the sand and take turns rolling another palm-nut at the opponent's "soldiers." Still another game is almost exactly like our own game of "jack rocks." Often they will sit about the fire at night and play a game like conundrums. One child will begin by telling the first half of one of their numerous little epigrammatic parables, the next child must take it up without a moment's hesitation and complete it. If he fails to do so the rest tease him unmercifully. For instance, one will repeat rapidly, "An ax lies under the fallen tree;" the answer must come quick as a flash, "The tree rots but the ax remains."

One of the games indulged in by the grown-ups, as well as by the children who are clever enough to learn it, is played upon a regular board with markers. The board is about two feet long by one foot wide and has four rows of shallow round pits scooped in it. The markers are usually polished black beans as large as a penny and almost as round. The game is a species of draughts and is rather complicated in nature. Another and less innocent pastime is a game almost exactly like dice-throwing. For dice they use the small white cowrie shells, so marked that they will fall "heads and tails." A confirmed gambler will sometimes gamble away all that he has down to his clothing, and even gambles himself away into slavery to the winner.

VIII

FOLK-LORE

NEARLY all African peoples believe that there is a supreme being who is responsible for the creation of all things, and they give to him a definite name. Most tribes, including the Bakuba, do not seem to feel the necessity of worshipping this supreme being. They seem to think that after creating the world he went away and left it to shift for itself. The Bakuba have apparently gone further than most of the tribes in striving to give some explanation of the origin of all things. Mr. Torday says on this point: "Their legends concerning the invention of the arts and the origin of the social institutions shows an interest in their past rare among African people." The same writer has pointed out the striking likeness between their legends concerning the origin of the universe and the opening chapter of Genesis. Their legend runs as follows:

"In the beginning nothing existed but darkness; water covered the whole earth. In this chaos 'Ncemi,' or 'Bumba,' reigned supreme. He was like man, only much greater, and was white. Then Ncemi vomited the sun, the moon, and the stars. The heat of the sun dried up the waters on the earth and dry land appeared. Ncemi continued to vomit and thus produced representatives of each species of creatures upon the earth. These representatives then took up the task of vomiting others of their kind; thus the white heron vomited the other birds, and scarab produced the other insects, the goat all the horned animals, the little fish all the other fish, and so on. Finally Ncemi vomited mankind in great numbers, but only one of them was white, whose name was Loka Yima. A son of Ncemi produced the plant from which sprang all plant life upon the earth. Ncemi or Bumba now made a tour of inspection to all the villages of men; coming to each in turn, he bade them to make free use of all the created things, but left some one thing with each village as its taboo; this thing, known as 'Ikina Ibadi,' they must not eat upon pain of death."

(To this day each family group among the Bakuba has its "Ikina," which it refuses to eat.) Ncemi, then, seems to have gone away and left mankind to their own devices, but before going he designated Loka Yima, the only white man, as "Ncemi Kunshi," or "God on earth." Here the Bakuba link mythology with history by claiming that this Loka Yima was the first king of the Bakuba.

The legend goes on to recount that Loka Yima left no sons and that after him his daughter, Lobamba, reigned as Ncemi Kunshi. After Lobamba came Wota, one of their best known ancestors. This man committed a crime so outrageous that shame and popular indignation led him to abdicate and to emigrate to another part of the country. Before departing he announced that early on the morrow, the first man to respond to his call would be appointed as his successor, regardless of his rank. One of the Batua people, hearing this, went to his friend Nyimi Longa, brother of Wota, and told him not to sleep that night, but to be ready to respond to the call before all others. This was done, and in the morning mists Wota duly gave to Nyimi Longa two feathers of the crested eagle, symbols of chieftainship. With the coming of day, Wota perceived that he had unwittingly given the power to the legitimate heir, his brother. He was very angry, but could not undo what he had done. Thus from Nyimi Longa the Bakuba took the title "Nyimi" to designate all their future kings; this also is said to be the reason for the close friendship between the Bakuba kings and the little Batua people. No Nyimi can today receive the eagle-feather without the presence and co-operation of the Batua.

Legend has it that to Wota, Ncemi revealed in a dream the use of iron; also in his reign a certain man introduced the poison cup as a test of witchcraft. The dishonoured son of Wota, Nyimi Lele by name, also emigrated and set up for himself in another quarter, becoming the progenitor of the "Bashilele" tribe. Before departing on his long journey, Wota is said to have set fire to his village, and in the confusion one of his wives received a burn. She hastily prepared a paste of ashes and applied it to the wound, but immediately removed it upon finding that it only caused the wound to smart the worse. Putting her lips to the spot to assuage the pain, she noticed a peculiar and pleasant taste left by the ashes, and so became the discoverer of vegetable salt. However, the discovery of vegetable salt in crystalline form is said to have come at a later date.

Wota was forced to leave the kingdom in the hands of his brother, but as a parting gift he put a curse upon the fowls and the millet. As a result, the fowls fell sick and died, and the millet was blighted. Finally, in desperation, Nyimi Longa sent out a delegation of picked men to find Wota and to persuade him, if possible, to remove the curse. The six men appointed to this task were named as follows: Kikama, Chikala, Ifanchola, Nyanga, Nyibita, and Nyimi Shonga. They succeeded in their mission and the grateful Nyimi Longa honoured them by making each of them viceroy over a section of the kingdom. The six leading dignitaries in Mushenge today are given the titles of these six men, and the Bakuba claim that this was the origin of their offices.

According to the legends, Nyimi Longa was followed in the chieftainship by Ming Mbengele, and during the reign of this latter, the great migration of the Bakuba took place. In the course of this migration they journeyed far from their original haunts, and in their wanderings crossed four great rivers.

In addition to the type of legend which attempts to account for their origin and history, there is a quite different style of folk-lore. This latter type is very much on the order of Æsop's fables and usually points a moral. The following, from the Bakete, will serve to illustrate:

A boa-constrictor, while passing through the forest, had the misfortune to get caught under a falling tree. As he writhed in pain, vainly endeavouring to extricate himself, a forest antelope chanced to pass that way. Hearing the snake's pitiful cry for help, the antelope forgot the hereditary enmity between the antelopes and the boas, and, putting his shoulder to the tree, he lifted it up so the captive could wriggle free. Once out, the boa turned upon the antelope to eat him up. He had the grace at least to make the explanation: "I am too sore to catch other game and will starve if I do not take this chance; if I am to starve I had as well have remained where I was." The antelope begged for time to talk the matter over. It so happened that another variety of antelope, small but very wise, was passing that way. The forest antelope called to him and asked him to settle justly the matter between himself and the snake. After hearing both sides of the matter Little Antelope pondered; then he said, "You have not dealt fairly with me, I believe both of you are lying. In the first place, I do not believe the snake got caught under the tree, and in the second, I don't believe that Forest Antelope is strong enough to have lifted the tree off." At this the snake was indignant and readily consented, when Little Antelope suggested, that they prove the truth of the story by reenacting it. Both disputants agreed; big antelope lifted the tree and boa wriggled under as before. Forest Antelope now caught the wisdom of Little Antelope and, dropping the tree upon boa's neck, they scampered away, leaving the ungrateful boa to his fate.

A much shorter story from the Bakuba is that of the gnarled plains tree which hospitably received upon its trunk a column of white ants, only to find that once established the ants proceeded to eat it. It sorrowfully remarks to the ants, "I thought you had come to catch friendship, but you only came to eat my body." So if you have a friend who, under guise of friendship, is begging you for all you possess you may quote one terse line from this parable, "Ngama atonga shenela!"—which means, "The plains tree caught friendship with the white ants!"

Another brief but cutting parable that explains itself is this: "If you ate no palm-nuts, why the palm-oil on your lips?"

A catch-word to show what true friendship is, says, "True friendship is that of the girdle and the loin-cloth"—which, being interpreted into good American, means, "True friendship is as close as that of the belt and the breeches."

"My friend has killed an elephant; our friendship has died." In other words, "Prosperity forgets old friends."

A parable designed to show the difference between a blusterer who gets nothing done, and the quiet man who does much, is this:

"The light of the moon drys no raphia; only the light of the sun."

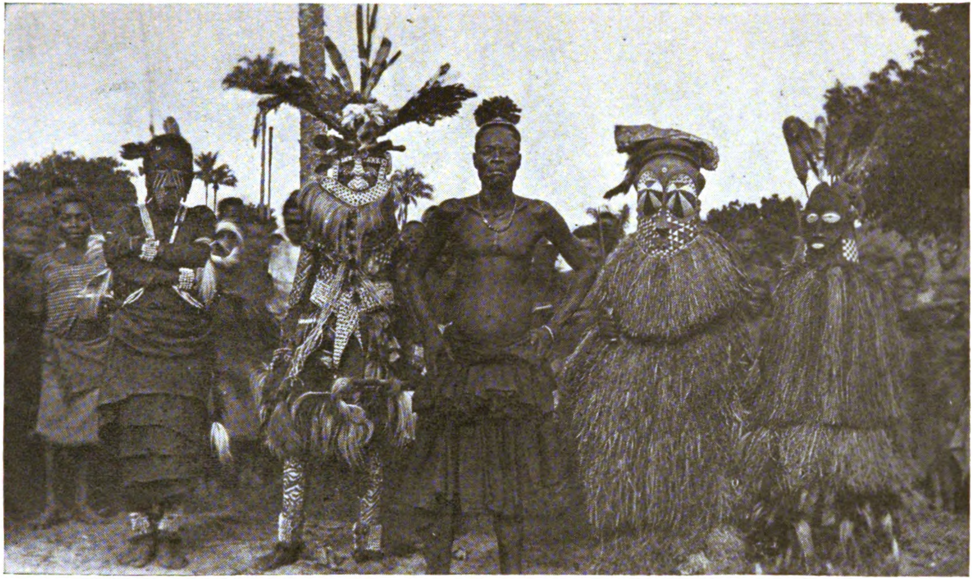
So run their countless epigrams showing touches of wisdom, sarcasm, humour, and wit.

IX

A CHAMBER OF HORRORS

WE now turn to a dark side of our picture of the Bakuba, a side that does much to negative all that has been said of their comparatively advanced state of civilization. There is no reasonable room for doubt that the practice of human sacrifice was carried on among them to a ghastly extent in the immediate past and throughout their history. A very careful study of this matter has led to the conclusion that the present diminished state of the population has at least one explanation in the wholesale slaughtering of human victims from time to time in the past. Contrary to first impression, the victims were not exclusively slaves; but free-born Bakuba in large numbers were also slain.

This practice of human sacrifice with the Bakuba did not centre around their religion, as was the case of the primitive people of Central America and other parts of the globe; but was designed to furnish dying members of the royal family with company and servants on their journey into the Beyond. They said it was not meet that a king or other royal person should go out into the great unknown alone and unattended, as did ordinary mortals. As a rule, not so many victims were



MEDICINE MEN IN COSTUME

necessary at the death of a king because of the fact that during his lifetime he had already, on one pretext or another, sent ahead of him many victims. However, the custom was that if any lacked of his full quota of attendants, the dead king was not buried until the last one had been sent on ahead. Many weeks the royal body would lie in state while the quota was being made up. The bier was a raised platform under which a slow fire was kept burning, so that eventually the body was nothing but a frame covered with a parchment of dried skin.

During his lifetime a king would, from time to time, place in the side wall of his house a small sliver of palm frond to mark as a future victim some unfortunate who had incurred the royal disfavour. These so marked were known by the name " Babadi ba Nyimi," or sometimes " Nkeketa." Any of the Bakuba, upon hearing himself addressed as " Nkeketa," knew that his doom was sealed. A curious ceremony known as " Ishenge Itana," or " The fifteen Cowrie Shells," was associated with this practice. The king has marked a certain man as a victim for some real or fancied reason and has sent a messenger to him to inform him that he is " Nkeketa." If the victim is conscious of some real crime he agrees without demur to the sentence and is allowed to hang himself.

On the other hand, if the man notified feels that he is innocent of any wrongdoing, he gives fifteen cowrie shells to the messenger and sends them back to the king as a symbol that he pleads not guilty. His case is duly tried, and if the court pronounces him innocent, the king indemnifies him with certain gifts; if, on the other hand, he is pronounced guilty he must agree to " Go to his fathers," as the expression goes. Not only so, but he must go through certain ceremonies showing that the king is just, otherwise the spirit might come back to " make uneasy the head that wears the crown." He holds in his hands a certain plant known as the " Itonaka," together with some white clay, and, first spitting upon the ground, he says: " O King, remain alive to eat fish and game, rejoice on earth with glory, beget children; as for me, I stand convicted, let my spirit go into the earth forever! "

As a rule the victims were allowed to hang themselves; but sometimes, when running amuck at the death of a great ruler, the frenzied people would hunt out and put to death the handiest of the marked victims. In some cases owners of fractious slaves would sell them for sacrificial victims. In such case the slaves were spoken of as goats; the seller would say, " I have a Numi Kamidi (male goat) for sale." In case of a woman the term was " Ngadi Kamidi." There are still living slaves whose fellow-slaves, under the same master, were thus sacrificed. It was from one of these, now a Christian, that this fact was learned. The story was then carefully rechecked by inquiries made of the son of the king who had done the killing. This king's son is now an old grey-headed patriarch of the tribe by name " Mbami Bushonga," and his father was the " Mbophay Mabinchi," who was reigning when the first white man reached the kingdom.

A most gruesome yet interesting custom in this connection was that of certain voluntary victims who agreed to die in order to accompany their departed king. There were eight villages[1] in the kingdom which were honoured by being allowed to furnish these voluntary victims. All these villages were inhabited by people who were of the same clan as the kings, known as "Bashi Matona." The chosen voluntary victim became the recipient of certain honours and also of very substantial gifts, these last becoming the property of his clan on his death. He was known by the title of "Yelo" until the time came for him to go to Mushenge to prepare for the end, then he was called "Numi Kema," meaning "Male Monkey." He was put to death by being buried alive just before the burial of the king's body.

It might be objected that these tales of horror are but the vapourings of primitive imaginations and that no dependence is to be placed on them. However, reliable evidence is not wanting to the effect that these dark customs were not yet abandoned at the time the early Southern Presbyterian missionaries were endeavouring to reach Mushenge. I was told by natives of Mushenge that Sheppard came to the capital the first time just as one of their orgies was in progress. Dr. Sheppard has since corroborated this statement. When Drs. Morrison and Sheppard made an attempt, some years later, to go to the capital, they were turned back by urgent messengers from Mushenge, being assured that they would be in danger of their lives. It was at this very time that a wholesale slaughter was taking place at the capital, celebrating the death in rapid succession of a reigning king and one or two who were in line for the throne. Probably this orgy, taking place at the death of King Mishaphay, was the last of its kind.

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[1] They were Mbomachedi, Matuka, Mbanchi, Muengeta, Shongo Nyinga, Labonga Honchi, Ndenga Lakonga, and Bakadi. This last village is now incorporated in the population of the village of Ngedibunchi.

Other evidence of the ruthless disregard of the sacredness of human life on the part of the Bakuba royalty is of very recent date and the incident cited took place since the writer of this book went to the field. Rev. H. M. Washburn, my colleague on Bulape Station in the Bakuba country, was warned by one of our native teachers that a plan was on foot in the village of Bukoiya to administer the poison test to the leading men of five villages. He called hammock-men and made a rush trip to the spot to see if he could not prevent the tragedy. Arriving on the scene, by most shrewd maneuvering, he discovered where the ingredients of the proposed poison draughts were hidden, and confiscated them. He also apprehended the would-be administrators of the test and held them until state soldiers could come and arrest them. There was poison material enough in the lot confiscated to have killed a hundred men; and, as has been said, they were about to administer it to the chiefs of five villages! Why? Because one of the female royalty at Mushenge was indisposed and had been advised by her witch doctor that certain parties, names unknown, but dwelling in one or other of these five villages, were responsible for her sickness. With regal carelessness she ordained a blanket test for all of the villages!

This custom of administering the poison-cup to supposed possessors of evil spirits is still persisted in, despite the efforts of the government to put an end to it. It might be a fitting way of closing this partial inventory of Bakubaland's Chamber of Horrors to explain the nature of the poison ordeal.

How many of the subjects of Lukenga have found themselves confronted by the sinister presence of another native with a green leaf plastered on his lip! As he enters the village no man seeing the leaf dares speak to him. Leaf-Lip removes the leaf in the presence of the person he has come to seek out, and, putting it on the closed fist of one hand, strikes it with the other, exclaiming, " Sha Nyo ifomi! "—which, being interpreted, means, " Remain to drink the poison-cup! "

This incident is the sequel of other events that have gone before. It means that some relative of Leaf-Lip has died under circumstances that to the native mind indicated that the death was not due to natural causes, but was the result of the departed having been bewitched by an evil spirit dwelling in some person, name unknown. The first problem in the matter of revenge, or, as they consider it, justice, is to determine the guilty party. Accordingly, a trip is made to the only source of authority in these occult matters, namely, to the witch doctor. After receiving his fee, the witch doctor proceeds to divine the suspect. He has a grotesque little carved wooden figure in the likeness of an animal, having a smooth, polished space on its back. Putting a pinch of resin upon this smooth surface, the doctor now rubs back and forth with a small polished disc, reciting the names of possible guilty parties. Presently the disc, in its back and forth journey, will stick, and whatever name is being chanted at the moment is at least a strong suspect. It remains to administer the poison-test to make sure. So Leaf-Lip makes his journey to the accused and formally charges him with being a person possessed of an evil spirit, which spirit, with or without his knowledge, has taken the life of Leaf-Lip's relative. However much the accused may protest his innocence, he dare not refuse the test, for his own people would cast him off if he should do so. Accordingly, on a set day, all assemble for the test, and the accused drinks several cups of vile and poisonous liquid. If he vomits the concoction satisfactorily he is declared innocent, to the joy of his relatives, and an indemnity must be paid as well. On the other hand, if he fails to do so, his own relatives will turn away from the weakening victim in horror and disgust, leaving the avenging relatives of the dead person to put an end to him.

"Ah, the land of the rustling of wings that lieth beyond the rivers of Ethiopia . . . a people tall and smooth, *terrible from their beginning onward!*"

X

WHENCE CAME THE BAKUBA?

THE question of the origin of the Bakuba is not only one of real interest in itself, but may be found to have some practical bearing upon the problem of their evangelization. We start with the premise that the country where they now dwell is not their original habitat; this is evident from the most casual study. They have among themselves an unequivocal conviction that they were not originally of these parts, and they speak in confident and definite terms of the great emigration, known as "To Ngela," which brought them from their original haunts to this present section. Evidence of this nature is admittedly of a highly conjectural character for the reason that their history and their mythology become inextricably interwoven a generation back.

However, more conclusive evidence is not wanting along another line. The unmistakable sharp contrast between the Bakuba and all of the tribes surrounding them makes it evident that they are strangers in a strange land. Their tallness and general physique, the cast of countenance, their unique kingdom, the advanced state of their arts and crafts, the possession of a rich mythology, the fact that they make a definite attempt to preserve some record of their past—all these and other considerations conduce most strongly to this conclusion. More conclusive evidence is that they still have the remnants of an ancient language, known as "Lumbila," strikingly different from their present one. The language they now speak, in common with the tongues of all the surrounding tribes, belongs to the great "Bantu System." This system obtains from five degrees north of the equator down to where the Hottentot bushmen begin on the south. As the "Lumbila" is a non-Bantu language, this would seem to indicate that the Bakuba were originally found beyond the limits of this system.

If, then, this is not their original home, whence came they? Their traditions do not help much on this point, yielding the more or less inconclusive legend that they crossed four great rivers in the course of their wanderings, and that they came from the north. We are not without some aid in this matter of determining the direction from which they came and it confirms their own vague notion. The clue to this evidence is to be found in the name "Bakuba" itself, which was given to them by the great Baluba tribe of this region. The word "Bakuba" means "People of lightning," and it seems very probable that the name was given them because of the fact that they formerly used a many-pointed throwing weapon previously unknown to the Baluba. This strange weapon is now obsolete, though elders of the tribe informed me that it was formerly quite common among them; they traced a rude likeness of it in the sand

and said that it had been called by the name "mpedima."

A careful study of this weapon reveals the fact that it originated in a definite zone, far to the north and east of the present location of the Bakuba. This zone includes the Sudanese tribes on the borderland of ancient Ethiopia. It also carries us beyond the limits of the Bantu system of languages. There is, therefore, at least a strong presumption that the Bakuba were originally found among these tribes on the borders of Ethiopia, such a presumption being justified both by their use of the throwing-knife and by the remnants of their ancient language. Their emigration enmasse to the south may very readily have been caused by a desire to escape the merciless raids of the Arabs. A striking incident lends credence to this last supposition: Mishafay, one of the first of the Bakuba kings to see the face of a white man, warned the intruder to leave him in peace, saying, "We left the country of our fathers because of trouble with your kind; why have you followed us here?"

Is it too fantastic to suppose that the comparatively advanced civilization possessed by the Bakuba may be explained as being an indirect reflection of that of ancient Egypt? The beetle or scarab design so often seen in their carving, the carving itself in base relief, the distinctly Egyptian cast of countenance manifested in their wood sculpture, all lend credence to the supposition. Yet, again, there is the fascinating possibility, at least, that the rude image of the Semitic religion, so remarkably preserved in the mythology of these people, is a corrupted infiltration of the religion of the Hebrews as it was in Egypt. Is it possible that even a later contact between the Bakuba and the true religion may have been established by the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, officer in the court of Queen Candace of Ethiopia? Perhaps the sphinx could answer our questions!

It seems the more reasonable because of the fact that a primitive people with no written language could hardly have preserved in their mythology such a close resemblance to the scriptural account of the origin of things. Remember how like the opening chapters of Genesis their earliest legends run: darkness everywhere, water over the whole earth, Ncemi reigning supreme over the chaos, Ncemi bringing forth the sun, moon, and stars, the sun drying the water from the earth and causing dry land to appear, the creation of all animal and plant life, and finally the creation (vomiting) of mankind.

Other of their legends, not heretofore cited, bear strong resemblance to certain incidents in scriptural history. For instance, this one: "In the course of our wanderings we crossed a great water in a boat without oars that was propelled by the hand of God (Ncemi)." Is this too far a cry from the story of the ark?

Then listen to this: One day, in preparing materials for this book, I was sitting in a small thatch hut in Mushenge, listening to the old grey-haired "Mbami Bushongo," as he told me stories of his people. Suddenly, without prompting or leading question of any kind, he volunteered: "We, too, once had white skins like yours; we are now black because of a curse put upon us by our forefather, Wota. He did it because one of the sons of Wota rolled up the door of his father's hut without ceremony and under circumstances that were improper. Wota put a curse upon him, and since then we have been black." I checked this story over with another ancient chief, a son of a king, and, while his account differed in some particulars, the conclusion drawn was the same, namely, that the Bakuba are now black because of the curse of their forefather.

It caused an unforgettable sensation to hear the old Mbami gravely begin telling the following: "Ncemi (God) is not one, but three(!); first there is Ncemi the Creator, next there is Kofangana, who acts as mediator between Ncemi and man, and last, there is Nyonyi Ngana, assistant of Kohangana, and acting for him when he is away. These three are all one in power and honour."

Along with vague accounts of what existed in the Beyond I found a belief in two final places of abode, one for the good and the other for the evil; the former was called "Iluemi Nganyi" and the latter "Ambixa Fena."

In conclusion, it is at least thinkable that what light the Bakuba have may be a distortion of the true religion, winding down through Ethiopia and on to the tribes in outer darkness; then indeed would the Bakuba have been included in Isaiah's message to "A people that dwell beyond the rivers of Ethiopia." Whether this be true or not, the fact remains that the Bakuba have, from some source, such a large foundation in the direction of the truth that the problem of their evangelization deals not with the task of teaching the unrelieved ignorance of primitive minds, but rather with that of fanning to new flame the fires of their ancient altars.

II

THE BAKUBA AND THE GOSPEL

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."—ISA. 9:2.

XI

THE TENT ON THE LULUA

THE story of how the Gospel came to this hidden kingdom of the Bakuba is one that requires a brush rather than a pen; broad, rapid strokes of a brush dipped into the deep green of Africa's jungles, the crimson of her hidden tragedies, the unrelieved black of her terrible need; this, rather than the detailed penning in of names, dates and statistics. Even so, certain names of men and of places must be etched in to redeem the story from the realm of fancy and place it where it belongs, in the realm of actual if most romantic fact.

Two such names are those of Samuel N. Lapsley and William H. Sheppard, who were sent forth by the Southern Presbyterian Church, in the year 1890, to establish a mission somewhere in Central Africa. For in the fullness of time it was the will of God that these two should, for the first time in the history of the world, proclaim the name of Christ the Redeemer in the vast region that lies in the basin of the Kasai River. The first named was a youth yet in his twenties, combining in his singularly lovable character a gentleness and piety that but enhanced the sterner strain of indomitable courage that was his. The other, also a youth, was one whose name, though that of a coloured man, was destined to become well known in two continents. There is something extremely appropriate in the sending forth by the Southland, land of cotton-fields and of slaves, of this expedition to preach redemption in the very heart of the continent from whence so many of these slaves came.

As the vessel which bore these two away on their great adventure of faith warped out of her New York pier there occurred an incident which speaks volumes of that indefinable relationship of love which existed between these two races in the South. There came a voice, a mother's voice, carrying clearly across the widening gap, " Sheppard, take care of Sam! "

Arriving at Matadi, in the lower Congo, they made the long and dangerous trek around the cataracts to the settlement on Stanley Pool, two hundred miles in the interior. Manning canoes, they then proceeded to explore on the main river and in the Kwango, determined to discover the best possible site before driving in any permanent stakes. Many and often perilous were their adventures during these trying months. Site after site was considered and abandoned. Other missions, Protestant and Catholic, had already preempted many of the strategic points along the lower river. In other regions they found either that the natives were hopelessly hostile or sanitary conditions were impossibly bad.

Despite numerous fevers and repeated discouragements, the dauntless pioneers refused to abandon the task for which they had been sent out. They now decided on a bold stroke—that of leaving the better known region in the lower Congo and penetrating, if need be, another thousand miles into the interior. They learned that there was a small trading-post far up in the basin of the Kasai at the head of navigation on the Lulua River. It was a region of which very little was known, and this small post was the only touch of civilization in all that vast wilderness. The post was kept in touch with the outside world by means of a small wood-burning steamer, the "Florida." Piece by piece this tiny vessel had been transported around the two hundred miles of cataracts in the lower Congo and assembled in the waters of Stanley Pool. They succeeded in securing passage on this steamer, and so, turning their backs on the comparative civilization of Stanley Pool, they bored on into the fastness of the unknown interior.

For several days the tiny but valiant little steamer fought its way with painful slowness up the terrific current of the main Congo before turning off into its scarcely less formidable tributary, the Kasai. Sometimes when in the grip of one of the more terrible currents the little vessel would vibrate in every inch of her length as she struggled for long minutes without making more than half her length in headway. Sometimes she was even whirled around and swept down-stream. More than once she was caught out in a broad lake-like stretch of water by sudden tropical squalls and all but capsized. Finally the "Florida" turned from the broad waters of the Kasai into the narrow but deep and swift Lulua. A few more days and the eager watchers saw ahead the foot of the cataracts that marked the end of the long and nerve-racking journey. For the last time sleek natives splashed overboard, one fore the other aft, each grasping a cable, struggled up the banks and made fast to some handy tree. This was Luebo, a little trading-post on the south bank, scarcely more than a clearing in the forest and a mud hut or two.

Almost immediately they made their decision to cross to the north bank and pitch their tent near a large native village that was located on the crest of the high hills overlooking the river.

As they laboured at the task of erecting their frail shelter they were surrounded by a group of curious natives, armed with bows and spears but friendly enough. They proved to belong to the Bakete tribe which, it later developed, was a sub-tribe of the Bakuba. Night fell and the natives scampered away to their own huts. A twist of cloth in a tin of palm-oil, and behold a lamp. The feeble glow of this smoky wick set the tent off against the blackness of the night; how small a light against how great a darkness. Thus came the light to those that dwell in the region of the shadow of death; thus at long last came the first messengers of the great King to the borders of the land of the Bakuba.

XII

EARLY DAYS AT LUEBO: TRAGEDY

THE coloured member of the expedition testifies that they slept but poorly that first night in the camp above the Lulua. Strange noises from the surrounding forest mingling with even more weird sounds from the heathen village combined to strike a note of menace little conducive to peaceful slumber. He adds, with that irrepressible touch of humour so characteristic of his race, that the approach of dawn brought the sweetest sound that had ever fallen on his ear, the roosters crowing in the native village: " There's one language we understand anyway," he said; " Those chickens are crowing in the same language as the ones at home! "

Swift days sped by as they strove to gain an inkling of the strange tongue of the natives. This is uphill work in a language that has never been reduced to the faintest semblance of writing. It means the painfully tedious digging out of the meaning of nouns and words to denote action and the assembling of what is learned into some definite order. It was at once interesting and encouraging to learn that the language followed certain clearly cut rules, despite the fact that it had never had any written form. It would be possible in time to reduce it to an orderly grammar.

The few books in the possession of the strangers were an unending source of wonder and interest to the natives, especially those containing pictures. One memorable day a spark of light flashed against the darkness of their great ignorance. Pointing to a picture of the Master in one of the books, a child asked, "Dina diandi nganyi?" (What is his name?) "Jesus!" said the missionary. "Ah, Jisu!" said the children.

Privations and sufferings made their appearance at the little clearing. Provisions and clothing and shoes began to run distressingly low and fierce tropical fevers came to rack their bodies. Tenderly they ministered the one to the other, and through it all their faith never wavered.

Came the day when Lapsley set forth on a long-contemplated journey of further exploration. Crossing the Lulua, he marched for days and days into the country south of the river. He found it thickly populated with natives calling themselves Baluba and Bena Lulua, who proved to be most friendly and hospitable. It was a momentous journey, for time was to witness the development of a great and successful work among these receptive peoples. His last pair of shoes now in shreds, the traveller made his footsore and weary way back to the clearing on the Lulua; in spite of discomforts he was happy in the conviction that God had led them with a sure hand to a spot where there was every opportunity of doing a wonderful work for the kingdom. Other trips only served to deepen and confirm this conviction.

Great was the rejoicing at the homecoming of the wanderer, both on the part of his coloured friend and that of the natives. Everything was done for his comfort and refreshment before hearing the account of the journey. Slipping away, Sheppard presently returned with a royal present, the last pair of shoes in the camp—his own. Over every protest he succeeded finally in making his friend take them. Probably they both recalled that distant day of parting at the New York pier and the mother's voice, "Sheppard, take care of Sam!" How faithfully and tenderly did he do so!

Plans soon began to take form in the mind of Lapsley to make an extended exploration into the entirely unknown back country on their own side of the river. They had heard reports that somewhere in the great angle between the Kasai and Sankuru Rivers to their north was a most interesting people governed by a king who held absolute sway over a great territory and many tribes. From time to time individuals of this tribe known as Bakuba, made their appearance in the marketplace at Luebo. They seemed to be traders in ivory and in slaves. Their appearance was most attractive as they strode haughtily about in their voluminous crimson loin-cloths amidst the more humble Bakete. Somewhere in that mysterious back country was a capital called Mushenge which was the great king's abode. Little was known of this city, not even the trails leading to it. Moreover, as against the hospitable reception accorded them on the south side of the river, repeated messages came from this distant king that any effort to penetrate further into his domains would be at the risk of their own lives.

At this juncture came a letter from state officials in the lower Congo requiring Lapsley's presence on important business. Although the message came at a time when he was still weak from an attack of fever, he resolved to go at once. In addition to the state summons there was urgent need to make some more efficient arrangements to keep them in touch with the outside world and to assure regular receipt of supplies. Sheppard remained to hold the fort and to carry on the work already begun. A weary and dangerous journey was in prospect for the one, a weary and terribly lonely wait for the other.

Weeks passed into months and still no word came to the lonely watcher; not weeks of idleness, however,—new and more comfortable quarters were planned and built, the school grew steadily, as did attendance on the preaching service. Many little improvements were made to be a glad surprise to the absent friend on his return. Many times the natives came to inquire when " Mutombo Nshila " would be coming back to them, for they had learned to love him in the nine months he had been in their midst.

Finally came the day when a breathless native raced in with the news, " Steamer! " Excitement reigned. In a few moments the steep trail to the river was black with eager natives, and with them hurried Sheppard. Slowly the little steamer rounded the distant bend sturdily fighting the swift current. As she drew closer, eyes were strained in the effort to make out the familiar form of Lapsley on the deck. Disappointment took the place of joy as they realized that he was not there. As the steamer touched the beach the captain beckoned Sheppard to come aboard, and handed him a brief note from a missionary in the lower Congo. It read:

"Matadi, Congo Independent State,
"W. C. Africa, March 29, 1892.

"Dear Brother Sheppard:

"You will be surprised and grieved to know that your friend and comrade, Rev. S. N. Lapsley, while here at the coast, was taken down with bilious hematuric fever, and, on the 26th of March, died.

"Yours in haste,
"S. C. Gordon."

As the full import of the message forced itself upon his consciousness he was all but paralysed with grief and reeled as from a heavy physical blow. Hard always to lose a friend, and under the circumstances almost unbearably so. From the bank where the thronging natives waited for news of "Mtombo Nshila" there arose the death-wail of the Bakete as they grasped the fact that their white friend and teacher would come no more.

The coloured missionary, in an ecstacy of grief, plunged into the forest and there, in a secluded spot, poured out his heart to God, weeping with the abandon of a little child.

XIII

SEARCHING FOR THE UNKNOWN CAPITAL

BACK again in the little clearing the coloured missionary slowly gathered his shaken faculties and faced the future. Should he return at once to America and report the results of this first expedition to the Church, or stay on and consolidate the results of their labours while awaiting reinforcements? The situation had been sufficiently difficult when there were two to render mutual aid and advice; it was now immeasurably more so. Overwhelming grief tended to cloud the issue, as did the terrific prospect of loneliness; but there were other voices as potent if not so strident that whispered to the lonely coloured soldier of the Cross: one of these was, " Lo, I am with you always! "—another said, " Your dead friend had definitely planned to go in search of the Bakuba capital by way of rounding out the work of this first expedition, the prosecution of those plans now lies with you! " He decided to stay.

Not only so, but he further wisely decided that, rather than linger where every object about him mutely reminded him of his lost comrade, he would, without delay, set forth on the quest for the forbidden city of the Bakuba king—an adventure that promised to be sufficiently hazardous and interesting to effectually divert his mind from its tendency to brood. Brooding is bad enough anywhere; in Central Africa it is a soul-wasting disease.

Calling together the most trusted of the station natives, he frankly told them of his intention, making no attempt to conceal the danger and uncertainty of the journey. To his great delight, they volunteered for the trip without a dissenting voice. Loads were apportioned and lashed to stout poles—two natives to a pole. Luckily for Sheppard, his effects included a few large conch shells, for one of these was to prove a factor in turning the hostility of a cruel native despot into favour. Loads were lifted with many a grunt on the part of the porters and, single file, the caravan wound its way out of the little clearing by the Lulua and into the forest—the great adventure was on!

As far as the large Bakete village Kampunga the way was known, and here the first stop was made. The people gathered about the stranger's campfire and heard for the first time the story of the Gospel. Then, with the rising of the great white moon, they turned to something which they understood much better. Drum-heads are tightened by the simple process of passing them deftly through the flames, the musician tuning in with light experimental taps until his ear tells him that its voice is just right. Soon the night resounds to their monotonous yet weirdly seductive zooming. Beneath the booming thunder of the drums comes the rhythmic, ground-shaking pad of many bare feet keeping time. The voice of the drums enters the bodies, the very spirits of these simple people; in complete abandon they sway and twist, stamp and turn in a very ecstasy of sinuous response to that monotonous, heady, imperious booming. All the night through they dance in the broad open space between rows of *malala* huts beneath the white glare of a moon that has looked down upon this scene in thousands of villages for thousands of years.

From this point onward the journey became increasingly difficult. The people knew the trail perfectly well, but refused to divulge it for fear of incurring the anger of the king. Finally, as the missionary worked his way to the border line between the Bakete and the Bakuba proper, he received, one day, a visit from a lad of the Bakuba tribe who agreed to show him the trail to the first Bakuba village. Sheppard was overjoyed and, breaking camp at once, set out with fresh hope.

As they neared the village they were startled to see a large group of Bakuba running in their direction, armed with bows and spears. An immediate halt was called, but it soon became evident that the advancing tribesmen had no hostile intentions toward the caravan of the missionary, but were intent upon quarry of their own. The Bakuba lad who was acting as guide explained that they had in their midst a woman who was suspected of being a witch, that they had administered the poison test to her and were now hounding her along in full flight, as is their custom, to see whether she would be able to keep her feet, thus proving her innocence, or whether she would succumb to the terrible draught and fall to the ground. The victim's only hope lay in the chance of keeping up until she could vomit the poison. It was not to be; even as the missionary started forward to interfere the harassed victim went down. Bad enough, but not the worst: " Witch! Witch! " yelled the pack, as the victim fell, and a great fellow with feathers in his hair and begirt with a leopard's skin, the witch doctor, leaped upon the neck of the prostrate woman and crushed out the remaining life. In a twinkling the pack had piled dry fagots about the still warm body and had set fire to the rude pyre. Almost nauseated himself by the shock of it all, the missionary walked on into his first Bakuba village with limbs that trembled so as scarcely to support his weight.

The friendly hospitality that was immediately extended to him on his entry into the village, by the same natives whom he had just beheld in a wild orgy of unrestrained savagery, was a source of wonder to the traveller. Were these people such arch dissemblers that they could switch from one rôle to another so entirely different thus quickly? He found the answer to his problem. The people are naturally friendly and harmless for the most part; the outbreak of apparently inhuman savagery finds explanation in the fact that to their poor deluded minds this person had undeniably been proved to be harbouring a sinister demoniacal power and the best thing that could be done was to put an end to her as speedily as possible. Even the relatives, who up to the last had maintained the innocence of the accused and who had strung along with the crowd to see fair play, were convinced of the victim's guilt when she fell and were then eager to help speed the end.

Sheppard's high hopes that he would now be set on his road to the unknown capital were soon rudely dashed; while they remained friendly, the chief and people steadily refused to give any information that would help him on his way. Apparently they were in deadly fear of the consequences of arousing the king's wrath. Days passed into weeks and the weeks lengthened into a month, and still the missionary was apparently no nearer to his goal. At this point his spirit almost broke, and, taking his camp-stool, he sought out a secluded place in the forest to muse and pray. There he found himself assailed with despair—his friend and companion dead, his present mission apparently hopelessly baffled. In the silence of the forest he broke down and cried as though his heart would break.

The answer to his prayers was on the way. One day the village was suddenly startled out of its usual calm by the appearance of a little group of natives. They did not enter the village, but quietly disappeared down a side trail. "Who are they?" he inquired of the hushed villagers. "Some of King Lukenga's traders on their way to the capital," they whispered. Their consternation was occasioned by the fact that it would now soon be reported to the king that they had harboured a foreigner who was making an avowed attempt to visit the forbidden capital. To them it spelled disaster; to the quick-witted missionary it spelled opportunity. Slipping away, he summoned one of his most trusted boys and put him on the track of the traders, telling him to mark the trail as he went. Over every protest on the part of the chief, Sheppard now made ready as soon as possible, and with his caravan, took up the trail. For two days they followed the signs left by the faithful boy, Ngoma, who had gone ahead to shadow the traders. They overtook him in another Bakuba village called Beshi Ibenga, and learned from him that the traders had finally discovered that he was following them, had threatened his life, and had taken to the trackless forest. The people of this village were sorely afraid and ran away, but, learning that the stranger could speak their tongue a little, they quieted down and came back to the village.

The chief, Kwete, gave him lodging and food of every description, but told him that he must go back the way he had come on the morrow. The people remained aloof until he called his caravan about him and raised a hymn. Hearing this strange thing, they gathered about him and he endeavoured brokenly to tell them the old, old story.

Again and again the terrified chief begged the missionary to turn back lest he and they be put to death by the king. Having come so far, however, Sheppard determined not to turn back with the goal almost in sight. On the third day after his arrival in Kwete's village, the chief's anxieties were justified by the appearance of a war party from the capital. Chief and people stood not on the order of their going but took to the forest at once, leaving the missionary with his little caravan in the village. The caravan gathered about the missionary and awaited the outcome. One small lad nestled close to the missionary's knee as he sat quietly in his chair.

The leader of the party from the capital now stood forth and loudly proclaimed that the entire village was under arrest and must stand trial before the king for harbouring this foreigner. Hearing this, Sheppard in his turn stood forth and pleaded in behalf of the chief, speaking in broken Bakuba, saying that the chief had done all he could to turn them back. "The fault is mine, and not Kwete's! " he said.

Startled at hearing this foreigner speak their own tongue, they withdrew a short space and held a council. On returning, the leader said, "This is a strange thing that you speak our tongue, we will go and report to the king." "Wait! " cried Sheppard, "take this present to your king, tell him that I am not a bad man and that I have a message for him." Hastily looking out a large conch shell, he gave it into their hands as a token of friendship to the king. It afterwards developed that the leader of this hostile party was himself a son of the king and that he was so astounded at the phenomenon of hearing this foreigner speak the tongue of the Bakuba he was afraid to proceed further without special instructions.

Followed several anxious days for all while they awaited the return of the king's messengers, and while they waited the missionary prayed as never in his life.

The king was as greatly puzzled as were his messengers by the strange news that this foreigner could speak the tongue of the Bakuba. He called a council of the elders and laid the matter before them. The outcome was that they reached the decision that this foreigner was not as other foreigners—Whence his dark colour? Whence his knowledge of the trails and of the Bakuba tongue? This man, said they, is the reincarnation of a former royal member of the Bakuba tribe, he is to be welcomed. Also the marvellous shell, sent by the stranger, made a great impression, predisposing the king to look with favour on the sender.

The outcome was that the king's son now headed a second party to go out to meet the stranger, this time with instructions to escort him in honour to the presence of the king. The hearts of the anxious watchers leaped for joy when they grasped the fact that for the moment at least all danger was past and that at last they were to behold with their own eyes the long-forbidden royal village.

Where the going had formerly been with tedious delays and uncertainty, they now found everything being done to expedite their journey. The country became more and more open as they advanced; less of forest, more frequent open plains. Suddenly, as they were crossing a small plain, the escort set up a cry of "Mushenge! Mushenge!" and there, in the distance, they could make out the outer palisades of the long-sought capital.

They found themselves halted at a sentry's shed just without the walls, while word was sent to the king of their arrival. Soon they were within and passing down one of the broad open streets bordered on either hand by blank thatch walls, while an increasing throng, wild with curiosity, gathered about them. Sheppard was shown to a comfortable house and his men were also given comfortable quarters. Presently the king sent greetings and the word that he would see his visitor the following day. The messengers that came with this word brought gifts of goats and chickens in profusion, and many other things. So came the first missionary to the court of Kwete Mbueke, first of all the Bakuba kings to entertain a foreigner.

XIV

THE BURNING OF IBANCHE STATION

HOW entirely different might have been the course of the evangelization of the Bakuba had there been many missionaries instead of one to enter this great door and effectual! As it was, Sheppard, after a long and successful visit at King Kwete Mbweke's court, was forced to return to his base of communications on the Lulua. At the time of Sheppard's visit the king was already an old and grey-haired man, and before reinforcements had arrived in sufficient numbers to make it practicable to occupy the capital definitely, the king died. His successor, Mishafay, was as hostile and suspicious as Kwete had been friendly. The new king desired nothing so much as to repair the breaches already made in the ancient wall of Bakuba aloofness. Even though Sheppard was permitted to make several more trips to the capital, he found an increasing attitude of suspicion and arrogance. Once again the old manifesto went forth that any foreigner trespassing upon the king's domains would do so at his own risk. All villages were warned not to receive or harbour the hated foreigners.

Missionaries did come,—many of them. Luebo developed into a large and flourishing station. The great Baluba and Lulua tribes south of the Lulua proved to be as eagerly open to the Gospel as the conservative Bakuba were opposed to it. A vast native settlement gathered about Luebo station from all parts of the far-flung Baluba-Lulua territory. Another station was opened in their midst, and another, and another, with still others in prospect as soon as more missionaries should come.

Meanwhile the project of evangelizing the Bakuba had not been entirely abandoned. In spite of dire threatenings on the part of the Bakuba king a station was opened in a large Bakuba market centre, known as Ibanche, situated some thirty miles north of Luebo on the very fringe of the Bakuba kingdom proper.

This station was opened in the very face of the rumblings of incipient rebellion. Mishafay held the reigns of power for only a short time, never in fact, actually wearing the eagle-feather in his hair. His death was the signal for a wild orgy of human sacrifice and on the heels of it there came to power a king shrewder and more hostile to the foreigners than even his predecessor: his name was Kwete Fay. An extract from the diary of a missionary alone at Ibanche,—a man who was destined to become one of Central Africa's greatest missionary statesmen—reflects most vividly the atmosphere of pending trouble and danger that overshadowed the new station:

"Ibanche, Dec. 1, 1897.

"I wrote a strong letter to the members of the Mission in which I clearly absolved them of all responsi-

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bility in my staying here alone, and giving reasons why I ought to stay at all hazards,—in order to hold the footing we have gained at this place. Somehow I feel more danger from palavers with the people of the neighbouring villages than from any special danger from the king. I believe the Lord has opened this gate to the Bakuba people, and I have faith enough to stay here and keep it open.

"W. M. MORRISON."

Ibanche soon grew into a full-fledged station with a neat compound and several families established in comfortable mud homes with whitewashed walls and thatched roofs. A great bronze bell daily sent forth its call to the five close-gathered Bakuba villages that constituted Ibanche. In spite of distant rumblings from the capital, no actual storm broke, although the way to the capital was still sternly taboo.

A far more serious obstruction to the growth of the work than the king's attitude was the natural conservatism of the Bakuba. They remained scrupulously friendly and hospitable and openly avowed that they were "People of the Mission;" but the actual progress of making genuine converts was painfully slow. Moreover, those who did seem to become converts showed little tendency to help evangelize their own people. This situation arose out of no limitation of mental ability on the part of the people. They early showed a high order of intelligence and learned some things with marvellous celerity.

A further complicating factor now appeared in the shape of an influx of Baluba and Lulua similar to that which had occurred at Luebo. These latter literally swamped the station and absorbed most of its energies, while the Bakuba tended more and more to withdraw from association with these tribes which they considered inferior.

Again the air became charged with the threat of a general rebellion of the Bakuba. This time the king seemed to be in dead earnest. From far and near he summoned medicine men and openly they made their war medicines. This revolt was aimed at trading-posts, government posts, the mission—anywhere the hated foreigners had succeeded in gaining a foothold within the limits of the kingdom. The king summoned the fierce Bangendi tribe to rise and strike with him, and all now hung on some phase of the moon, some aspect of the war medicine. This medicine, among other things, was supposed to render the bodies of the king's warriors immune to the bullets of the white men; they had implicit faith that it would do so. The plan was to make simultaneous attacks upon the several widely separated posts of the white men.

When there was no hope of doing anything further to avert the rebellion and when the storm was actually breaking, the missionaries at Ibanche slipped quietly away in the dead of night and retired to Luebo. Arriving there, the men raised a number of known faithful Baluba natives and hastened back to Ibanche in hopes of protecting the mission property. They came too late! The once flourishing station was a smouldering heap. Even the great bell was gone, carried away by the raiders.

With the exception of this one point, the rebellion was a sad failure. In every place where armed resistance was encountered the Bakuba warriors were beaten off. In their attack on one company post the warriors swept fearlessly into the compound of the white men, confident that their medicine fully protected them from their bullets. Their rush came to a startled and horrified halt, however, when one or two men stepped out onto the verandahs and opened fire with modern rifles into their closely massed ranks. They broke and fled, leaving a writhing heap of disillusioned warriors on the ground. Officials of the Belgian Government promptly took hold of the situation and stamped out the last spark of rebellion, leading haughty Kwete Fay in chains, as well as several other of the prime instigators. This was the first time that a Bakuba king had ever felt the weight of a chain, and it sent a shudder through the whole kingdom. It was a shudder that marked the end of the ancient untrammelled freedom of this proud tribe forever. A government post was shortly established at the capital itself.

Ibanche station was quickly rebuilt and the work resumed; even the bell was recovered from the spot where the raiders, finding it far too heavy to travel with rapidly, had buried it in the earth. Once more its familiar call sounded far and wide.

After a time Kwete Fay was released and returned to his capital, the mission paying a large part of the indemnity required to purchase his freedom. Even so, while apparently grateful to the mission, he made no move toward offering them the freedom of the capital.

After several more not unfruitful years at Ibanche, especially among the Baluba population, it once again became evident that if any successful work was to be done among the Bakuba and subtribes it must be done from a point yet further into the heart of the kingdom; a point from which, if possible, all energies could be exclusively bent upon these tribes. Finally it was decided to abandon Ibanche, this not without many heartaches on the part of those who had learned to love the station and the work there. The new venture was to be on the basis of a ten-year experiment to give the Bakuba a final chance to prove whether or not they were open to the influence of the Gospel.

It is not inconsistent with the nature of this account, being, as aforesaid, rather a portrayal than a chronicle, to mention by name the tall, rangy Kentuckian, H. M. Washburn, to whom fell the task of pioneering the new station among the Bakuba;—an endeavour that had many of the marks of a forlorn hope. Surely he was a man raised up of God for such an hour as this. True replica in every way of the fearless type of Kentucky pioneer, able to turn his hand with equal facility to forge or trowel, carpenter's bench or cobbler's; one who had utilized these gifts already, not as dabbling experiments, but in the stern fight for food, clothing and education; and withal, a trained and forceful preacher of the Word: such was the man about whom was to centre one of the most dramatic and heroic incidents in the history of modern missions.

Behind him, Ibanche, for two decades the busy scene of endeavour, fell rapidly into deserted ruins more pitiful to look upon than the smoking desolation left in the track of the raiding Bakuba. With what terrible fecundity does Africa reclaim to the wilderness even the brightest spot the instant that incessant labour to keep it so ceases! Sagging roofs, gaping holes where once were bright windows and hospitable doors; here and there only a mound of earth left to mark the grave of what had been a happy home. A traveller, passing that way, came upon what had been once a flourishing rose-garden, now a tangle of tropical growth; his eye caught one valiant survivor which had lifted its head above the wilderness of weeds and had flung forth a last pink blossom like a lone banner over a stricken field. What was its message? A last tribute of love above a spot where many hopes lay forever buried? Or was it a glowing emblem of deathless hope for the new venture? In his heart the beholder prayed that it might be the latter!

XV

BULAPE; A STEP NEARER THE CAPITAL

A YEAR later we find the Kentuckian camped beneath a giant clump of bamboo on a high palm-crested plateau. With a heavy sense of the responsibility resting upon his shoulders in the selection of a site upon which hung the fate of a great tribe, he had swung far and wide in tireless journeys through a great stretch of country where no white man had even been, and, after weighing every factor, had decided upon this spot, believing in his heart that he had been divinely guided in his choice. All about him the scene is one of activity,—hundreds of natives busily swinging machets, making an ever-widening swathe in the dense growth. On Sundays the people gather in the great blotch of shade cast by the bamboo and the missionary preaches to them the Gospel.

In all of his travels of exploration the missionary had met with no active opposition on the part of the natives or of the king; nor had any demonstration been made when he had finally decided upon this site near one of the largest villages in the kingdom and within easy striking distance of the capital itself.

It is true that by the time the tent under the bamboo had given place to the first mud home and the lonely watcher there had been joined by his family the air had begun to vibrate with rumours that Kwete Fay was secretly planning another attempt to expel the white men from his kingdom. Whether or not there was any real foundation for these rumours, any possibility of such a contingency was effectually quashed by the death of the king himself.

Just before his death there occurred in him a startling change and one fraught with deep significance. He called his successor, a great six-foot giant known as Bofay Mabinchi, and laid upon him this parting injunction: " Bofay, you will soon be king of the Bakuba; I myself and my predecessors have all showed unrelenting hostility to all the foreigners; I want you to change that policy in so far as it affects the people of the mission. I am able to see clearly now that in all the years they have never done anything to harm us or our people; in my degradation and imprisonment they helped me: when I am gone and you wear the eagle-feather, send messengers of friendship to the mission."

To the heavy-faced sullen prince who listened to these words of the dying chief, no words could have been more unwelcome. He was big in body only. His soul was small and narrow and incredibly embittered against all that circumscribed in any way the ancient and cruel despotism of the Bakuba kings. His natural bent in this direction was greatly accentuated by the fact that he was the last of his line,—there was no male heir of any of his sisters left to succeed him. This is a heavy enough cross when it occurs in the course of nature; but in this case there had been several heirs and they had been killed in one of the raids incident to the subjugation of the Bakuba. In his blanket hatred of the fair-faced ones who were responsible for this condition, Mbofay made no distinctions; he had no slightest desire to conciliate any of them.

However, upon his accession, Mbofay had no alternative but to obey the command placed upon him by the dying Kwete; deep-rooted superstition that the spirit of the dead king would do him evil if he refused scourged him to compliance with at least the letter of the law. Accordingly, he sent messengers to the mission at Luebo with overtures of friendship, and as a token he sent also one of the beautiful patterned mats for which the Bakuba are justly famed.

The mission responded in kind, sending two representatives to the capital with gifts of friendship. These met with a friendly enough reception at Bofay's court; but that, on his part at least, these professions of friendship were a mere farce, was made evident by the fact that no sooner were the ceremonies finished and the ambassadors gone than he began with subtle tyranny to do his utmost secretly to check the rapidly growing influence of the new station upon his subjects.

The king's rancor was further enhanced by the fact that in spite of all his petty persecutions, village after village was becoming openly friendly to the mission and was sending delegations to Bulape asking that evangelists be placed in its midst. Even at the capital itself, at first covertly, then more and more openly the people began to evince their friendship for the missionaries. Visit after visit was made to Mushenge in an effort to conciliate the king and thus lift the ban of fear laid on his subjects. The king remained arrogantly obdurate, but the people would surreptitiously dart out and grasp the hammock-poles of a passing missionary and carry it for a space with every evidence of eager friendship. Not only so, but the mission had a powerful ally within the very circle of the king's most trusted councillors. He was an old grey-haired chief, famed for his sagacity and holding one of the highest offices in the kingdom, that of Mbami.

Something in the nature of a crisis was precipitated when the villagers of Koshi, within an hour's march of the capital, openly declared for the mission and went to Bulape to get an evangelist to teach them. The leading spirit in this daring move was the chief of the village himself. This chief, Bofay Nobe, was no longer a young man, but was still strong and active and seemed determined to see that his people should hear for themselves this strange teaching of the missionaries at Bulape.

Such flagrant insubordination could not be allowed to go unpunished. Chief and people were warned that they harboured their evangelist at their own peril. Task work was heaped upon this luckless village out of all proportion to the usual quota; with many petty persecutions their lives were made a burden, but still they clung to their evangelist.

Finally the chief, Bofay Nobe, was summoned to Mushenge on some trivial pretext, was beaten and thrown into chains. Through their teacher the people now appealed to the mission for help. Two missionaries at once set out for the village of Koshi, determined if necessary to secure evidence and make a government palaver against the king. There was nothing to be lost my such a course because the king could not be made any more hostile and every effort at conciliation had met with failure.

Calling a group of the more influential heads of the village, the missionaries withdrew with them to a secluded spot in the plain and carefully questioned them. Sufficient evidence of unwarranted cruelty on the part of the king was forthcoming, but the hitch came when the people, whether from fear or some innate sense of loyalty, refused flatly to bear witness in court against their king. Without witnesses, a government trial was out of the question and it seemed that nothing could be done to help either the people or the poor chief in chains at Mushenge.

The missionaries now decided upon the almost hopeless expedient of appealing once more directly to the king. Before the sun went down they were making their way amidst the maze of *malala* walls at the capital. The king came forth and greeted the visitors, but with a marked lack of cordiality. He showed them an enclosure where they might pitch their tent and left them with the word that he would send them word when he was prepared to receive them.

Until late that night they expected momentarily the messenger that would conduct them to the presence of the king—but no sign came from the royal inner enclosure. While they waited, the missionaries got out a small portable phonograph and began to play. A mad scene of eager curiosity tinged with fear ensued as the people literally fought each other in an endeavour to get close enough to see the box that talked. Finally they retired to their camp cots with a sense of defeat, acutely conscious that the king was deliberately flaunting his insolence in their faces: not even the usual gifts of ordinary hospitality had come from the king. With an earnest prayer to God, they lay down to sleep, determined at all hazards to gain an audience with the king on the morrow and strike at least one more blow in behalf of the Master's work.

Morning came, and still no sign from the king. When the missionaries sent word to him answer would come back, putting them off on some trivial pretext. Finally, nearly at noon, the two arose and made for the enclosure of the king, unannounced. Upon being notified of their approach, the king, with a bad grace, made the best of it by pretending that he was just in the act of sending for them. The meeting was in an open court between high walls and the glaring noonday sun beat down pitilessly. Mats were spread and all sat down upon these in a circle, the king being attended by several of his counsellors.

The interview was a brief and stormy one—the king, brushing aside their earnest but courteous advances, proceeded to violently upbraid the mission, charging that they were responsible for all the disasters that had overtaken the Bakuba. Then it was that the missionaries firmly pointed out that the mission had never had but one purpose among them, and that to preach to them a hope of life, and that, moreover, his obstinate standing in the light of his people was beginning to recoil on his own head, for they were showing a determination to choose for themselves in the matter. They told him, as a parable, that the people had tasted salt and found it good, and even a royal edict was not long able to keep them from getting it.

At this point the king rose to his feet and flung from their presence with an insolent stride, swinging his great crimson loin-cloth with the motion of his body. Almost immediately, however, he reappeared and told the missionaries that the sooner they left the better for all concerned, and never to return. Goaded past all restraint, one of the two, with cheeks burning, now addressed the king in a parting word, "Mbofay, you will live to see the day that you will *cry* for a missionary to come to you!"

On the heels of this came the horrible news that the faithful Bofay Nobe, already emaciated from long imprisonment with insufficient food, had had the crowning indignity heaped upon him of having his eyes literally slapped out by the hands of his captors. He was then released. Groping his way painfully back to his village, he immediately called the people together in the little thatched church shed and said to them, "Let us praise God that He has permitted me to return alive to my village!" Then exhorting them to stand fast for the mission, he groped his way to his hut. Surely the Spirit of the living God had touched that dark heart!

XVI

THE FURNACE OF AFFLICTION

IN a very short time after the incidents recorded in the last chapter the tall Kentuckian who had pioneered this last stand among the Bakuba found himself face to face with a grim situation which promised to have a tremendous influence over the whole future of the venture. The annals of modern missions have no brighter instance of pure heroism than that evinced by him in dealing with the crisis that now arose.

The Great War did not leave untouched even the remote fastnesses of this part of Central Africa. The Belgian Government found it necessary to call upon this region for porters to see service in the German Kameruns and in German and British East Africa. With the close of the war these conscripts began to straggle back in small groups to their homes; with them came some bearing the deadly infection of dysentery contracted in distant camps. Beginning in an isolated spot or two, this fatal disease soon began to assume alarming proportions and ere long was sweeping like a prairie fire through the whole country. The rate of mortality which it left in its wake was fearful—comparatively few, once fairly in its grip, were able to shake it off. At first the natives would stay in their village and make some sort of effort to bury their dead with their usual customs, but as the deaths mounted up and up so that the living were scarcely able to bury the dead in hastily scratched graves, they would abandon the village in utter demoralization and flee to scattered spots in the forests and plains. The mortality in at least one Bakuba village was practically one hundred per cent, the village being blotted out completely.

Bulape station lay squarely in the path of this advancing wave of death, and before long pitiful cries for help began to come in from the nearby out-villages. The station held a council to determine some course of action. Two courses lay before them: one, to leave the station for a time and seek the comparative safety of Luebo, where there was a doctor and ample medical facilities; the other, to stay on and make some effort to stem the tide of death among the helpless people about them. Without hesitancy they elected to stay at their posts, and from the beginning the idea began to form in their minds that this great epidemic might be mightily used of God to the advancement of the work if they only had faith to stand by and render what help they could in this dire extremity.

The case was not as absolutely hopeless as appeared on the surface. Early in the fight the capable physician at Luebo began sending in large quantities of ammunition for the fight in the way of a mixture that, coupled with isolation of the victims and careful diet, worked almost miraculously. The most difficult phase of the work was that of securing the full co-operation of the natives in matters of diet and sanitation. In some instances stern measures had to be resorted to in order to save the poor frightened and stupid natives from the results of their own ignorance and obstinacy. Some refused to send stricken relatives into detention camps, others persisted in swarming about the sick, thus giving the disease every chance to spread from the dying to the living. This condition had first to be controlled at all costs.

The village of Bambuya awoke one day to the fact that the long-dreaded red death had at last begun to walk the streets of their village. Without delay they sent a runner to the mission for help. Almost as promptly a missionary was on his way to see what could be done. Arriving in the village, he immediately called the chiefs together, laid down the rigid conditions, and asked if he could count upon them to enforce these regulations absolutely. After deliberation, they decided that they could not agree to such a rigorous régime. At once the missionary ceased to parley and started for other scenes where his presence was sorely needed. In the one week that followed his departure, seventy people died in that village. Came another and more urgent cry for help. Again the missionary responded, and this time, with the full co-operation of the people, he established a detention camp and stamped out the disease with the loss of only two more patients.

Here, there, and everywhere the Kentuckian, now the only male missionary on the station, fought desperately to stem the rising tide of death. Shoulder to shoulder with him through it all fought the plucky[1] trained nurse of the station. The strain began to tell, and his face set in grimmer lines and sterner and sterner grew his methods of dealing with those who deliberately secreted their sick relatives in their huts. He was soon forced to drop back from the outlying territory and establish a great central camp at a distance from the local village. Day by day he sent scouts to search every house, and where he found secreted victims he caused them to be removed to the camp and set fire to the house. House after house went up in flames before the obstinate people abandoned their folly. Stern measures, but justified in the light of the fact that in this great village of two thousand souls not a life was lost while that scourge raged all about, taking a toll of thousands.

Early in the fight the missionary sent word to King Mbofay that he would be glad to render any aid possible at the capital in case the disease struck that point. He received a haughty message that the king could do without his help. Evidently he felt that he had a reliable source of aid of his own, for he summoned his chief medicine men and asked them to dispose of the troublesome plague that was ravaging the kingdom, and even threatening the capital itself.

These worthy men of science went into occult session and thereafter reported to the king authoritatively that it was the daily crowing of the roosters at dawn that was causing the spread of the disease; nothing was so universal throughout the kingdom besides the sickness but the cock-crow, there must be a connection. At once went forth a royal decree sealing the fate of countless luckless roosters!

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[1] Miss Elda M. Fair.

Nevertheless, the sickness had the temerity to continue to exist, and even finally made its appearance at the capital. Now that it had become a personal matter, the king had recourse to flight, abandoning his subjects to their fate. Many longed to send to the mission for the help proving so effective in other quarters, but this the king vetoed.

Even flight bade fair to prove unavailing; the very caravan that bore the king into the Bakele country carried the seed of death to that tribe. In terror, the king fled on into the Bashoba country and, as before, carried the deadly disease with him. There he buried his favourite wife and began to feel himself in desperation.

Behind him the disease began to rage like wildfire amidst the closely-packed walls and houses of the capital. Seven hundred of his people died there in a short space of time, and finally the king's mother sent word to her royal son demanding that he send to Bulape for help. In this last extremity the proud spirit broke, and, taking from his ankle its heavy embossed brass ornament, he sent it for a token to the Kentuckian and asked that he go to Mushenge and do what he could to stay the disease among his people.

The messengers found a missionary worn almost to the breaking point by the unremitting strain of the past terrible weeks, but the challenge of this opportunity awakened a last reserve of hidden energy and he set out at once on the hard twenty-five-mile bicycle ride to the capital. Possibly God might use this means of opening those long-closed gates to the Gospel—he *must* not fail!

Reaching Mushenge, a scene of indescribable desolation met his eyes. All the high *malala* palisades had been levelled to the ground by the state official in charge of the near-by government post. He had no medicines with which to cope with the disease, and took this means of at least letting more air and light in upon the spot where the people were literally dying by the hundreds. Most of the population had by now fled in terror to the surrounding forests.

Gathering together as many of the leading authorities as he could find, the missionary laid down the king's anklet before them and awaited their word. The moment they beheld this familiar ornament they responded with the seven solemn claps of the hands in unison which, is a token of reverence reserved for the king alone. They told him, " As long as you hold that token, you are king in Mbofay's stead; your word is law to us; speak your commands, only help us in our terrible need! "

With this assurance the missionary, with his helpers, now took up without delay the difficult task of rounding up the sick. Plunging into the forest, he searched out the stricken ones, even handling them with his own hands. Three he took from shallow graves who yet had the breath of life in them. Of these three, two actually survived! Here and there the searchers came across bodies of those that were past all human aid; these were hastily buried.

The result of these heroic labours was a long line of sufferers slowly making their way toward Bulape and the hope of life. Some were no longer able to walk alone; for these the missionary commandeered carriers. One young buck, when called upon for such service, refused point blank. Instantly the missionary cast the king's anklet down before him, saying, "You are not refusing my word, but your king's." No sooner were the words spoken than eager hands whisked the offender away. Shortly he returned, his back well striped with welts, and humbly offered to serve in any capacity whatever.

Only pausing long enough to assure himself that there were no more victims within reach of his help, the missionary wearily mounted his wheel and pedalled back to the station ahead of the sufferers to help the trained nurse with the task of providing the necessary extra accommodations. For miles he passed group after group of those he had sent on ahead. Some were walking, some being carried on the backs of others, some were actually crawling, and a few were lying still by the roadside. "Keep in the path, and keep coming!" he called as he passed; "If you can go no farther, stay in the path and we will try to send back for you; if you can just make it to Bulape we can help you!"

One thing especially made the heart of the weary missionary leap within him: in that long file of Bulape-bound sufferers his eye had marked three young princes, those who were in direct line for the throne some day!

XVII

KING MBOFAY CALLS FOR A MISSIONARY

A SECOND horror now followed close upon the heels of the one just past: the same wave of Spanish influenza which swept over the civilized world penetrated also to the heart of the Congo. Marvellous success had attended the results of the missionaries' efforts against the dysentery, the death rate in that great detention camp being only four out of every hundred, but many of those who had survived the first epidemic, being in a weakened condition, were unable to withstand the second. Finally the man who had so stalwartly stood between hundreds and death was himself stricken by this second attack at the very moment he was seeking to organize a new endeavour to meet this enemy also as best he could. His case proved not to be a severe one, but on the top of all he had already undergone it was sufficient to sap his last ounce of strength and confine him in helpless weakness to his bed.

Strangely enough, King Mbofay, who had also survived the first disease, fell a victim to the second. In a panic, he sent a runner in haste to Bulape to announce that the king was sick, feeling that this would prove sufficient. The missionary merely sent back word from his sick-bed that he himself was ill and could not come. Back came another urgent messenger, saying that the king was dying, and begging Mr. Washburn to come without delay.

Weak as he was, the sick man now determined to have himself carried to Mushenge. From his hammock-pole there dangled by a cord the anklet the king had sent him. It proved of the greatest utility: in each village he passed through, the people, upon catching sight of that potent token, dropped to their knees, patted their hands, and asked what he desired of them. In each case he demanded an entire fresh group of carriers, and they were immediately forthcoming; enabling him to make a rapid trip, up hill and down, without putting his foot to the ground.

He came too late: the king was already dead. He died in the arms of a mission evangelist, literally crying for a missionary to come to him. To the missionary, as he gazed upon the dead form of that once arrogant king, came the memory of a blazing hot day in a little enclosure at the capital, when this same king had been warned sternly, "Mbofay, you will live to see the day when you will *cry* for a missionary!"

Though the missionary arrived too late to render any aid to the king or even to hear any last message with which his dark mind may have been burdened, he did arrive at an opportune moment to witness a spectacle upon which the eyes of no white man had ever gazed—the burial ceremonies of a Bakuba king. The grateful people of their own accord insisted that he stay and witness every step of the long and interesting process.

The reign of Mbofay had been brief and inglorious; his funeral was the precise opposite. For ten days he lay in state and was finally buried with a lavish splendour that defies description. When the missionary reached Mushenge he found hundreds of natives busily employed night and day preparing the elaborate costumes, the vast casket and other accessories incidental to the great event. One whole group of natives was seated beside great sacks of cowrie shells, which constitute the coin of the realm, busily engaged in chipping these in a manner that would admit of their being sewn on the numerous robes of state. These cowrie shells alone represented a tremendous outlay of wealth.

The body of the king was first carefully prepared and then dusted thickly with a coat of the crimson cam wood powder, so dear to the heart of the Bakuba, and was then arrayed in a regal costume. The next step was to cunningly adjust the body in a semi-reclining attitude, that was startlingly lifelike upon a wonderfully carved throne of wood with his back supported against four upright ivory tusks. His left arm rested naturally upon a carved pedestal, while his right was outstretched before him in a gesture of blessing; this last effect being obtained by supporting the arm most ingeniously with fine cords that were scarcely visible. At his feet lay the royal sword, its hilt intricately patterned with inlaid flecks of brass and copper and white metal. His state spear, with its carved and highly polished shafts, slanted up against his left shoulder. On his head reposed an elaborate cowrie studded and befeathered head-dress.

When all was in readiness, there came a group of women from the harem to kneel at his feet and croon the ancient chants of the Bakuba royal dead. Day and night for the ten entire days these last came in relays to sing. Each succeeding day the body was arrayed in a different costume, each more resplendent than the last.

Day and night shifts also worked unceasingly at the fashioning of the great casket. This was as large as a small house, being twelve feet in length, eight in depth, and six in width. The labour involved in the construction of this casket was tremendous, as it was built of boards hewn out by hand and carefully dressed smooth with hand-adzes. Afterwards these boards were pierced at the ends with rows of small holes to enable the artisans to join them by lacing the ends together with strands of tough vine.

The entire exterior of this huge box was then covered over with a great cloth, especially prepared for the purpose, being heavily encrusted with cowrie shells sewn on in beautiful designs. Next in order the interior was lined with the royal embroidered raphia cloth, which is one of the most beautiful products of an artistic people. On the floor was laid one of their finest mats which had been especially woven to fit the space exactly.

Four superb robes were now brought forward to form the shroud: these were draped over the king's body one after the other in the order of their splendour. With the placing of the first robe, a head-dress of birds' feathers was placed upon the king's head, and with each succeeding robe certain other feathers were added to it. The fourth robe covered the body from chin to ankle and was a fitting climax to the whole, being so encrusted with light and dark beads and cowries as to form a marvellously realistic imitation of a leopard's skin. With this last robe a single eagle-feather was inserted into the head-dress.

With greatest care the body was now lifted into its place in the casket, the lifelike posture being maintained exactly as before. Great quantities of cowrie-shell money were placed near the body so that the king might not want for funds on his long journey. Lest he hunger or thirst, meats of every description and many molds of bread, together with gourd on gourd of palm-wine were disposed within the casket. At the king's feet space was reserved for a trunk, in which were laid piece on piece of the rarest examples of the Bakuba art of cloth-weaving and embroidery. Finally the top was lifted into position and securely fastened.

Long poles were lashed to the great structure by which to carry it to the grave. Forty men stepped out and grasped these poles and endeavoured to raise the deathly weight to their shoulders; their efforts were unavailing. Others came to the help of the struggling men at the poles; even so not until a full sixty stalwart natives put all their strength to the task did the huge structure rise slowly to its place on their shoulders. On the way to the grave these carriers were relieved by a constant interchanging of men.

What a grave! It was rather a chasm twenty feet in depth with the other dimensions in proportion. Stout vine-ropes were placed beneath the casket and as these were grasped and paid out slowly by hundreds of hands, it slowly sank to the floor of the pit.

The task of filling the enormous grave was in itself a most formidable one, and was performed entirely by hundreds of the late king's wives. These women raised no impious tools to the task, but reverently sifted the earth through their fingers, and as they worked they chanted ceaselessly the death-wail of the Bakuba royal dead. All through the night they toiled and sang and their task was not done when the flush of dawn crept into the eastern sky.

XVIII

"THE LEOPARD HUNTS ALONE!"

THE plague passed, the palisades of the capital were rebuilt as of old, and the affairs of the kingdom dropped into the old ruts deep-channelled by ancient usage. The royal enclosure in the heart of the capital remained empty; there was no king and for lack of one the oldest councillors administered the affairs of the kingdom.

In a separate enclosure without the main walls lived Kwete Mabintshi, the man who was destined to wear the eagle-feather as successor of Mbofay. All Bakubaland waited the event of his formal acceptance of the vacant kingship, but months passed by and still the king-to-be remained without the walls. Always he could be found there, reclining upon a broad, low couch. A glance showed that this recumbent attitude was enforced by a complete helplessness that belied the apparently powerful contours of his huge body. In his eyes smouldered a hidden fire that sometimes, when he was crossed, flared forth in lurid flame indicative of a former time when body and spirit had once been free and famed, the one for its magnificent proportions, the other for its fiery rebelliousness. Prior to the time that Kwete Fay had made the medicine of his rebellion against all the foreigners his splendid body had given no hint of the devastating seizure that was to bring him to this pass; in fact, this man, even more than the king, had been a leading spirit in fomenting the rebellion in which they trusted to free their kingdom of the last white man. Taken in chains, together with the king, it was not until he had been released from that galling bondage and had begun the long journey back to his home that the first touch of this paralysis had laid a warning finger upon him. Apparently it was God's way of nipping another rebellion in the bud and of opening the way for the advance of His kingdom among the Bakuba.

Many times during the lifetime of Mbofay the missionaries who came to his capital to seek to alter his attitude of hostility would go and visit the helpless Kwete. This he had seemed to appreciate. The Bakuba, like the ancient Greeks, almost worship physical perfection, and to this man acutely sensitive of his condition this little mead of consideration was most grateful. Gradually the light that smouldered in his eyes had changed to one almost of friendliness. This fact, coupled with the events of the past weeks of plague, was the slender peg upon which the missionaries at Bulape hung their eager hopes. Just possibly this man, at his accession, would throw open the doors of the capital and the kingdom to the preaching of the Gospel. But as weeks lengthened into months and still no sign came from Mushenge the station dropped into its old routine and the terrible events of the great epidemic became as a fevered dream.

Then one unforgettable day it came—that long-looked-for sign from Mushenge! The trail from Mushenge plunges into a deep little patch of forest just before reaching the station and abruptly comes out as from a green tunnel onto the open compound. On this memorable day two missionaries, working in the open upon some common task, looked up to see a dramatic picture framed in this opening in the forest. It was a small group of tall, bronzed Bakuba just emerging from the forest, their deep red loin-cloths showing strikingly against the green background. In their midst, and in front, slowly strode the grizzled but majestic Mbami Bushonga who had been for years a secret friend of the mission at the capital. Slightly stooped with age, the old chief came forward to where they stood, supporting himself in his stately walk by means of a staff with a cluster of four spear-heads at the top—his official symbol of rank.

It could mean but one thing; he had come directly from the king-to-be on an errand of deep significance: this much was known from the fact that this important functionary, himself a king's son, rarely stirred from the capital except on some royal embassage of great importance. His face lighted with its usual benign smile as he clapped hands in greeting, as is the Bakuba custom.

"You have come!" greeted the missionaries according to formula.

"I have come!"

"You are strong?"

"I am strong!"

"Have you a word?"

"I have a word! The king has sent me to say that he is now ready to take the eagle-feather; he only awaits the coming of his friends!"

The tropical sun glared down intolerably upon the capital as though jealous of any bedimming of his sovereignty by an earthly potentate. In a thatched pavilion which cast a grateful blob of shade was a small group of helmeted foreigners, including a representative or two of the government, two trading company men and several missionaries from Bulape. In this latter group was the tall form of the Kentuckian who had so shortly all but given his life for these people and who with the others, now waited with suppressed eagerness to hear what would be the result of it all. About them eddied a swelling throng of the inhabitants of the capital, many of them in gala dress.

The tedious wait was at last broken by the sound of a horn from within the enclosure. Immediately a file of queer-looking, undersized natives, representatives of the forest-dwelling Batua tribe, separated themselves from the throng and were admitted within the palisade. These strange people, who formed such a striking contrast with the tall, broad-shouldered Bakuba, though apparently insignificant, have a peculiar place in the superstitious traditions of the more powerful tribe and without their occult ministrations no Bakuba king can be invested with the eagle-feather.

Finally a great gate slid back and the king appeared. To those who had always beheld him prone in his helplessness it was a startling thing to see him now sitting erect in a large wheeled-chair.

He sat it like a throne and looked every inch a king. When this chair had been presented to him by a missionary shortly before, he had been so relieved and moved at the undreamed-of prospect of being able to appear in a dignified attitude before his people that tears had come to his eyes—tears that years of suffering had probably never wrung from the proud-spirited man. In his hair was a single snow-white feather; in the curve of his left arm was the rolled-up skin of a leopard. Behind him the walls that had been his temporary shelter were thrown down with a crash.

At his feet was now placed a large rectangular car fashioned of wood and covered with antelope skins, to the sides of which were lashed poles by which it was to be carried upon the shoulders of several strong men. This was the ancient royal car in which the Bakuba kings were always carried in triumph from the temporary enclosure without the walls to the great inner fence at the heart of the town. Leaning against the back wall of this car was a back-rest composed of four tusks of ivory lashed together. For the moment, however, the king retained his chair, which gave him an instant prestige with his subjects that almost, if not quite, offset his inability to stand erect.

The two young sons of the former king now came forward and formally delivered over to Kwete the right to the throne of their father. After them came a procession of other sons of former kings, bearing certain gifts of symbolic significance—a spear, a great cowrie-studded belt, a necklace, a beautiful head-dress. All the while a musician thrummed a many-stringed harp and another blew upon a large queer-shaped horn. Just behind the king on the ground was a strange round drum with a giant lizard-skin for a head and splotched all over with gruesome daubs of crimson and white. It was now silent, but this was the dread instrument that formerly was heard in the village streets in the dead of nights and those hearing it huddled in their houses in terror; its passing always spelled doom for some.

Mbami Bushonga, the chief that had come to Bulape to call the missionaries, next came forward in regall dress and executed a dance before the king as he brandished a large sword. He paused to propound certain questions to the king and concluded with the exclamation, " Your name is no longer Kwete but King! " The Mbami's co-chief, the Mbengi, repeated almost exactly the performance of the former.

One of the Mbami's questions to the king had been, " Are you fruitful, as a king should be, have you children to set forth? " The response to this was a procession of the sons and daughters of the king, all richly dressed.

Following this came a group of the queer little Batua people, men and women, marching in single file. They moved in a circle about the king's chair while one of their number blew upon a horn fashioned from an ivory tusk. As they moved, they sang a weird chant. One of the king's sons stood by his side within the circle and held aloft a trailing end of the king's cowrie-wrought girdle. As they slowly circled about, it could be seen that the women each carried something bulky and mysterious which they carefully concealed beneath the folds of their loin-cloths. The men now presented the king with a twisted stick of some deep significance while the women drew near and, having first thrown a concealing cover over the king, showed him under its protecting folds the contents of the bulky parcels. The most gruesome speculation would probably fall short of the reality of the contents of those mysterious bundles.

At this point the king allowed himself to be carefully lifted into his carrying-car; at his feet sat two of his subjects holding his feet in their laps. A hush fell upon the throng as he opened his mouth to speak, and among them all none listened so intently and eagerly as the little group of missionaries in the pavilion. A moment now would suffice to make or break all their hopes.

In brief staccato sentences the king warned his people to respect the government authorities and to maintain friendly relations with the other foreigners in his kingdom. Then, tapping the leopard-skin in the hollow of his left arm, he spoke these words:

"The elephants roam the jungles in herds; the monkeys pass through the tree-tops in bands; the driver ants travel in columns through the sand;—all the animals hunt in a pack,—*But the leopard hunts alone!*

"I am the leopard, I hunt alone! Following my own will and judgment, I now pledge you, in my authority as King of the Bakuba, to friendship with the mission! Let them come and build their village at my capital! As the leopard tears his prey, so will I despoil those who refuse my commands! "

With a shout the people now grasped the poles of the royal car and, hoisting it to their shoulders, set out in triumphal procession towards the main avenue leading into the capital. Behind him, high above the heads of the populace, came the heir apparent in a car similar to that of the king. Moving in the cloud of sun-shot dust, the missionaries followed to see what would be the end of a day that had already brought a joy that made their hearts swell with gratitude to a prayer-answering God. The words which they had just heard spoken had come thirty years and a day from the time Lapsley and Sheppard pitched their tent on the banks of the Lulua.

Arriving at the entrance of the central avenue, the royal procession came to a halt; coming to meet them, down the broad way leading from the heart of the capital, was another procession headed by a stately chieftain in elaborate head-dress and costume. This was the Kikama, son of a king and ranking officer at the capital. The kingdom had been in his hands pending the inauguration of the new king; he now came forward formally to place the capital and kingdom in the hands of the new ruler. The procession came on to the accompaniment of beating of drums and loud shouts of acclamation until the Kikama's car was within twenty paces of the royal car. Here the Kikama halted his car and, holding out his sword-hilt first toward the king, made a terse address of welcome.

Followed similar speeches by many others of the chief men of the kingdom, each in turn being elevated in the Kikama's car for the purpose.

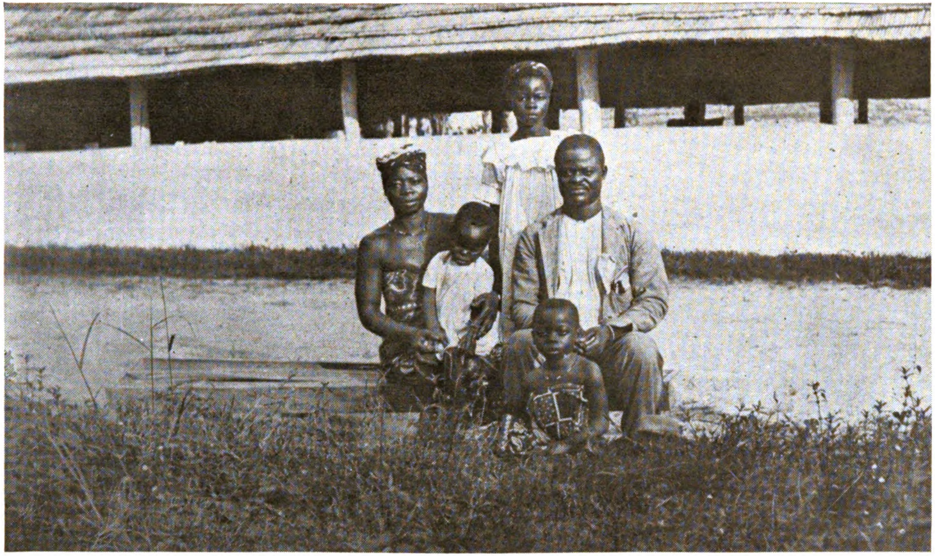
The king's response was brief; already the intense suffering occasioned by the great strain of the proceedings was beginning to show in his face in spite of his wonderful muscular control. The two throngs flowed together and the whole, headed by the king and the heir apparent, moved slowly up the broad way. Arriving at a point opposite the royal enclosure, the shouting horde tore a great gap in the fences on either side of the way: through the one the king was borne in triumph to his permanent residence in the royal central enclosure; through the other, the heir apparent was borne back to his own quarters. Within the royal enclosure, into which only the men were allowed to penetrate, they all fell to their knees and gave the seven royal hand-claps reserved for the king of the Bakuba. "Here are our heads," they offered, "kill us or save us alive as you will, we are your people forever!" The assemblage rapidly dispersed, the sun sank redly in the west and swift-following night drew the curtain on a memorable day in Bakubaland.

XIX

FROM SHADOW INTO LIGHT

THE king, in breaching the city walls for his own triumphal entry, had also decisively broken down every barrier to the entry of the Gospel to the heart of the kingdom. Not a moment was lost in taking advantage of this breach in a hitherto impregnable wall; two fine young Christian lads with their wives were hurried from Bulape to the capital, there to take up their permanent residence. Such was the ancient spell cast by this stronghold of the Bakuba with its lurid traditions of unnameable horrors that even some of the older evangelists at Bulape balked at the prospect of living there. The two lads already mentioned used up their last reserves of courage in agreeing to go; having done this much, they implored the missionaries most pitifully not to leave them there long at a time unvisited. Indeed, nothing was farther from the hearts of those who sent these boys than the thought of leaving them there alone in these first trying months. Weeks at a time they spent at the capital organizing and directing the work.

For want of any place of worship, the first meetings were held in a broad open avenue, the people seated on the ground. With the lifting of the royal



MOSES KABUYA, FIRST NATIVE PASTOR AT BULAPE, AND HIS FAMILY

He is teacher of the boys in the Training School for Evangelists ban the people fairly scrambled for places to hear this Gospel about which many had long been most curious. Sometimes the Sunday services witnessed two thousand and more eager listeners. Naturally enough, there was a strong element of Galilæan fickleness intermingled with this Galilæan enthusiasm, while not a few undoubtedly had an eye to the loaves and fishes; however, the ebbing of some of this superficial following left a large and firm stratum of those who were sincere and earnest in their desire to learn more fully this hope of an eternal life, and some were to demonstrate the genuineness of their zeal by daring persecution and even the threat of death.

Not only was this so, but there were many found who had already been taught at Ibanche in years gone by, and these in turn had spread the seed in the capital even in spite of royal disfavour. These had been led hitherto only by fear of the king's wrath and now entered whole-heartedly into the faith. In a very few months there was a class of over a hundred who were eagerly awaiting examination for baptism. These sent repeated messages to Bulape, " Come and test us! "

After a most careful double examination with an intervening period of probation, some sixty-four candidates were accepted and baptised. The baptism of this first group of converts made a profound impression upon those at the capital. This impression was enhanced by the fact that, mingled with some of the humbler seekers after the truth were many of the royal people. The very fact of these haughty ones showing a willingness to mingle with the common people in the desire of the knowledge of life was a startling and unprecedented thing.

Two of the first converts were lads who would, if they lived, be some day kings of the Bakuba. These two came one day to the evangelists with a word that was passing strange coming from such a source; they said, "You teach that those who hear and believe must go and teach others; we want you to let us go now and teach the Gospel in some of the nearby villages, because when we become older the affairs of the kingdom will hinder us from doing so." This from the highest ranks of the haughty and scornful ruling class!

Then there was Princess Bulape, own sister of the king: she was converted and earnestly desired to be baptised, but was confronted with a staggering problem. She came to the evangelists with it: "I believe and want to be saved, I have no longer any fear of or respect for the medicines and fetishes; but what am I to do? I am the appointed custodian of some of the king's most powerful medicines. The laws of these medicines lay certain rites and restrictions upon me which are known to all the people. Shall I break the laws of the king's favourite medicines?" The question was a poser for the young teacher, himself not many years removed from the age-long thrall of superstitious medicine. He knew that in the present case the consequences of deliberately breaking the king's medicine might well be most serious, jeopardizing not only the princess but the future of the work itself. The king's favour could hardly be expected to extend to acquiescing in the flaunting of his most deeply-rooted superstitious worship. However, he gave his judgment that Bulape must choose between the two and in the event of her becoming a Christian she could no longer execute the rites of the king's medicines, even though she herself did not believe in them.

She went away to fight her own battle: the outcome would shortly be known to the whole capital, for one of the restrictions imposed by the king's medicine was that this girl should not appear during the period of the new moon with her head uncovered. Shortly after the coming of the new moon the whole capital was stirred by the appearance of Bulape in public without her familiar headdress—she had made her choice! That no dire punishment was wreaked on the head of this courageous young girl gave rise to the possible hope that some ray of light had found its way even into the heart of the king.

We are again at the Bakuba capital. It is the time of the new moon and the softly falling darkness at first faintly and then more clearly brings into relief the slender silver crescent against the salmon of the dying day. Keener eyes than ours have already beheld that mysterious and ever-fresh miracle and a strange hush falls over the city of fences broken only by the whispering voices of those who point out the faint visitor to their less quick-visioned friends. The old spell is upon the capital: from somewhere within the city comes the strangled gurgle of a queer trumpet: comes also the throb of drums beaten softly and the sound of the voices of many women chanting. The old spell unbroken—No! not unbroken—for clearly on the night air comes to our ears in words that we may not understand but with notes that are unmistakable: "All hail the power of Jesus' name!"

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