Thomas Birch Freeman

Missionary Pioneer
to
Ashanti,
Dahomey & Egba

J. Milum F.R.G.S.

FELLING A FETISH TREE. [*p.* 129.

THOMAS BIRCH FREEMAN

Missionary Pioneer to Ashanti, Dahomey, and Egba

BY

JOHN MILUM, F.R.G.S.

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TO HIS MANY VALUED FRIENDS OF

THE NATIVE MINISTRY IN WESTERN AFRICA,

THE AUTHOR DEDICATES THIS BRIEF STORY OF THE LIFE OF

A REMARKABLE MAN,

TRUSTING THAT HIS EXAMPLE MAY STIMULATE THEM

TO FURTHER EFFORTS IN THE FORMATION OF A

HEALTHY, SELF-SUSTAINING

AFRICAN CHURCH;

AND WITH THE HOPE THAT THEY MAY BE LED

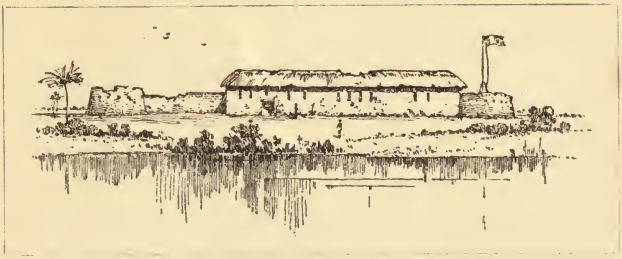
TO A MORE DETERMINED ATTACK UPON THE

STRONGHOLDS OF HEATHENISM

IN THE FAR INTERIOR

OF THEIR

FATHERLAND.



OLD FORT AT WHYDAH, DAHOMEY.

PREFACE.

CHRISTIAN evangelisation on the Gold Coast by agents of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, is of comparatively recent date, Joseph R. Dunwell, the first missionary to the Fantis, having reached Cape Coast Castle as late as the year 1836. As a child of eight years old, the writer of this preface can well remember the sorrow occasioned in the family of his late grandfather, Elisha Wilson, of Peckham, from whose class Dunwell had proceeded, on the reception of the news of the young preacher's lamented death, after a short ministry of scarcely six months. The whole subsequent history of the Gold and Slave Coast Mission is embraced in less than two generations, its jubilee having been celebrated in 1886. Over nearly the whole of this period the missionary career of Thomas Birch Freeman extended, as will be shown in the following pages; and it will be discovered, on

perusal, that the development of the work in his hands, and in those of his coadjutors, was simply marvellous. What its future will be depends upon the wisdom and energy of its European supervisors, and the devotion to spiritual duty of its native staff. Lake Chad is its ultimate bourn. Across the swamps to Benin, and round to the bend of the Niger, over the hills to Nkoranza, and thence onward to Timbuktu; through Salagha and the inner lands of the half-pagan, half-Islamite Soudanese, to Sakatu, and thence to Kuka on the Great Lake, is its scope. What possibilities of successful extension lie before the young Fanti and Egba Churches! and what a prosperous future history their annals will become, if, in the providence of God, they resolve to embrace their opportunities!

J. F. W.

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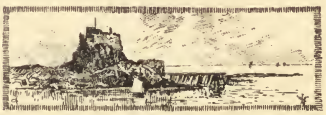

YORUBAN CHARMS.

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TWYFORD CHURCH.

THOMAS BIRCH FREEMAN

Missionary Pioneer to Ashanti, etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAN.

ABOUT three miles from the ancient city of Winchester lies the picturesque village of Twyford, which has been named by some topographers "the queen of villages." Whatever may be its merits in point of beauty, there can be no question as to its antiquity; for quite recently interesting remains of a Roman village have been discovered within a few feet of the surface of the ground. And though the old church has been repaired and modernised, the ancient yew tree with its unique cone-shaped head remains, a much-prized object of interest, as it probably has been for hundreds of years.

It was in this ancient village that Thomas Birch Freeman first saw the light on November 29th, 1809.

Quite a romance has gathered about the parentage of this remarkable man, the chief points of which have received confirmation from an old inhabitant who knew the subject of this memoir. His father was a slave, but against his supposed West Indian origin the son strongly protested. Whether it be true that the father of Thomas Freeman was brought to England as a reward for his fidelity in the time of a slave-rising or not, the following has received no denial. At the home of his master he married a European serving-woman of the household, the subject of our sketch being the only issue of the marriage. At the tender age of six his father died, and his mother remarried. We have failed to trace the children of the second marriage, but it is asserted that there are some half-brothers, who might furnish many interesting circumstances of this period. The fatherless boy grew into youth under the roof of his father's master, whose name he took, "Freeman" being added as an appropriate surname for one whose father had obtained freedom under the Emancipation Act.

John Birch lived in a middle-class house facing a three-cornered space, a public-house, "The Dolphin," occupying the second, and a cottage, then used as the Wesleyan preaching-house, the third corner of the triangle. The preaching-house, which was the residence of a shoemaker, has long since been removed to make room for a more modern structure ; the shoemaker too, who was the Methodist class-leader of the village, died some twenty-five years ago. The public-house and John Birch's house, in which Freeman was born, still remain.

Twyford was embraced in those days in the Winchester Circuit of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the little thatched cottage being regularly visited by the preachers of that Connexion for the holding of a simple religious service for the pious villagers ;

whilst the devoted shoemaker did his part, as in hundreds of cases in English villages, all the week through, gratuitously acting as pastor, giving helpful counsel and advice to all who cared to join the little company.

The humble thatched cottage not only became an object of interest to many who received there spiritual instruction from the humble lay-preachers and the godly shoemaker, but it was an object of curiosity and a centre for mischief for the village youths, Thomas being one of the number. The roof and chimney of the cottage were about the height of a wall that protected it from the roadway, which was on a higher elevation. To annoy the worshippers Freeman and his companions would climb upon the roof, tie a brick to a string, put it down the chimney, and continue to draw it up and down, greatly to the distraction of those engaged in devout exercises. One Sunday evening, reaching the cottage earlier than his mischievous comrades, he listened through the keyhole, and heard words that were not only the means of his conversion, but which influenced his whole after life. A native of the village connected with the little cottage-church, who has been an honoured lay-preacher for more than thirty years, furnished this particular, and adds that it was a matter of remembrance and rejoicing amongst the earlier Methodists of the parish.

A neat modern sanctuary in another part of the village, dedicated to public worship on New Year's Day 1851 under the auspices of the Free Methodists, is the substantial outcome of the humble cottage and its simple services, and will stand as evidence of a continuance of the gracious influences that gathered about the godly shoemaker and the early village Methodists.

At precisely what age this crisis in Freeman's life took place we are unable to state, but subsequent events indicate that he allied himself to the Church from which he had received spiritual benefit,

and soon began to exercise his talents as a preacher. About those early days he was unnecessarily reticent, not even permitting the members of his own family to break through the secrecy with which he surrounded this and the earlier periods of his life. It was possibly the remembrance of his father's servitude that galled his sensitive nature and made him so silent, but the honourable position to which he afterwards attained indicates the true nobility of his nature ; and upon him the circumstances of his birth leave no mark of shame : the brand is upon a nation which permitted to so late a date such a degrading condition of things.

John Birch, however, was no harsh master, and evidently afforded a liberal education and training to the youth ; for soon after we find him occupying the responsible position of botanist and head gardener on the estate of Sir Robert Harland at Orwell Park, on the banks of the Orwell, in the neighbourhood of Ipswich.

Sir Robert Harland appears to have taken great interest in the young man, giving him facilities for improving his education and for the acquirement of a special knowledge of botany and horticulture, which he afterwards turned to good practical account in Africa. One of his old friends informs us that she remembers seeing his cosy little library in the gardens at Orwell Park, which proves that his spare moments were utilised in the best possible manner. Both Sir Robert and Lady Harland showed him unusual kindness ; but when it became known that he had connected himself with the Methodists of the neighbourhood, it aroused within Sir Robert's breast great prejudice and the strongest opposition. He could not brook the gossip of his aristocratic friends in reference to his Methodist gardener. He summoned him to his presence, and informed him that he would have to make the choice between giving up his preaching or his situation, and he would allow him a month to think the matter over.

The young man consulted his friends, and especially Mr. Peter Hill of Chelmondiston, at whose house he was a frequent visitor, and for whom and his family Freeman retained a lifelong affection. He soon decided as to his course of action in the matter. He loved his profession, and was much attached to his kind patrons ; but he felt that his first duty was to his *greater Master* and His work.

At the end of the month the young gardener sent in his resignation, much to the vexation of Lady Harland, who did all in her power to induce him to change his mind. He stood firm to his conscience and the advice of his godly friends. A few aged people still remain in the neighbourhood of Ipswich and in the village of Chelmondiston to testify to the earnestness and the ability of the ministrations of the young man of colour, and also to the fact that he was esteemed and beloved by all who knew him.

As already stated, in Freeman's veins there flowed African blood, and the story of the ills of the race with their long oppression, and the appeals which at this time were so frequently made in the Methodist churches, soon stirred within his fervid heart a desire to bear the message of the Cross to his father's kindred. In the year 1837 he offered his services to the Wesleyan Missionary Society for special work among the people to whom he was so strangely allied, and was summoned at once to London for interview and consultation. He passed a satisfactory examination before a special committee at the old Wesleyan Mission-house in Hatton Garden, and on the evening of the same day preached a "trial sermon," when the genial Abraham Farrar was present, and encouraged him by his affectionate manner and kindly face.

In reference to this event he wrote when he was a veteran in the mission field the following appreciative paragraph: "My brief personal acquaintance with the late Rev. Abraham Farrar left an impression on my mind which is as fresh at this day as it was in

1837, when I first knew him. . . . He was appointed to hear me preach my 'trial sermon' in Spitalfields Chapel. . . . He sat on that occasion in a side pew down on my left, evidently withdrawn from striking observation, but allowing me to see him; and his countenance then, as on all other occasions when we met, beamed on me with an affection which made me feel greatly at ease in his presence and entirely at home; and hence in after-life, whenever the thought of gentlemanly feeling and bearing, and elegance of mind, and paternal affection associated with the ministerial character has occurred to me, he has always been the *beau ideal* of my imagination."

Those who afterwards were intimately acquainted with the subject of our biography will be ready to accord to him the credit of having attained in after-years to his *ideal*. There was about him a deference to others, a courtesy of manner and bearing, which, associated with the fashion of his dress, reminded us at times, in his old age, of one of a series of family pictures in an ancient country-house, of some fine old ancestor with gallant pose characteristic of the gentleman of a former century.

His brief interview with the committee of the Wesleyan Missionary Society resulted in his immediate appointment to the newly-formed mission on the Gold Coast, Western Africa; and in keeping with a recent decision of the committee, like Wrigley and Harrop, his predecessors in this difficult and trying field, he was advised to marry. His thoughts went at once to Miss Boot, the lady housekeeper at Orwell Park. One who knew this lady, and her sisters also, intimately, and frequently visited her, states that "she was a charming woman, and there is no wonder she was chosen for his wife; and we knew she was devoted to him, *young* as *we* were." She was a cultured English lady who had it in her heart to do much for the native people among whom her lot was to be cast, and whose affections she rapidly won.

Thus our young missionary and his bride embarked on the sailing ship *Osborne* for a voyage which was much more of an undertaking then than now. It was a long, tedious passage, arising principally from their being becalmed, under the oppressive heat of a tropical sun, for the space of thirty days. The track is now so well known across the Bay of Biscay to Madeira and the Canary Islands, and then skirting the African coast, that it would only weary the reader to relate here the details of such a voyage. In the missionary romance, however, which he wrote when an old man, he evidently embodied his impressions of a storm in the dreaded bay, of the beauty and fertility of Madeira, the grandeur of the Peak of Teneriffe, with sundry phenomena striking to a traveller for the first time voyaging to Africa.

He gives us also an idea of his occupations and musings on board ship, all of which gathered about his future work, and his consecration to such a sublime service, which he thought of with soberness and joyful anticipation. The following is quoted from the story above mentioned, which may well be an extract taken from his journal, referring to the approach of the ship to Madeira:—

"The air seems almost fragrant, and so soft and healthful, that I have been leaning over the bulwarks looking at the beautiful phosphoric light as late as 10 p.m. without the least sensation of cold. Hail! peaceful hours of meditative thought! I luxuriate in your temperate sweets. It is at such times as these that faith climbs the ladder of Jacob, and the exalted sympathies of the soul pierce beyond the boundaries of time and wander in eternity. Oh, for that complete control over every feeling, every passion, that I may be able to catch every wind which will waft me forward over the ocean of sacred knowledge which lies expanded before me! Oh, ye walks of Divine science, I see, I see your vast, your boundless stores of holy fruit and balmy nectar, such as can

satisfy ethereal natures ! Oh, my God, help me daily to eat and drink and live for eternity ! "

Later in the journal he writes :—

" Pursuing my Biblical studies, and delighted with the many pleasing wonders which burst upon my mental vision. How beautiful is the harmony of the Holy Scriptures ! God of my life, sanctify me through Thy truth ! Oh, help me to dive deeply into its sacred mysteries, and to become mighty in the Scriptures ! Let their sublime truths constantly occupy and influence my spirit, that I may prove, day by day, that the blessed gospel is indeed the power of God unto salvation."

FRONT VIEW OF THE CASTLE, CAPE COAST.

CHAPTER II.

THE PIONEERS.

THE Gold Coast of Western Africa has been more or less familiar to Englishmen for some three hundred years. Our earliest connection therewith was not of such a character as to cause us great satisfaction. In the days of Queen Elizabeth our daring sailors had discovered that great wealth was to be obtained not only from the precious metal after which the country is named, but more particularly from the accursed slave trade ; and Her Majesty's consent was sought and was reluctantly given for the continuation of the nefarious traffic by an association which finally developed into "The Royal African Company of England."

Those were the days of piracy on the high seas, when the hardy freebooters knew no right but might ; and on that African seaboard, cursed and blessed in turn by the invasion of European adventurers, the renowned sailors of both the Portuguese and Dutch

were brought into competition with the bold sea-kings of England. For a long series of years great and bitter rivalry existed between these nations for the ascendency over this strip of country in the Bight of Benin, till within the last twenty years the cession of the Dutch fort and town of Elmina, with the famous De Ruyter's staff, has given England the supremacy, and resulted in the formation of the now well-known Crown colony of the Gold Coast.

Portuguese influence is not, however, likely to be forgotten, inasmuch as the names bestowed by them upon many of the towns and points of land have gained permanence, as indeed have also many terms woven into the native tongue. Cabo Corso, now corrupted and anglicised into Cape Coast, was the name given to the point of land upon which the Portuguese built a fortress used chiefly as a strong slavehold. This historic castle fell into the hands of the Dutch, who were subsequently dislodged by the English in 1661. They enlarged and strengthened it, retaining its possession to this day. The great white-turreted castle built upon the black rock, over which the surf breaks into foam, is still the most prominent object to catch the eye of the sailor as he passes the seaboard town of Cape Coast. Within its walls—at first garrisoned by the servants of the Trading Company, then by a small contingent of West Indian troops—a company of armed native Houssa police, officered by Englishmen, has more recently been quartered. Here formerly the President, and since then the Governor, of the Gold Coast lived, and on this building is concentrated a history which is alike tragic and pathetic. A true record of its upbuilding and maintenance would present the chief facts of the history of the town and people for the last five hundred years. The history of its religious life too, as far as Christian missions are concerned, takes its rise within the stone walls of the castle.

With a strange inconsistency the Englishman,

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especially in the early days with which we now deal, entered upon his piracy and his slave-dealing unconscious of his wrong-doing, and he was careful to say his prayers both before and after his dishonest acts; and when a company was sufficiently large and wealthy to do so, it was regarded as a legitimate part of the business to employ a chaplain to say prayers for its members. Probably many will see little to choose between the inconsistency of these hard-handed traders and sailors and the slave-holding Christian backed by his parson in the Southern States of America less than half a century ago, or the modern powers whose chaplains pray for a blessing before entering upon the carnage of a battle-field. Thus we find these traders in native produce and "living ebony" were in the habit of receiving a chaplain at Cape Coast Castle, under whose ministrations and prayers their trading transactions might appear to have the sanction of Heaven; and out of this custom grew a greater blessing to the country than could have been dreamed of by the most sanguine philanthropist.

To one of these chaplains—a missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts—must be accorded the honour of making the first attempt to introduce the blessings of the Christian religion to the natives. This was in the year 1751. To his honour it must be stated that it appears as if the chaplaincy were not his primary object; but it is evident that his official position in the castle gave him an opportunity of carrying forward a work which could not have come to him otherwise. This chaplain, the Rev. Thomas Thompson, M.A., who had already spent five years in America under the auspices of the renowned Society, obtained permission from the directors to proceed to the Gold Coast in order "to make a trial with the natives, and see what hope there would be of introducing among them the Christian religion." After four years of toil his health gave

way, and he returned to England much discouraged with the result of his attempt.

He had, however, sent two native youths to England to be trained, one of whom, Philip Quaque, graduated at the University, Oxford, and returned to continue the work Thompson had begun ; and for fifty years he faithfully discharged his duty. Within the castle a memorial of this man may be seen, with the following epitaph : "Sacred to the memory of Philip Quaque, native of this country, who, having been sent to England for education, received holy orders 1765, and was here employed upwards of fifty years as Missionary from the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and as Chaplain to the Factory. He died 17 October, 1816, aged 75 years. The African Company, in token of the approbation of his long and faithful services, have placed this memorial on his mortal remains, 1817."

The calumnious report that at the very last he lapsed into heathenism may be safely dismissed to the limbo of ill-natured reports which have been so diligently propagated by numerous traducers of the Christian missionary on the western coast of Africa.

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel sent four Europeans in rapid succession to continue the work, three of whom died ; and the fourth after failure of health returned to England. The Gold Coast, however, remained on the Society's list till 1826, and as late as 1843 the directors had not given up hope of resuming the work, and still felt that the natives had "claims upon them." But as no volunteers for this dangerous post were forthcoming, the Society was unable to reoccupy the position. It therefore graciously stepped aside, and permitted the Wesleyan Missionary Society to occupy the position without interference or jealousy.

To all appearance the work of three-quarters of a

century was unproductive ; but the faithful labourers had sown the seed of which the harvest is being reaped to-day. They had nurtured the school held within the walls of the castle, which had developed into the institution known as the Government School ; and there the lads had been taught to read the English Bible, a copy of which was presented to each youth on leaving. Administrators like the genial and gifted President George Maclean gave the modest institution the benefit of their powerful influence, delighting to promote the moral and intellectual interests of the natives. Thus the spark was fanned.

Some of these lads became genuine students of the Bible, its Oriental stories fascinating them, and the New Testament portrayal of their inner life convincing them of its Divinity. The Scriptures were carefully examined, and portions committed to memory, with the result that some of the students were brought to a sense of their sinfulness and need of God. In their perplexity they repaired for counsel to a Scotch trader, William Topp, whom they believed to be religiously disposed. By his advice they formed a "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge," faithfully living up to the rules which they made for their guidance, and meeting regularly once a week to study the Scriptures and pray for light and leading. Down to a very recent period a few of the members of this little band remained ; and fifty years later one at least was spending quietly, in his old age, a well-earned rest from the activities of a long ministry in the native Church.

That native "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge," in its spontaneous formation and its subsequent results, is surely a wonderful testimony to the fidelity and fruitfulness of the work done and apparently lost by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and is in itself a theme upon which one might dwell at great length as to the result of honest work and the marvellous fecundity of "the good seed." And what

a rebuke it administers to missionary despondency, and to the hasty conclusions we sometimes arrive at in relation to missionary work! That little Society was formed in 1830 or 1831, when the natives had been for some years without the guidance of a missionary and the castle without a chaplain.

The aged native minister to whom reference has just been made, the late E. J. Fynn, recently related an incident which is interesting as a record of the earliest persecution of this little Christian band. Some of the "castle people" entertained a dislike for the little company with their primitive methods of worship, and raised a calumnious report accusing them of dangerous political designs, taking care that the rumour should reach the ear of President Maclean. Immediate steps were taken to suppress the Society; the leader, William De Graft, was imprisoned, and the rest were threatened with a fine; whereupon the members, after taking counsel together, sent a copy of the Scriptures, which he himself had presented to one of them, and most courteously requested the President to point out in his own gift, which he had backed by good advice, his authority for the infliction of punishment and fine for the reading of such a book. This appeared to be contumacious, but was not so intended, and the whole band was cast into prison; whereupon, with the Paul and Silas spirit already developing among them, these Fanti Christians prayed and sang aloud. The President was not likely to be unjust, and when on inquiry he discovered they were innocent of the grave charges made against them they were released, and they secured his powerful influence and lasting friendship. Thus their trouble turned out for the furtherance of the gospel.

The exigencies of life in the course of a few years scattered this little band, some in one direction, some in another, as traders and clerks and mechanics. William De Graft, their leader, took up his residence at Dixcove as a trader. The little remnant at Cape

Coast, finding their stock of Bibles running short, communicated with him, requesting that he would obtain the help and sympathy of some suitable person to secure a fresh supply of Scriptures from England. Soon after, the opportunity presented itself by the arrival of the Bristol trading barque *Congo*, the captain of which was named Potter, and with whom De Graft had transactions.

Captain Potter was a member of the Wesleyan Church at Bristol, and was not a little surprised and interested to receive a commission for Bibles. He made it his business to visit the little Christian community at Cape Coast, joining the members at one of their weekly gatherings for Scripture-reading and prayer. He not only expressed his willingness to obtain a supply of Bibles, but, to their immense satisfaction, to be the bearer to England of their earnest request for the appointment of an English missionary. John Aggery, who was subsequently king of Cape Coast, was one of the number who appealed to Captain Potter to secure for them a missionary.

In consequence of forsaking the fetish of his country he had been cut off from the succession to the chieftainship, and he and his companions were publicly flogged. But such a change was produced by missionary effort in the country that within thirty years he was elected sovereign, and at the Church anniversary in 1864 he publicly acknowledged his sense of obligation to Christianity, and declared that his object should henceforth be to promote the educational and spiritual improvement of the people.*

The captain, on reporting himself to the President, related all he knew, and stated his intention of securing the interest of the Christians of England on behalf of the little company. President Maclean is reported to have replied: "If you propose to obtain a missionary, I would advise one of the Methodist communion; for these people with their fervour remind

* "Annual Report of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, 1865."

CAPE COAST CASTLE, FROM THE ROADSTEAD.

me much of the members of that Church in England." Such a recommendation was not likely to be lost upon the godly Methodist captain. When once more his ship arrived in the Bristol dock, and he was free to communicate with the Wesleyan Missionary Society, he delivered the message from these simple-minded Africans. At the same time he offered to take on his next voyage a suitable man, whom the directors might select, free of charge ; and to bring him back on the same terms, should he find it impracticable to establish a mission during the time of the captain's stay, which was sometimes prolonged over many months, on account of his trading transactions with the natives.

The offer was gladly accepted, and the pioneer was selected in the person of Joseph Rhodes Dunwell, a sturdy Yorkshireman, the story of whose life does not belong to our present narrative. The young men, whose request had thus been so fully met, gladly placed themselves under his direction and care, and on the first Sabbath after he landed, January 4th, 1835, Dunwell began his public ministry at Cape Coast. He found already formed in the regular weekly meeting the peculiar conditions of Christian fellowship insisted upon by the Methodist Church as a test of membership, and upon that foundation it was comparatively easy to build, which he did as a wise master-builder. The first congregation to which Dunwell preached was composed of the band of young men referred to and a few others, and he thus describes it : " The deepest attention was manifested ; joy beamed on every countenance " ; and then adds, "Their gratitude is without bounds, and they say, 'We did never think of the missionary's coming to teach black man.'" The little Church, beginning with upwards of fifty adherents, under the direction of this earnest servant of God rapidly increased ; but to the intense sorrow of all, and the dismay of the little community, the unhealthy climate claimed him as a

victim within six months of his landing, and he passed away to his reward on June 24th, 1835.

The Wesleyan Missionary Society, "unable to reconcile with their conviction of duty the abandonment of a work which had been so auspiciously begun," resolved to send two married missionaries, "on the principle that the interests of a mission in such a climate as that of Western Africa ought not to be left to the care of one, . . . and that their wives might attend to the improvement of the native females." Such a resolution, it may be understood, gave unbounded joy to the bereaved Church. A young Lancashire man, George O. Wrigley, with his recently wedded wife, sailed on August 12th, 1836. With great energy he applied himself to the work of acquiring the language, and laid the foundations of a large and commodious place of worship, the beginning of the present stable building ; whilst his wife gathered about her for instruction the native girls and young women. They continued their hazardous toil for four months, when it was their joy to welcome a young Derbyshire man, Peter Harrop, and his wife.

But within a few weeks Mr. and Mrs. Harrop and Mrs. Wrigley died from the effects of the climate, and Wrigley was left alone. This is an epoch of tragic interest in the mission, and even at this distance of time one can scarcely read the pathetic story told by the surviving and solitary missionary without tears. It is not surprising that he writes, just from the graves of his companions, "This is indeed a land of death."

He buried his sorrow, however, in prodigious labour, applying himself with greater devotion than ever to the work of the mission. "Your mission," he wrote to the secretaries of the Society, "will feel the loss severely. The natives here, especially the females, are in a most depraved and degraded state. The persevering efforts of my beloved partner had done much on their behalf; the girls' school was more

prosperous than it ever had been at the time of her death, and her three classes of females were just beginning to reap the benefit of her pious instructions, two of them raised by herself, when, alas! all was stopped. I am keeping the school together as well as I can until you send more help. Surely others will be found to occupy the places of those who are gone! There is indeed a large harvest of souls waiting to be gathered in here; but everything outwardly seems opposed to its accomplishment. Nevertheless, I will not despair. I will yet hope to see better days in Cape Coast. The departure of our friends has raised various opinions among the natives, some of which among the baser sort are not of the most friendly nature to the cause of truth. Pray do send me assistance as soon as possible! I have also again to urge the sending of a quantity of elementary and other books for schools; they are much wanted. Three boys' schools may be commenced immediately, and also a few Sunday-schools in the small villages surrounding Cape Coast. I cannot stir without books, and I do hope the committee will send them. I have also again to urge the immediate reinforcement of the mission. What is one single individual among so many? I hope, notwithstanding the sad news which these sheets will communicate, that others will be found to fill up the ranks, and in the spirit of one now slumbering alongside the dust of Harriet Newell* in the Isle of France, 'Come to this hell, if it be even to die here.' I hope in reference to myself, in the midst of my discouragements,—and I have them from a variety of quarters,—that I can say, 'Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor

* A devoted American missionary who died at the early age of nineteen. "She is interred in a retired spot in the burying ground in Port Louis (Mauritius), under the shadow of an evergreen." The missionary Sargent, to whom this saying is attributed, lies by her side.

height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus,' and from my work in this section of the mission field until my appointed time."

This is not the language of defeat or despair. A man like that is not easily beaten. He wiped away his tears and went to work.

Already there was a call from Ashanti that had come in the month of January. One of the members of Wrigley's flock had been residing in Coomassie, where he was visited by the royal princes, with whom he had often prayed and conversed on religious matters ; and on Christmas Day he and a few others, by request of the king, had conducted religious worship in the palace. Wrigley's sympathies were drawn towards this benighted kingdom, but he was never permitted to do more than urge its claims upon others and pray for it. What with his chapel-building, visitations, preaching, and teaching, he was "in labours more abundant" ; and he continued to manifest this earnest spirit in the work of his Divine Master till early in the month of November, when, returning from Anamabu by water, he was smitten with a fatal illness, and died at Cape Coast on November 16th, 1837, having survived his wife about ten months. He died as he had lived in the full triumph of the Christian faith, and devout men carried him to his burial, the whole town mourning his loss. The testimony to his worth, borne by his brethren in the Wesleyan Methodist ministry, found expression in the words of the obituary in the Minutes of their annual Conference, and is one which any true servant of Christ might covet: "He entered on his work with great zeal and judgment, and was instrumental in the conversion of many people to the knowledge of Christ."

Thus the deadly climate had claimed the little pioneer band, and when the last of the standard-bearers fell we cannot wonder that a sense of desolation possessed the infant Church. The great conflict

in Western Africa has always been serious; but in those first days it was heart-breaking in the extreme, and none but the most devoted and loyal would attempt to lead "the forlorn hope" and maintain the position at so costly a sacrifice.

It was just at this juncture that Freeman stepped into the breach, less than seven weeks after the grave had closed over the remains of Wrigley. No flag at half-mast told him of the falling of so brave a man; but the empty rooms, the unfinished task, and the tearful voices of the bereaved members of the Church were part of the greeting of our hero when he stepped ashore and prepared for work.

BACK VIEW OF MISSION-HOUSE, CAPE COAST.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE BREACH.

MR. and Mrs. Freeman landed at Cape Coast on January 3rd, 1838, expecting a welcome from the missionary Wrigley, whose voice had been silent in death for some weeks. We can well imagine Mr. Freeman's dismay at finding himself and his young wife thus suddenly face to face with the great responsibilities of the entire management of this important mission. The members of the native Church, who had passed through such a series of trying bereavements with the light-heartedness which is so marked a feature in the African character, soon found their tears giving place to joy, and trooping in from various parts they gave the newcomers an open-armed welcome.

With the fervid zeal and undaunted hope so characteristic of Thomas Birch Freeman, he entered upon his holy work, gathering up the loose ends and unravelling the tangled threads, and doing this with such clear judgment and patience that all were filled with

confidence in the young missionary who had at this critical juncture succeeded the brave men so recently passed to their reward. His experience at this time is reflected in the pages of his little book, *The Missionary Enterprise no Fiction.* "The circumstances of a Christian missionary recently arrived in a foreign and uncivilised country," says he, "and in a sickly and dangerous clime, are peculiarly trying and difficult.

GROUP OF FANTIS.

No man arriving in the same region for other purposes can possibly be placed in a similar situation. . . . Arriving in a pagan country from a land of Bibles, from the region of gospel light and the glorious liberty of the children of God, he experiences a thousand strange sensations as he moves about among a people given to idolatry. . . . No village bell sounds in his ear its hallowed associations 'with thoughts that speak and words that burn'; he sees no publicly

recognised Sabbath. The fisherman casts his net, and the husbandman toils on his farm ; the carpenter works at his bench, and the mason at his building ; and the pagan procession, with its rude band of music and the wild intoxicated dance, parades the street on the first, as on any other day of the week. He meets, perhaps, with men of education among the people to whom he has come ; but they, alas ! are too many of them, practically, pagans still. Upon them the light of knowledge has already dawned ; but it has only played around the head, it has not affected the heart. He meets also, perhaps, with some of his own countrymen, who were cradled like himself amidst all the blessings of evangelical light; but they, alas ! have lived in the midst of corrupt influences, until, far removed from all the helps and appliances of Christian conventionalities, they have contracted a painful and destructive taint, and need his aid and sympathy to expel from their hearts the deadly poison of moral corruptions. On every hand, therefore, he sees around him antagonistic influences, debasing superstitions, and exhibitions of evil calculated to discourage, to depress, and to overwhelm even himself unless perpetually sustained by power from on high."

Thus it was with Thomas Birch Freeman ; and as he continues his reflections we see the portrait of himself.

"Newly arrived in the burning clime of torrid Africa, now comes the vital and anxious question, Will he stand firmly in the day of battle ? and will he eminently endure hardships as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, as 'seeing Him who is invisible' ? . . . Thousands of miles from his home and friends, and surrounded by a perishing people who have not seen the heavenly and life-inspiring vision, he has no human aid at hand, no earthly friend or counsellor. There is neither Aaron nor Hur to hold up his hands, and aid and sustain him in the conflict. . . . Happy, indeed, for him that he can say, 'And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.' Now comes the test

of his faith and patience. Like the husbandman, he must wait for the precious fruit, and have long patience until the Lord sends the early and refreshing rain. Yes, he must toil on, through many a dark, cloudy day, ploughing and sowing in hope. Bearer of the precious seed, he will doubtless weep, for he is indeed in the vale of tears ; but faith beholds in the distance the time of rejoicing amidst the fruit of a glorious harvest. . . . Onward, then, our beloved missionary ! Onward, lonely messenger of mercy, warrior of Messiah, greatly valorous ! When thy hands hang down and thy spirit droops, *remember Calvary* ; panting under the burning heat of noon, *remember Calvary* ; and should life ebb out, a solitary wanderer for the benefit of mankind in a pagan land, *remember Calvary*. Be this thy banner, thy watchword, thy rallying-point,—yea, be this thy life, to *remember Calvary* : Calvary with its dying love ; Calvary with its world-crucifying power ; Calvary with its glorious hopes ; Calvary with its wondrous prospects ! "

Thus wrote Freeman, when an old man, recalling this early time in his history ; and though disguised under another name, we have good reason to know that he effectively portrays his own circumstances and state of mind.

Very soon his manhood and Christian fortitude were put to a severe test. Within a few weeks the zealous young missionary was smitten down by the dreaded malarious fever, then commonly spoken of as the "seasoning fever" ; an ordeal through which the stranger with very few exceptions must as inevitably pass as must children through the whooping-cough and measles.

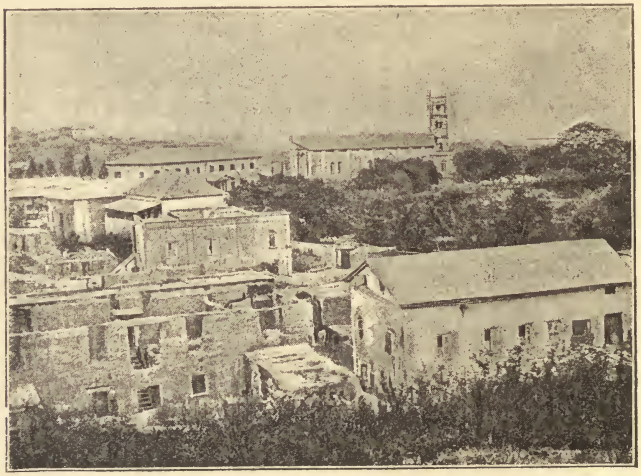
In those early days "the fever," which was usually of the intermittent form, proved fearfully fatal ; but, thanks to healthier dwellings and surroundings and a more skilful treatment, it has now lost much of its terror, though it is still a too fatal malady on the west coast of Africa.

While watching with wifely solicitude the sick-bed of her husband, who now regarded it as a special providence that his partner had accompanied him, Mrs. Freeman was seized with a violent inflammatory complaint, which terminated her life in a few hours, on February 20th, 1838, within seven weeks of her arrival. Her death was a great loss to the mission, for she had it in her heart to do much for the native females, and all classes of the community bore testimony to the respect she had gained for herself. Once more the afflicted Church was plunged into mourning, and the joy so recently manifested on the arrival of the young missionary and his wife gave place to tears. Thus in the first three years of the mission no less than six precious lives had been laid down for the work, and one solitary smitten man was left to hold the fort and fight against the fearful odds.

Freeman gradually recovered from this severe affliction, and, crushed though he was at first to find himself so utterly alone, his noble spirit soared above his personal grief and loss. He girded up his loins, took a stronger grip of his sword, and led on his small army to victory. How bravely and well he did his duty is the business of these pages to tell.

The first important work needing his attention was the completion of the Wesleyan Church at Cape Coast. He found a large portion of the building which Wrigley and Harrop had begun had been washed away by the heavy rains. The work of rebuilding Freeman actually entered upon on January 17th, just a fortnight after his arrival; and it is more than likely that it was this early exposure to the tropical sun which prostrated him. On rising from his sick-bed he resumed the work, and by the end of April the walls were ready for the roof. Many of the natives volunteered their services to obtain the needful material to repair and cover the "swish" walls of the building. No fewer than four thousand pieces of stone had been brought from the distance of a mile for the purpose of repairing

the breach. The collection of the material for thatching seems to have been a joyous and simultaneous work. Thus we find it recorded that, "on the chosen day, April 26th, the members of the Church, the scholars of our own and those of the Fort School, were busily engaged in bringing four thousand bundles of grass, from a place six miles distant, for this purpose, and the sacred building was completed, for the people had a mind to work."



VIEW OF CAPE COAST, FROM MOUNT HOPE (WESLEYAN CHURCH IN BACKGROUND).

On June 10th "Mr. Freeman had the satisfaction of conducting the opening service in a substantial place of worship, large enough to accommodate from seven hundred to a thousand persons on the ground floor. Two commodious vestries were also attached to the church."

Since that time galleries have been built right round the interior, and a fine square tower erected, in which a bell and an illuminated clock have been placed. The

building occupies a commanding site on an elevated position in the middle of the town, and in front is a fine open square. Thus it is one of the most prominent and interesting objects of the town; and, now hallowed by half a century of blessed memories, and the scene of many spiritual revivals, though since that time it has been improved and beautified, it still remains a substantial memorial of the labours of this indefatigable man.

The first service was attended by President Maclean and several other Europeans, and by at least twelve hundred natives; for those who were not able to obtain admission within the edifice crowded round the door and windows, and in this way participated in the sacred service. The President and other English residents contributed handsomely towards defraying the expenses of the erection.

On September 3rd of the same year the first missionary meeting was held within the church, when President Maclean, who had just brought his wife, the celebrated poetess L. E. L., from England, and who had taken such a lively interest in the establishment of the mission, presided, contributing £25, thus swelling the collection of that first missionary meeting to £50. Since then more than fifty similar meetings have been held within the walls of this fine native church, several of which the author of this biography has been privileged to attend, and one of which he cherishes as exceeding in enthusiasm anything he has ever witnessed either in Africa or England.

It must not be imagined that the success herein recorded was permitted without opposition from the native priest. He had been attacked in his stronghold, and was not likely to relinquish his power without a fight. Beecham * records, in substance, the following particulars. Shortly after the commencement of the mission, a fetishman, named Akwa, came

* *Gold Coast and Ashanti.*

from the interior to Cape Coast, and professed to be able to perform certain feats, by which he obtained credit with the people. He crushed beads to powder, and then pretended to restore them to their former state; he thrust his finger through a stone, and in evidence produced the stone with a hole; all of which to the simple-minded and superstitious people was evidence of his supernatural power, which he might exert for evil upon them if false to the faith of their fathers.

The writer remembers hearing Freeman speak of these times, and of this individual, who appeared to chew his arm, eating away the living flesh, and in evidence the blood seemed to flow freely. The missionary detected the fraud, and found that the blood was produced by the chewing of a piece of well-known wood. Akwa, however, claimed to have power, not only over the mineral and vegetable world, but he averred that he had influence to summon apes from the bush, and make them talk with the people; but this he could not do in the daytime, as the apes were timid and shunned the light. He therefore took his dupes into the forest after dark, and they returned into the town quite convinced that they had conversed with apes. By such exploits he gained much renown, impressing the people with the great powers of his fetish. His deception was, however, exposed by a native trader, who had become sufficiently enlightened under Christian influences to suspect the cheat. Having expressed a wish to witness some of the wonderful feats of Akwa, he accompanied him to the forest in the darkness of the night, taking care, however, to instruct his servant "boys," who attended him, as to their part. These "boys" carried the usual present of rum—about a gallon. At the appointed place and time Akwa began to call for the apes, and presently a rushing sound was heard, and a small voice said, "We have come; give us some rum." When the hand was stretched forth a servant caught it,

and called out to his master, "My father! my father! it is not an ape; I have caught a boy's hand." "Hold it fast," replied the trader, "until I come and satisfy myself"; but in the struggle which ensued the captive gained his liberty, and the servants, pursuing the fugitives, found that they were a number of boys who had been trained by Akwa to personate apes. So great was the panic that the fetish boys abandoned the bottles they had brought into which were to be emptied the trader's flasks of rum. Akwa himself fled, and was never heard of more in the town of Cape Coast. This discovery broke the spell with which the popular superstition had bound the mind of the trader, and he soon after became a member of the Church. Such an exposure, too, had its effect upon the minds of the people generally.

Later, at a great fetish dance, a stone was thrown, which struck the chief fetishman in the face, who demanded, in his wrath, that the offender should be discovered. The retort came from the people that unless the fetish could inform him it was useless to apply to them for counsel. They then threw down the drums, to the sound of which he was dancing, and left the priest to his own meditations.

The whole passage, with other incidents therein related, is worth reading in the pages of Beecham's interesting but scarce volume on Ashanti and the Gold Coast, and indicates how the current of Christian influence was gaining force, and that already a disintegration of the popular superstitions was taking place.

ELMINA CASTLE, GOLD COAST.

CHAPTER IV.

A MISSIONARY JOURNEY.

THE successes and achievements of Freeman's first year's toil provoked a desire for larger enterprises. From the beginning he had set his heart upon winning Ashanti for Christ. In his first letter to the missionary committee he stated that he should not consider his work done until he had unfurled the banner of the Cross in Coomassie. He records the following in the published *Journals*: "The tales of horror, wretchedness, and cruelty which I had often heard respecting the Ashantis, wrought in my mind the deepest commiseration, and a constant restlessness to commence missionary operations among them." Early in his second year he hastened to carry out this great purpose.

There were many objections to the project. The expense of the journey, danger to health, the doubtful success with the despotic king of Ashanti, the prolonged absence from the infant Churches already

formed, and the importance of being at Cape Coast to receive a fellow-labourer whom he had been expecting for weeks, all received full consideration.

These obstacles were one by one met by the generosity of the people of his charge, and the promise of necessary assistance from President Maclean. The latter provided him with two soldiers to accompany and conduct him to Ashanti, with a letter of recommendation to the king. Moreover, the excellent William de Graft expressed his willingness to take charge of the mission during Freeman's absence.

Such a journey could be accomplished only on foot, or by hammock borne by men, the usual method of travel on the Gold Coast. For some unknown reason, though it has been carefully and scientifically sought, horses cannot live in this part of West Africa. Thus the European who is judicious enough to care for his health has not only to submit to this strange method of locomotion, but his food and clothing must be borne also upon the heads of natives. The preparation for a journey to the interior is, consequently, sufficiently exacting, apart from its actual performance.

"Deeply sensible," Freeman writes, "of the difficult and dangerous nature of my undertaking, and not forgetful of that eternal Source from whence I must receive all my strength, both physical and spiritual, I took an affectionate leave of our Society at Cape Coast on Tuesday evening, January 29th, 1839. On following morning I left for Coomassie, and reached Anamabu at noon."

He rested at this place till the following morning, and then proceeded by way of Domonasi, that he might encourage the little Church there. On reaching Domonasi he was prostrated with a slight attack of fever, the result of his anxieties and labour in organising the expedition.

On recovery he moved on to Yankumasi, where he was well received and entertained by the young chief Asin Chibu, who presented him with a sheep and

green plantains, and also supplied him gratuitously with five carriers for his luggage to the next stopping-

HAMMOCK-TRAVELLING.

place. Mindful of his function, Freeman conversed with the young man concerning the worship of the true God, and found him more receptive than most of

the Fanti chiefs with whom he had been brought into contact.

When he reached Mansu he was welcomed by the chief Gabri and his captains. Both Gabri and his mother were heedful of native etiquette in sending presents of fruit, vegetables, and a sheep. Here the fever returned, and Sunday, February 3rd, found him still at this town. The fever having somewhat abated, he preached in the afternoon to the chief and his principal men, and to many of the people, taking for his text, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

He adds: "Considering their ignorant condition, they behaved very well. I do not remember that I ever witnessed a more soul-refreshing and interesting scene than that which took place at the close of the sermon. The sublime truths concerning the mysterious plan of human redemption—God becoming incarnate, and dying to save His rebellious creatures, to bring them to eternal glory—made such an impression upon the minds of the chief and his captains that they could not contain themselves. Spreading abroad their hands, and lifting up their voices, they acknowledged the lovingkindness of God, and declared before their people that they would worship Him. I verily believe they would, if they could be watched over and attended to continually by a missionary or teacher."

Leaving Mansu his "path lay through a dense forest, abounding in lofty silk-cotton and other trees, and many handsome varieties of fern." He travelled along the banks of the sacred river of the Ashantis, with the beauty of which he was deeply impressed. The river Prah is the natural boundary between Fanti and Ashanti, and Freeman described it as being "the largest he had yet seen in Africa. With its thickly wooded banks, abounding in palm trees and *mimoseæ*, it presented a beautifully picturesque and interesting scene."

He halted on the banks of the river for a day, giving the carriers the opportunity of rest and refreshment

to be obtained by bathing in its waters. This place is about eighty-five miles from the coast, and midway between Cape Coast and Coomassie.

He describes the country over which he had travelled as "covered with luxuriant vegetation, consisting of plantains, bananas, palms, bamboos, many

MANSU.

large forest trees covered with climbers, *Epiphytical Orchideæ*, and ferns. Among the shrubs and herbaceous plants I noticed a very pretty variety of *Crotan*; also *Lantana Odorata*, and a species of *Gardenia Hedychium*, or garland flower, *Canna Indica*, and a handsome blue variety of *Maranta*, the leaves of which were on the upper side a pale green colour, and underneath a bright purple." Not only

were his botanical tastes gratified, but his "ears were charmed with the notes of some of the feathered songsters of the forest; and my attention was also arrested by the well-known sound of the woodman's hook and axe, employed to clear small tracts of ground in the forest for the cultivation of yams."

Crossing the Prah "in a large heavy canoe," he entered the country of Ashanti, and quickly discovered, what all African travellers find out sooner or later, that many petty difficulties stood in his path, and that great patience was needed to overcome them. The strong *harmattan* wind was blowing, "affecting the eyes, and producing a sensation like that felt by a violent cold in the head." One morning he was mortified "to find that a rat had eaten some of his hammock-strings, which rendered it almost unfit for use."

He passed over the Adansi hills, and arrived at the small town of Kwisa. Here he was informed that he could proceed no farther without permission from the chief, who resided in the "neat little town" of Fumana, a mile distant. Korinchi, the chief of Adansi, a man of drunken habits, proved his evil genius by delaying him for several precious weeks.

Those weeks were not spent idly, but the delay was most tiresome to the ardent missionary. From his journal we get a glimpse of the young man making the best of the opportunity to work for his Master. He was delighted to find here some native Christian traders, and they, with the missionary's company, formed the nucleus of a congregation for public worship. They also supported and encouraged him in his interviews with the chief. This border-chieftain did not fail to magnify his office, and received the missionary in semi-royal state, seated under his gorgeous umbrella, and surrounded by his captains and people. There were the usual complimentary passages so characteristic of this and other African tribes, followed by inquiries as to the object of the missionary's proposed visit to Coomassie.

This gave Freeman the opportunity of making known, probably for the first time, the gospel to the chief and his vassals. He disclaimed any commercial or political intention, and stated that he had "come into the country to promote the best interests of the king of Ashanti and his people, by directing them in the way of peace and happiness through the preaching of the gospel." The chief replied that he should like to hear the gospel in his town before Freeman proceeded any farther into the country.

The missionary at once opened his commission, and spoke to the chief and all present on the existence of a God. Holding up to their view a leaf which had fallen from the banyan tree under which he was standing, he asked if they could make one like it. They answered, "*No.*" He then further asked if they thought it possible for the combined wisdom, power, and genius of the world to make such a leaf. Again there came back in ready chorus, "*No.*" From this simple illustration he led their thoughts up "to the almighty power, mercy, and truth of 'God who made the world and all things therein,' and declared to them the nature of the Christian religion." They bade him come again on the morrow that they might hear more.

Next day, being Sunday, the missionary took his stand under the same trees, and had the pleasure of preaching to Korinchi and a congregation of five hundred natives. The little band of Christians gathered about him, and they sang "Plunged in a gulf of dark despair, etc." Then a native Christian offered prayer in their own tongue. Again the little Christian choir struck up :—

"Lord over all, if Thou hast made,
Hast ransomed every soul of man,
Why is the grace so long delayed?
Why unfulfilled the saving plan?
The bliss, for Adam's race designed,
When will it reach to all mankind?"

Then followed a sermon, rendered into Fanti by an interpreter. The preacher explained the nature of the gospel, and proved the Divine origin of the Bible. A great solemnity pervaded the congregation, and the deepest attention was paid, assent being given every minute or so by a hearty "*Yes*" from the listeners.

At the close Korinchi and his captains pronounced it a "good palaver," and declared they would like to hear more as to what God liked and what He disliked. The missionary retired with the promise to preach again when desired. The chief and his people were greatly impressed with the disinterested character of Freeman's mission, and expressed their astonishment that so great a sacrifice should be made on the part of a stranger to benefit them. That in itself led them to conclude that the religion he professed must be good.

Before leaving, however, he made clear to the chief that his office as a Christian minister precluded him from conforming wholly to the custom of making costly presents. This drew forth the ready reply that such was not expected from him. They desired rather to become acquainted with the gospel he preached. His inquiry as to when he might be permitted to proceed to Coomassie was evaded, a form of procedure with which he was to become bitterly familiar.

In his more mature years Mr. Freeman became thoroughly acquainted with the arts and wiles of chiefs and kings to cause delay, but in his inexperience he now felt it a great trial. His mind was constantly harassed with anxiety about the flock of nearly seven hundred left behind. Yet he was filled with intense longing to go forward to proclaim the glad tidings in regions beyond, although he had fears that his health might give way, exposed as he was in a poor hut in the midst of the *harmattan* season.

CHIEF NEXT IN COMMAND TO KING OF COOMASSIE.

CHAPTER V.

A TRIAL OF PATIENCE.

AT last after varied excuses a messenger arrived from Coomassie with a present of nine *ackies* of gold dust (equal to two pounds five shillings), and with a promise that the king would send for Freeman in a few days.

Korinchi now offered Freeman the privilege of waiting the king's pleasure at Fumana, of which he gladly availed himself, the latter being more open and healthy than Kwisa.

His conversations and public services provoked a desire to hear more. And so much in earnest were they that Korinchi sent one morning at eight o'clock to summon the missionary to explain to him and his captains some of the truths of Christianity. The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead greatly puzzled them ; but their teacher succeeded in convincing them of the possibility of such an event. He then directed their attention to the doctrine of future rewards and punishments.

One day he swung his hammock under a large

banyan tree in the principal thoroughfare. The chief visited him, and a large group of people gathered around. He led them into a general conversation, and pointed out the folly of their superstitious offerings which he had seen them preparing for their fetish. At first they resented this, but subsequently said "their fetish told them nonsense and deceived them."

In his lodgings he held a meeting for Divine worship, which the chief and his captains attended by his invitation. All seemed deeply impressed with its solemnity. Whatever hopes might have been entertained by the missionary of the chief's conversion from heathenism were soon blighted. A few days after this solemn service a sister of Korinchi died. As Freeman walked out early the following morning, he was shocked to see in the public street the mangled corpse of a poor female slave, who had been beheaded during the night to attend her mistress in the ghostly sphere to which they believed the departed had gone. He had reason to think that his presence had a restraining influence, or many more slaves would have been immolated. Half ashamed that the stranger should see the result of their superstition, the people had partly covered the poor body with a native mat.

"In the course of the day," he adds, "I saw groups of natives dancing round this victim of superstition and cruelty with numerous frantic gestures, and who seemed to be in the very zenith of their happiness. . . . Thoughout the day I saw females fantastically dressed, with their faces and shoulders daubed with red ochre, parading the town as mourners for Korinchi's sister." The mangled trunk of the slave was cast into a ditch by the roadside to lie and putrefy, or be devoured by turkey-buzzards or beasts of prey.

As might be expected, such an incident made a deep impression on the missionary's mind, and he gave himself earnestly to prayer that God would clear away the darkness resting upon the people.

A few days after he writes: "Early in the morning the fetish tune was played through the town, to assemble the people for finishing the 'custom' for Korinchi's sister. In the afternoon nearly all the principal persons of the town were dressed in their gayest attire. A large group of them gathered under the fetish tree to see and hear the fetishman while he made his orations and danced to the sound of several drums, which were played by females. The appearance of the priest was very much like that of a clown. His face was daubed with white clay; he had a large iron chain about his neck, worn as a necklace. This chain I tried to get as a curiosity, but without success. Around his legs were tied bunches of fetish, and in his hand he held an immense knife, about fifteen inches long and two and a half broad. Sometimes he danced with many frantic gestures, and at other times stood gazing around him with every indication of a vacant mind.

"While I was looking at him, he set out and ran to a distance of about a hundred yards. Anxious to keep him in sight I walked forward, past a small shed which would have concealed him, and saw him with a musket at his shoulder taking aim at a turkey-buzzard on a tree hard by. Having fired without hitting his mark, he returned to the tree from whence he started and began to make a speech.

"It is at these public meetings that such men deliver to the poor credulous people the messages which they pretend to have received from the fetish, which are esteemed by the great body of the inhabitants as sterling truth. Thus the funeral 'custom' dragged itself on after the fashion of the country amidst drunkenness and debauchery."

In a half-drunken condition Korinchi attended a Sunday service held by the missionary. A few days after Freeman made an opportunity of remonstrating with him. He also pointed out the folly of their 'customs," and the wickedness of human sacrifices.

The chief offered an excuse not unknown in civilised lands. They were so unhappy, so he stated, at the loss of relatives that they were glad to have recourse to drunkenness to drown their sorrow. The missionary directed him to God as the only real source of comfort in times of affliction.

The very next night, however, Freeman was kept awake by the noisy drumming of the fetish worshippers, which he discovered was but the prelude to another human sacrifice. The next day he saw the headless body of the victim, a young man about eighteen years of age. Already the turkey-buzzards were feasting upon the corpse. But what filled the missionary with painful emotion was regarded with the utmost indifference by the mass of the people familiar with such horrible scenes.

That heathen, however, such as these are not entirely without conscience is evident from an incident which occurred at a public service on the Sabbath. Freeman's text was, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." During the delivery the chief and his retainers grew very excited, especially when the preacher explained the Decalogue. They often stopped him to ask questions. "Is the offering of human sacrifices murder?" questioned one. The missionary answered, "It is even so; and you will henceforth be left without excuse, if you persist in that horrible practice."

Proceeding to explain the excellency of the commandments, the preacher turned questioner. "Who are the happiest persons," asked he, "those who conscientiously keep God's commandments or those who wilfully break them?" Without hesitation there came the apparently sincere reply from the people, deeply impressed with the solemnity of the discourse, "Those who keep them." Subsequently this discourse was a subject of conversation between the chief and his captains, who were disposed to dissent from the missionary's teaching that the keeping of

the Sabbath was obligatory upon them. They believed that God had appointed different sacred days for the nations: one for the Ashantis, one for the Fantis, and another for the Wassaws. They feared that they would expose themselves to great danger by giving up their fetish days and keeping the Christian Sabbath. This objection was met by Freeman telling them of what England once was in its state of heathenism, and of the mighty change since the introduction of Christianity. "This argument was too strong for them, and they gave up the point."

So the days passed, and the missionary grew weary of waiting for permission to proceed. Now we find him searching the forest for floral specimens, now climbing a hill to become enraptured with the glorious prospect, then remonstrating with the chief, and telling him that he half suspected that he or those whom he influenced were to blame for the long delay. Then he gathered about him his fellow-travellers, and entered into close personal conversation concerning the salvation of their souls. Again and again he preached the words of life to those willing to hear. The days grew into weeks, and still there was no answer from the king, whereupon he determined upon the stratagem of threatening to return to the coast.

To show that he was no longer to be trifled with by the treacherous chief, he packed his boxes, and put himself in a state of readiness to return. Alarmed at the consequences to himself when the matter reached the royal ear, he came hastily to Freeman to entreat him to exercise further patience. To this he agreed, on the condition that the chief would provide on the following morning a messenger to accompany his with a letter he intended to write to the king. "After he had used every means to persuade" Freeman "to the contrary," the "chief consented with great reluctance."

Next morning, when the missionary's messenger

was prepared, he sent to Korinchi to inquire if his messenger were ready. There came a series of answers characteristic of the duplicity of the heathen African ruler. "The king's path-keeper was not found," or "had not arrived," and so the delay was continued. The missionary acted with promptitude, and repaired to Korinchi's house, only to be informed that the chief was not within. He then proceeded to the house of the king's messenger and vigorously protested, and was politely informed that they were simply waiting for linguists belonging to other chiefs before they prepared the escort. Feeling displeased with the manifest deception, Freeman ordered his people to make ready to return at once to Cape Coast.

Before turning his back entirely upon the place, he paid another visit to the chief's house, taking the precaution to send one of his men to the back door whilst he went to the front. Again, with profuse apologies, he was politely informed that Korinchi was not within. Taking the matter in his own hands, he presumed, to their astonishment, to enter the house before any one could give warning. As he suspected, the chief was there, and most leisurely taking his breakfast.

The missionary upbraided the wily chief for his unjust conduct, and requested that he would find the promised messenger as soon as he had finished his repast. He then retired to another apartment to await the result. Half an hour passed, and though the chief had made a faithful promise, he did not appear. Freeman sent an attendant to inquire the cause of delay, and discovered that the chief had again eluded him. He had finished his breakfast and made his escape. More delays of the same tedious kind followed, and then, persuaded that Korinchi was dealing treacherously with him, the missionary started some of his attendants with packages towards the coast.

The poor chief, now in a quandary, sent in great

haste to inform Freeman that the messenger was nearly ready. He was no longer in a mood, however, to be played with, and requested to see the messenger, but none came. The loads were now all despatched, and his people were told to wait on the road whilst the missionary sought Korinchi to take leave of him. It was not a pleasant interview for either party. Mr. Freeman says the chief "appeared stupid, brutal, and sullen, and would not give me his hand. I consequently turned from him, and waited a moment to tell the king's messenger I was going. Before I parted with him, I asked whether he did not think forty-six days a sufficient length of time for me to wait patiently, especially as I was getting short of provisions and the rainy season was fast approaching. He candidly acknowledged that I had been detained too long, and that he could not blame me for returning. I had but proceeded a short distance when Korinchi sent begging me to stop and speak with him, to which message I thought it right to pay no attention."

The chief was now truly alarmed, and sent messenger after messenger to entreat Freeman to return. He offered an abject apology, and promised to send that night, by torchlight, a messenger to Coomassie. The night drew on, and with it came a tornado, and Freeman was glad to find shelter in a six-feet-square hut, into which he also invited the chief's messengers. These men did their best to conciliate and dissuade the missionary from his purpose of recrossing the Prah.

That night Korinchi tried to console himself for the missionary's sudden departure in his usual way when trouble was upon him. He spent the whole night in drinking, drumming, and dancing.

Believing that Korinchi would no longer put obstacles in his way, Freeman slowly yielded to the entreaties of the messengers. These men were so rejoiced at having overcome the apparent reluctance of the missionary, that they gladly acted as carriers of his

heavy luggage, and were most profuse in their thanks. Such was the effect of the scare that within half an hour of his return a despatch arrived from the king requesting him to proceed to Coomassie. Freeman thought that, though the chief "was deserving of censure, much of his conduct was due to jealousy on the part of the king." He does not even blame the king, but ascribes his conduct to evil influences brought to bear upon him by Mohammedan and fetish priests, who would do their utmost to prevent the introduction of Christianity into the country.

He subsequently wrote: "I believe my long detention . . . was the Lord's doing. The great length of time which I remained there gave me an excellent opportunity of becoming acquainted with the people and of gaining their affections. I also became accustomed, by gradual degrees, to those horrid and awful scenes, which are every-day occurrences in that place." After visiting Coomassie he considered Fumana a more desirable place for a mission than the capital. He thought the people more prepared to receive the gospel, and in spite of the treachery and drunkenness of the chief Korinchi he considered him on the whole exceedingly well disposed.

The missionary's suspicion that the king's jealousy had much to do with his detention at Fumana received confirmation. The king sent a messenger to see what sort of a person he was, and on his return was interrogated as follows:—

KING: "You have seen the fetishman?"

MESSENGER: "Yes."

KING: "Had he plenty of drums with him?"

MESSENGER: "I saw no drums."

KING: "Why, he is a fetishman; he must have drums with him."

MESSENGER: "I saw no drums. He has plenty of boxes, but I cannot say what they contain."

KING: "Why did you not endeavour to learn whether the boxes contained drums or not?"

Whereupon the king became exceedingly angry because the messenger could give no satisfactory answer. The king evidently brooded over the matter, and was sorely puzzled that a stranger should desire to visit him on such an errand. "Never since," said the king, "the world began, has there been an English missionary in Ashanti. What can he want?"

Freeman, once more on the path with his face to the capital, was impressed with the fertility of the country and the luxuriant vegetation, and was struck with the kindness of the natives through whose towns and villages he passed. Every day he received presents of palm wine and fruits.

On April 1st he found himself at the small village of Franfraham, a mile and a half from Coomassie. In consequence of the delays, he had been two months covering the hundred and seventy miles from the coast!

This village was the halting-place for strangers visiting the capital. Here the missionary, in keeping with the customs of the country, awaited further invitation from the king. The interval was well filled with the partaking of needful refreshment, and a prayer-meeting to implore the blessing of the God of missions upon the undertaking.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CITY OF BLOOD.

THE entry of the first Christian missionary into the blood-stained capital of Ashanti will be best described in his own words. We copy from his journal under date of April 1st, 1839 :—

"At 2 p.m. a messenger arrived from the king requesting me to proceed as early as possible. I immediately dressed myself, and while doing so three others arrived, each bearing a golden sword, requesting me to hasten forward. I then advanced towards the town, preceded by the messengers and some soldiers bearing arms.

"Having reached the outskirts we halted under a large tree, and there waited for another royal invitation. In a short time His Majesty's chief linguist, the Apoko, came in a palanquin, shaded by an immense umbrella, and accompanied by messengers bearing canes nearly covered with gold. These took charge of my luggage, and saw it safely lodged in the residence intended for me. All this being properly arranged,

another messenger arrived, accompanied by troops and men bearing large umbrellas. I was requested to proceed to the market-place. 'The king's commandment' being 'urgent,' we pushed along with speed, preceded by a band of music.

"As soon as we arrived at the market-place I got out of my travelling-chair. Walking through the midst of an immense concourse of persons, a narrow path being kept clear for me, I paid my respects to the king, his numerous chiefs and captains. These were seated on wooden chairs, richly decorated with brass and gold, and under the shade of splendid umbrellas, some of them large enough to screen twelve or fourteen persons from the burning rays of the sun. These state umbrellas were crowned with images of beasts and various devices, and covered with gold. Round about the king and the chief were the native troops and a multitude of attendants, lending impressiveness to the ceremony.

"I was occupied for half an hour in walking slowly through the midst of this immense assembly, touching my hat and waving my hand, except before the king. In his presence I, of course, stood for a moment uncovered. I then took my seat at a distance, accompanied by my people and several respectable Fanti traders who were staying in the town. Here, according to the usual custom, we received the return-compliments of the king.

"After I was seated the immense mass began to be in motion. Many of the chiefs first passed me in succession, accompanied by their numerous retinue. Some of them cordially shook me by the hand. Then came the officers of the king's household attended by their people. Some bore on their heads massive pieces of silver plate, others carried in their hands gold swords and canes, native chairs and buffets neatly carved and almost covered with gold and silver, and tobacco pipes richly decorated with the same precious materials.

ASHANTI KING PREPARED TO GIVE AUDIENCE.

"Amidst this ostentatious display I saw what was calculated to harrow up the strongest and most painful feelings. The royal executioners displayed the blood-stained stools on which hundreds, perhaps thousands, of human victims have been sacrificed by decapitation. They also carried the large *death-drum*, which is beaten at the moment when the fatal knife severs the head from the body, the very sound of which conveys a thrill of horror. This rude instrument, connected with which are most dreadful associations, was literally covered with dried clots of blood, and decorated with the jaw-bones and skulls of human victims.

"Then followed the king, Kwaku Duah, under the shade of three splendid umbrellas, the cloth of which was silk-velvet of different colours. These were supported by some of his numerous attendants. The display of gold which I witnessed as His Majesty passed was astonishing.

"After the king followed other chiefs, and lastly the main body of the troops. This immense procession occupied an hour and a half in passing. There were several Moors in the procession, but they made by no means a conspicuous appearance. I suppose the number of persons which I saw collected together exceeded forty thousand, including a great number of females. The wrists of some of the chiefs were so heavily laden with golden ornaments that they rested their arms on the shoulders of some of their attendants. The appearance of the procession was exceedingly grand and imposing.

"The contrast between the people themselves and their large umbrellas, seventy in number and of various colours, which they waved up and down in the air, together with the dark green foliage of the large banyan trees, under and among which they passed, formed a scene that was novel and extraordinary. I gazed on this concourse of heathens with feelings of sorrow and joy. I sorrowed in the reflection that most, and perhaps all, were totally ignorant of the

great Author of their being, and without one ray of Divine consolation to cheer them amid the changing scenes of this visionary world."

Mr. Freeman happily did not know at that time that two newly-made earth-mounds on either side of the way as he entered the town were the graves of two human beings who had just been buried alive. These victims were to serve as a powerful fetish to avert any evil likely to arise from the presence of so unusual a visitor as the Christian missionary. It is significant evidence of the fears which had possessed the king, causing the delay of the visitor on the path from the coast.

On this day he writes in the journal a most eloquent and touching appeal to British Christians to render help to bring the light to this dark place. The appeal breaks out here and there like the "burden" of one of the prophets, the storm of emotion finishing in language of joyful anticipation. Such an appeal the lovers of Africa still ring out for a bold march to evangelise the tribes in the regions beyond.

When the arduous duties of that first day in Coomassie were over, the wearied missionary retired to his quarters, spread a cloth upon the floor, and sank to sleep.

The place where the missionary party was located was very circumscribed and intensely hot. It consisted of ten little sheds about six feet square each, with one small opening into a common yard about ten feet square. The heat was increased by the native followers being obliged to use the yard for cooking purposes. The missionary took steps at once to relieve himself, by sending his followers to the forest to obtain materials to erect a bower to protect him from the heat of the sun. In this contracted space he received Mohammedan visitors and king's messengers; but all his movements were watched and reported to the king. It was evident that he was regarded with

great suspicion, and it was difficult to make the king's officers understand the disinterested nature of his mission. The Apoko, chief linguist and foreign minister, an influential State officer, had charge of the stranger. To him Mr. Freeman complained of being confined in so close and unhealthy a place, and desired permission to walk out into the town for the sake of his health. This, however, was denied for a few days, in consequence of the "custom-keeping" for the death of a royal relative.

From his quarters the missionary could see the ominous wheeling of the birds of prey over the spots where he learnt the bodies of the victims lay. Throughout the day he heard the muffled sound of the dreadful death-drum. Its language is distinctly understood, and the natives know from it the moment when the sacrifice is made. "Hark!" said Mr. Freeman's interpreter to him; "do you hear the drum? A sacrifice has just been made, and the drum says, 'King, I have killed him!'" Throughout the day the bloody work proceeded; not only in Coomassie, for the villages surrounding contributed to the sacrifice. The heads of the poor village victims were brought into the town in baskets.

During the day the king's messengers arrived with a small present and a kindly message, entreating the missionary not to stir out, as His Majesty "knew Europeans did not like to see human sacrifices." Another day brought this part of the dreadful funeral custom to a close. *Forty victims* had been immolated within two days. The headless bodies were permitted to lie in the streets till in a state of decomposition. Mr. Freeman was amazed to witness the callous indifference of the people, who walked about among the putrefying corpses smoking their pipes, and utterly unmoved by a scene which so agitated him.

At last he was permitted to view the town. He found the streets large, clean, and uniform, with a breadth, in some instances, of quite thirty yards, and

"an average length from three to six hundred yards." Some of the streets were delightfully shaded by a row of splendid banyan trees. On each side were the houses of the chief inhabitants. These had unique open fronts, carved and beautifully polished with red ochre. The floors were raised two or three feet above the level of the ground, and served as the reception-room for callers. Behind these open rooms were a number of small sheds hidden from observation, the private apartments of the people. All the houses were erected on the same plan. Mr. Freeman further describes the town as situated on a bed of granite, and the streets as rough and full of dangerous holes washed out by the heavy rains. There was only one stone-built house, which was within the royal premises, and was known as the "Castle." "All other buildings were of wood and *swish*, and by no means durable." There was a large market-place, on one side of which the bodies of the victims were cast, and from which there arose an intolerable stench.

A mile distant from Coomassie is the suburb of Bantama, where is the mausoleum in which repose the ashes of former kings. Here also the skulls of great enemies are kept, which are brought forth for display on some great festivals. Through the silent streets of this sacred place, with its fetish houses and great banyan trees, the missionary walked, a privileged visitor. Before leaving the sacred precincts he was received by the Amankwa Tia, one of the great state officers, who regaled him with palm wine.

As they passed under the banyans on their way back one of the party unwittingly plucked some leaves from one of the sacred trees. As Mr. Freeman, led by his botanical proclivities, had been seen gazing into the trees, this plucking of the leaves was construed into a significant act. Jealous watchers summarily stopped the visitors to make explanation. It was, however, with difficulty that these keen detectives could be persuaded that the plucked leaves were not

meant for some evil fetish. To the Apoko our missionary explained more fully, showing him coloured illustrations of many varieties of orchids, a beautiful specimen of which had attracted his notice in one of the trees.

A few days later he noticed a large crowd of persons gathered about an umbrella, where the king sat drinking palm wine with his chiefs. A band of music was playing, and a human victim was lying on the ground exposed to public view. This public ceremony of palm-wine-drinking was the prelude to a week's partial retirement to the palace to complete the "custom" for his deceased relative who had died a week before.

Thus the weekdays were filled by the missionary in making observations, and the Sabbath was spent in declaring the gospel to those who would hear. His anxiety, however, to return to the coast increased as he noted that the rainy season was rapidly approaching. The last Sunday he spent there on this occasion brought an undoubted warning that if he would reach Cape Coast in safety there was no time for delay. He writes as follows under date of April 14th :—

"Early this evening I held a prayer-meeting, which was no sooner concluded than the rain, which had been threatening for several hours, commenced with awful violence. In a few minutes the small yard was covered with water to the depth of twelve or fifteen inches ; and as the thatch of my sleeping-shed was in bad repair the rain poured in upon my pillow. I soon began to feel the evil effects of the damps, and had some fears as to the consequences, which fears were heightened by the consideration that my provisions were so nearly exhausted."

Mr. Freeman had made a good impression, and in the fortnight had by no means worn out his welcome, but he saw the need of an early departure. Already he had appealed to the king through the Apoko for permission to return. The tornado described made

him more in earnest to attempt the journey back. The day after the storm the king's permission, with a characteristically diplomatic message in reference to the establishment of a mission in Coomassie, reached him. The Apoko, attended by royal servants bearing presents, consisting of gold dust *and a slave*, waited on Mr. Freeman and spoke the king's words :—

"His Majesty knows that you cannot stop longer on account of the rains. As the thing which you have mentioned to him requires much consideration, he cannot answer you in so short a time. If you will come up again or send a messenger after the rains are over, he will be prepared to answer you."

With this message the missionary was pleased, and promised either to come again himself or send as desired. He then repaired to the palace to take a formal leave of the king. He was received with great cordiality, and desired by His Majesty to convey his compliments to President Maclean. As he proceeded along the street the Apoko, who had proved a true friend, followed to give him a hearty hand-shake to testify his affection.

Mr. Freeman was not a slave-holder for long. On again reaching the little village of Franfraham, he halted a few minutes to emancipate the poor fellow. He was a native from the far interior in the prime of his life. The missionary's statement is worth reading: "On my informing him that he was now a free man, he appeared overwhelmed with gratitude, and almost fell on the earth before me in acknowledgment of the boon. He had not all the pleasure to himself, however; for while I enjoyed the luxury of doing good, many of my people looked on him with delight. Our satisfaction was heightened when he told us that he had twice been brought out for the purpose of sacrifice during the recent 'customs.' He had twice been put in irons and sent back alive. When he was brought out this morning he expected to be sacrificed in the course of the day.

Happy change! Instead of having his head cut off and his body thrown to the fowls of the air, he now finds himself in the enjoyment of liberty, safely proceeding with us, far away from the scenes of his bondage."

The party proceeded with speed. Sometimes they had to take shelter from a fierce tornado, but scarcely dared to rest long in one place, or even halt to take food. As Freeman states, "he pushed onwards like a man escaping for life." Already the clayey paths were so slippery that the carriers frequently fell. So dangerous was it that he scarcely dared trust himself in the hammock, but accomplished a great portion of the journey on foot.

He reached Fumana wet, weary, and hungry, but received a flattering welcome from his old acquaintance Korinchi. Here is his record: "He seemed overjoyed to see me, gave me a hearty shake with both hands, put his arms around my neck in transport, and made me a present of palm wine and a mess of soup made from the flesh of the monkey. I then retired to my lodgings, and thankfully partook of the chief's monkey-soup to satisfy the cravings of hunger, having little else to eat."

Having received the chief's promise to help forward Freeman's scheme for the establishment of a mission in Coomassie, and his assistance in the supply of four men to carry one of his attendants who had fallen ill, he sped away over the Adansi hills and through the forest, till from sheer weariness he was obliged to rest in a small village for the night. Early in the morning he was again on the way, travelling all day with little food. When he drew near to the river Prah he found that "the God of providence had kindly furnished him with a table in the wilderness. A wild hog had been killed in the neighbourhood, a portion of which he purchased and found very delicious." And there under a rough shed he slept the night. At daybreak he started for the Prah, crossed the river, and at

Prashu, on the Fanti side, partook of breakfast. There he rested a few hours for his followers to refresh themselves in the river, which again flowed between him and Ashanti.

With all his desire to reach Cape Coast he was mindful of the Sabbath. At Fesu he rested on the holy day, and preached to the people from the words, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" To his deliverance the natives paid great attention. He closed the day with a prayer-meeting.

Next day at Mansu he met a messenger from the coast bearing a welcome supply of food. "Thus," he added, "I was enabled to take a comfortable breakfast consisting of suitable food, the want of which I had felt severely during the last seven or eight days. My people, who had seen with regret the privation I suffered, sat at a distance looking upon me whilst I was taking my breakfast. Their countenances told how happy they were to see my wants supplied."

With renewed strength he pushed bravely on. He found that already the rains had quickened the luxuriant vegetation. In many places the path was almost overgrown, making it difficult to push through. He did not slacken, however, till he was within nine miles of Cape Coast, when he found his carriers so utterly weary that they could proceed no farther.

Here he left the greater portion of his following, and, with his hammock men, proceeded under the bright light of a tropical moon to complete his journey. He reached the mission-house at Cape Coast about nine o'clock on the night of Tuesday, April 23rd, 1839, "and obtained a refreshing view of the 'deep, deep sea,' with feelings of humble gratitude to Almighty God who had mercifully preserved him in the midst of so many dangers, and brought him home in health, peace, and safety." He had thus covered the distance from Coomassie in eight days, a journey

which had taken two months to accomplish on his way thither.

Thus he had been to the city of blood. He had witnessed for himself the human sacrifices, and his heart yearned to save the poor degraded people. Ashanti now rested as a great burden upon his heart, and he would not rest till he had committed the Missionary Society to the establishment of a mission there. He wrote to the secretaries as follows : "It is true that this spiritual Jericho at present stands strong, and that Satan, its monster king, still has the triumph of seeing thousands of helpless men for whom Christ died dashed into the dust in dishonour. But Israel shall surely triumph. The mystical ram's horns shall not be blown in vain. The enemy shall be taken in his stronghold, and the Redeemer shall have these 'heathen' for His 'inheritance,' and the 'uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.'"

EMBARKING THROUGH SURF AT ACCRA.

CHAPTER VII.

LABOURS ABUNDANT ; SORROWS OFT.

THE building of the church at the coast town of Anamabu, about twelve miles to the east of Cape Coast, had evidently absorbed much of Freeman's time and thought. The foundation had been laid ten months before the time of his visit to Ashanti, and similar scenes to those we have described in connection with the building at Cape Coast were witnessed. All classes of the people were to be seen busily engaged, sometimes as early as two or three o'clock in the morning, carrying clay and other material for the structure.

To their physical labour they added their gifts, and their noble efforts were crowned with success in securing the building from the destructive influences of the heavy rains.

So interested was Freeman in this enterprise that he gave himself only a few days' rest, which he occupied in copying and sending off his journal to the missionary committee. Then, taking with him a few carpenters and bricklayers, he hastened to the help of the Anamabu Christians, so as to ensure the completion of their sanctuary by the time of the opening ceremony.

The foundation was of stone, the upper portions of the walls were of *swish*, and the roof was thatched with the long grass of the country. It was fifty-three feet long by thirty broad, and was estimated to seat four or five hundred persons.

Seventeen years after, when the people were preparing for a more pretentious building, it was pronounced by a visitor* "a rude structure, and inconveniently small"; but at this time the people looked with pride upon this house which they had erected for the Lord, and Sunday, May 26th, 1839, the date of opening, was a high day with these simple-minded Christians.

The people repaired early to the house of prayer, and at 7 a.m. Freeman conducted the service, preaching to an attentive congregation from Psalm c. 3, 4: "Know ye that the Lord He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name." "Many felt it to be a delightful service, and the tear of gratitude to Almighty God was shed." Many of the church members of Cape Coast were present to share with their fellow-Christians the blessings of the day. In the afternoon at three Freeman again preached to a congregation, in and around the building, of about a thousand people, taking for his subject the beautiful description of the rest of the people of God in Heb. iv. 9-13. In the evening he conducted a third service, preaching to a large and attentive congregation from Heb. iv. 14-16, on the High-priesthood of Christ. All these themes were singularly appropriate to the occasion, and many felt it "good to wait on the Lord." Considering their previous exertions, the collections that day were remarkably good, amounting to more than ten pounds.

* *Life of Daniel West*, p. 220.

The gentlemen residing at Anamabu looked favourably upon the undertaking, and contributed liberally to the building fund; whilst others at Cape Coast added their names to a subscription list which showed the substantial sum of thirty-two pounds. Mr. Henry Barnes receives honourable mention by Freeman, for he not only contributed handsomely, but superintended the work in Freeman's absence, sending his own workmen to assist in the building without charge, and freely opening his house to the missionary whensoever he visited Anamabu.

Mr. Freeman then continued his journey eastward along the coast, halting at Winnebah to inspect the church in course of erection; and having arranged to expedite the work of completion he proceeded to Accra, where he was shown great kindness by the commandant and other gentlemen.

During his stay at Accra the commandant permitted him the use of a large hall in the fort, in which to meet the members of the church, which, with the schools, he found in a flourishing condition. There were thirty-five members.

In the boys' school, which had been established six months, he found sixty-five scholars; and in the girls' school, which had been established two months, twenty. The local government had undertaken to bear half the expense of the boys' school, and, till permanent provision could be made, located them in the fort, and also made comfortable arrangements for the master and mistress.

Freeman was pleased with these early beginnings, and considered the prospects most encouraging. When writing to the missionary secretaries he begged that a missionary should be sent to this place without delay.

Having encouraged the Christians of Accra and satisfied himself as to the nature of the work, in the course of a few days he retraced his steps to Winnebah, where he proceeded to put the finishing

touches upon the little church. This is his own record: "In eight days after my return we had a neat pulpit erected, the floor fitted up with fixed benches, and every arrangement made for opening it on Sunday, June 23rd, 1839. At 7 a.m. we held a prayer-meeting; . . . at eleven I read prayers, and preached to an attentive and serious congregation from 'For thy Maker is thine Husband; the Lord of Hosts is His name,' etc. (Isa. liv. 5-8). God was in the midst of us, and blessed us.

"The chief and many of the more respectable heathens in the town were present, many of whom paid deep attention to the words spoken. At 3 p.m. I again preached to a large congregation, from 'It is appointed unto men once to die' (Heb. ix. 27). The chief and his captains again attended and behaved well.

"The respectable conduct of these heathens reminded me of the great change which has taken place in the character of the Winnebah people during the last few years. Some time ago there was a small English fort in the centre of the town. Misunderstandings having arisen between the natives and the commandant, the former rebelled against the latter and killed him. The consequence was that some British men-of-war fired on the town as they sailed past it, and battered the fort to the ground, causing the refractory inhabitants to retreat into the forest. *On the very spot* where the fort stood, and where these unhappy events took place, stands our chapel; and here also were gathered together, peacefully listening to the words of eternal life, the descendants of those who had in former days been assembled to shed blood. This happy change has taken place partly through the instrumentality of the local government of Cape Coast, and partly by the introduction of that incomparable blessing, Christianity."

After the afternoon service Freeman conversed with the people on the subject of establishing a school

for the instruction of the children. Finding them in sympathy, he arranged to send one of the youths he had in training at Cape Coast to begin this work.

Freeman regarded Winnebah as of great importance to the mission, and gives the following as one of his reasons: "While toiling along the coast for a distance of nearly a hundred miles visiting our societies, I find Winnebah a delightful retreat from the heavy sandy beach, the burning rays of an almost vertical sun, and the strong breeze from the Atlantic. I hope to see much lasting good result from the erection of the chapel and the establishment of a school."

At this time he also reports that a few Christians at Salt Pond, eight miles to the east of Anamabu, which he describes as a small "croom," but to-day is an important palm-oil mart, were intending to build a place of worship at their own expense. Freeman promised to return, when the rains were over, to begin the building for them.

He had been a few days only at Anamabu, when the unpleasant news arrived that the heavy rains were seriously damaging the church at Cape Coast. He hastened to view the reported damage, but to his joy he found nothing to cause alarm. He purchased and at once pulled down two old native houses, which, in case of fire, would endanger the church. We then find him negotiating the purchase of "the present mission-house," and contemplating the removal of the girls' school to these premises from the old house taken by Mr. Wrigley.

Calls were coming from all directions, and Freeman's labours at this time must have been prodigious; but he devoted himself with apostolic ardour to the accomplishment of his great purpose, laying a broad foundation for the uprearing of a splendid monument of Christian missionary enterprise.

Before the close of the year he was able to write the following good news to the missionary authorities

in England: "The results of my mission to Ashanti are now beginning to be manifest. The king, I hear from good authority, is becoming anxious respecting the establishment of a school in Coomassie, and is expecting me to pay him another visit; and many of the Ashantis who became acquainted with me during my late visit call at the mission-house to see me when they come down to Cape Coast. A brother of Korinchi has this morning (September 17th) paid me a visit, presenting his regards, and stating that they will be very happy to see me in Ashanti again. If the advantage already gained can be followed up, I have no doubt that, under the blessing of the God of missions, we shall in due time meet with abundant success."

In the meantime Freeman's journals of his visit to Ashanti, extracts from which we have already made from time to time, had been read and considered by the missionary officials, and this is the conclusion at which they arrive: "On the receipt at the Wesleyan Mission in London of Mr. Freeman's journal . . . the question 'What shall be done?' became the subject of grave consideration on the part of the missionary committee, under whose direction Mr. Freeman acted. The ordinary annual income of the Society was already pledged for the support of existing missions; and yet the committee durst not take upon themselves the responsibility of refusing to *attempt*, at least, the establishment of a mission in Ashanti. It was at length resolved that Mr. Freeman should be allowed to return home for a time, partly for the purpose of recruiting his health, but more particularly with a view to a special effort being made, in order to raise the funds necessary for the new undertaking; and two missionaries were immediately sent to relieve him for a time from his laborious duties at the Gold Coast." Freeman continued, however, in his lonely toil, so far as European aid was concerned, to the end of the year 1839.

On January 13th, 1840, he had the joy of welcoming the two missionaries referred to, the Rev. J. M. Mountford and Mrs. Mountford, with Rev. Robert Brooking.

After a few months of fellowship with these two honoured brethren, the former of whom is now passing a quiet eventide in retirement after the labours of a long life, Freeman voyaged to England, and under date June 18th, 1840, the secretaries of the mission made the following announcement: "We have pleasure in stating that the Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman, the senior Wesleyan missionary on the Gold Coast in Western Africa, . . . arrived in London on Thursday last." It was further announced that he was accompanied by William de Graft, and that their stay would be about four months, when "Mr. Freeman hopes to return, . . . accompanied by six other missionaries. Four of these are intended to be his companions in the glorious enterprise of attempting to establish a mission among the four millions of men who constitute the population of the powerful kingdom of Ashanti and its dependencies; and thus to introduce Christianity, education, and civilisation into one important portion of that great continent to which Britain owes so vast a debt of reparation for the wrongs and miseries of the accursed slave trade. This mission may now be considered as fully determined upon by the Wesleyan Missionary Society, in accordance with the resolution of the late annual meeting in London."

During this visit Mr. Freeman was entertained as an honoured guest at Orwell Park by his old employer, Sir Robert Harland. Lady Harland had a house purposely constructed for the care and culture of some valuable tropical plants which their old gardener had brought with him as a present.

Mr. Freeman and his native companion were enthusiastically received by the English audiences which they addressed. De Graft's manuscript journal, which he once lent to the writer of this book, makes frequent

reference to these wonderful receptions. We take the following from the official statement:—

"The results of Mr. Freeman's visit to several of the principal towns in Great Britain and Ireland were of the most gratifying description. Members of the Church of England, some of whom are in the higher walks of life, and Christians of other denominations, as well as the members of the Wesleyan community, responded to the novel and deeply interesting appeal; and by these united exertions the proposed sum of £5,000 was placed at the disposal of the Wesleyan Committee, to enable them to send with Mr. Freeman, on his return, six additional missionaries. . . . At Mr. Freeman's suggestion, the committee agreed so far to comply with the established African custom of offering presents, as to send for the king of Ashanti . . . a suitable carriage, which was noticed with approbation by Her Most Gracious Majesty and His Royal Highness Prince Albert, to whose inspection it was submitted by Mr. Sims, the builder."

On Monday, December 1st, 1840, a special ordination and valedictory service was held at Great Queen Street Chapel, London, in connection with the departure of the missionaries; and although very little previous notice was given, so keen was the interest that the chapel was well filled.

The service was conducted by the well-known ministers Bunting, Hannah, Alder, Beecham, and Hoole; and the five missionaries were solemnly ordained, after giving a brief account of the circumstances which led to their offer for the arduous service in Western Africa.

Mr. Freeman, on being introduced to the audience, expressed his gratitude for the kindness extended to him during his visit, and for the deep interest manifested in his mission. William de Graft, who was now received as a regular agent, took his leave of the Christian public in an interesting address; and to him Dr. Bunting presented a copy of the Bible, and

expressed a hope that he would continue to spread its important truths among his countrymen.

The saintly Dr. Hannah then delivered an appropriate charge, and Dr. Bunting led the audience in fervent prayer for the success of the missionaries, and thus brought to a close a memorable public service.

The next day there was a formal leave-taking of the general committee and the ministers of London and its vicinity at Hatton Garden ; and on Thursday, December 3rd, 1840, this large missionary party, consisting of eleven persons, embarked on the brig *Osborne*, and sailed from Gravesend.

Mr. Freeman had been so fortunate as to find another English lady to accompany him as his wife. This lady was a native of Bristol, from which place Mr. Freeman married her a few weeks before his departure, and "was eminently calculated by her piety and talents to aid him in his important operations."

In addition there were two other ladies, the wives of Messrs. Hesk and Shipman. Mr. Freeman had a native boy and William de Graft accompanying him, whilst Messrs. Watson, Thackwray, and Walden were unmarried. Never was a missionary party dismissed from the shores of England with a more intense feeling of interest and sympathy. The prayers of the whole Methodist Church and many of other Christian communions followed the missionaries and the interests of the mission to which they were designated. Freeman subsequently refers to a "delightful and happy Covenant Service" held on board on the first Sunday of the New Year.

On Monday, February 1st, 1841, the whole party, in the enjoyment of good health, and full of large hopes, reached their destination,—the largest contingent of Wesleyan missionaries that ever landed at one time on the Gold Coast, representing in the most emphatic manner the intensity of feeling created in England in reference to this interesting mission.

The Cape Coast annual missionary meeting had been postponed to March 29th, to secure the advantage of the presence of Freeman and his companions. With his usual urbanity and liberality, President Maclean consented to preside ; and there must have been unusual excitement, for whilst the collection in cash amounted to fourteen pounds, many gave in kind, bringing goats and sheep, which, when sold, realised a good sum, the total reaching to the respectable amount of nearly fifty-two pounds, indicative of the whole-heartedness of the Fanti Christians.

The pleasing prospect of having so large a party of fellow-workers was soon blighted by the treachery of the climate. The first reduction of the staff was occasioned by the needful return to England in the month of March, only a few weeks after their arrival, of Mr. and Mrs. Mountford. In the month of May William Thackwray died at Anamabu, after a brief illness of eight days. Mr. and Mrs. Freeman had gone thither, intending to accompany him to Domonasi, his intended station. From thence Freeman had written a letter to the committee stating that all the brethren had proceeded to their stations, except Mr. Thackwray, who was preparing to start early the next morning. The young missionary himself also wrote a letter, which was full of hope, and stated that he had been permitted to introduce the gospel into Egá, a small beach village about a mile from Anamabu, a place visited by Mr. Wrigley, but from pressure of circumstances afterwards neglected. He also stated that his companion, Mr. Hesk, had been ill. It is evident that the purpose of going to Domonasi was never fulfilled, and Freeman had the sad duty of bringing back his dead body to Cape Coast for burial.

Charles Walden was the next to fall a victim to the fever of the country, and passed away on July 29th. Then there fell upon Freeman a heavier blow,

in the death of his second wife. Soon after their arrival it was feared that Mrs. Freeman would not be able to endure the climate, and preparations were being made for her to return to England ; but before an opportunity offered she was seized with illness, which terminated fatally on August 25th, 1841.

President Maclean, in writing to the missionary committee in England, states that "her death was occasioned by an hereditary and peculiar complaint."

Three days after, Mrs. Hesk, too, died at Anamabu, and her body was brought to lie by the side of her companions in the burial-yard attached to the Wesleyan Church at Cape Coast, but which now, owing to extensions, is covered by the rostrum and communion.

Mr. Hesk's health failed him soon after landing in Africa ; and though he tried the effects of one or two short voyages on the coast, he continued in a very debilitated state, and in September he embarked for England.

Thus in about six months the mission staff was reduced by more than one-half; but the indomitable spirit of our missionary shows itself in the statement he makes in a letter to the secretaries at this time, which we quote : "Though my opportunities of becoming acquainted, since my return, with the spiritual state of our Societies have been rather limited, yet I rejoice to say that I find many things of a very encouraging character. There is a marked attention paid to the preaching of the Word of Life. Our seasons of grace at the Lord's table have been of the most hallowed description. The prayer-meetings are very exhilarating means of grace, and the congregations are generally good."

At this time the ships of the noted Niger Expedition arrived, bringing the two Ashanti princes who had been educated in England, William Kwantamissah and John Osoo Ansah. Whilst at Accra, President Maclean, Captain Tucker of the *Iris*, and the two

Captains Allen of the *Soudan* and *Wilberforce*, called upon Freeman, who was visiting the Church there. They urged the desirability of sending a missionary to the banks of the Gaboon, and offered to convey a suitable man to inspect, and bring him back to the Gold Coast. Freeman entreated the committee to send a man for the proposed station. This enterprise, however, was never taken up.

On the arrival of the Ashanti princes, Freeman hastened his preparations to start on his second journey to Ashanti, and arranged that during his absence the coast stations should be left in the charge of Messrs. Shipman and Watson.

CHAPTER VIII.

PLANTING THE CHURCH IN ASHANTI.

ON Saturday, November 6th, 1841, Freeman started on his second journey to Ashanti. He was accompanied by the young princes, who were attended by an imposing retinue, numbering in all some three hundred and forty men, one-half of whom were Ashantis, the larger proportion of the remainder being employed for the difficult task of conveying the carriage brought from England as a present to the king.

Mr. Brooking also accompanied Freeman, to take up the honourable and perilous duty of the first resident missionary in Coomassie. With some advantage he had occupied Mansu for two months ; Freeman noted that this short residence had produced a good effect upon the people in the removal of prejudice ; and doubtless the young missionary had obtained valuable experience, which was calculated to be of service to him when more entirely cut off from his brethren on the coast.

President Maclean's interest was shown in the

sending of a sergeant and six soldiers to the banks of the Prah ; whilst Mr. Henry Smith, a prominent native Christian gentleman, accompanied the party all the way.

Along the track already described in a former chapter, Mr. Freeman toiled with his large following, and with incredible labour dragged the carriage through the forest, across the river, and over the hills. At first it was borne bodily upon the men's shoulders and heads, and then placed upon wheels, as probably an easier method of procedure. Here clearings had to be made through the narrow "bush path," and there a huge forest tree removed or a new way cut around it. Freeman tramped nearly the whole of the journey, and worked as hard as any labourer in bringing this strange present to the king of Ashanti. He suffered from constant violent attacks of toothache, aggravated by his being wet in his feet and legs nearly all day long, caused by the incessant rains.

The journey, however, was enlivened by the excitement caused in the villages and towns by so large a party passing through. Sometimes the "rustic bands," with their strange music, turned out to lead the party triumphantly into their village ; and then a number of native labourers would assist in clearing the path and help the carriage through their territory. Occasionally darkness would settle upon them while the party were in the heart of the forest, miles from any village, when a number of men had to remain on the spot all night to guard their unique treasure.

The Sabbaths were times of rest and refreshment, and the little towns were made to echo with sacred song, and the Word of Life was declared by Freeman and his companions to the natives who gathered round.

On reaching the Prah he was met by a royal messenger bearing a letter from Kwaku Duah, urging him to quicken his steps. The king was evidently becoming impatient to see Freeman and the present which was being conveyed with so much difficulty.

The carriage was placed upon two canoes fastened together, and thus ferried across the sacred river dividing Fanti from Ashanti. Soon they came to the Adansi Hills, and here another messenger from the king presented himself, with fifty men to help the party over the hills and on the rough way to the capital. With such a contingent the carriage was drawn up the steep ascent without halting. Seventy men were pulling the ropes and pushing the vehicle till near the summit. For two or three hundred yards the ascent seemed nearly perpendicular. At this juncture Freeman describes the scene as "almost terrific: the appearance of the carriage winding up among the lofty forest-trees, surrounded by from one to two hundred Fantis and Ashantis actually shouting for joy, as they beheld the carriage steadily ascending without accident." His heart was filled with thanksgiving as he saw so many representatives of these two tribes, usually entertaining feelings of deepest hostility, now engaged in a work calculated to produce a beautiful harmony. Yet, in the midst of all, he could not prevent his memory from recalling the distress and anguish through which he had passed six months previously in the burial of his wife and his fellow-missionaries.

At Fumana he found his old lodgings, but not his old friend Korinchi. He had been disgraced and removed to another and inferior position by the king, who thus marked his displeasure at his turbulent conduct when at court. But other old friends came to greet Freeman, and large congregations gathered to hear him and his companion preach, and to salute the princes, who were objects of interest everywhere.

More royal messengers arrived, but now to inform Freeman that, as the *Adai* "custom" had begun, his reception would have to be postponed for several days. He wished him to salute his nephews "with a kiss" for him.

In the midst of all the rough work, Freeman had an

eye for the floral beauties and insect life of the country, and notes the large and superb butterflies and moths. He states : " One of my men caught a fine species of hawk-moth ; unfortunately, the rich down was so much rubbed off from the wings that I did not see it in perfection. Its principal colour was green."

The Ashantis and Fantis of his following,—who often passed the early hours of the night in dancing together to the sound of their rough music,—sometimes gave him a little trouble, especially if he had granted them a longer rest than usual. One morning, desiring to start early, the men were not forthcoming. Freeman thus writes of the event: " I sent for them a second time, but they came not. I then thought it best to go after them myself; and on entering their quarters I found them all comfortably seated, taking an early breakfast. This was out of all order, as they were allowed plenty of time to take their meals whenever we rested during the day. They knew they were wrong, and took the alarm the moment they saw me. As I entered, they jumped up and flew in every direction. They had been sitting round a large earthen pot of soup, out of which they were all feeding with their fingers. In their hurry they broke the pot to pieces, spilling the contents on the ground. The doors of the native dwellings are generally small ; and as several of them tried to rush through at the same time, they knocked down a part of the wall near it. One of them ran into a small yard, where his progress was retarded by a wall about six feet high, plastered with swish or clay. Determined not to be foiled by the wall, though a pretty strong one of its kind, he, with astonishing activity, commenced pulling a part of it down, occasionally looking over one of his shoulders, to see if I was coming after him ; and in a little time that seemed almost incredible, he was at his post with his companions. I need not say that this fracas caused me no small amusement ; and as these frail buildings are

so easily repaired, the damages were not enough to cause much regret."

Drawing nearer to Coomassie, Freeman found that the king had had the road cleared and rough bridges constructed across the streams, to facilitate his journey with the carriage. He passed near Bekwa, a large and important town, and heard of a repetition of the bloody scenes in connection with the "custom," with which he became only too familiar on his former visit.

On the morning of December 13th, the thirty-seventh day after starting from the coast, Freeman halted at the entrance to Coomassie, and was soon surrounded by all those tokens of barbaric splendour which have been described in a former chapter: gold swords and ornaments, and the blood-stained stools, all except the death drum, being borne along in the procession. The princes were well received, and the presents, especially the carriage, excited great curiosity and gave immense satisfaction. With some figured coloured muslin caps sent by friends from Keighley, the king was greatly delighted, and declared that his captains should wear them.

A few days after, according to native etiquette, came presents from the king in return, consisting of cattle, vegetables and fruits, with gold dust to the value of fifty-six pounds. Messrs. Freeman and Brooking's share amounted to twenty-seven pounds, which was at once passed to the credit of the mission. The missionaries then proceeded to one of the most elevated parts of the town, where the king seated himself to drink palm-wine and return thanks for the royal gifts. Freeman's description of the king drinking wine will be found of interest.

"Shortly afterwards his servants arrived with palm-wine and a large calabash, partly overlaid with gold, for him to drink out of, and a large silver bowl to hold under the calabash, to receive the palm-wine which might run down His Majesty's beard. While he was drinking the large drums were played, and several arrows were shot from the bow, to let the people

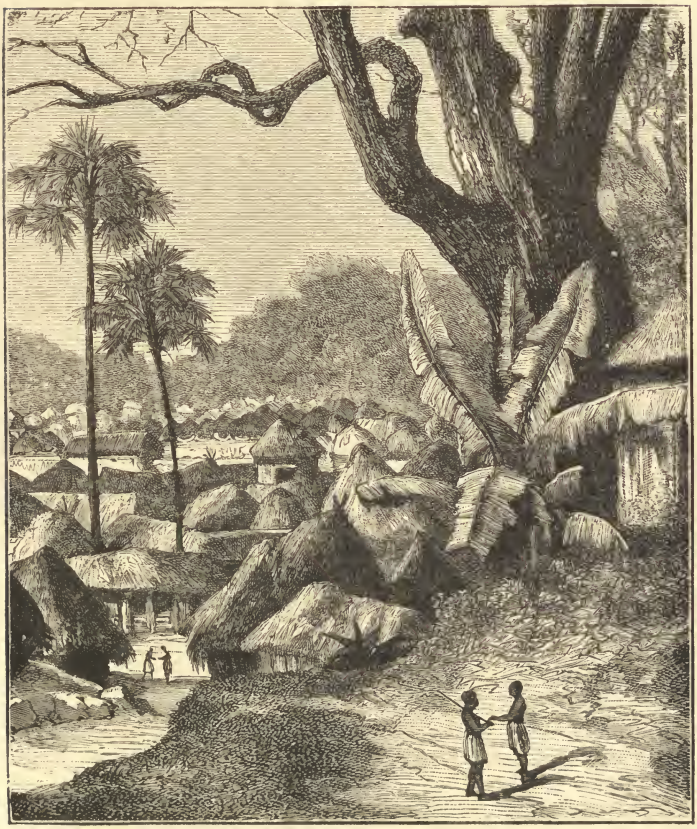
know that he was still holding the calabash to his mouth. He then sent us a supply of the wine, after which he returned to his residence."

In subsequent interviews Freeman acquainted the king with the motives which actuated the British Government in securing the princes, his nephews, a liberal education in England. It was desired to show him what Christian civilisation might do for his country. On the subject of slavery Freeman told him of the antipathy which Great Britain felt to it, and the great sacrifice which she had made to emancipate the slaves of the West Indies. The whole party, including the young princes, entered into a spirited conversation with the king on the wonders of civilisation, the arts and sciences as seen in Great Britain. Freeman took the opportunity of informing the king that their special object as missionaries was the introduction of Christianity into his dominions. The king promised them his protection, and presented them with land on which to build a mission-house.

Freeman and his friends kept their Christmas-day in Coomassie, making it as nearly like an English Christmas as they could. Twelve of them dined together off roast beef and plum-pudding, under a shed which they had decorated with green boughs and flowers from the forest.

Divine service was held, and the meaning of Christmas was explained to the king. He sent presents of fat sheep to the missionaries. This probably was the first Christmas-day that the gospel was preached in Coomassie. Freeman makes the following entry in his journal that day :—"After dinner we sang some hymns, and then went out for a walk. On our way home I saw the corpse of a young slave, about twelve years of age, slung to a pole and carried by two men. This led to the disclosure of the fact . . . that all slaves, except a few favoured ones, are considered not worth the trouble of decent burial . . . but are thrown into the water which runs round the town . . . as food

for the thousands of fishes," which may be here mention are sacredly preserved. These fishes are very tame, and Freeman witnessed, what he had heard



COOMASSIE.

stated with some incredulity, some of them move several inches out of the water to obtain crumbs and then return to their native element.

To all appearance perfect freedom was given to the people to attend the teaching and preaching of the missionaries, and in other ways the king took pains to show that he regarded his visitors with favour. Hitherto they had dwelt in a damp house in a low part of the town ; but on it being represented that their health was suffering, he took care to have them removed to a healthier spot and into a better house. Perhaps the greatest mark of favour was the invitation to dine with His Majesty on December 28th. Freeman gives particulars of this wonderful repast, covering several pages of his journal. The king arrayed himself in gorgeous European attire of very ancient make, and as nearly as possible adopted English customs, and had a native band to discourse music which perhaps would scarcely be considered "sweet" by the visitors ; but Freeman was surprised that they managed to render a few English airs so correctly. Surrounded by his royal relatives and high officers of state, the king partook of the English dishes, tasting them and passing them on to his officers. Then followed *toasts* and dessert, and a visit to the stone house built by Osai Tutu Kwamina, which appears to have been a store of curiosities from various parts of the world, royal presents to Kwaku Duah and his kingly predecessors. Best of all, the king expressed his entire satisfaction with Freeman and his proposed mission.

We cannot refrain from quoting the closing entry in his journal for the year 1841. "The last day of an eventful year, during which I have enjoyed greater happiness, and have had greater trials, than at any former period of my chequered life. At the commencement of the year I was in possession of one of the most amiable and best of wives. At the end of the year I mourn her early death, and am left a widower in a foreign land. How powerfully does she, being dead, yet speak, reminding me to be 'also ready' to meet my Judge ! Amidst all these poignant

sufferings,—the loss of my wife, and that of some of my brethren who had laboured with me in the same field,—I rejoice that I can say, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His Holy Name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.'"

On the first Sunday of the year 1842 Freeman preached twice to interested congregations, Mr. Brooking being unwell. In the evening the little mission family, including the two princes, joined in a solemn covenant service of consecration to God, and partaking together the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The following day the king conferred upon Freeman and Brooking, in company with the two princes, unique honour. They were invited to a semi-private reception. The king, and his wives, whom no man is permitted to meet or look upon, were assembled in one of the palaces. His Majesty explained that he was desirous of thus showing his gratitude to the English people for their kindness and care of the princes and himself. The band played, and several young women, beautifully attired, danced gracefully before the company, all behaving with the greatest decorum. When they ceased the king descended from his stool and danced, explaining to Freeman that it was not usual for the king to dance before his wives in the presence of any one, but he did so before him in honour of the Queen of England. The queen-mother followed, dancing and proclaiming the "strong names" of the king and his ancestors. This kind of exercise continued until all must have grown very excited. Then, in honour of Freeman, the women sang an improvised song, which has thus been rendered into English:—

> "The Englishman lives in Sebu Seki,
> To-day he has come to visit the King.
> The King has danced before him
> In the presence of his wives,

And done what he has never done to
A European before. He has walked
Up and shaken hands with him."

The king was now on the most intimate terms with the missionary party, and placed great confidence in Freeman. The day after the reception the king sent in haste asking Freeman to send medicine to a female member of the royal family living at Juabin, a town of some importance about twenty-one miles north-east of Coomassie. Freeman explained that he could not undertake to send medicine unless he knew the ailment from which the lady was suffering, and as she was too ill to come to Coomassie he offered to go to Juabin and prescribe for her. Leaving one morning about ten o'clock, he reached Juabin about seven, an hour after sunset, and at once made his way to the house of his royal patient Seiwa, the queen of Juabin. He was kindly received and welcomed to her town, and on his return to the lodgings allotted to him, she sent an acceptable present of food. Freeman then collected his little family about him, and, as he states, "a strange and extraordinary thing took place in Juabin: an altar was for the first time erected to the Lord God of hosts, and the whole of that beautiful hymn,

'Jesus, the name high over all,'

ascended to heaven from grateful hearts."

He found the queen suffering from a nervous affection which had deprived her of the use of her left arm, the large muscle being constantly agitated, accompanied with great pain. She ascribed it to poison, the usual African explanation of a malady, and believed that the movement was caused by a worm. He found the lady somewhat intractable, but gave her medicines which relieved her. On his return to Coomassie he treated a chief for bilious fever, and gained the reputation of having saved his life. These matters added largely to his influence.

Freeman describes the revolting barbarities in con-

nection with the executions which he witnessed. To prevent the victim from using a solemn oath which all regard as binding, the poor wretch has his cheeks pierced with knives previous to decapitation. A slave once swore by the king's head that the king must kill him that day ; all feared to go near him, lest he should also add that the king should also slay his nephew.* Therefore the precaution of piercing the cheeks described by all visitors to Coomassie. The executioner, whom Freeman saw behead two poor victims most adroitly, was a lad about eighteen years of age, and told Freeman a few weeks before that he had then executed as many as eighty victims.

Another excitement awaited the missionaries. Whilst they were conversing with the Apoko concerning the establishment of a mission school, they heard the alarm of fire. The tall grass at the rear of the town, behind the house in which the missionary party lodged, was on fire, and the flames were approaching with great rapidity. Freeman took the precaution quickly to cut down the grass near his quarters, and by a providential change of wind the danger was averted as far as the mission party was concerned. Other portions of the town were soon ablaze, and the king's quarters were in danger. Freeman with his friends exerted themselves to stay the flames and preserve the royal buildings, but the fire consumed a large number of houses, and many people lost their lives. Freeman again received the thanks of the king for his disinterested exertions.

A nephew of the king met Freeman when walking near the royal residence, and said, "We are very sorry you are going to leave us soon. When you came to Coomassie before, we were afraid of you ; but

* The binding nature of a solemn oath, like the vow of Jephthah, according to their code of morals, must be recognised at all costs. Human sacrifice is based upon the religious sentiment. The victim is a solemn offering to their deity, and any oath of his, especially when first preparing for the fearful ordeal, comes with peculiar force to their superstitious minds. To swear by the king's head is the most solemn of oaths.

we have no fear now, and are glad to see you here." Later the same individual said, referring to the providential saving of the premises of the mission when the fire raged, "God preserved you Christians from the fire."

On January 31st, having gone through the usual ceremony of taking leave of the king and high officers of state, Freeman turned his back upon Coomassie, leaving Mr. Brooking in charge, with good prospects of building up a spiritual Church in this blood-stained city.

As he approached the coast he was gladdened with the news of the arrival of a further contingent of missionaries from England, Messrs. Allen, Rowland and Wyatt, and very soon he took steps to appoint these brethren to different stations. We find him now at Dixcove, settling Mr. Watson; then on the way to the Prah, to accompany Mr. Rowland on the journey to Coomassie. Again he is settling Mr. Allen at Domonasi, and then encouraging Mr. and Mrs. Shipman at Accra, who had started an unpretentious theological institution; but the end of the year 1842 finds him attempting another large enterprise, the description of which we must reserve for another chapter.

MARKET WOMEN, ABEOKUTA.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE EGBA METROPOLIS.

MANY of the slave-ships which had been captured by our gun boats on the West African coast were towed into Sierra Leone, and their human freight discharged and cared for under the shadow of the British flag. A motley population was thus collected, speaking a hundred different tongues. Amongst these were a large number of the Yoruba race, known in Sierra Leone as Akus, from their frequent use of this word, which is their most common salutation. The members of this tribe are well known in West Africa for their marvellous trading propensities.

In the year 1838 a half-caste trader in Sierra Leone purchased a ship and sailed down the coast on a trading expedition. Many of the Akus joined him. In the course of their voyage they reached a large trading town in the Bight of Benin, which they were told was Lagos, but which they recognised as the

great slave depôt Eko, and they knew they were on the borders of their own country.

On landing they gathered some little information as to the condition of their fatherland and kindred, which induced them to ascend the river Ogun in native canoes till they reached its navigable limits, and there found the object of their search, the now well-known but then recently formed town of Abeokuta. Here they were welcomed by relatives from whom they had been sundered for long years, and to them they told the story of the wonders they had seen in the white man's country, Sierra Leone, and astonished them by recounting the story of the efforts made to secure their liberty and education. Descending the river, they reached Lagos again, and returned to Sierra Leone, reporting to their kindred there what they had seen, and bringing loving messages from relatives to many from this great Egba city of Abeokuta. This led to other similar expeditions ; the freed slaves buying with their hard-earned money some of the old slave-ships and making an exodus to their native land.

The slave-dealers of Lagos soon became suspicious that this wonderful movement boded no good for their vile business ; and not only served some of these civilised natives cruelly, but blocked their way back to Abeokuta by Lagos. Thus the pilgrims sought and found another port of landing at Badagry, some forty miles to the east of Lagos—a town protected by the Egbas, who kept an open road to the coast this way.

Some of the liberated African Christians who had returned to Abeokuta sent an urgent request to the Wesleyan Missionary Society for the appointment of a Christian teacher. One letter to the missionary at Sierra Leone was couched in impassioned terms. "For Christ's sake come quickly. Let nothing but sickness prevent you. Do not stop to change your clothes, to eat or drink or sleep, and salute no man by the way. Do, for God's sake, start this moment."

TYPES OF NATIVES, ABEOKUTA.

To our missionary, Freeman, fell the congenial duty of bearing the response of the Wesleyan Missionary Society to these urgent appeals. On Saturday, September 24th, 1842, we find him landing through the dangerous surf from the ship which had brought him from Cape Coast.

His former native companion, William De Graft, with his wife, had accompanied him; and he had brought some materials for constructing a house, and a number of native workmen, who were soon hard at work under Freeman's supervision.

Running along this coast, stretching almost continuously from the river Niger to the Volta, is an interior waterway parallel with the coast line, into which there flow the waters of numerous rivers. This network of lagoons has proved the natural highway for the nefarious slave traffic, and more recently for legitimate commerce. The strip of land separating the lagoon from the surf-beaten coast varies from a few hundred yards to four or five miles, whilst here and there the bulk of water has made for itself a breach opening into the sea.

When Freeman landed he found he had about a mile to walk across the strip of land to the edge of the lagoon, on the other bank of which is situated the town of Badagry. The lagoon here has the appearance of a good broad river, with the current setting towards Lagos. This crossed, Freeman expressed his thankfulness to be once more on shore, after his uncomfortable voyage of five days from Cape Coast.

Lander found Badagry one of the vilest places imaginable, human sacrifices being an almost daily occurrence, with a huge fetish tree, from the branches of which were suspended various portions of human bodies, whilst human skulls were scattered on the ground underneath its shadow. Our missionary found it little better. The people at that time were addicted to the most revolting and abominable practices.

A few visits of inspection to the forest and along

the lagoon convinced Freeman that he could find such timber as he needed for building purposes, and by December 3rd he had completed the shell of a house and covered it with a good thatch roof. It was a large airy dwelling, suitable for a European family, raised from ten to twelve feet from the ground on twenty-two stout cocoanut pillars averaging about three-quarters of a ton each in weight.

Already he had received communications from Abeokuta, and urgent requests to hasten thither; and now that he had so far completed the work of building

NATIVE CHRISTIANS AT ABEOKUTA.

the mission-house, he felt free to start for the interior. The great Egba chief Shodeke had sent fourteen men to escort him, and previously had forwarded a present of a native pony with trappings complete.

On December 5th, Mr. Freeman, accompanied by De Graft and his wife, started for the town of Abeokuta, about seventy miles north-east from Badagry. Early in the afternoon they reached the Egba encampment, which had been pitched close to Adu, to keep in check the people of that place, who were given to plunder and kidnapping. Here he was courteously received by Shamoye, the brother of Shodeke, who

held the position of General, and at his urgent request spent a day in his company.

The country through which he passed was somewhat different in its nature from that of the Gold Coast. He noted the extensive farms and fine plantations, the very rough forest paths and the well-supplied native markets—all indicative of the industrious character of the people. On December 10th he had reached Owayadi, a village on the summit of a hill, not far from which may be seen on a clear day the great town of Abeokuta. The general aspect of the country now indicated that the missionary was approaching the African metropolis. Some Sierra Leone emigrants came out to meet him, accosting him in his own language, whilst numerous native salutations were offered. As it was too late to enter the town that day, Freeman rested at the little farm village of Okwaru, sending a messenger to inform the chief of his approach, and requesting that he might be permitted to enter at once, as the morrow was the Sabbath; but as the night gathered this became impossible.

At six o'clock on Sunday morning a mounted escort arrived to conduct the missionary and his party into the town. He crossed the river Ogun, which here flows in a south-westerly direction, and is about seventy yards wide, to the landing-place, Aro. Then for a few miles over the grassy plain to one of the gates of this great walled town. As he passed through the streets a perfect chorus of native salutations greeted him. "*Welcome! welcome! white man!*" "*Blessing! Long life to you, white man!*" The crowd increased as he proceeded, and the salutations grew louder, till he was brought into the compound of the great chief, who held the supreme position in the plutocratic government of this native state.

Shodeke was a superior man, who had shown great skill in guiding the counsels in the government of Abeokuta, and by his righteous dealing had won for himself the esteem and affection of the people. In

their admiration they ascribed to him prophetic powers, and some of his statements are still recalled, as the predictions of an old seer. His mind had been greatly exercised in relation to religion, for the incursion of the Mohammedans into the north of Yoruba and the preaching of their priests had produced an element of doubt in the minds of the most thoughtful concerning their idolatry. Already Mohammedanism was powerfully represented in the town, and the priests had been welcomed by Shodeke, and encouraged to display their proofs of the truth of their religion. The native priests also were desirous of maintaining their supremacy. On the spot where the controversy occurred, the author has heard from the lips of the older race of Christians how this contention waxed warm, and how each side strove to produce its "strong reasons." At this juncture the Christian missionary arrived, and was welcomed by the great chief. Shodeke was not long before he received fresh light on the great question which had exercised his mind, and was so thoroughly convinced of the truth of the Christian religion brought by the stranger that he dismissed the angry contending priests, and announced his determination to accept "the white man's religion."

The foiled priests vowed vengeance, and, not long after, carried their threat into execution by craftily poisoning Shodeke. As the enlightened old ruler lay dying, he turned with words of sorrowful rebuke upon the priests, and said, "You have succeeded in poisoning me, but you will never get another Shodeke!" In the chequered history which has since followed the people remember these fateful words. To-day, as the old people recall those times, with the halo of romance which they have placed in their imagination about the brow of their old chief, they say, "On the day that Shodeke died the sun forgot to shine and the birds to sing."

The romantic story of the founding of the great town of Abeokuta has been so often told that the

slightest sketch is all that is needful here. The Mohammedan Fellani had crossed the Niger, and at last threw off the guise of friendship which had led to an alliance between them and the chief of Yoruba, seizing large portions of the country and asserting their authority. In their true character of cruel, greedy self-seekers, they depopulated and destroyed large towns, and thus carried on the profitable but wicked slave-trade. The king was driven from his capital, one hundred and thirty towns and villages were destroyed and the people seized as slaves. The remnant kept in hiding for a time, and then formed the community in which we are now interested.

In the south-west of this great Yoruba country, and on the eastern bank of the river Ogun, in the midst of undulating ground covered with tropical verdure, there rises a huge hill of rough granite, the shelving sides of which form a cave of large proportions, which in ancient days was a hiding-place for robbers. To this rocky retreat the refugees fled, about the year 1825, in such numbers that soon they were able to occupy the fruitful valleys and build a wall to enclose their new resting-place.

The great granite rock which had sheltered them in the day of their distress they called "*Oluma*" ("The Builder"). The inhabitants sacrifice their sheep and fowls to it to-day, regarding it as one of their greatest "*orishas*," or idols. They named the town "Abeokuta" ("Understone"), from the interesting fact of its origin as described. Its fame soon spread, and to it there gathered the remnants of the clans. To-day it is estimated that its great clay wall and trench, some fifteen miles round, enclose a population that cannot be less than one hundred thousand.

The enemies of the people were soon alarmed at its strength, and determined upon its destruction; then it was that the inhabitants placed themselves under the leadership of the brave man Shodeke, as their first ruler, who, by his prudence and courage, extended the

fame of the town and kept open the path to the seaboard for legitimate trade.

This is the man to whom Freeman was introduced. He found him "seated on the floor, on a large native mat, supporting himself against a beautiful leather-covered cushion of native manufacture. He wore a

ROCK OF OLUMA.

handsome damask cloth, thrown lightly over his shoulder, and a scarlet cloth cap with a blue tassel on the crown of it. Before him stood a large glass bowl of European manufacture, well supplied with kola-nuts." This large astringent seed, which contains many valuable properties, is used extensively by the interior tribes, and serves as a good corrective to

the laxative native food. It is also used to stave off hunger-pangs, in visits of ceremony, in declaring war and the expression of friendship, the presentation of certain numbers having a symbolic significance. After brief ordinary greetings, Freeman was permitted to retire to the quarters allotted to him.

There were present a number of Christian emigrants from Sierra Leone. "I shall never forget," Freeman writes, "the joy which beamed in their countenances as they seized me by the hand and bade me welcome. 'Ah!' said they, 'we told our king that the English people loved us, and that missionaries would be sure to follow us; but he could hardly believe that any one would come so far to do us good. Now what we told our king has come to pass! O Master! you are welcome, welcome, welcome!'

"Shodeke seemed quite overjoyed, and, as we were walking across the court-yard, he clasped me in his arms before all the people, and thus testified his extreme satisfaction. Shortly afterwards he came to our apartments and talked . . . in a free and familiar manner. 'My people,' said he, 'told me they were sure their friends in England would not neglect them; but I feared you would not venture to come so far. Now I see you, and my heart rejoices; and as you have now come to visit us, I hope the English will never leave us.' My feelings were of the most intense character. I saw in Shodeke's open and manly countenance something which gave the seal of truth to all he said. His remarks were not vain, empty compliments. I believe they came from his heart, and were spoken in sincerity and truth."

In the afternoon of this first Sabbath in Abeokuta the missionary conducted a service in the court-yard of the chief, expounding the Scriptures and holding a prayer-meeting. Shodeke seated himself beside Freeman, and for his benefit all that was said was interpreted into the Yoruba language. Thus began most auspiciously the work of the Wesleyan Missions

in Abeokuta, which has continued with more or less success to this day.

This first Christian missionary to Abeokuta caused considerable excitement. Wheresoever he walked abroad scores of the people gathered about him, following him in the streets and greeting him with strange salutations. *Oni Oku Oyimbo! Oku Abo Oyimbo!* "Long life to you, white man! A blessing on you, white man, in your coming," with other phrases of native welcome, were heard from the people, who were delighted at the missionary's presence in their town.

He noted that the irregular streets contrasted unfavourably with the uniform and regular thoroughfares of Coomassie, but he also observed that the town was quite twice as large, and estimated the population at fifty thousand, which must have been under rather than over the mark. He also found that there were a large number of Haussa settlers there, some of whom came to greet him; and learning that their country was only seven days' journey on horseback, he evidently longed to carry forward the Cross of Christ into that Mohammedan state, and cherished the thought that he might at a future time be able to accomplish this.

Freeman's visit extended to ten days, when Shodeke very reluctantly permitted him to depart for Badagry, where other enterprises were awaiting him. The chief accompanied Freeman to the outskirts of the town, the people crowding into the streets to bid farewell to the missionary. "Good-bye," said many of them as they waved their hands: "come again soon! come again soon!" "Shodeke parted with us with considerable emotion, and was, I think," adds Freeman, "sorry that we had left him."

Freeman pushed on rapidly to the coast, with no extraordinary incident to record. He noted a very usual incident of African travel, but perhaps of some interest to the English reader, that, on rising early to finish the journey, the dew saturated him as he

travelled through the long grass, and when he had gone for several hours and felt hungry he could not obtain his breakfast, because his carriers were left far in the rear. His upper clothing saturated with perspiration and his lower extremities cold with the dew, he became somewhat concerned. So hungry was he that he was glad to purchase a pot of native soup, "made with pork and palm-oil. A mussel-shell supplied the place of a spoon, and though I could scarcely fancy taking palm-oil in such a wholesale manner, I found the soup to have a refreshing and invigorating effect."

The people of Badagry were pleased but surprised to see him return. On remarking this, one of his attendants told him that the chief had informed them that he would be killed if he attempted a journey to the interior ; and one night, before Freeman started for Abeokuta, Wawa came to this servant and said, "It is not good for your master to go into the interior : the people are not to be trusted ; perhaps they will kill him. Try and persuade him not to go." The servant replied, "My master does not care for that ; his work just now is in the interior, and he will therefore go. If he live, it will be well ; if he die, it will be well : he does not care ; he has a good home to go to when he dies." No harm came to him, except that for a few days he was ill with fatigue ; but as soon as he recovered he was again on the move.

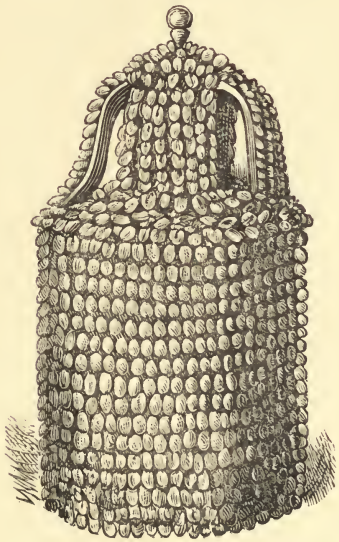
Badagry, with its mission-house, became an important station, the first agent in charge of which was De Graft, whom Mr. Freeman left behind. Its subsequent history is full of interest.

Christmas Day was spent with Mr. Townsend, who had just arrived, bound for Abeokuta in the interests of the Church Missionary Society. On the day Mr. Freeman left for the ship Mr. Townsend started for the interior.

On December 29th the chief Wawa, with some of

Shodeke's men who had escorted Freeman, went to the beach to see the missionary safely through the surf, which was running very high. Although one of the native canoes upset, the missionary party got safely through, with nothing worse than a good soaking from the waves which had broken over the boat. They were soon safely on board the ship *Queen Victoria*, and the next day set sail.

On the last night of the year 1842 they anchored in the Whydah roads.



ORI (HEAD.)

HUMAN SACRIFICES IN DAHOMEY.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE COUNTRY OF THE AMAZONS.

JANUARY 1st, 1843, fell on Sunday, and Freeman had decided to hold a service. But the ship was small and uncomfortable, and many of Freeman's followers were so sick with its incessant rolling, that he decided upon landing as early as possible. In consequence of the unusually heavy surf breaking here, the beach of Whydah is one of the most dangerous spots on the whole line of coast for landing. After accomplishing this in safety, Freeman was dismayed to find that the town was between two and three miles inland. To reach it a broad expanse of lagoon has to be crossed and a swamp waded, the town itself being situated on the slope of a hill. The work of conveying the packages from the beach to the town, with the vexatious delays which usually take place, to Freeman's chagrin, absorbed so large a portion of the sacred hours of the Sabbath that it was altogether too late to attempt a service.

BARTERING FOR SLAVES.

The slave trade attracted to this spot a number of Europeans, who found it a convenient place for their vile purpose. Here they acted as middlemen to the king of Dahomey, who extended to them his protection in their trade of "living ebony." To the Europeans were allotted certain quarters of the town for the establishment of factories, which were strongly fortified. To this day the names of the nations remain to indicate the divisions of the town.

The town, which has a population of some twelve thousand people, and is very healthily situated, is disfigured by hideous symbols of idolatry, the most prominent figure being the obscene Legba. Here also is the famous snake-temple, the python being a great object of worship. Our missionary found himself face to face with idolatry of a grosser type than he had yet met.

He made his way to the quarter known as English Town, and lodged in the English Fort, in the hall of which he held divine service and received visitors. On Sunday, January 8th, he preached to a small congregation, composed chiefly of his own followers, with a few natives and some Christian emigrants from Sierra Leone.

One of his first duties was to call upon the Yevogah, the viceroy who resides at Whydah. He explained to him the object of his visit, and expressed a strong desire to see the king, that he might lay his plans before him, with a view to obtain permission to begin a mission in the country. At first he was regarded with some suspicion, but subsequently with greater favour, and assistance was promised.

Mr. Freeman had an interview also with the great slave-dealer, De Souza, who, notwithstanding his well-known and degrading occupation, received him very courteously. From him the missionary learnt that rumours of his doings at Badagry had reached Whydah and Abomi. His house had been magnified into a fort, and it was freely stated that on his visit to

the interior he had carried with him two pieces of artillery.

Freeman then proceeded to the beach to see the rest of his goods landed, and settle with the captain of the ship. He had brought with him three horses

"THE BOAT WAS BORNE HIGH UPON THE CREST OF A BILLOW."

from Yoruba, one of which he landed at Whydah, while the other two he sent to Cape Coast, believing that they could live away from the coast. The last load was being brought ashore, when the surf-boat was borne high upon the crest of a huge billow and flung with such violence upon the beach that to his great

mortification it broke into pieces and much of his property was destroyed. In the course of a few days he was fortunate enough to obtain another boat to be sent on to Badagry—a necessary appendage to such a mission station in those days, when the missionary was dependent upon the ships that called to obtain needful supplies.

Week after week passed, Freeman being repeatedly disappointed at not receiving the royal permission to proceed to the capital of Dahomey. He then determined to proceed to Cape Coast without seeing the king, but was persuaded by De Souza to linger a little longer. Then his mind was troubled by misrepresentations, which were also satisfactorily explained. But the weary waiting produced fever symptoms, and he chafed at the restraint under which he found himself living.

On February 5th a ship arrived from Cape Coast bringing him the sad news of the death of Mr. Shipman, of Accra, which occurred on January 2nd; but the same mail informed him of the arrival of more missionaries at Cape Coast.

His enforced stay, though trying, obtained for him influence among the chiefs and others. On Sundays he conducted divine service, but seems to have had a few only of the natives to listen to the gospel. Thus the time passed on, and it was not till the beginning of March that he received the much-desired permission to proceed to Dahomey. This obtained, he started at once for Abomi.

The path to Abomi along which Freeman travelled was the same rough, unimproved way over which the writer passed thirty-eight years after. The whole journey is a gradual ascent, with a few minor depressions here and there. Till the Agrimi swamp is reached—a good half of the journey—the path is for the most part pleasantly shaded by trees, whilst on the Dahoman side of the swamp it is bare of trees and wearying to traverse during the day. There is

compensation, however, in the good hard road which leads to Kaña, whence the whole eight miles to Abomi is broad and well-kept. There are a number of villages along the way, with features much in common,—a few poor mud-huts, roofed with palm leaves, with fetish images and shrines with offerings. Each village has imposed upon it by royal mandate the necessity of building and keeping in order a large shed as a resting-place for travellers and royal messengers. Some of them are clean, others unwholesome. At the entrance of each village of importance is a "king's gate," a structure much like a rough football goal. Here the native bares his head and shoulder in respect to royalty, and the gate-keeper exacts toll. This humble officer acts in the double capacity of toll-collector and detective. The path from the seaboard to the capital is thus well watched, and the chance of escape for either slave or criminal is very small.

It was along this path that our missionary travelled. He met the usual obstacles in starting, as the carriers of his luggage were with difficulty got together. Having at last seen the porters before him, he mounted his pony. In a short time he had passed over the corduroy road across the Nynsin swamp, and reached the village of Savi, interesting as the ancient capital of Whydah, and as the scene of a remarkable native battle. Another three hours and a quarter of travel brought him to Torri, about eleven miles from Whydah. Here a colony of sacred monkeys may be seen playing in the branches of the magnificent trees. They presume upon their protection, descending into the market-place, and in the most flagrant manner steal tit-bits from the baskets of the women. Freeman made this spot his bivouac, as there were many laggards of his party who did not arrive till nightfall.

The second night of the journey he spent at Allada, a town formerly of considerable importance, in which centres a story of great interest in the history of

Dahomey. A royal residence, a large two-storied house, is situated here, and in certain ceremonious acts pertaining to royal oaths the place is occasionally visited by the monarch. Mr. Freeman calls the house a country-seat of the king. He noted what most travellers in Dahomey have described: the extraordinary colony of bats, the fine trees being quite black with tens of thousands of these vampires in the daytime, the sky in the evening becoming quite darkened when they fly off in search of food.

The next night he rested at Akpey, on the borders of the great Agrimi swamp. The following is an extract from his journal. "As the shades of evening closed in, and the moon was throwing her silvery light over the dark foliage of the forest in the distance, one of my people came to tell me that he saw a strange sight in the heavens. I came out of my tent; and, to my great delight, I saw the comet with the nucleus just above the tops of the trees, and its enormous tail in length equal to the chord of an arc of 45°."

The next day Freeman reached the outskirts of Kaña, fifty-two miles from Whydah, a suburb of Abomi, where the king was in residence.

Here he found himself again face to face with horrible human sacrifices. "We passed," he writes, "within five or six yards of a gibbet, from which was suspended the body of a man, . . . hanging with its head downwards, the legs being lashed to the beam just above the ankles. One hand appeared to be dropping off; having probably been partly severed by some sharp instrument. Two or three turkey-buzzards were feeding underneath the gibbet. . . . It was indeed a frightful sight."

Drawing nearer, the missionary and his party halted under the shade of a tree. Whilst there a number of the king's wives passed, with water-pots on their heads, and in deference to the king the people turned aside. This is Freeman's description of what followed. "After we had rested but a short time, we heard the

drums begin to play, and soon saw a party of native soldiers at a distance approaching us, with arms, flags, and native music. As they advanced towards us we moved nearer to the tree, and collected more closely together, allowing room for the soldiers to march around. They then drew near. I could perceive their captain among them, who was riding on a mule under the shade of a large umbrella. . . . The chief saluted me as he sat on his mule. . . . Then they made a circuit, singing as they went; after which the chief dismounted, and danced before me for a few minutes. This was succeeded by several of the soldiers firing a salute with muskets and blunderbusses; and then, the chief's stool being placed near me, he came and shook hands with me, and joined our party.

"The streets were filled with companies of soldiers for a considerable distance, each party having its respective flags, banners, and umbrellas. They presented a gay and exciting appearance." Mr. Freeman was evidently treated to the display which every European visitor witnesses: flag-staves tipped with human skulls, stools and other paraphernalia decorated with jawbones of enemies, and almost every conceivable device to impress the onlooker with the monarch's deeds of blood.

The various companies having passed, led by their chiefs, each one under his large umbrella, they formed in double circle, which Freeman and his party traversed nine times to give his salutations. This accomplished, he took his seat near the king's gate, and there received salutations in return from all the high officers of state, the captains and great men. He was then handed over to the care of one of the chiefs as his "house-master," and to one of the women of the royal household as his "mother." After these ceremonies he was conducted to his lodgings, and on the way had to pass round a part of the royal premises. At each gate an officer and party were established, to

salute by discharging forty muskets. Weary with the day's procedure, he was glad to retire to his quarters, which he found very roomy.

Two days after, he was permitted an interview with the king. There was the usual ceremonious approach. Proceeding a short distance, he was bidden to halt; then he was invited a little nearer. Again he had to enter a large square and wait for another invitation. The royal messengers then advanced in a stooping position, repeating in a low voice, "May we come? may we come?" He was conducted through another gate and under a thatch verandah, where sat Gezo, king of Dahomey, surrounded by his many wives, and the renowned Amazons as his body-guard.

The king was seated upon a European chair, and before him was a small European table laden with different kinds of *European liquors*. The messengers prostrated themselves on the ground at his majesty's feet, and threw dust upon their heads, whilst the chiefs who conducted the stranger knelt on the ground opposite the king. Gezo arose and cordially greeted Freeman, shaking his hand, and giving him a hearty welcome to Dahomey. Then he was requested to be seated, and the king desired him to drink his health. A salute of twenty-one guns was fired in honour of the Queen of England, the tally of which the king held in his hand in twenty-one cowrie-shells, which he showed Freeman. This salute was followed by another of nine guns for the missionary himself.

After ordinary matters had been discussed Freeman entered upon the great subject of the object of his visit. He strove to remove any wrong impressions which the king had received from the false rumours concerning the operations at Badagry, and assured him that his "operations there were of a strictly religious, and not of a political nature. He seemed well satisfied with these explanations . . . and immediately said, 'Cannot you do something at Whydah also?' to which I answered,

'My particular business with your majesty is concerning the mission at Badagry; but if you wish us to commence one at Whydah, we will try and attend to your request as nearly as possible. . . .' He said he wished us to do so."

Freeman then gave him a brief account of the circumstances which had led to his visit to Abeokuta, and also told him of the work accomplished in Coomassie. He also assured the king of the great desire on the part of the English Government to benefit Africa. At the close, the missionary expressed a desire to see Abomi, and to be permitted to return as soon as possible, as he had been so long absent, and many pressing duties called him back to Cape Coast. Permission was at once given for him to visit Abomi within a few days, and the king promised that there should be no unnecessary delay in his departure to the coast. At the close of the interview the king accompanied him through two courts, and as he took his leave the Amazons fired another deafening salute from their muskets.

In a private interview the next day the king confirmed his statement in reference to Whydah, and emphatically desired that a mission should be commenced at that place.

On the day appointed he was escorted from Kaña to Abomi. As he passed down the wide road, with two or three hundred Dahomans and their chief as an escort, and drew near to the king's fetish-house, the priest came forward to pronounce a blessing. "Though I pitied the people," he says, "on account of their superstitions, yet I could not help admiring their apparent sincerity." In the capital he was taken the round of the palaces. First he visited the Coomassie quarter, then Abomi proper. He then passed to the palace usually occupied by Gezo, the walls of which he noticed were decorated with human skulls. During the writer's visit there was no lack of skulls and blood and human sacrifice, but these barbarous trophies had

been removed. Freeman describes a characteristic scene of Abomi as follows :—

"As we passed along the street, still near the walls of the royal premises, one of the Whydah people said to me, 'Do you see that man?' and on looking up, I saw, close to the wall on the outside, a kind of gibbet, on a pole fixed in the ground, and about twenty feet high above the ground was secured the body of a man seated upright on the top of the pole. On inquiry I found that the body had been dried and salted, and had been preserved in this position for nine months. The man was a public offender, and had been guilty of a great crime."

Thus he had seen Abomi, a city founded on blood, and whose whole history might be written in blood. But its despotism has been at last curbed by the occupation by French soldiers at the end of 1892, and probably Dahomey will never again assert her independence.

Freeman returned to Kaña, and within a few days bade farewell to the king and turned his face to the seaboard. The king gave presents for the Queen of England, for President Maclean and himself, consisting of slave girls; and two boys and two girls were entrusted for education, to be sent back to the king. Freeman brought no less than eight children, whom he soon placed under Christian influences. Then, amidst the firing of guns from the Amazons, Freeman obtained permission to return. He adds in his journal the following :—

"As soon as I reached my quarters, I informed the little Aku slave girls that they were now all free ; that they should go with me to Cape Coast for education, and afterwards be sent home to their own country. When the little creatures fully understood me, their tears, which had been for some minutes flowing apace, were all dried up, their countenances beamed with joy, and they became so noisy and riotous that I was obliged to scold them. The little Dahomey children

PORT OF WHYDAH, DAHOMEY.

seemed alarmed at first; but when they knew their destination and prospects they soon ceased to grieve."

Early next morning the king sent a bountiful supply of food, and enquired if Freeman were ready to start. The king was waiting to bestow his last favours; and as the missionary and his party started, Gezo, with his bodyguard surrounding him, accompanied Freeman a short distance. More salutes were fired, and then a cordial "farewell" was uttered. Two priests ran at utmost speed along the path for about a hundred yards, made a full stop, spread abroad their hands towards heaven, invoking a blessing on his journey, and then informed the missionary that the path was open before him. A few days more, and he was again at Whydah, having accomplished the fifty-two miles between Kaña and Whydah in a much shorter time than on the journey up.*

He spent a week at Whydah, then went by lagoon to Ahgwey, where he expected a ship to call, in which he intended to voyage to Cape Coast. Whilst waiting at Little Popo the arrival of the ship, he visited the chief, George Lawson, a native who had journeyed to England. He found the old gentleman trying to raise a school in which to teach the children elementary English. He eagerly accepted Freeman's offer to send a teacher, and Lawson promised to supply books and do more if possible. This was the first step in the formation of the Popo Mission, which has continued with few intermissions to this day.

On April 9th, 1843, Freeman again safely landed at Cape Coast, full of gratitude for the preservation of his life and health.

* The distance from Whydah to Abomi is about sixty miles.

DIXCOVE.

CHAPTER XI.

PERILS AND CONQUESTS.

AT Cape Coast Mr. Freeman found George Chapman awaiting his directions, the young man having arrived in the previous January. As soon as possible he made arrangements to accompany him to Ashanti. In the meantime he paid a flying visit to Dixcove, and reported a great change for the better.

"Our work," he writes, "is beginning to assume a more cheerful character. The labours of a good missionary would, I am persuaded, be speedily productive of great good. I am surprised at the wonderful change which has taken place within the last two months. When I was there I not only met the members of the Church, but all the head men of the town; and they have promised to countenance and aid the mission by all means in their power."

In August 1843 Freeman for a third time journeyed to Ashanti, the new missionary Chapman accompanying him, Robert Brooking having been compelled to return to England through impaired health a few

months before. On this occasion he occupied the new mission-house in Coomassie, which has been the home of all the missionaries and agents since, and which, though very dilapidated, was the home of the captive German missionaries till the conclusion of the Ashanti war in 1874.

Now in every direction from Dixcove to Badagry, and from the interior stations cheering tidings came of the rapid growth of the good seed ; but disease and death constantly diminished the ranks of the workers. Mr. Allen writes, in September 1843 : "In that whole range of country we can have access to the people, and have only four missionaries ! May I not ask, in Scripture language, 'What are we among so many ?' And may not these people, to whom we are obliged to turn a deaf ear, say, 'No man careth for my soul' ? "

Freeman had now to pass through an ordeal more trying to him than that of the pestilent climate. He had to learn the bitter trial of "peril among false brethren." A young man, one of the large company which he brought back to the coast in 1841, who had compromised his character and left the mission, returned to England in 1843, and at once made reprisals by publicly denouncing Freeman and his work. The controversy raged for some time, and was eventually taken up by *The Times* newspaper.

This, with the financial condition of the Society, combined with the desirability of a needful rest for recruiting his health, brought Freeman to England again in the middle of the year 1844. Many unfounded charges were brought against the devoted missionary and his work, all of which he was happily able to refute. A keen observer and missionary historian says that "Mr. Freeman came out of this trial 'more than conqueror'" ; and that it had the effect of raising him and the mission still higher in the estimation of the friends of missions in general, and also of obtaining some additional supporters to the same hallowed cause.*

* Fox's *History of Wesleyan Missions*, p. 577.

That these unjust aspersions were a great grief to him may be gathered from an extract from a private letter, which the writer has been permitted to peruse, addressed to a brother missionary. It is written from 11, Lloyd Street, Lloyd Square, Pentonville, London, the residence of Dr. Beecham, and dated November 14th, 1844.

"I am glad to find that you have written to the editor of the *Watchman* respecting the heartless attack of the apostate —— on me and my brethren, and our missions on the Gold Coast. . . . I sincerely thank you for the excellent letter in question. . . . I was aware when he left the Coast that he would embrace every opportunity of injuring me and the missions under my superintendence, but I also felt satisfied that, while the Christian public believed nothing but the truth, he could do us no permanent injury. I was aware that he would give a wrong colouring to everything which would admit of a twofold representation. How could I help the work being retarded at Domonasi, or how could I be accountable even for an irregularity on any station while my brethren were dying around me, and place after place was left unoccupied by a European missionary?"

This incident, painful as it was, did not prevent a hearty reception being given to the missionary wherever he went advocating the claims of his mission. Few returned missionaries had so marvellous a story to tell as he, and the progress which had been made was amazing, in spite of disease and death. Thomas Fowell Buxton headed the list of special contributions for the Gold Coast Mission with the munificent donation of £200, and Thomas Clarkson wrote a review of Freeman's published journals, commending the mission to the sympathy and support of Christians generally.

In spite of this the committee found itself seriously hampered, and announced at the annual meeting of 1845 that there was a debt connected with the Gold Coast Mission of £7,935, towards which the general treasurers had received from special contributions

£3,000. Before the end of the year, however, they were able to announce that they had received an additional £2,500. Mr. Freeman spent nearly twelve months in England on this occasion, and by his various addresses and testimony generally helped up the funds of the Society. It was proposed that he should visit the West Indies, possibly with the idea of strengthening the mission by West Indian missionaries ; but that project was abandoned. He embarked for Africa for a third time from the Isle of Wight. Here the *Jane* called to take on board a boat presented by Mr. White, the eminent ship-builder of Cowes, for the Gold Coast Mission. Freeman took with him a young man of colour from the West Indies, Henry Wharton, who became, and remained for many years, a successful missionary in Western Africa. After a favourable voyage the missionaries landed at Cape Coast on June 23rd, 1845, where they were welcomed by Mr. Brooking, who had returned to his work in Africa, and Mr. Chapman, both of whom looked wound-up and ill from the effects of the climate. Mr. Chapman had returned from Coomassie in consequence of a serious attack of *Guinea-worm.*

Thus the mission received the oversight of this tireless man, who sped from place to place year in and year out. Shock after shock came, but he seemed invulnerable and kept steadily at work.

In the year 1848 Christianity was introduced into the little beach village of Assafa, twenty-two miles eastward from Cape Coast. In its immediate vicinity was the sacred grove of Mankessim, the mysterious abode of the great National Bosum. This spot was consequently the great centre of pagan influence for the Fanti country.

John Warden, a native Christian of Anamabu, and hunter of wild game, made this his temporary abode. By his consistent conduct and his regular observance of family worship the villagers were attracted and became inquirers. Two priests became sincere converts to the

Christian faith, and joined the Christian hunter in fellowship. Very soon they were visited by the mission agents under Freeman's supervision, and a little Church was formed with a membership of thirty persons, and the hunter appointed as their leader. They soon built a chapel. Then followed in rapid succession a series of severe trials.

Some of these Christians cultivated a small tract of land in the neighbourhood, which gradually extended into a small farm village with native huts. All went calmly till the year 1851, when, without duly considering the strength and prejudices of the priests, they encroached upon the sanctity of the sacred grove by cutting down a pole for their use in the plantation.

This act of indiscretion met with severe and undue reprisals. The priest influenced the chief of Mankessim, who led an armed band against the unsuspecting Christians, captured them whilst at their work, flogged and imprisoned them, placing them all in irons. The farm village was burnt down, and the farm, the fruit of their industry, destroyed.

At this point the English Government interfered, and, while admitting the indiscretion of the Assafa Christians, called the chief to account for his lawless violence. The persecuted converts were set at liberty and a fine was imposed upon the chief. The Christians received substantial sympathy from their fellow-Christians at Cape Coast and Anamabu. To their credit it must be added they showed no resentment against the priests, who however, could not refrain from persecution.

The rainy season which followed was very mild, and the crops in consequence not very productive. The calamity the priests ascribed to the apostasy of the Assafa Christians and their trespass upon the sacred grove. The great Bosum in anger had withheld the needful rain, and the converts were pointed out as the cause of the drought.

This culminated in the pagans suddenly attacking

the converts, who were lodging with some Anamabu Christians, and violently expelling them from the town. Among the number was the hunter. When he called upon Mr. Freeman to report the circumstance he appeared joyous and resigned, though in the scuffle he had received a severe blow in the eye and was otherwise bruised.

The chief and one or two of his most influential captains were summoned to Cape Coast to answer for this unlawful proceeding. They were fined five ounces of gold dust, equal to eighteen pounds sterling, and £52 of gold dust as compensation.

Although the persecution partially subsided, it was evident from the haughty bearing of Edu, the chief of Mankessim, that a spirit of rebellion was fermenting and a crisis approaching. He refused to pay the amount adjudged as compensation to the Christians. When ordered to appear at the castle he refused to obey in terms which proved that he reckoned upon the sympathies of the great mass of pagans in the neighbourhood. It was therefore evident that, if the English Government would keep up its supreme authority and moral influence, force must be used.

The expelled converts were not permitted to rest in any of the villages along the coast, and finally it was thought prudent to send a police escort to protect them, and they were lodged in Anamabu Castle. At Assafa the few Christians were peremptorily ordered to cease their worship, the pagans telling them they would shortly put a stop to this "going to school" throughout the country. It was plain that a widespread persecution of the Christians was intended.

Encouraged by the popular feeling and led on by the priests of the secret oracle of the grove, Edu continued for many weeks to defy the Government, and refused to answer the summons. To prevent a conflict which would probably have resulted in bloodshed, some influential natives of Cape Coast begged to

be permitted to try a last effort to persuade the chief to appear at the castle, which happily succeeded.

At length Edu arrived, accompanied by a large body of armed supporters. He appeared before the governor in the great hall of the castle attended by numerous chiefs and headmen from Cape Coast, Mankessim, and the interior of Fanti. At first, supported by popular clamour, he refused to enter the castle, and demanded that his case should be heard outside the gates. The governor refused to listen to this request, and Edu was obliged to yield. When questioned as to his contempt of authority, he retorted by charging the judicial assessor, Mr. Cruikshank, with undue severity, and requested that the whole case between him and the Christians might be re-heard.

Mr. Freeman, who watched the trial, states that at this stage the whole affair became deeply interesting and exciting. Christianity was now on its trial before the authorities—persons of the greatest influence both European and native. How would it pass the ordeal?

Twenty-two of the Christian converts were called, and related their persecutions and their losses. It was proved that three only had trespassed upon the sacred grove, and they did so without the knowledge of their brethren, who with Kwesi, their aged headman, had reproved them for their folly. It transpired that they had simply cut a strong pole for the more convenient carrying of green withes for a fence—an act which had often been committed with impunity by the pagans living near the grove.

One stated that he was at work on his farm when some one told him the little village was in flames. On hastening to the scene of destruction he was met by Edu and his band, who questioned him as to whether he was a Christian; then he was seized, stripped, flogged, and put in irons.

During the examination many of them stated their reasons for embracing Christianity. Edumadsi, a converted fetish man, was peculiarly interesting. "I

was a fetish man myself," said he, "and I understand the secret movements of the fetish men. There is no God who can give or take life save the great Jehovah, who created all things and causes medicine to be provided for the use of man. As to the whole art of the fetish, I was taught it by the priestess Oto Mokama. That I was expert in my profession, those who saw me in my mad career can testify. That there were gods in the grove at Mankessim I seriously believed."

He then detailed how his wife had gone to consult the oracle, and had been outraged by the priests. He was thus led to see the folly of their pretensions, and went boldly to the great shrine and accused the priests of their wickedness. After severely upbraiding them he departed, telling them that this had decided him to become a Christian.

Continuing his narrative, he said: "From that time the priests knew that I intended to expose them." On returning he passed the house of a brother priest, whom he informed of the treatment he had received from the sacred grove. This man begged him to say nothing of the matter elsewhere, and at once made a pilgrimage to the grove to upbraid the priests for acting so foolishly. They entreated him to act the part of mediator, and offer an apology and any pecuniary satisfaction. Anything was better than exposure. "To these overtures," said Edumadsi, "I would not listen, but started for my village. The name of that friend, who is still alive and in this room, is Kwesi Kuma, and I beg that he may be called upon to say whether I speak truth or falsehood."

Kwesi Kuma corroborated every particular. He said he had not yet become a Christian, but that he was so alarmed at the intrigues of his order that he was resolved to give his aid in an entire exposure of the practices with which he himself had been too long connected. He accused the priests of the great oracle of being the cause of Edu resisting the authorities

and bringing the country to the verge of ruin. Producing great sensation, he declared, too, that since their arrival at Cape Coast they had been plotting the death by poison of three influential persons, whom he mentioned by name.

Edu, the chief, offered a very weak defence. The governor and council of Europeans, enlightened natives, and pagan chiefs, retired to consult on the case. The former decision of fine and compensation was confirmed. In addition to this, however, Edu was bound over to obedience to the English Government and to keep the peace with the Christians. As a guarantee of good behaviour he was ordered to lodge in the castle, for the space of three years, fifty ounces of gold dust, value one hundred and eighty pounds sterling.

After the evidence of Kwesi Kuma in reference to the conspiracy, nearly the whole troop of priests were taken into custody preparatory to a strict investigation. A few days after, the affair was inquired into.

The case was opened in the great hall, in the presence of Edu and the chiefs. The evidence was clear and convincing. Several of these deceivers confessed that their fetish was nothing but their own wicked intrigues and an utter delusion. On account of the great crimes of which they were convicted several were sentenced to be publicly flogged and to work in irons for the space of five years.

The chiefs were indignant that they had been so long duped, and the evidence clearly showed that their national religion consisted in nothing but the intrigues and villainy of such men as they saw before them. They gave their hearty assent to the punishment appointed. Leaving the castle saddened and excited, they asked: "What shall we now do when we get rich?" then adding, as though a hopeful solution had suggested itself, "We had better all go to school together."

The execution of one part of the sentence on the convicted priests was not long delayed. These unhappy deluders of their countrymen had the measure

of their disgrace filled up by being publicly flogged before the castle gates for their conspiracy to poison certain individuals. On that day the greatest contempt was shown for these men by those who till recently believed them to be holy ministers of their most sacred oracle.

So Christianity came out of the fire tried and purified, while the greatest disgrace fell upon the fetishism. The sacred grove, no longer venerated, was regarded as the scene of dark abominations and wicked intrigues; and eventually it fell under the woodman's axe and was cleared.

The chief, Edu, returned to Mankessim, dejected and vexed that he had been made the dupe of such men. As usual he went to consult the oracle, and the great Bosum answered out of the darkness as heretofore. But the suspicious chief had placed men in ambush, who suddenly pounced upon the spot whence the mysterious voice proceeded and captured the speakers, who were no gods, but men no better than the rest of men about him. For the mystery there was no longer respect or fear. The angry chief at once put these priests in irons and kept them prisoners, somewhat gratified that he could bring upon their heads a little of the shame which he had been made to feel in formerly championing their cause.

This exposure of the fetish clergy known as the Brafo was a heavy blow at the fetish, and was a circumstance of the greatest importance to the spread and establishment of Christianity. There was at once a great desire for the teaching of the gospel on all sides.

The chief, Edu, became friendly with the Christians, and welcomed the establishment of a school at Mankessim, supplying fifteen children from his own household as a beginning.

The fall of the Mankessim Brafo was followed by other incursions upon the fetish. Yamaki, the chief of Aberadzi, near Domonasi, at his own expense built

a little chapel for Christian worship in his village. To show his contempt for the superstitions of his former days, he cut down a majestic bombax standing at the entrance to the village, which was regarded as the great fetish-tree. While it was being felled, and as it tumbled to its doom, he addressed it thus :— "Ah, if you were a man I would make you refund all the gold dust and fine fat sheep and goats and the rest, which I have in past days lavished upon you."

Soon, another ancient sect of superstition yielded to the power of the gospel. Freeman's own account of his visit there and to Mankessim is deeply interesting, but too full to be inserted here. Akrodu, a village forty miles in the interior, was noted for a more ancient fetish establishment than even that of Mankessim. Mr. Freeman took his stand under a tree and preached to the fetishmen and the villagers. A few days after, at Anamabu, he held a public baptism service. "The old fetishman of Akrodu was present ; and when the question was proposed to him, 'Wilt thou then be baptised in this faith ?' he exclaimed aloud, 'What ! will I be baptised ? Yes. I want all the water from the vessel poured over me.'" Mr. Freeman remarks, "What an echo of 'Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head' !"

Close upon the trials, to which reference has been made, a gracious wave of revival swept over the mission. All the stations on the Gold Coast seemed to have been more or less visited. Mr. Freeman was incessant in the glorious toil. At Anamabu he was called upon to receive a number of adults by baptism into the Church. These catechumens had all been prepared by a long trial.

"They thronged the communion rail all round *four deep*," says Freeman, "and I found at the conclusion that I had baptised eighty-two adults and eight infants. . . . It was indeed a delightful scene to witness

> 'Crowding ranks on every side arise,
> Demanding life, impatient for the skies !'"

A notable lovefeast held at Cape Coast in 1852 closed up a series of remarkable meetings. Kwesi, the old grey-headed patriarch from Assafa, with fifty young men from Mankessim, were present. The venerable man spoke of his experience with artless fervour, moving those who knew all the circumstances of his persecution and loss to tears. Then followed a sacramental service, when the crowds were so great that it was approaching eleven o'clock at night before the service concluded.

Although the people had been thronging the church from five in the morning to that late hour, they were again at the sacred place for the early morning prayer-meeting on Monday at five o'clock; again at the ordination service of the native minister at eleven o'clock, and still with undiminished interest they crowded in to share in a valedictory service. Mr. Freeman writes as follows:—

"Thus ended a series of services far exceeding, in deep and powerful interest of the best and holiest kind, anything I have ever witnessed in this part of the world."

Whilst spiritual progress was made, Mr. Freeman did all he could to promote the education of the people in the peaceful arts, which ever follow in the wake of true religion. Governor Hill in a despatch to Earl Grey wrote with approval of the mission under the supervision of Mr. Freeman, and appended a report by him of an industrial agricultural school established at Beulah, about eight miles in the interior from Cape Coast. This report was considered of such importance that it was published as a parliamentary paper.

Some years before, Mr. Freeman had examined with interest the industrial schools of the German missionaries at Accra, and on a small scale had attempted a similar thing at Domonasi—which prepared the way for the more extensive undertaking at this spot which our missionary called Beulah. The station was intended to serve as a sanitarium for the missionaries

as well as an industrial school. It proved a pleasant resort for the inhabitants of Cape Coast, who frequently spent a holiday there. The garden was richly stocked with fruits and plants of all descriptions, and was exceedingly productive. Had it been more liberally sustained it would eventually have been a source of income to the mission. When the writer became acquainted with it its glory had passed away, and it was perishing from neglect. Nevertheless even then the mission table was well supplied with fruit from this source. The work of cultivation was done by the scholars, assisted by a few labourers, and overlooked by an agent, who also cared for the spiritual needs of the small societies around.

The house which Freeman built remained to the year 1874, when the Ashanti army completed the wreck. Very little now remains except tangled coffee plants, to indicate where once was a beautiful place of resort. On the spot has sprung up a small village, still known as Beulah, an out-station of the Cape Coast Mission.

LAGOS.

CHAPTER XII.

SUNSHINE AND SHADOW.

IN 1854 Mr. Freeman made another journey to Dahomey, taking with him Henry Wharton. First they called at Whydah, and here they saw a sight which happily is not a frequent one to-day. When they came to an anchorage in the Whydah Roads they were the unwilling witnesses of a slave shipment. By aid of their glasses they saw a number of large canoes skirting the breakers and making rapidly for a spot marked on the beach by a Portuguese flag. Presently a swift slave ship flew by them and anchored just opposite the flag. Then a line of hammocks issued from the sheds on shore, surrounded by a swarm of naked negroes, male and female. Through the telescope they could plainly see the thongs fastened to the necks of these poor helpless slaves as they were driven to the beach for shipment. Six hundred and fifty poor wretches were put on board the ship. Four were drowned from leaping over the side of the canoe on the way to the ship, preferring death to slavery in a foreign land. One poor mother

was torn from her few-days'-old child, notwithstanding her piteous appeals. Such were the horrors of the West African slave trade !

By the middle of the day the slave ship had taken in her living freight, and was flying like a guilty thing before the breeze to a distant land. Mr. Freeman communicated the information of what he had witnessed to the English Government, which resulted in a closer watch of these shores, and the strengthening of the West African fleet of gunboats.

By his watchfulness the ship in which they were travelling was saved from being wrecked. A furious storm blew up, and Mr. Freeman of all the party alone remained on deck. As he peered into the darkness he thought they were suspiciously near another ship. Calling up the captain, he discovered that the anchor was dragging, and that they were in danger of being driven ashore. Another anchor was let go to stay the vessel, and thus the danger was averted.

Mr. Dawson, the native assistant-missionary, and his wife, who had been stationed at Whydah, received and entertained the missionaries as well as they were able.

They were soon on their way to Dahomey, with the road to which the reader has already become acquainted when Mr. Freeman made his former journey. Gezo received them cordially. Accompanying the missionaries were the two girls entrusted to Freeman for education, who had been baptised Grace and Charity. These were returned safely into the hands of the king, who manifested no sort of gladness.

After a short stay with the king, with the usual ceremonies and dreadful displays, the missionaries returned to Whydah and up the lagoons to Ahgwey, Little Popo, and right along the beach to Accra.

Later on in the same year we find him visiting Abeokuta again, where he strengthened the hands of the Christians. At this time, too, he visited Lagos, where some two years before the Wesleyan Missionary Society had begun a mission.

Our notice of this important place must be brief, to bring it within our present limits. Lagos was a notorious slave-mart. In 1851, with the object of stopping this vile traffic, the English Government sent a consul to enter into a treaty with Kosoko, the king, a great slave-dealer. For some years Kosoko had been the means of stirring up great strife, and the whole lagoon from Lagos to Badagry had been rendered unsafe by his war-canoes. Kosoko refused to enter into a treaty to put an end to the slave trade, and was therefore removed from his kingly position, and Akitoye, the rightful king, whom he had deposed, reinstated.

Akitoye had appealed to Britain for help to regain his throne, and promised to suppress slavery. He was taken on board an English ship which entered the river, and after a decisive engagement with Kosoko, who fled, Akitoye was placed on the throne of his fathers.

On New Year's Day, 1852, this important treaty with England was signed. The king promised to put down the slave trade, abolish human sacrifices, and give perfect liberty and protection to Christian missionaries to follow their vocation. A few months after the Wesleyan missionaries entered the place, and have occupied it ever since. Lagos has proved to be, from its peculiar position, the true key to all Yoruba-land. It is but a small island, three miles by two, but it stands at a point of the lagoon where the great water-courses converge and debouch into the sea.

The history of the establishment of Christianity in this island would read like an exciting romance, and deserves to be told in detail. The beginnings were not encouraging ; the work was hard and the dangers not a few.

It was to promote the establishment of the work here, and to encourage by his counsel the agents who were appointed to this difficult sphere, that Mr. Freeman visited the town in 1854, on his way to Abeokuta.

As Lagos grew in importance as a mission station, Badagry waned, till at last it became an unimportant out-station. For some years it was unoccupied by the Wesleyan Mission, but more recently the work has been resumed.

A LAGOS VILLAGE.

When Freeman arrived he found Lagos enjoying a comparative calm, after terrible strife and civil war. Rival factions had kept the town alive with their fights, and more than once the missionaries received protection from English gunboats. At last Kosoko

had retired, and, for a time at least, had given up the struggle to regain the throne. Akitoye had died suddenly, and Dosumu, his son, was reigning in his stead.

The foundation of a mission deep and broad was being laid at this time by the missionaries, and as a result the Lagos Church is one of the most flourishing to-day in West Africa. Mr. Freeman and his companion were met by the European missionary Gardiner, stationed at Lagos, and the following day they began special religious services in the little temporary bamboo chapel, which were attended by Christian emigrants from Sierra Leone, school-children and a few natives. King Dosumu and Consul Campbell received him very kindly, whilst the members of the Church rejoiced greatly at his visit. On the Sunday he preached twice to large congregations. A week later, on his return from Abeokuta, December 5th, 1854, he held the first Wesleyan missionary meeting in Lagos. This must have been a service of great interest. The English Consul presided, and the king of Lagos, who was present, surrounded by his chiefs, made a speech and emphasised it by a subscription of five pounds. The collection on the spot amounted to sixty-five pounds.

The following day Mr. Freeman met the missionaries and principal leaders of the Church to consult and devise means for the promotion and prosperity of the mission. They projected plans for chapel building and extension generally. Thus he brought to a close his first successful visit to Lagos.

The journey from Lagos to Abeokuta, which was made in a native canoe up the river Ogun, is well known to the writer of this biography—across the broad expanse of lagoon, through the Agboi Creek, reeking with mangrove swamp slime, and offensive with the scent of alligators. Then into the open river, here and there beautiful with overhanging trees and picturesque windings. All this Mr. Freeman noted. On the fourth day he arrived at Abeokuta.

At Aro he was met by the native minister Bicker-

steth, and many members of the Church. Shamoye, the brother of Shodeke the great chief, who had died some time before, honoured his old friend, who had spent the day in the Adu Camp with him, on his first visit, by sending "a beautiful war-horse gaily caparisoned in Moorish fashion." Visits of ceremony were then paid to Sagbua, who had succeeded Shodeke as the chief ruler to Shamoye and others.

Shamoye reminded Freeman that on his visit in 1842 he had made choice of a piece of ground for a mission station, and that, although since Shodeke's death others had applied for it, the land had been carefully preserved for him. Freeman was pleased that he had been so well remembered, and said the land should be taken possession of, and the station should be a memorial of the old chief.

The next few days were filled with services ; there were several baptisms and weddings, and then a well-attended missionary meeting. "After the object of the meeting had been stated, Mr. Bickersteth stood at the communion-rail to take down the names of the subscribers. It was very delightful to see the people . . . leaving their seats and coming up, one after the other, saying, 'Five shillings,' 'Ten shillings,' 'Fifteen shillings,' and so on."

After a hasty call upon the Church missionary, Henry Townsend, and his wife, and also upon Sagbua, Freeman was once more hurrying back to the coast ; and by poling day and night the canoe-men landed him and his companion at Lagos in two days. A few days after he embarked on the mail steamer for the Gold Coast.

In the midst of a rebellion at Accra, which imperilled the little Church, and in the face of pagan opposition at Cape Coast and Anamabu, in reference to the Christian fishermen prosecuting their calling on the pagan fishermen's sacred day, and yet withal successes in nearly all the stations, Freeman plodded on at his work.

So successful was he, that he found extensions and enlargements necessary, which involved an embarrassing outlay upon the missionary committee. Then followed a correspondence between Mr. Freeman and the secretaries of the Society which was painful in the extreme to both. Such were the wonderful openings for missionary enterprise, that no good man would willingly do anything to stop a work so manifestly owned of God. Nevertheless, the members of the committee, feeling themselves already so heavily involved, thought it prudent to inform this ardent servant of God that the expenditure must necessarily be lessened. Such a huge piece of machinery had been set in motion, however, that it was not possible all at once to cut off supplies on the coast or in the interior.

Retrenchment, painful as it might be to the committee, was much more so to the devoted missionary who had sacrificed so much and laboured so unsparingly. He felt that other hands should lower the flag, for he was reluctant to show any signs of retreat.

The painful correspondence culminated in the appointment, by the committee, of the admirable Rev. Daniel West as a delegate to inquire into the condition of the Gold Coast mission, financial and otherwise. He, with the Rev. William West, who was appointed financial secretary to the mission, arrived at Cape Coast at the end of the year 1856.

Daniel West spent about four months in the country, personally inspecting as much of the mission as was possible, even making a journey to Lagos and Abeokuta. Mr. Freeman was delighted with the intercourse he had with him, accompanying him in all his journeys and giving every facility for a clear understanding of the condition of things. This able and devoted minister never reached England to report to the committee what he had seen, but died at the Gambia on February 24th, 1857. Mr. Freeman was of opinion

that had he been able to present his report in person to the committee, the subsequent results would have been different.

Mr. Freeman was now relieved of the burden of the finances by the Rev. William West, who had been appointed secretary, and soon after he was superseded by him as the general superintendent of the mission. Then conditions were proposed which Mr. Freeman found he could not comply with; and the friction was so painful that he reluctantly severed his connection with the Wesleyan Missionary Society.

During his twenty years' continuous service Mr. Freeman had been incessant in his labours to spread the gospel. Such had been his success that the Coast had been dotted with stations from Dixcove to Lagos, a distance of three hundred miles. He had borne the gospel to Ashanti, Dahomey, and Yoruba, and hundreds of heathen had been won to Christ as the seal to his ministry.

Mr. Freeman retired to Accra with his wife, a native of the Gold Coast and the mother of his children. Though, for a time, he was severed from the ministry of the Wesleyan Church, he still took the deepest interest in the mission, and frequently filled the pulpit, and served its interests in other useful ways.

The Colonial Government was glad to avail itself of Mr. Freeman's experience and knowledge of the country and the people, and employed him on delicate political embassies to tribes in the interior, and freely consulted him on matters of importance.

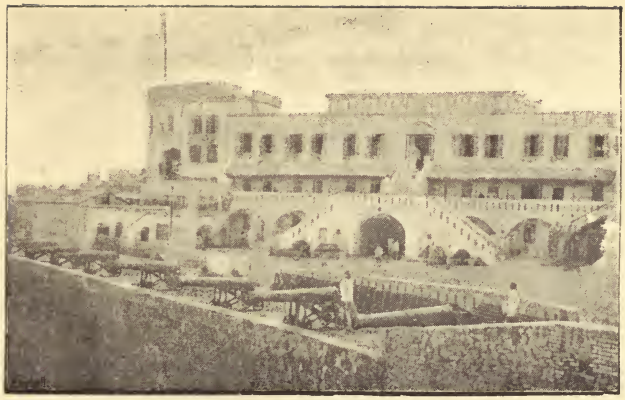
He was free now also to put to a practical test what he had from the beginning believed an important means of civilisation. He secured a large tract of land within the bend of the river, some eight miles interior from Accra. Here he cultivated fruits and vegetables to perfection, and supplied the Europeans and others at Accra. He thus formed another Beulah, which it is to be hoped will not suffer the

same fate through neglect as the gardens near Cape Coast.

He not only gave himself to these agricultural pursuits, but went to considerable pains, in the interests of science, to procure rare and valuable species of orchids from the forests. For many years he corresponded with the authorities at Kew, and supplied not only rare specimens of plants but also useful information. Thus the years went on, and Mr. Freeman became increasingly respected, especially by the community at Accra, with whom he was brought more frequently into contact; for his social qualities were of the highest order. He was a most interesting companion. On this estate he built a house, in which the writer has had the pleasure of visiting him. Here, and in the town of Accra, his family grew up about him.

It was well, perhaps, that such an ardent nature should have a time of quiet rest. This interval extended over sixteen years, and the writer feels it to be one of the honours of his life that he had a part in persuading Mr. Freeman to resume the duties of an active missionary life.

In the year 1873 he returned to the Mission, and received a hearty welcome by all the missionaries engaged on the Gold Coast under the auspices of the Wesleyan Missionary Society. He was appointed at once to take charge of the now important mission at Anamabu, and entered with his usual ardour upon the work he knew so well how to do. As the reader will know, he was upon familiar ground, and under his fostering care the cause marvellously prospered.



INTERIOR OF THE CASTLE, CAPE COAST.

CHAPTER XIII.

GATHERING IN THE SHEAVES.

SOON after Mr. Freeman's return to the work of the ministry the threatened invasion of Fanti by the warlike Ashantis became a dreadful reality. The invading hordes drew very near to Cape Coast and other coast towns ; and to avert a worse calamity it was needful to seek aid from England. Sir Garnet Wolseley was sent out by the English Government, and led his little army of Englishmen and native contingents against the fierce foe, driving them gradually back until he had to recross the Bosum Prah. The victorious General followed up his successes by entering Coomassie and leaving it in ruins. Sir Garnet obtained the permission of the Wesleyan Missionary Society to secure the services of Mr. Freeman for a time, as no one was so well able to furnish information such as the General needed. As soon as possible Freeman was happily released from a duty that could not be pleasant, and which was likely to compromise him.

A fearful scourge of small-pox had ravaged the

Gold Coast a few years previously, and now the country was suffering from the awful scourge of war. These terrible calamities had the effect of chastening the people, and doubtless prepared the way for a gracious work in which our friend took a prominent part. He had lived to gather some of the precious fruit and to rejoice as men do in harvest. We condense from his own report the blessed experiences which he records in detail between the years 1875 and 1877.

Early in October 1875 he visited Kuntu, an outstation of Anamabu, where he found the Christians greatly quickened and in great spiritual expectancy. During his preaching the people were deeply moved and cried aloud. As they knelt penitently at the communion rail many trembled exceedingly, and clutched the rail to prevent their falling, such was their deep emotion. A few days after, at Anamabu, he administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to three hundred communicants. In the same month he visited Cape Coast and joined the excellent native minister, Andrew W. Parker, in conducting a special prayer-meeting for penitents. Such was the gracious influence resting upon the people that cries for mercy resounded through the schoolroom. Many found the peace they sought, while the remaining penitents adjourned to the house of one of the leaders and continued all night in earnest prayer.

At Salt Pond, which was such hard soil to break in his earlier days, he preached to a crowded congregation in a large sanctuary, and administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to a church full of members. At the after meeting the same wonderful scenes were repeated, and many penitents sought Divine favour. At Accra he ministered to another crowded congregation, and at the close desired those who were not members to leave, as he would give the Lord's Supper to those alone. None moved, and he was surprised to find every one in the over-filled church a member.

At Elmina, in company with the Rev. George

Dyer, who had recently arrived from England, and the native ministers Messrs. Laing and Parker, he held a notable service. The chapel was thronged, whilst others pressed round the open door and windows. Mr. Freeman adds: "There was a gracious influence resting on the congregation. We invited penitents to the communion rail, to which they came in crowds. Then the Blessed Spirit brooded over us, and we had a fine revival-meeting. Scores of the congregation were in tears and crying for mercy, and many found peace and joy in believing." Such a meeting had never been known in Elmina.

At Anamabu again he called upon the people to repent, and then reproached himself for his weakness of faith. Here is the touching entry in his journal: "Oh, for more child-like confidence in God, that He will endue me with greater unction, and with a tongue of fire! Then I may hope to be a more successful preacher of the glorious gospel. I never leave the pulpit without a feeling of dissatisfaction with myself. That feeling is ever present, but at certain times painfully intense,—Lord, help me; Lord, save me!" At Great Kormantine the people "cried mightily to the Lord for salvation." Leaving the chapel he preached to the fishermen in the open air, "who were moved by the great truths declared;" and subsequently he "repaired to the chapel to perform marriage ceremonies. Three couples were to be married; but I had to wait some time, as one of the young brides-elect had fallen insensible on the floor under the hallowed fervour of the morning prayer-meeting, and there was some delay occasioned thereby in her being made ready for the marriage."

Such were the multitudes now attending divine worship at Cape Coast that Mr. Freeman consulted with the trustees of Wesley Church as to its enlargement. They decided that the boys' school should be fitted up as a chapel-of-ease. He immediately made arrangements for commencing operations. Whilst thus

engaged at Cape Coast he received letters from his wife, who remained at Anamabu. The extracts are simple and touching, and prove her deep interest in the spiritual work that was progressing. "Please try and come down again, because yesterday our congregation at the chapel was very much people. Many had to sit outside: it is very wonderful. I have never seen anything like this at any time." A few days after she wrote again: "I like very much that you will come down. On Monday evening the congregation was the same as on Sundays. While one girl was praying and crying all that were in the chapel trembled. I hope that you will come down and see these wonderful things, and say something to encourage and strengthen their hearts." Still another letter says: "One of our sisters reports that, as she was just now passing along the street she met a group of about twelve heathen people, men and women, from the fishermen's quarter of the town, who were saying: 'We will go to chapel to be Christians; we will go to give ourselves to God omnipotent.'" Then followed a series of remarkable services at Anamabu, where he was driven to do as was being done at Cape Coast—fit up the schoolroom as a chapel-of-ease to accommodate the crowds that came.

Early in December of the same year, 1875, he visited Salt Pond again. The candidates for baptism were so numerous that he had to remove to the shade of some banyan trees and there perform the ceremony. "The candidates occupied a line of benches extemporised for the occasion, forty-seven paces in length. The scene was beautiful and imposing."

Returning the same day to Anamabu the congregation was "overwhelming," and he had to repeat the Salt Pond experiment. "Two hundred and twelve candidates received baptism in the presence of assembled hundreds." That day he had received into the Church by baptism some three hundred souls. His brief description of the watch-night service on the last

MARKET-PLACE, CAPE COSAT.

night of the year 1875 at Anamabu is worth recording. "A crowded congregation and a blessed influence. I preached from 1 Kings xx. 39, 40. At midnight a mighty influence rested on the congregation. Stifled sobs soon rose into loud cries all over the chapel. Oh, what a scene! At length I succeeded in giving out and raising the hymn, 'Sing to the great Jehovah's praise.' We sang it through, but in the midst of cries and tears strangely mingled with the harmony. At 12.30 the meeting closed, but the people would not leave the chapel. They had a special prayer-meeting conducted by the leaders, kept up till 3.30 a.m."

On the first Sunday of the year 1876 the Church at Anamabu joined, in accordance with Methodist custom, in a solemn covenant service; and Mr. Freeman notes that there were about five hundred communicants at the Lord's Supper.

There were many extraordinary cases, which might rank with some recorded in John Wesley's journals. We give his description of one case—and there were many of a similar character—which occurred at Anamabu at the service for receiving adults into the Church by public baptism. "One female adult was much excited at the communion rail, first trembling violently, and at length breaking out into loud cries as though under intense bodily or mental suffering. She seemed to lose her powers of volition, and had to be taken out of the chapel by some of her friends who were present."

He expresses his opinion of such cases which may be of interest to some. "In these cases of extraordinary excitement I see nothing acted and unreal on the part of any who seem thus to suffer. I look upon such experiences as purely physico-mental, and as arising out of the intensity of religious feeling acting upon the brain, and upon the entire physical system."

On January 20th he went to Assafa and married five couples. "Then under the shade of some banyan trees . . . baptised two hundred and sixty adults and

children. . . . There were many children and infants, as the new converts who were heads of families, coming themselves for baptism, brought their children with them and offered them to the Lord. Thus whole households were baptised."

Among some later candidates for baptism was "the head of a pagan family, very recently remarkable for an unusually extravagant drinking festival in custom-making for the dead. They consumed one puncheon of rum and commenced another, besides ale, wine, and other intoxicants. These are the blessed changes now effected by the operations of the Holy Spirit. Glory to God!"

Later on he organised an extraordinary camp meeting at Great Kormantine, which was the first service of the kind ever held on the Gold Coast. Slight booths were erected for the people who came from the villages round. The Christians brought cooked food, so that no time might be wasted. Before daylight on Sunday, April 9th, 1876, the Christians came flocking into the village, and by ten o'clock a thousand persons were present, who joined in public worship. "When the service closed, the congregation dispersed to take breakfast in groups under the shade of clumps of cocoanut trees. That being over, several larger groups collected for exhortation, prayer and praise. This was a beautiful scene, the culminating point of the day. Over an extent of ground of three or four hundred yards square, dotted with clumps of cocoanut palms, in every direction the voice of prayer and praise was heard, while others were walking about in the open spaces engaged in earnest Christian conversation. In the afternoon a lovefeast was held, at which there must have been fifteen hundred people present."

At Mankessim, near the site of the grove of the sacred oracle, Mr. Freeman was obliged to move from the chapel to the shade of some trees for the baptism of the numerous catechumens. The record he makes is most encouraging, considering that this was

formerly the stronghold of fetishism. "This was, upon the whole, the most extraordinary and affecting baptismal service I have ever witnessed. It cannot fail to make a deep impression on the pagans of the town, many of whom were gathered in observant groups near at hand."

In September of the same year another camp meeting was held at Great Kormantine, when the people gathered in greater numbers than before. Mr. Freeman estimates that there were two thousand people present. There were similar scenes to those before described, and gracious influence rested upon the multitude.

At the end of the year 1877 it was found that no less than three thousand persons had been added to the Church, and Mr. Freeman himself had baptised fifteen hundred persons. These, added to the baptisms of the previous year, showed an increase of some four thousand five hundred, and still the gracious revival continued. No wonder that the missionaries, when assembled at their annual gathering, "started to their feet as one man, and with moistened eyes sang the doxology"!

Mr. Freeman was a true bishop, and watched the flock with tender solicitude. We find him holding conventions with the leaders, and advising them how to act in various phases of the revival in progress. Lest the people should come to view loud cries and tremblings as a necessary part, or as adjuncts to conversion, he exhorted them to guard carefully against all unnecessary excitement. Thus he went from village to village, and the scenes were the same everywhere. Here and there whole villages deserted their idols to serve the living God, and Mr. Freeman's heart was very full of thanksgiving that he had been permitted in his old age to see such a gracious "Pentecost."

Another camp meeting was held in the same place as the previous ones in the year 1878. In addition to

other services a moonlight prayer-meeting was held under the palm trees, followed by a lovefeast. "As speaker after speaker told of the wonders of redeeming love displayed to them, the assembly rose in the bright moonlight and sang doxology after doxology." The most remarkable testimony came from a recent convert. It was as follows :—

"Under the moonlight you do not see me clearly. If you could plainly see my face, you would see what an ill-looking, worthless fellow I am. My father was a fetish man and my mother a fetish woman, and I used to be their drummer. If any one had said to me at that time that I should by-and-by become a Christian, I should have angrily said to him, 'You are a liar!' Nevertheless the change has come ; a good and a blessed one, and Jesus has done it all."

Mr. Freeman remarks : "It may be deemed important to notice that the extraordinary success of the camp meetings in *feeding the revival* has been their suitableness to the national genius of the people. In their pagan life they are accustomed to frequent and extensive gatherings in their occasional and annual customs. Thus the national habits have been utilised to promote the spread of the gospel, and to uplift the Church of Christ into a higher atmosphere of Christian life."

Then followed the usual weeding ; but much true wheat remained, and within those three or four years between four and five thousand believers were added to the Church of God, to testify to the spiritual power of this wonderful revival.

MISSION HOUSE, LAGOS.

CHAPTER XIV.

JUBILEE AND GLORY.

AFTER six years of continuous labour at Anamabu and the villages around, "Father" Freeman, as he was now affectionately known to his colleagues in the work, was appointed to take charge of the mission at Accra, which embraced not only this important centre, but a great number of small towns and villages reaching to Winnebah on the west, to the Volta on the east, and to some distance over the Akwapim hills in the interior. He entered upon his work here in 1879 with his wonted ardour, and was privileged to see great success.

In 1881 he received fifty-two persons into the privilege of Church membership. Two-thirds of them had been won from paganism. He had then under instruction for baptism a woman who had abandoned her hereditary calling. She had received special training, but refused initiation into the mysteries of the fetish priesthood, which would have brought her

great gain. In 1883 he met with unprecedented success at Accra. He had formed evangelistic bands, which were doing a good work, and reported the conversion of an Ashanti prince from Juabin, named Akympon, who had become an unpaid evangelist.

In 1884 the writer of this biography was requested by the committee of the Wesleyan Missionary Society to visit his old mission with a view to the settlement of certain difficulties which had arisen. At his special request Father Freeman was associated with him in this important undertaking. He readily accepted the trying duties that were likely to be imposed upon him, and joined the author on board ship at Accra. During this year his health had broken down, and the change did much to recruit and invigorate him.

For several weeks we were in closest association. We journeyed to Lagos together, and there he displayed his mature judgment in the settlement of the difficulties which had arisen. The greatest reverence was shown to the veteran, and the people listened with the deepest interest to his public utterances. There were a few old people in the town who remembered his former visits, and they were specially delighted to greet the man who had introduced the mission.

On our return from Lagos, early in the year 1885, we had the pleasure of sitting together at Cape Coast with the ministers in charge of the various stations of the Gold Coast. It was the annual Synod, when all reports were received for the year and arrangements made for the following year's work. Be it remembered, too, that this was the actual jubilee year of the mission. The meeting was therefore of unusual importance. To the experienced missionary, the composition of the Synod was suggestive of the wonderful work accomplished in the half-century. The European element was very small, but there were fourteen native ministers, choice men, who joined in the counsels and gave cheering reports from their

various stations. Each one of these men represented the centre of an organisation, included in which were scores of other native agents, paid and unpaid, all diligently carrying on the work of God. One man had come from Bekwai, a province of Ashanti ; another had come from Apollonia, to the east of the Gold Coast, who could tell us of the new gold mines in Takwa ; another from Anamabu and from Winnebah ; and Father Freeman, as the reader knows, from Accra.

By special permission there were also present the Juabin chief Akympon, and Frimpon his brother. They had come to plead with the Synod on behalf of a colony of Juabins who had settled behind the Accra hills. Such a plea as they presented could not be resisted, and though the finances were extremely limited, it was decided that an agent should be sent to their help. That night the old Wesley Church was more than crowded for the annual missionary meeting. The open doors and windows were full of eager listeners. The spacious platform contained all the ministers, and as speaker after speaker told the story of his mission the enthusiasm was such as the author has never witnessed elsewhere. The culmination was reached when Akympon, with his brother Frimpon by his side, spoke and appealed for a missionary and "The Book." The grace and force of his appeal made his plea irresistible, and spoke volumes to us who knew the long years of bitter hatred and strife which had existed between the Ashanti and the Fanti. Mr. Freeman was delighted with the appointment of a devoted native minister to this station, (which continues to this day), especially as he had taken the deepest interest in the chief, who was a member of his church at Accra.

This Synod also made arrangements for a suitable celebration of the jubilee of the Gold Coast mission throughout the length and breadth of the now extensive district. As part of the rejoicings, the native Church proposed to send Father Freeman on a visit

"FATHER" FREEMAN.

to England at their own expense. Of this offer he never availed himself, hesitating very much from the fear of the English climate.

These gracious jubilee services began at Cape Coast on Sunday, February 1st, 1885, and produced immense enthusiasm. The Rev. W. Terry Coppin furnished a brief account, which was published in the English papers. As early as three o'clock in the morning the spacious church was full of earnest pleaders with God, and the prayer-meeting continued till day-dawn. Then at seven o'clock a native minister preached. Calico awnings were placed along each side of the church, to protect the people who could find no room within from the fierce heat of the sun. The first English service of the day, however, was that conducted by Father Freeman at half-past ten. The patriarch of seventy-six chose the appropriate passage from the blessing of the dying Jacob uttered upon his beloved Joseph. "The blessings of thy fathers have prevailed above (exceeded) the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills." The old man with great energy and eloquence drew upon his rich experience, contrasting the past with the present.

Who could have preached so well from such a text to this people? It was he who had completed the building of the revered sanctuary in which they were assembled, and his missionary life among them had covered nearly the whole period of fifty years. He had been the chief human agent in extending the work from one end of the district to the other. The old father preaching the jubilee sermon was as complete a finish to the marvellous record of fifty years as any historian could wish.

The two following days were devoted to public thanksgiving meetings. Mr. Coppin writes: "After a short introductory address . . . remarkable experiences and some equally remarkable gifts followed. Ministers and laymen followed one another in joyous

haste, promising amounts varying from five to fifty guineas. Then came the largest offering of the day —one hundred guineas from a young native merchant whom God had prospered in business." After a short recess, they reassembled with increased enthusiasm. Two or three at a time were upon their feet to speak of God's love and mercy to them and to subscribe their amounts. Mr. Coppin adds: "I was greatly touched by a statement from an aged woman: 'I am nothing, I have nothing, I can do little else than nothing. Yet I cannot sit here and see and hear others giving their offerings to God and remain silent. With myself and children I will try and get a guinea: please put my name down!' Many a widow's mite after this manner has gone into the Lord's treasury to-day. . . . One old lady said she was associated with those who first invited Captain Potter to bring them a missionary. She alone was left of her female friends who joined to welcome Mr. Dunwell. . . . Then the work was very poor and hard, and she marvelled to see it spread as it is doing now. Aged and poor, she possessed very little, but she would try and get a pound as her offering. . . . The people seemed as if they could not do enough. . . . Better than all, many heathen present publicly renounced heathenism.

"When a young native minister announced that he had that evening walked arm-in-arm to the church with the chief of an obscene dancing club called 'Ganga,' and that the young man had renounced his sinful life, giving himself to Christ and His service as a mission agent, the emotion which moved the congregation was most intense. Spontaneously the large assembly rose and sang the doxology with a pathos and power very blessed. . . . Four members of the 'Ganga Club' sent a letter stating they had severed themselves from it, had given themselves to God, and sent twelve guineas as a subscription to the Jubilee Fund."

Another letter ran as follows :—"Fetish men and women live in our house, but I find no Saviour in them, so I give myself to Jesus and send my present of thirty shillings."

Old Father Freeman, with others, gave suitable addresses, bringing the remarkable series of services to a close.

The enthusiasm spread throughout the district. At Accra Mr. Freeman did his utmost with his usual ardour to promote the interests of the jubilee celebration. In a letter which the author has now before him, Mr. Freeman states that the people of his circuit had promised £2,920 towards this fund, which was to be appropriated to the extension and maintenance of the work of God in the country.

The meetings in connection with this jubilee celebration, whether the finances were helped or not, were productive of deep spiritual feelings, and did immense good. In them all there was no happier man than our dear friend, the story of whose life we have tried to relate.

Mr. Freeman continued in active native work till the year 1886, when the earnest labourer reluctantly stepped aside to rest. He would have preferred carrying on his holy toil, taking his full share of responsibility ; but yielding to advice, he became a supernumerary minister in the midst of his own people at Accra. He found it necessary to supplement his allowance by again resorting to his garden. So his time passed, in the performance of such duties as he could perform and in occasional preaching, and down to the last taking the deepest interest in the Christian work all about him.

Then came frequent physical ailments ; and his eldest son fitted up a house for his father, where the patriarch dwelt in greater comfort. On the arrival of the European missionary Price, Mr. Freeman went to the church to hear him preach. The result was that he caught cold, and his friends thought the

end had come. God spared him, however, a little longer.

Again in the following May he was taken seriously ill, when he was removed to the mission house, and subsequently rallied. His eldest son, who has furnished the writer with these particulars, states: "About a fortnight after his removal he began to mend, was able to sit in his armchair in his dressing-gown, and even answered some letters received just before his illness. He got me to trim his hair. He looked fresh, and walked up and down the verandah; on my arm at first, and afterwards without that aid. He inquired when his next appointment would be due, with a view to prepare a sermon for it. We all were looking forward to the time, which did not seem far distant . . . of welcoming him home once more."

"But that was not to be, for on August 6th he had an attack of influenza, . . . which brought on a relapse. The complaint itself, an affection of the kidneys, had been checked . . . but the fever had so exhausted his strength that there remained little rallying power.

"The doctor told me," continues his son in the letter, 'We are fighting, not so much against disease as against old age.'" The son watched by his father's bed. On the morning of August 9th he replied, in answer to his son's inquiries, "I think I am better, but very tired." The letter continues: "On that day the doctor told us that he would not recover, and that the heart was failing in its action. He could only utter a word at a time, and was constantly calling me, but only took my hand for a time and dropped it.

"As I was conversing with him the day before the fatal relapse, he directed my attention to several passages that seem to favour the idea of our Lord's second coming as a near event. . . . He believed himself very near it, and was in daily expectation of being caught up to meet the Lord in the air. He said he was like a little bird with wing ready raised for flight.

When the doctor gave him up on the Saturday I asked him: 'Haven't you anything to say to us, papa?' He seemed to be musing. I inquired: 'Nothing more than what you said to me on Wednesday?' He brightened up and shook his head."

"One of the last entries he made in his journal is: 'Mr. Parker's text was from a very familiar chapter of mine, John xvii. 24, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am," etc. O dear and blessed Jesus, this is what I daily feel! Nothing can satisfy me but seeing Thee in Thy glory. Oh, when wilt Thou bow the heavens and come down?'"

"At the last family prayer he joined in, he gave out the hymn beginning, 'Now I have found the ground,' etc., throwing much pathos into the fifth verse, repeating the last line and adding, 'Amen.'

> "'Though waves and storms go o'er my head,
> Though strength, and health, and friends be gone,
> Though joys be withered all and dead,
> Though every comfort be withdrawn,
> On this my steadfast soul relies,—
> Father, Thy mercy never dies.'

"He was thus ready, with his loins girt, often exclaiming, 'Amen, come, Lord Jesus!' And though he was not actually caught up alive to meet the Lord in the air, his departure can hardly be called death. On the last day he was quite free from pain, and slept a good deal. In his waking moments he looked tenderly on us."

The hours passed away, and the veteran slept peacefully till ten o'clock at night on August 11th, 1890, when without "knowing death" he passed away home to God. His son, who watched his dying father, writes: "There was no struggle, no groan, no sigh; but gently and gradually the pulse beat slower and slower . . . and life ebbed out and the spirit was 'safe in the arms of Jesus.' So gradual was the transition, and

so gentle, so soft, so restful, was the last slumber, that neither mother nor myself could perceive the exact point of time when the altogether imperceptible change took place, though watching so closely."

Many went to view the body of this servant of God as it lay in the mission-house, and on August 13th the remains were taken to the Wesleyan Church, where he had so often held forth the Word of Life. The Revs. T. J. Price and S. B. Solomon conducted the former part of the funeral service. A vast crowd followed his remains to the grave in the Wesleyan Cemetery, where the Rev. D. G. Williams, M.A., of the Anglican Episcopalian Church, concluded the service. The native minister, Plange, who had wept like a child at the loss of one with whom he had been associated for so many years, between his sobs gave an address ; whilst the Rev. Carl Reindorpt, of the German mission, also testified to the love and respect in which he was held.

At the same hour a memorial service was held at Cape Coast. The following week, at another service, many were glad to bear testimony to their great love of the departed by raising a subscription, forty pounds of which were sent to the widow. The remainder was kept to raise a suitable memorial to be placed within the church at Cape Coast, which Mr. Freeman had been so instrumental in building.

The testimony of his brethren, as embodied in the official obituary, is as follows :—" Mr. Freeman was a true missionary, loved and respected by all. His mellowed piety, patience, resignation and humility, were characteristic. He served his Church faithfully, and, as his reward, gained the reverent love of all the people of the Gold Coast."

A few more such ardent souls, and the wastes of Africa shall be won for Christ. "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose," and the continent, cursed by the cupidity of man, shall smile with the benediction of the Gracious Saviour, whose loyal servant

our missionary was. He was in the habit of saying, in reference to his enjoyment of tropical heat and brightness, "I am a child of the sun," and we know that he loved his adopted country with greater affection than that of a patriot. The whole Church may well be thankful for such men, and that section of it to which he specially belonged has a right to be proud of such a representative. And surely those whose inheritance it is to bear the banner so nobly unfurled by this loyal soldier of Christ will not linger along the path. Let the Church be but faithful in encouraging and sustaining the Christlike enterprise, and many more apostolic men like Thomas Birch Freeman will be found willing to seek the redemption of Africa.

THE END.


F.M.R.