

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



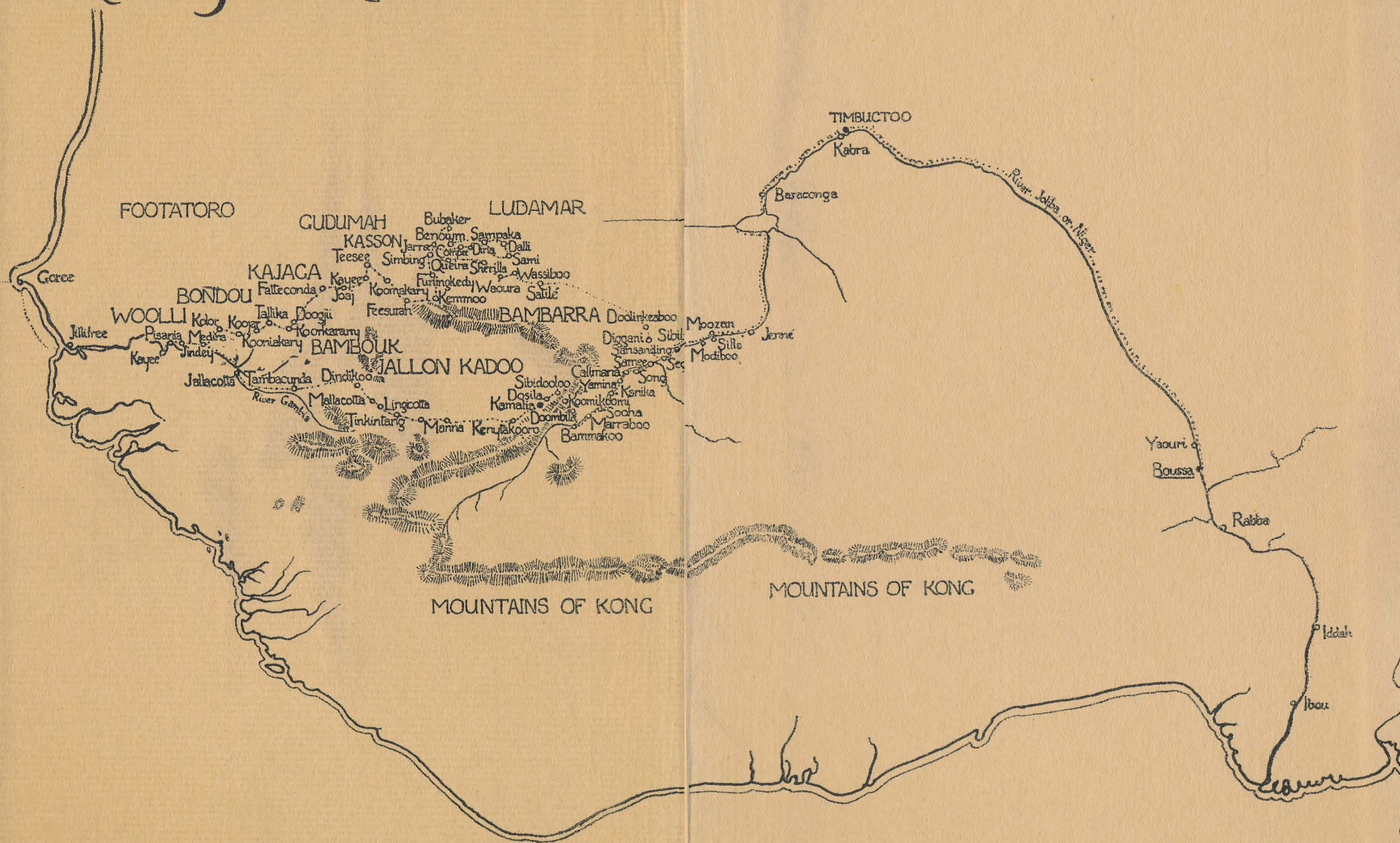
PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

FIRST JOURNEY





MUNGO PARK

NIGER
THE LIFE OF MUNGO PARK

BY

LEWIS GRASSIC GIBBON

EDINBURGH

THE PORPOISE PRESS

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1934
BY THE PORPOISE PRESS
133A GEORGE STREET, EDINBURGH
LONDON: FABER AND FABER LIMITED
24 RUSSELL SQUARE, W.C. 1
PRINTED IN SCOTLAND
BY ROBERT MACLEHOSE AND CO. LTD.
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, GLASGOW
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

TO
COMPTON MACKENZIE

PRELIMINARY NOTE

I think I have read almost everything by or about Mungo Park—everything which still survives in print or manuscript. Two interesting letters from the Peebles days seem to have found their way to America, and, though I tried, I could trail them to no more definite locality. More exhausting was the experience of reading a certain private collection, and then being denied the right either to quote from it or to mention the owner's name ! This incident provided me with the interesting alternative of either cultivating a partial amnesia with regard to what I had learned, or of consciously bearing that information in mind and disregarding it as unimportant. I followed the latter course, recasting slightly the last third of this book.

The Peebles and Colonial Office records have supplied certain negligible sidelights on exits and entrances, dates and departures. But the *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa, 1795, 1797, with an Appendix containing Geographical Illustrations of Africa, by Major Rennell* (1799) and *The Journal of a Mission in the Interior of Africa in 1805, by Mungo Park ; together with other documents, official and private, relating to the same Mission ; to which is prefaced an Account of the Life of Mr. Park* (1815) remain the *fons et origo* of any

biography of Park. Most biographers, it is true, instead of looting these rich galleons of the requisite treasure, cower down in the shadow of their hulks, shamefacedly. I have been moved to no such shame. Similarly, in their acceptance of the explorer's view of his own rectitude in the conduct of the Second Expedition, I have found the attitude of other writers impossible. The worst example is T. B. MacLachlan in *Mungo Park* (1898), the last attempt at a more or less full-length biography. A much better book is 'H. B.'s' *Life of Mungo Park* (1835), sincere and serene in the conventions of camouflage peculiar to its age.

Doubt has been thrown on the veracity of the account of the guide, Amadi Fatoumi, which did not come to light until six years after the close of the Second Expedition. I see no reason to doubt Fatoumi in the main details of his narrative, and have incorporated these details in this book without other acknowledgment of doubt or indebtedness than this.

L. G. G.

1933

I Mungo Park the elder farmed at Fowlshiels, four miles from Selkirk, a pleasant place, with the Yarrow below and the loch of Newark across the valley. In summer this was a country of green and gold and the blue blur of heath, but in winter a frost-bitten stretch, with the sough of the wind raging down the valley of the Yarrow and turning its placid waters mottled-green and lapping its drifting mists against the grey whinstone wall of the Fowlshiels biggings. But for Mungo it is probable neither sun nor storm were agents of colourful scenic change: they were facts to be faced in his fight with the dour acres of Fowlshiels, ploughed with the wooden plough of those days, a sturdy figure, the ploughman, in the hodden grey that Burns had made the traditional garb of the land and period—even if economic fact had designed a more enduring costume.

The portrait of Mungo the elder is a mosaic, built up against the greens and greys of Fowlshiels, built up of casual references in the letters and allusions of his son, glossed and varnished in the references of the genteel biographers of an earlier day who sought for the origins of that son. He had the usual Scots passion for education—that passion compounded of a belief that education meant power and knowledge and the ability to climb from the sodden

rees of the farms to the comfort of kirk and manse, compounded of that and a dour desire to beat the next man in an argument. It had, and has, something of the same quality, this Scots desire and pride in education, that the Chinese merchant has in almost exactly similar circumstances when he moils to make of his sons members of the literati, those who pass the Examinations and attain the ranks of the blessed. But Mungo went beyond the reach of most of his contemporaries, even to the extent of employing a private tutor for his family.

Where he came from there is no knowing, except from the soil, up out of its darkness with that horde of men of like kind, the dour even-tempered peasants of Scotland. But when he settled at Fowlshiels he married a daughter of John Hislop of Tennis, a 'woman of great prudence and sense',—else indeed she would not have survived, we may guess, the life that awaited her at Fowlshiels. There Mungo took her and installed her and proceeded to beget upon her in the three-roomed house with the brownstone walls a family of thirteen.

The winds came down the Yarrow in winter, the springs came greening its banks and the dark clay rigs of Fowlshiels, summer broadened across and about them, autumn brought the flay of flails in the barns of Fowlshiels; and throughout a space of twenty years, in the fashion of her time, Mistress Park went perpetually bowed in the ungracious lines of pregnancy, exercising that prudence and good sense as she might, and apparently not unsuccess-

fully. Her son's biographers make of her a handsome personage, as they do of her consort : they were probably both constitutionally cold and cool, and treated to an unbroken silence discussion of those intimacies which produced their family. They regarded each other, no doubt, with that mixture of sardonic humour and iron tenderness that was of their life-quality—an attitude ground out in steel with the wear and moil of their years, its tenderness made up of sudden unloosening of the bonds of sheer pity and compassion one for the other.

For the matrix that produced Mungo Park, the now ruined whinstone house, mantled with ivy and set with a neat little tablet, is unconvincing enough unless one remembers the quality of his father and mother, and the life they led. To cram a family of thirteen, not to mention an altogether improbable maidservant, inside the compass of those narrow walls, and imagine it a winter night with the elder Mungo coming laired from the fields, the cruse-lamp with a murky splutter on the earthen floor and the plain walls, the scrubbed table and the shining dresser, is to reach to a type of life now remote from anything in Scotland or outside the huts of the Esquimaux. It is to penetrate below the gentility of polite commentators and realise the changes of a hundred years that have made that life impossible, even as, in a fashion, they have made impossible the production of such personalities as the seventh child, the third son, who presently came to bless the union of the Parks of Fowlshiels.

2 It was an era and a district producing Scotsmen of note. The eighteenth century's sunset shone forth, and many Scotsmen spawned. Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, was born at Ettrickhall in 1770, a year before the birth of the younger Mungo ; John Leyden, the orientalist, was born at Denholm four years after him. And in that year 1771 a puny child, Walter Scott, was born a few months before that September the 10th when Mrs. Park's third son came through the humble portals of all birth into the daylight of Fowlshiels' dark kitchen.

The family had thinned out. Three were already dead when Mungo arrived, and blinked his eyes, and waited throughout the months and years of babyhood the impingement of those multitudes of impressions upon his mind which were yet to make of him—such the play of chance—alien and different. The chickens came chirawking into the doorway and pecked at crumbs on the floor of the kitchen while he lay in his cradle and watched them, and blinked drowsy eyes, and was fed intermittently and efficiently by the handsome and prudent mother who was generally a whirlwind of energy engaged in baking, brewing, and washing, directing, darning, and scolding. The clamping feet of his father would wake him from sleep, and perhaps, though seldom, the touch of a rough-grained hand on his cheek.

But that unseldom, for it would have been gypèd foolishness, and folk must work, and get on with their work, and see to the making of silver, and that all the bairns are well-rigged when they gang to the kirk of a Sabbath. Of unnecessary affection, none.

So young Mungo grew out of swaddling clothes into a thickly-breeched childhood. Because second-sight in the Scots was a fiction not yet invented in the fertile shallow brain of that other Scot born in the same year as Mungo, the parents of the young Park neglected to foresee the curiosity of later generations in the acts and actions of their third son. But letters and biographies march the same phrases meticulously across his early childhood as across his later years. He was quiet, restrained, grave of demeanour, proper and shy—a fit subject, in fact, for the psycho-analysts as yet inapparent upon that unhappy era. No child should be any of these things : they were made up of his world of multitudinous sense-impressions superimposed with the most narrow and Spartan code of conduct ever invented outside Laconia.

On the unimaginative this code of suppression, of non-joy in the Sabbath, of the hearty eating of tiresome food, of conventionality of expression and demand, sat lightly enough : probably most of Mungo's brothers and sisters accepted it cheerfully and grew up and slipped it aside—on to the shoulders of their own children. But on Mungo, as on many another imaginative child, it fell like a stifling black blanket. He invented the proper re-

sistance : gravity (exaggerated till it was unduly noticeable) of outward demeanour to hide the burgeon of his soul beneath.

He was a handsome boy, as later a man, brown-haired, tall for his age, with finely cut nose and a shapely if unaggressive chin. One may reconstruct the Mungo of childhood and adolescence by modifying the well-known portrait and garbing it in breeches and grey woollen stockings, giving it a rounder face, and eyes surely with not that coldest of gold glints in them. There were times in his early life, no doubt, when he mislaid the gravity and steadiness of demeanour so heartily approved by his parents and contemporaries, and played the devil, and romped, and tore his clothes, and lay on his back and peered at the clouds and wondered on God and birds and beasts and how babies really came and were created, and why you shouldn't swear or scratch in the kirk. Nevertheless, there is record of but one occasion when his defensive armour slipped aside—and that almost certainly an occasion neatly staged.

The occasion was an evening, Mungo grown to a grave schoolboy, deep in books. The servant was sweeping the floor and in the process sweeping up great quantities of printed leaves torn from a book. Mungo's mother was in the room, and Mungo himself. 'You're destroying the book,' Mungo protested. The servant tossed her head : 'They're only old Flavel's.' To which the dark-faced boy retorted gravely, to the delight of all his bio-

graphers, 'Ay, you, or somebody else, will one day be sweeping up *my* book-leaves and saying they're only old Mungo Park's.'

One would like to know if he really meant that, or if he glanced virtuously at his mother as he said it. His mother's comment was more than characteristic, it was national: 'You poor useless thing, do you think that you will ever write books?'

Mungo's retort is not recorded. Doubtless he remained grave and taciturn, at least until he left the room and was out through the smells and cluttered action of the farmyard down to the drumming Yarrow banks, still happily unsung by Wordsworth. There, and to the surrounding hills, he went often, 'to read poetry'. This was mostly collections of songs and sagas of the Scottish Border, meaty dour stuff, filled with tales of raids and riots, border flights and border fights, Childe Rolands and Dark Towers. Plus these were the lesser gods of the Scots pantheon, witches and wizards and kelpies and the like, unchancy infernal fauna, all sung in laggard anapaests. On Yarrow Mungo devoured much of this stuff, and no doubt made of himself a knight, a crusader, a wandering minstrel. He also read novels—they do not tell us what novels. No doubt they were those oddly constipated pseudo-religious tracts beloved of his time.

He had been sent to the Grammar School at Selkirk. To and fro he tramped every day, a distance of several miles, and is reported as cold and taciturn at school as at home. He was probably

inordinately shy, what of his suppressions and with his readings, cowardly as only a Scot can be cowardly. But one of his biographers finds this unpalatable, and smarms upon the record the affirmation 'Some sparks of latent spirit which occasionally flashed forth protected him from any attempt at insult, to which his unsocial disposition might have subjected him on the part of his noisy school-fellows.' But rather, one can hear their howls of amusement, his school-fellows, surrounding and tormenting in some playground corner a brown-faced silent boy.

His schoolmaster in later years had nothing to say of him except that he was exceedingly fond of reading and 'always the head of his class'. Books, and still the solitudes of the hills and windings of Yarrow, remained to comfort him from both the raucous voices of his schoolmates and the fatuous expectations of Fowlshiels.

But at last in his fourteenth and fifteenth years he had to face up to those expectations and make an important decision. He had been early destined by father Mungo and Mistress Park for training as a minister of the Kirk of Scotland. He was so obviously qualified by (yet again) 'the gravity and steady decorum of his manner'. And, just as it was the ambition and intention of every Scots farmer to produce at least one son who should receive college education, so naturally it was expected of that son that his education would flow from him in pulpit periods. Curiously, one realises that the attitude

had little relevance to religion. The Scots are not a religious people : long before the rise of the historical school of criticism the Presbyterian Scot had realised that religion is little more than the ghost of archaic science haunting the busy ways of the world, the world of birth and death and the coming of spring and mating, sinning and begetting. It was no sacrifice to a God, no holy dedicatee the elder Parks visualised. In common with their class in Scotland they saw, very practically, that the minister lived in a manse, had a servant, was paid some deference (almost exclusively a secular deference) and had, in fact, an effective voice in things. This indeed is the function and privilege of the Scots minister : he is less a priest than a Spartan ephor, elected by the people to hold the nobles and the two kings in check, to examine into the morals of the people, and to settle minor disputes. In addition, it was also expected of him in Mungo's day that he be an adept in interpretation of the Christian Scriptures, and capable of expounding with some oratory a ferocious metaphysical system which both he and his hearers would know (coming from the byres, and the ring of coulter in ploughed ground, and women in travail, and the kindliness of tired men) to be false and irrelevant.

Mungo refused to be a minister.

He felt he had 'no call', it is recorded, and the fact worried his contemporaries, proud of him later as an explorer, and a pious one at that. It may puzzle a later inquirer, even as it awakens his first

genuine thrill of interest in the boy. Why did he refuse the Church, the obvious refuge not only for his apparent gravity and decorum, but for his mental fears and imaginings liable to such sad bruising in the sterner ways of the world? Why not carry the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border and his novels, books and books and yet more books, into the refuge of a manse, a pulpit, a shovel-hat and a hilarious collar?

But the books had brought him more than the tenebrous imaginings of fear. The Scots ballads could have widened his geographical horizons little: they deal with the doings of a little people on a dark little stage, an unhappy questing people, haunted by the unpleasant physical after-effects of death. So we must leave to the nameless novels the main-springs of Mungo's refusal—these, and no doubt other books that lifted his horizons from around the dreaming banks of Yarrow and flung them far across the deserts of Africa and the snows of America and the heights of the Hindu mountains into strange lands and climes, where beasts were un-Scots and untamed, and in blue waters strange plants waved their glassy fronds and the oyster opened its pearl-lined valves. . . .

Perhaps not only the books. Mungo had lain on the grass and the heath and the bells of the hills, looked at the twining convolutions of the buttercups, the purple bells of the heather-drops, watched the busy insect-world at its play of life, looked at the blood pulse down the veins in his own arm. He had

seen the play and perhaps the majesty of life. However unhappily grooved his mind by his early surroundings and scoldings and commendings, it was brightened and sharpened to a curiosity that no manse would ever satisfy.

He elected to study medicine.

3 His gravity 'not altogether thrown away', he was bound apprentice in his fifteenth year to a local practitioner, one Thomas Anderson of Selkirk. This was in 1786. Thereafter, for a space of three years, he disappears into incidental mention and doubtless much earnest and fatiguing study. The three years saw him in occasional attendance at the Grammar School of Selkirk, studying classics and mathematics, in both of which he was 'very apt'. For the rest he no doubt pounded the medicines and rode the rounds with his master, finding such excitements of life and death as there was in the medicine of an age without anaesthetics or a knowledge of antiseptic principles, without the stethoscope—which Lannaec did not perfect until 1816—or the clinical thermometer.

Most surgery was rough and ready : the patient was drugged or alcoholised or simply held down by strong hands and operated upon to the sound of his cries and the unshielded stench of cut flesh. In the more normal physicians' routine, then as now, pills of various sizes, colourings and degrees of unpleasantness and effectiveness relieved the inner ills of the farmers and shopkeepers and cattle-dealers of Selkirk and its environs. Mungo gathered to himself a good practical training, but, or so it would appear, no great liking of his profession. Yet he

kept his own counsel, dark and grave, and in 1789 matriculated and went up to Edinburgh—by coach, travelling tall and dark and hardly yokel-like at all, the mask almost perfect already in encounter with all but such contemporary intimates as Anderson's children, Alison and Alexander. Ailie was a light-hearted tease, vexing Mungo from his safe solemnities.

He was at Edinburgh for three sessions. There he developed a passion for botany, an outcome of much wandering the lonely hills in his childhood. Besides, in that age botanical knowledge stood the medical practitioner in much good stead.

Presently Mungo's researches had the assistance and encouragement of a family relation who was in some measure as remarkable a man as Mungo himself was to prove.

This was his brother-in-law, James Dickson, seedsman of London. Dickson had been born in Scotland and had migrated early to London, to become a nurseryman at Hammersmith. He was more than a mere gardener, however, a botanist to boot, and a very good one in the opinion of his time. Before he returned to Scotland and met with and wedded one of Mungo's sisters, he had published a book on *Cryptogamia*, a prosy little, pompous little book in the style of the period. But he was an enthusiast, sincere enough, and the year before Mungo matriculated had assisted in an important event in London. This was the foundation of the Linnaean Society in company with Sir J. E. Smith.

His brother-in-law came north just as Mungo was finishing with Edinburgh. Dickson proposed a botanising tour in the Highlands, and Mungo assented, shyly. They departed from Edinburgh, apparently on their own, and leave no route or account of their travels. Doubtlessly they botanised and amassed specimens and speculations, and were grave good Lowlanders on the unchancy fringes of the country of the more excitable Highlanders. More important, Dickson was one of the very few men who ever succeeded in breaking through the glassy armour of the solemn youth who companioned him. Somewhere and somehow on that expedition in the summer of the Highlands, Mungo opened his heart to brother-in-law James, and expressed his violent distaste for a general practitioner's life in Scotland.

Dickson's comments remain unchronicled. But he set about practical means to assist Mungo. At the Linnaean he had come in contact with Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society since 1778. Apart from being a botanist, and a man of a singularly volcanic temper, Banks had seen and experienced most of the strange things that a curious-minded man might see and experience in that age when the fringes of the world were still un-mapped. He had voyaged to Newfoundland, collecting plants. When Cook sailed round the world in 1768-71, Banks had outfitted a ship to accompany him. On that expedition he compiled his remarkable *Journal* and returned refreshed to cast his eyes

over the unbotanised Hebrides. Exploring these and Iceland the year after his return, he was the first to make Staffa and its wonders known to the world. . . . A remarkable and likable soul, and the ideal patron for Mungo, as Dickson saw ; accordingly, he set about arranging a meeting.

Mungo came to London. From the beginning Banks had a compassionate fondness for him, the slim handsome youth with the dark face and flaming hair, the polite manner and the occasional twinge of nervousness. The older man questioned the younger and found him singularly difficult to help : he was either too shy or too uncertain. Banks gave up the matter in some puzzlement, and Mungo, unemployed, retired to Selkirk and the household which had dimly backgrounded his student years.

His father and mother were both ageing hardy, Yarrow looking a smaller and meaner stream. His schoolmaster seemed shrunken greatly when Mungo tramped into the town to see him. These were unhappy months in his life. His parents shook their heads over him—not even a stickit minister, but a stickit doctor, goodsakes ! He fled often to the hills and the peace of them. Something was ready and waiting his conquest, but the road to it blinded in fog.

And no doubt he prayed for advice. Prayer, ceremonial prayer, was part of life's routine at Fowlshiels. The invocation to the Almighty to alter his immutable laws and interfere in an arbitrary manner with creation was a recognised spiritual exercise among the Parks : Mungo acceded to the

practice with a formal sincere devotion. The remarkable piety which was to sustain him in the wilds of the Niger country was even then developed to the full—remarkable in the sense that it seems as though Mungo himself knew it for what it was : a psychic exercise, refreshing and sustaining, quite apart from the fact that the Almighty might or might not pay it heed.

He was comely and an interesting young man. Women looked at him kindly at kirk and in street, the Edinburgh student, a doctor nearly. But Mungo paid them no heed. He had sublimated too many vagrant impulses between the sharny close of Fowlshiels and the Grammar School of Selkirk to unleash them on the subject of women : he waited for wider horizons to release him.

For he had a very passionate love for his mother—and this had set in a mould his whole love-life. Women were always mother-women to him. He was never, it seems, a lover, and in that was as characteristic of one great division of Scots as Burns was of another. He saw them as pitiful and kindly and very frail and shining people : he was a feminist without a philosophy and before feminism ; and it is one of the loveliest traits in the close dark heart so rigidly constrained behind the genteel blue coat with brass buttons.

Suddenly he received a message from London that Sir Joseph Banks had found him a position as assistant-surgeon on the *Worcester*, an East Indiaman, about to sail for Bencoolen in Sumatra.

4 He was twenty-one years of age, tall, broad-chested, muscular, with the solid frame of the Scots peasant redeemed of its usual squatness by his height. The brow and chin were model features, the eyes had a certain closeness. He had a fine Greek nose and his hair had a downy youthful wave.

He was very young. Boarding the *Worcester*, he felt himself authentically launched on the adventure of life. He might have written verse about it or sung songs or disported himself in a like kindly manner but for the fact of Fowlshiels. So instead he sat down and wrote a letter to Anderson in Selkirk :

‘ I have now got upon the first step of the stair of ambition. . . . The melancholy, who complain of the shortness of human life, and the voluptuous, who think the present only their own, strive to fill up every moment with sensual enjoyment : but the man whose soul has been enlightened by his Creator, and enabled, though dimly, to discern the wonders of salvation, will look upon the joys and afflictions of this life as equally the tokens of Divine love. He will walk through the world as one travelling to a better country, looking forward with wonder to the author and finisher of his faith.’

Perhaps teasing Ailie would read that and be impressed.

Again, just before the *Worcester* sailed :

‘ I wish you may be able to look upon the day of your departure with the same resignation that I do on mine. . . .

May I rather see the green sod on your grave than see you anything but a Christian.'

It is almost the most appalling example in letters of the humorless piety of adolescence. But Anderson, that genial soul, seems to have remained uninfuriated. Perhaps he realised that the letter was Mungo's reaction to the sudden realisation of the straying delights and tenebrous terrors of the world faced alone. So he was lifting his voice in protest, protesting and protesting, his heart singing within him as he traced the route to far Bencoolen. He was not merely an insufferable young prig : he was a boy trying hard to be grown up in the only fashion he knew how.

Dr. Anderson rode to Fowlshiels and showed the letters to the Parks. They were greatly impressed.

Mungo sailed. He sails out of his own biography for the space of nearly a year. The ship wandered round Africa in the easy-going sailing of those days, dawdled across the glassy North Pacific, put in at Bencoolen, and drowsed there, gathering its cargo. We catch a glimpse of Mungo, botanising on land—it is possible that he botanised a considerable distance up into the interior and stared at the Sumatran mountains and wondered what was beyond. And he dredged the shore waters and studied the fish, and drew up a paper for the Transactions of the Linnaean Society describing eight new and hitherto unchristened fishes. He was happy, though the mountains vexed his horizon. He had no vision of that destiny that was being prepared for him with the death of Houghton in Moorish Ludamar.

5 That blank in Mungo's biography the chronicler fills in with an outline of the Niger's. The rumour of the Great River beyond the Great Desert had haunted the fringes of Mediterranean history for over two thousand years. It was the second great mysterious river of the ancient world, the primal Nile taking first place. Civilisation arose, an accident from an accidental starting-point, on the banks of the Nile and from there spread abroad the antique world of the Golden Age hunters, carrying agriculture, the first social classes, the first kings and the first gods to many races of men, lifting them to economic security and debasing their minds and hearts in the ritual of kingship and temple. It spread abroad Asia and Europe and far to America : more slowly it seeped south into the dark continent where it arose. Even at the present day there are little lost tribes in the heart of Africa that still live the life of happy primal innocence which all our fathers led ere corn and the gods, Pandora's gifts, were let loose on the world.

The Mediterranean lands grew histories. Kings rose and dominated and founded dynasties. Sailors sailed the seas for Givers of Life, gold and pearls. Travellers penetrated down through the fertile North African fringe and gazed at the great barrier of the Sahara. What lay beyond ?

There were many guesses and many tales. There the world ended, a burning waste where the phoenix and the salamander alone disturbed the bright play of the sunshine on the glistening sands. There was the world's end. But presently these tales failed to satisfy. From Punt the Pharaohs sent westwards expeditions into the lands of the blacks, carrying to the forest folk the secrets of planting and reaping, the institution of kingship, the practice of slave-raiding. It is possible that those late dynastic Egyptians even reached Lake Chad, penetrated beyond that and looked upon the rolling majesty of a river that rivalled the Nile, flowing through the jungles broad and majestic, without boat or skiff on its placid waters. But their tale almost perished with them. They had but the vaguest notion of this Great River's location.

But in 600 B.C. the Carthaginians circumnavigated Africa in the service of King Necho. Beyond the Great Sands was a mighty land that waved its jungles down to the seashore, that kindled its fires at night along the shores and was filled with strange beasts and men and plants. Civilisation had penetrated far into Africa by then. By another hundred and fifty years, when Hanno, that first of the true explorers, reached as far south as Sierra Leone, the natives were in organised tribes, no doubt mutually hostile. They demonstrated from the shore their marked lack of affection for the Carthaginians. Hanno captured a couple of gorillas, had them skinned, and turned back.

With the murder of Carthage by Rome the great sea-voyagings round Africa ceased. The Romans drew North Africa under their power. They had little taste for the sea, but much for more and new land. They sent great expeditions into the Sahara. Most of them never returned, and were doubtless whelmed in the sands. But some, perhaps, actually penetrated to the Upper Niger and founded small kingships there, till time and the blacks wiped traces of them from the face of the country. Herodotus had heard of the Great River, crocodile-laden, 'dividing Africa as the Danube does Europe'. But he thought it flowed from the Nile westwards. In Pliny's time it is possible that a Roman expedition actually penetrated to the Niger, surveyed it, and returned to the Province of Africa. But the whole incident is wrapped in a mist of doubt.

In the ninth century of the Christian era the Southern Sahara began to feel the effects of the Islamic invasion of North Africa. Mixed drifts of Libyan-Berber-Arabs crossed the great desert and came in contact with the barbaric negro tribes on the upper waters of the Niger. Wars raged unendingly; the negro displayed as resolute a power to resist political subjection as a high ability to absorb cultural elements. Little states of half-breeds came into being, flourished a while, and were smothered in great tribal swayings to and fro. To European eyes, ironically, those centuries of war and heroism, oppression and hope, are no more than Chesterton's 'small, dark, cloud, where the tortured

trumpets scream aloud and the dense arrows drive '.

But presently, on the middle Niger, there arose to being two great negro kingdoms, Songhay and Bornu. Each had under its control territory to the extent of a million and a half square miles. Their kings were great potentates : there was a great Black civilisation long ere there was a great European. The Niger drained it—still mysteriously.

For Ibn Mohammed al Idrisi's map, published in 1153, showed the Niger rising in the Nile and flowing thence across Africa into the Atlantic. Ibn Batuta, who visited Timbuctoo in 1353 and voyaged down the Niger to Songhay—decaying Songhay—, knew the falsity of the Nile for the rising point of the Great River. But he also was unsure of where it reached the haven of ocean—if reach it it did. Perhaps it was lost in the ' sands of the interior '.

Though they make no mention of the fact, it is obvious that to these Arab geographers the puzzle of the river was the direction in which, a full-flowing stream, it ultimately flowed. Four hundred years after Ibn Batuta, determination of that flow of the Niger was to crown as the pinnacle of his achievements the person of a tall young man tramping shoeless, ragged and alone down the jungle to its banks.

In the early fifteenth century the Portuguese commenced to plant trading-stations—slave and gold trading-stations—up and down the West African coast, coming in the process on the mouths of the Senegal and the Gambia, great and authentic

drains of inner Africa. The rumour of the Niger was known to Europe, and for a time it was assumed that the Gambia was that river under a different name, and that far on its upper waters stood Timbuctoo the mysterious, the African El Dorado, its gold roofs shining under the blaze of the tropic sunshine, its hundred palaces lifting their airy pinnacles against the blue of desert and jungle. Like Manoa, like Lhasa, it was the focus of much romantic talk and writing for several hundred years.

By the early seventeenth century the decline of Portuguese power on the West Coast had set in. In 1618 the English African Company was formed to trade with the abandoned coast. The English had known this coast since the days of the Elizabethan pirates, who would raid it for slaves in the intervals of raiding Spanish America for gold and acquiring immunity for their nauseous butcherings and cruelties under that happy cloak, patriotism. (Their activities may be said to have first coined for that word its reputation as the last refuge of scoundrelism.) The African Company was in the tradition. It was genteelly patriotic as it flogged the slave-gangs up the gangways of its ships and exchanged bad rum and calico for gold dust and human merchandise with the black headman of the coast. Stations were established at Cape Coast Castle and Fort James on the Gambia, and to these centres trailed down the negro slave caravans from that mysterious interior of which the traders heard in wild rumour.

But two years after the founding of the Company

Richard Jobson's expedition sailed up the Gambia as far as Tenda, and as definitely put an end to one rumour as it confirmed another. The Gambia was not the Niger. But Timbuctoo was a reality—so Jobson's informants swore—'with roofs covered with gold'.

The French came trading to the West Coast as well—all those lands that now belong to them—and early concentrated on the Senegal, founding stations far up its course which changes in trade and the times would leave to long periods of abandonment and then see revived to fresh activity. Rumours of the Niger came to them also, contradictory as always, giving its risings and settings in every point of the compass. But the main drift of rumour roused it on its long journey from an inland lake, and sent it flowing west to the Atlantic.

Yet down the West Coast no great river emerged except the Congo. Could the Congo be the Niger under a fresh name?

6 To men in the days when Mungo rode the rounds of Anderson's patients in Selkirk the lie and flow of the Niger were still as debatable as the meaning and origin of the Martian canals are to us. Now it is a far-off tale, this tracing of the Niger's course, and only the human incidents of accident and encounter in the tales of the explorers preserve any interest. We know now that the main stream of the Joliba in that far day, as now, rose in the Liberian mountains less than 150 miles from the West African coast. Instead of flowing towards the sea, it streamed towards the interior of Africa, gathering waters from innumerable tributaries, and passing through a multitude of countries ruled by negro kinglets till beyond Segou, the capital of Bambarra, it diffused itself into a vast sweep of interlocking lakes and swamps subject to annual inundation. Below Timbuctoo (no river-port, but inland) it gathered itself together again, and, swollen with the waters of a new tributary, the Bani, flowed south-east as the Kwara, passing through the disrupted kingdom of Songhay and so through the Benin lands of cannibals and exquisite wood-carvers till it finally completed its 2,600 miles journey by emerging on the Atlantic, seeping through a vast delta of 120 miles into the Gulf of Guinea. Well down the river where it became the Kwara stood a town with

the name of Boussa—a name that still for the student of exploration has the flavour of old tragedy.

None of these facts were known to the English African Association formed in 1788 under the impetus of the indefatigable Sir Joseph Banks. Sir Joseph wanted the Niger explored and the troublesome matter of its final end cleared up once and for all. Lord Rawdon, the Bishop of Llandaff and Messrs. Beaufoy and Stewart he co-opted as fellow foundation-members. All were men of standing, all were classical students who had read Herodotus. The Bishop was an Abolitionist, but otherwise a gentleman. The objects of the expedition were defined, unnecessarily, ‘ as the encouragement of the scientific exploration of Africa ’.

Within five years of its foundation the Association had despatched three explorers into Africa in pursuit of the Niger. The first, Ledyard, an American marine, had some idea of tackling the problem from Libya. But he died in Cairo ere his mission was well begun. Lucas, the second man selected, had once been a slave in Morocco. He proposed to travel to the Niger country across the Sahara, and actually set out on that mission from Tripoli. But, after five days travel, he turned back his caravan, having come into collision with ‘ revolting Arabs ’ (he referred to their political activities). The next selection of the Association was Major Houghton, fort-major at Goree, where the great French aerodrome is now built, a man of singular courage and address, in the phrase of the time, and well acquainted with Arabic.

Houghton's venture progressed further than that of either Ledyard or Lucas. With assistance and co-operation from a white slaver on the Gambia, one Dr. Laidley of Pisania, Houghton passed through the negro 'kingdoms' of Woolli, Kasson, and Kaarta. Beyond Kaarta was Ludamar, a 'kingdom' of half-breed Arabs—'Moors' as they were dubbed in the nomenclature of the times. Jarra was the border town and Houghton wrote from there his last and characteristic letter to Laidley five hundred miles away :

'Major Houghton's compliments to Dr. Laidley ; is in good health, on his way to Timbuctoo ; robbed of all his goods by Kend Bular's son.'

With this last cryptic message, Houghton disappeared into Ludamar, was again robbed, crawled on his hands and knees to a Moorish village, was there refused food, and either allowed to starve to death or knocked on the head and his body dragged into the woods.

News of the catastrophe filtered down to the coast with the slave caravans, and Laidley sent it on to the African Association in London. The third venture had not been lucky. Banks and the others looked about for someone to take the place of the unfortunate Houghton. A young and unemployed Scotsman, lately returned from a voyage to Bencoolen in Sumatra, and living with his brother-in-law in London, was recalled to Sir Joseph's mind as a suitable person. Why yes, he remembered Mr. Park. If Mr. Park would apply with due form—

Mungo leapt at the opportunity. It seemed that all his life he had been waiting for this to happen, or at least all the uneasy months since his return from Bencoolen. 'I had a passionate desire to examine into the productions of a country so little known, and to become experimentally acquainted with the modes of life and character of the natives.' In this arid phrase he disguises his excitement.

He was accepted by the Association and told to prepare for a speedy departure to Africa. He went home to Scotland and looked in at Fowlshiels. The elder Parks heard him and bade him a shyly sardonic godspeed. He walked into Selkirk to see Anderson and noted how Ailie was now a woman, though still so gay and hoydenish. But her eyes widened with admiration when she heard of his mission.

Then he bade them goodbye and went south, through the English spring, to Portsmouth, through a soft land burgeoning green and sweet under the fall of rain. Lost and naked a year later in the tropical jungles he was to take that picture from his mind and look at it often and long.

7 His instructions had sufficient latitude and clarity. On landing in Africa, he was directed to 'pass on to the River Niger, either by the way of Bambouk, or by such other route as should be found most convenient. That I should ascertain the course, and, if possible, the rise and termination of that river. That I should use my utmost exertions to visit the principal towns or cities in its neighbourhood, particularly Timbuctoo and Houssa; and that I should be afterwards at liberty to return to Europe, either by the way of the Gambia, or by such other route as, under all the then existing circumstances of my situation and prospects, should appear to me most advisable.'

Cool and collected though he was, the dark young man in blue coat with brass buttons, with beaver tile respectworthily poised on his head, it is unlikely he was visited by any forward vision of those circumstances in which he would turn to regain Europe. All that was hid in a quivering haze, a dry haze through which shone the sultry lands, and, winding tenebrous, the Lost River of the Negro continent. Both fulfilment of Yarrow and freedom from Fowlshiels was awaiting him there at the end of the voyage of the brig *Endeavour*.

The *Endeavour* traded with Gambia in beeswax and ivory, was skippered by a Richard Wyatt, and

bore Mungo as its solitary passenger when it sailed from Portsmouth on the 22nd of May, 1795. Mungo had letters of introduction to Dr. John Laidley, that gentlemanly slaver and merchant on the Gambia banks who had befriended Houghton, a letter of credit for £200, an umbrella, a pocket sextant, a thermometer, and a few changes of linen. It would be interesting to know, behind the polite phrasings of his chronicle, his opinion on the adequacy of the £200. Concerning the rest of his equipment, however, he had no doubts at all. He was especially fond of the umbrella.

‘On the 4th of June we saw the mountains over Mogadore.’ Evidently he saw them rise in poetry as well as in fact, and stared with a quickening of blood at that first glimpse of the mysterious continent. Then the peaks closed away in the sunhaze while the *Endeavour* coasted down the African shore for another seventeen days. They were days wearying enough in the smell of the hot seas and creaming surf and the dim company of Captain Richard Wyatt, that respectable man. But the cool and diplomatic Mungo officially records the voyage as a pleasant one of thirty days. Probably he removed the beaver tile and sighed with satisfaction, nevertheless, as one morning they warped their way into Jillifree, a town on the northern bank of the River Gambia, and opposite to James’s Island, an early port of the English.

Wyatt had put into Jillifree to trade ; and here it was that Mungo first looked upon the negro at home

and in authority. Jillifree lay in the 'kingdom' of Barra, and the Emir of that indefinite territory laid a duty of £20 or so on every vessel that sought his harbours. Chattering, grinning wide-lipped, and quite disregardful of the cool observant gaze of Mungo, the servants of the chief magistrate of Jillifree—*el caid*, or 'the Alkaid' as Mungo somewhat stutteringly dubs him—swarmed on board the *Endeavour*. Maize, cotton cloth, elephants' teeth and gold dust Mungo saw or heard were brought down the rivers to Jillifree to trade with Europeans. It was a thriving and busy place, with a seemly hustle of which Mungo approved.

He does not tell us if he landed there, but that is the probability, making notes and edging a cautious courteous way through the bazaars, considering the shape of the natives' skulls, the tonation of their voices, the appearance of their earrings, and their habits in coition. Such of these observations as were seemly and exploratory Mungo committed to paper, regained the *Endeavour*, took to the smell and cockroaches of his bunk (but probably noted neither), and on the 23rd saw Jillifree hull-down to the north.

They passed up the river to the southern side and so up a creek which can still be identified, bright with rotting mangroves, to the town of Vintain. Vintain was the chief trading station for Europeans, and an important port of call for Captain Richard Wyatt, in search of beeswax.

Here, disregarding the town, its buildings, appear-

ance, and extent, Mungo made researches into the origin of the beeswax. So doing, he discovered two nations in occupation of the territory around Vintain, and, indeed, much beyond Vintain. Of these, the collectors of beeswax were the Feloops, 'a wild and unsociable race'. They were, indeed, the hinterlands negroes, still largely untouched by Arab culture or civilisation. They lived in villages remote in the forest, collecting beeswax, growing cotton, and carrying on the ancient life of the archaic civilisation, diversified in its solemnities by copious draughts of mead. Mungo records that they collected honey and made mead 'much as in Great Britain'. Immersed in these pursuits and refreshments, the Feloops generally employed members of the second nation in the district to act as traders. These were the Mandingoes, concerning whom we shall again meet Mungo discoursing.

Three days' residence in Vintain completed Captain Wyatt's business, and the *Endeavour* was sailed or warped down the hot creek into the brown flow of the Gambia. Then they held up the river, flowing deep and muddy, with the slime and shine of the mangroves on the distant banks, and much toil and exertion in these windless reaches. Beyond the jungle bush showed up great stretches of malarial swamp. Mungo inspected the Gambia fish, and found no species at all known to Europe. He records that sharks were very plentiful at the mouth of the river. Upstream, amid the mangrove reaches, showed the saw-like toothed jaws of croco-

diles, which Mungo called alligators. He was far from the kindly fauna of Fowlshiels.

The dense and swampy country unfurled slowly, day on day, in an intensifying heat and stench. But at last, six days after leaving Vintain, they reached up-river to Jonkakonda, where the *Endeavour* was to carry out the main part of her lading.

This was Mungo's port of disembarkment. Captain Wyatt despatched a messenger to Dr. Laidley informing him of the presence of the composed young traveller. Laidley lived at the village of Pisania, six miles up-river. He lost no time in descending to Jonkakonda to welcome Mungo. They liked each other at once. It was no season for commencing the journey into the interior, and Laidley invited Mungo to spend the intervening time at his house in Pisania.

So at daybreak on the 5th of July the young Scotsman set out with a guide on the first lap of his journey into the interior of Africa. Riding for sixteen miles, he came to Pisania, where Laidley and two others, of the name of Ainslie, had set up a trading post. Their trade was largely in slaves, of whom they retained large gangs as personal servants. But the main part of the river commerce in ivory and gold was also in their hands ; in spite of the fact, Mungo assures us, apparently without intentional quibble, that ' they were highly esteemed and respected by the natives *at large* '.

8 Settled in Laidley's house, Mungo set about learning Mandingo, the *lingua franca* of the country, and acquiring all relevant and irrelevant knowledge possible of the lands through which he must travel. Laidley helped greatly in this ; so (the beginning of that suspicious association with slavery which was afterwards to reflect seriously on Mungo's impeccable character) did the slatis, negro merchants who traded chiefly in slaves. They were mostly liars or unreliable, those slatis, and Mungo appears to have summed them up with as cool a patience as he did the rest of the fauna and flora of the remarkable country on the edge of which he sat in survey. For more than three weeks he kept at study of the language and study of the natives, study of the country, its products and appearance, and piled up careful notes on all five subjects.

Only a few of these carry interest to this day. Feloops and Mandingoes we have already met. Further study of the former acquainted Mungo with their gloomy and reserved disposition, their love of feuds, and their fondness for mead intoxication. But these unpraiseworthy characteristics were in some degree counterbalanced by qualities of gratitude and trustworthiness. Also, they were fond of the English, as Mungo notes with a bland approval, and had on various occasions taken up arms in

defence of English ships against French privateers. The picture of the grateful negro defending the grateful slaver against the latter's enemies presented itself to Mungo without any humour at all. Instead, he was moved to wish that 'the minds of a people so determined and faithful, could be softened and civilised by the mild and benevolent spirit of Christianity!' The mark of ejaculation seems warranted.

The Jaloffs (he heard) lived inland, between the Senegal River and the Mandingo states on the Gambia—a warlike people who appear to have had a considerable admixture of Arab blood. They were divided into a number of states and tribes, at constant feud. In the intervals of feuding, the Jaloffs manufactured a 'very fine cotton cloth'.

Verging on Gambia territory were also the Foulahs, more Arab even than the Jaloffs, a pastoral people without definite and distinct social organisation, apart from those imposed by the inhabitants of the alien states into which they had gradually penetrated, coming from the interior with their flocks and herds.

But the most powerful and numerous of all the negroid racial groupings, Mungo gathered, was the Mandingo. They came from an interior country, Manding, and had established a number of 'kingdoms' in the Gambia hinterland. Like the other tribes, they had been permeated by Arab influences; the chief magistrate in each town was *el caid*, which is good Arabic; the courts were called *palavers*,

which is mutilated Portuguese. Superimposed upon the ancient negro tribal customs we catch sight of a grotesque admixture of Mohammedan law and European ethic. With these had come an exceeding fondness for litigation, and Mungo discovered them fully equipped with professional advocates (‘ what I little expected to find in Africa ’). Nevertheless, they were in general a ‘ mild, sociable, and pleasing people ’. Mungo was to have much to do with these Mandingoes in subsequent days.

For clothes, the majority of the inhabitants, of all tribes, wore a loose frock and drawers, with sandals on their feet and white caps on their heads. The women wore elaborate loin-cloths ; to which they added a further loose piece of cloth, draped negligently around the shoulders. They undraped it, no doubt, with a like negligence.

Around Pisania, and far into the interior, the proportion of free to unfree was about one to three. Three-fourths of the inhabitants were slaves cultivating the land and herding the cattle. Nevertheless, they had certain privileges, these domestic slaves. They could not be sold to fresh masters without consent of the entire village. Nor could they be wantonly slain. In both of these matters, as Mungo was to find, their condition differed materially from that of the unfortunate enslaved who came from the interior—captives of war and the like driven down to the coast for export in the ships of the white traders.

The country stretched up the shores of the river,

through the boundaries of many indeterminate states, a flat hot land, presenting in general a tiresome and gloomy uniformity to the eye. Nevertheless, it was rich and fertile, as the cultivated patches showed. Maize and rice were the principal crops raised ; cotton and indigo were also grown, for home use and export. Mungo was intrigued to find among the states a commodity of commerce known as shea-butter. It was a kind of margarine, extracted from the kernel of a nut ‘ and an admirable substitute for butter ’. Salt was traded inland, as always in Africa, the interior a salt-hungry land.

Such was the painted backcloth to the stage awaiting its hero.

9 It had yet to await him a while. Mungo, meticulously note-taking amid the sour heat and sourer mosquitoes, was congratulating himself that he had escaped the fever which generally attacked newcomers to the Gambia. But his immunity was only temporary. On the 31st of July he went out to observe an eclipse of the moon ; next day he was down with fever, and passed into delirium.

For nearly a month he lay in this condition ; hot and stifling the days in the Pisania hut, with little to read and few to speak to, for Laidley appears to have been gone here and there on various commercial concerns, and the Ainslies were busied with their own affairs. Probably they thought of Mungo as an interfering amateur, and his cold, chill manner repulsed them.

He lay in bed and longed for recovery and the interior.

By the first week in September sufficient strength had returned for him to emerge from the hut and take short walks in and around Pisania. His hunger for knowledge of everything on the fringes of the land of his exploration was again moving him to activity. It moved him too soon. On the 10th he rambled too far under the midday sun, and returned home swaying in an apparent condition that would certainly have been misinterpreted in

Selkirk. It was fever again ; fortunately, this was a mild attack. He lay in his hut and listened to the torrential drumming of water on the roof.

The rains had come and through the windows and door he could see the blinding fall and pelt for tedious hour on hour. Sometimes it would slacken off, dry, and the heat would grow stifling till the day waned into night and the chorusing voices of Africa kept Mungo from much-needed sleep—the laughter of hyenas and the whining of jackals ; and, booming loud and staccato above all else, the calling of the bull-frogs. Then the thunder would growl again above the dripping bush and muddy-watered Gambia, and the rains resume in the stifling dark of the nights.

Gambia flowed slow and brown with detritus, and the plants and weeds around Pisania flourished in a rank luxuriance. Mungo has little to tell of the hours of boredom and weariness that were surely his, even though Laidley had by now returned and had taken to nursing the invalid and beguiling some of the wearier hours with tales and information.

September swam past in a mist of hot rains, and still Mungo remained in bed, wasted considerably, and weakened. But his constitution was also being thoroughly inoculated against the mischances of the future. Gambia waters rose and rose. At last, a month or so after Mungo had taken to his bed the second time, they reached high-water mark—fifteen feet above the high-water mark of the tide. Thereafter they commenced to sink. Mungo heard

through nights and days the gurgle of the receding waters as the rains cleared from the land, and the voices of the frogs grew muted in distance as their pools dried up. With that double departure his own strength returned. He burned it alive in himself, anxious to have finished with this prelude.

It was the season for travelling. Harvests would be in, the natives cheerful and well fed and unobstreperous, provisions cheap and plentiful. No caravan for the interior was yet ready to set out, but Mungo was impatient to be gone, and coldly suspicious of the character of the slatis who controlled such caravans. So he resolved to wait no longer, but to depart unprotected, on his mission in quest of the elusive Great River of legend.

10 It was the 2nd of December, 1795, when Mungo left Pisania, and turned the head of his horse along the banks of the Gambia. This animal, small, spirited, and much to be travailed, Mungo had purchased for the sum of £7 10s. od.—half the price of a slave. Behind him there rode on ass-back or truded on bare feet a small caravan of six attendants and companions.

Of the latter, two were free negroes—Madiboo, travelling to Bambarra, and Tami, a native of Kasson, a blacksmith returning to his home after four years of employment in the coastal lands. Both were Mohammedans, both were to prove very trustworthy and likable friends of Mungo. However they regarded him at first, in the hot tracks and the dangers of the following nights these two succeeded in penetrating the icy reserve that cased about the young white, and, whatever else they found below it, found little or nothing of white snobbery or white disgust. The two other companions were slatis, slave-merchants travelling into the interior as far as Bondou. Mungo accepted them with the same cold and friendly interest as he accepted all else.

Besides companions he had two negro servants, procured him by Laidley. One, Johnson, a freed-man who had been a slave in Jamaica, was hired for the sum of a £1 a month, to be paid to him on

the journey, and a further ten shillings a month, to be paid to his wife during his absence. Johnson was to prove a bending reed. Of quite other quality was the slave Demba, the Sancho Panza to Mungo's Quixote, loaned by Laidley and promised his freedom on Mungo's return to the coast, if the latter should give a good account of his services. Mungo had purchased two asses for the use of the two blacks.

'Thus I had no less than six attendants, all of whom had been taught to regard me with great respect, and to consider that their safe return hereafter, to the countries on the Gambia, would depend on my preservation.'

Thus Mungo. But it is difficult to conceive how either the slatis or Madiboo and Tami had need to worry greatly over his preservation. The two latter, at least, had no intention of returning to the coast. This extract may be regarded as little more than writer's patter, the while Mungo draws breath, mounted, pale-faced, tall, in blue coat and nankeen trousers, and prepares to ride out on his mission. He took with him, he tells, provisions for only two days, some beads and tobacco with which to purchase a further supply, some changes of linen, an umbrella, the sextant, two compasses, and a thermometer. His arms, carried by himself and his blacks, were two fowling-pieces and two pistols.

Laidley and the Ainslies, with some of their negroes, rode with him through the first two days. Laidley was apparently of the opinion that he would

never see Mungo again. Probably the Ainslies felt the same, and all accompanied the traveller in a kind of compassionate curiosity. The forest tracks opened up, the sun beat down, and presently Pisania, with its memoried rains and sounds and smells, disappeared in the rear.

Somewhere in the afternoon they reached the village of Jindey, on the Walli Creek, a branch of the Gambia, and the Ainslies and Laidley took Mungo to the house of a negress who had once been the mistress of a white trader. This had raised her status considerably in the eyes of her fellow-natives—a status which Mungo would have us believe his arrival confirmed. He tells us no more of the lady than that she was known as the *Seniora* : he had little interest in the relicts of departed traders. Evening came and the four white men strolled out in the cool to an adjoining village, the property of a hospitable slaver whose barbarous name Mungo transliterates as Jemaffoo Mamadoo. Jemaffoo had a bullock killed in honour of their arrival ; and while, in Mungo's phrase, the ' beef was preparing ', Jemaffoo and his guests exchanged smoking-room stories. The least indecorous of these diverted Mungo considerably :

' Many years ago (said the relator) the people of Doomasansa (a town on the Gambia) were much annoyed by a lion that came every night and took away some of their cattle. By continuing his depredations, the people were at length so much enraged that a party of them resolved to go and hunt the

monster. They accordingly proceeded in search of the common enemy, which they found concealed in a thicket ; and immediately firing at him were lucky enough to wound him in such a manner, that, in springing from the thicket towards the people, he fell down among the grass and was unable to rise. The animal, however, manifested such appearance of vigour, that nobody cared to approach him singly ; and a consultation was held concerning the properest means of taking him alive ; a circumstance, it was said, which, while it furnished undeniable proof of their prowess, would turn out to great advantage, it being resolved to convey him to the coast and sell him to the Europeans. While some persons proposed one plan, and some another, an old man offered a scheme. This was, to strip the roof of a house of its thatch, and to carry the bamboo frame (the pieces of which are well secured together by thongs), and throw it over the lion. If, in approaching him, he should attempt to spring upon them, they had nothing to do but to let down the roof upon themselves, and fire at the lion through the rafters.

‘ This proposition was approved and adopted. The thatch was taken from the roof of a hut, and the lion-hunters, supporting the fabric, marched courageously to the field of battle, each person carrying a gun in one hand, and bearing his share of the roof on the opposite shoulder. In this manner they approached the enemy ; but the beast had by this time recovered his strength ; and such was the

fierceness of his countenance, that the hunters, instead of proceeding any further, thought it prudent to provide for their own safety by covering themselves with the roof. Unfortunately, the lion was too nimble for them ; for, making a spring while the roof was setting down, both the beast and the pursuers were caught in the same cage, and the lion devoured them at his leisure, to the great astonishment and mortification of the people of Doomasansa ; at which place it is dangerous even at this day to tell the story, for it is become the subject of laughter and derision in the neighbouring countries, and nothing will enrage the inhabitants of that town so much as desiring them to catch a lion alive.’

The tale of these Gambian Wise Men of Gotham preceded the feast on the newly-slaughtered bullock. Then the four went back through the paths and the raucous silences of the African night to Jindey and the house of the trader’s relict. It was the last night that Mungo was to spend in the company of white men for nearly two years.

For, after noon on the following day, the 3rd of December, Laidley and the Ainslies drew rein and bade Mungo goodbye. He responded with his usual serene decorum, waved them a dignified farewell, and then, with his six attendants at his heels, turned and rode slowly down a forest track into the dark obscurities of trey Africa.

I Here a mood of despondency came upon him, and for a little while, riding, he thought with a sinking heart of the lights and comforts and seemliness of Christian society. He might never see it again, but vanish amidst these dark kingdoms as had Houghton and many another. The mysteries that had drawn him from Scotland looked bleak and unfriendly a while, as he reflected that a white man in the interior was merely ' the object of curiosity or plunder '.

But he probably gave little sign of his feelings, and the mood passed. About three miles on from his parting with the white slavers a body of native militia suddenly appeared, blocking the forest track and halting the small caravan.

They were now in the ' kingdom ' of Walli and these were its customs officials. They informed the caravan that they must either accompany them to Peckaba, the capital, to present themselves to the king of Walli, or pay customs dues on the spot. Mungo pointed out, in Mandingo, and with a cold reasonableness, that as his journey was not one of traffic or commerce, there was no excuse for levying a tax upon him as was done on slatis and such-like merchants. Customs was unimpressed. Rapidly sophisticated as the natives were becoming in this region, they had not yet attained to appreciation of

such niceties in Scots law. They blandly retorted that it was usual for travellers of all descriptions to make presents to the king ; and added as an afterthought that without making such a present Mungo would not be allowed to proceed. Mungo surveyed them coolly, saw that they were in too great numbers to be beaten off, ' and withal very noisy '. He accordingly handed over eight shillings-worth of tobacco, for the king's use, and the border guard waved him on.

At sunset they reached a village near the town of Kootacunda. Here they lay for the night in peace. Next morning Mungo assembled his caravan and pushed east. In the forenoon they passed Kootacunda and so came to the Walli-Woolli border. But again, in these borderlands of fantastic nursery nomenclature, there were customs dues to be paid. They were then allowed to cross from inhospitable Walli, and rested for the night at the village of Tabajang.

Woolli was another Mandingo state, and here, as elsewhere, the Mandingoes Mungo found divided into two social classes, the free and the unfree, and two religions, the Mohammedan and the followers of the native cults. Religions and social grades were not, however, synonymous, for Mungo gathered that the ' king ' of Woolli was a pagan.

Mungo rested well and undisturbed in spite of the clang of Tabajang's name. Probably it was here that he first met and ate the succulent kouskous. Morning came, and Johnson and Demba assembled

Mungo's effects for the next lap of the march. This was Medina, the capital of Woolli.

They reached it at noon on the 5th of December, this town of Arab nomenclature, the most considerable native city on which Mungo had set eyes. He rode through a gate in its high clay wall and saw a city of some eight hundred or a thousand houses, some clay-built, some of reeds. The wall and fence had once been imposing structures before the housewives of Medina were let loose on them: they plucked the stakes for firewood, records Mungo. Riding to Medina, he found the country rising about him into gentle acclivities, a sunshine land, with wooded hills and villaged valleys. Cotton and tobacco patches showed bright through the greenery with their ant-like gangs of slaves at work; the hill-sides were green with maize. It was a peaceful and fertile country, and Mungo, reaching Medina peacefully, set down his careful notes on it after obtaining a lodging in the hut of a near relation of the king.

Refreshed, he set out in the afternoon to pay his respects to the dusky king Jatta, having first been informed by the king's relation that he must on no account offer to shake hands with the king. Primed on this fine point in Woolli etiquette, Mungo appears to have made no *faux pas*, coming into the presence of Jatta squatting on a mat in front of his door. Around was his court. It appears to have been a moment of relaxation. The courtiers were singing and clapping their hands. Mungo, not misinterpreting this for applause, made a formal salute and,

with the same attitude of respect as he would have carried before a Selkirk magistrate, informed the king of his purpose in entering the country and his desire to pass through it.

King Jatta was an old and kindly man who had assisted Houghton and appears to have looked on white men with considerable favour. He told the young traveller in the blue coat that he had full permission to pass through Woolli ; and added the gracious information that he would pray for the traveller's safety. Mungo records his graciousness without apparent reserve. He was a king and gracious ; that he was also a negro and a savage did not confuse these facts in the mind of the genteel young Scot. Hearing of the king's promised prayer, one of Mungo's attendants, probably Demba, burst into a song—some kind of hymn, Mungo gathered, for at every pause king and courtiers beat their foreheads with their hands and cried *Amen* !

These necessary preliminaries satisfactorily concluded by both Mungo and the blacks, Jatta and Mungo entered into matters of business. A guide was promised the latter through the remainder of Woolli ; and Mungo, returning to his lodging, diplomatically despatched to the king an order on Dr. Laidley for three gallons of rum. Plus the guide, this order evoked from the benevolent ruler of Medina a quantity of provisions for Mungo's caravan. It was a pleasant city and a pleasant ruler : only once was Mungo to look upon his like again.

Here white men were not unfamiliar phenomena. But it would be different when he had passed the borders of Woolli, as the old king took care to impress on Mungo when the latter went to the palace next morning to procure the promised guide. The black ruler was seated in front of his tent, on a bullock-hide, warming himself at a great fire lighted to drive off the chills of morning ; he had been ruminating the matter of the young man throughout the night, and on Mungo's arrival strongly and benevolently advised him to give up his intended journey. He remembered the passing of Major Houghton, he told, and how the fact was well known that the latter had been killed beyond the borders of Woolli. East of Woolli, no white man was safe.

Mungo listened politely and answered that it was impossible for him to turn back. Jatta shrugged and gave up the thankless task of advising the traveller, and told him the guide would be ready in the afternoon. There was a sad lack of efficient time-tables at Woolli.

Two o'clock brought the guide, however, and with some impatience Mungo again assembled his caravan, and passing through the housewife-despoiled fortifications of Medina, set out for Konjour, a small village still in the Woolli kingdom.

Konjour was reached at five o'clock. Here Mungo halted for the night and purchased a sheep. It was killed by Madiboo and Tami with all the ceremonies necessary for such an event, and Mungo,

deep in his notes, was presently aroused by the sound of an angry dispute. Johnson, his servant, and the other two blacks were quarrelling as to who should possess the sheep's horns. Mungo intervened and awarded one horn to Johnson, one to the negroes. This judgment of Solomon concluded, he turned back to his notes, recording that these horns were considered objects of considerable value. They were used as wallets or sheaths for carrying written Koranic prayers. Whether a black was a pagan or a Mohammedan, he considered such a prayer as an amulet of singular efficacy, guarding him against the bites of snakes, and even (though this must have been somewhat of a strain, upon even simple native faith) of alligators. Writing, as Mungo noted with young and characteristic shrewdness, is considered a magical attribute among the unlettered, the magic lying rather in the actual writing than in the purport of the words written. Remote in the east a time was waiting when he himself was to put the fact of this superstition to good account.

He was passing through a land and villages that about that time were producing some of the finest examples of native wood-sculpture. But Mungo mentions no specimens, which is curious in more ways than one, considering how careful he was to note each detail in ornament and furnishing. Probably these carvings seemed to him, as to many another, mere barbaric botchings of good wood.

For two days he marched deeper into the interior, and leaves us no more than notes of dates and halts.

On the night of the 7th he reached the village of Malla ; midday of the 8th he and his caravan arrived at noon at the town of Kolor. Kolor was to supply the English and several other European languages with a new term of opprobrium of inestimable value in the courtesies of political and theological controversy. This was Mumbo Jumbo. For outside Kolor Mungo gazed in considerable puzzlement upon a ' sort of masquerade habit ' made from the tree-bark, and hanging up empty awaiting further employment. Questioning his companions, he was told the uses and purposes of the suit. It was used by the unchivalrous Mandingo for keeping their consorts in good order and morale. Most Mandingoes of any pretence to social rank had more than one wife. Genteelly, Mungo observed that the ladies are bound frequently to disagree among themselves and disturb the peace of their lord, and, possibly, his bed. So the wily Mandingo had invented the ritual of Mumbo Jumbo in preference to the divorce court.

The outraged husband, or an agent, would hie himself off to the forest near his village or town, garb himself in the bark-ropes of Mumbo Jumbo, and wait till the fall of night. With the coming of dark the natives would hear a dismal howling rise from the depths of the trees. Then Mumbo Jumbo himself would be seen entering the town, and making for the town bentang. This was a large platform of interwoven canes built round the central tree of the village plaza, and used as the town hall and lounging-

place in general. Hearing Mumbo Jumbo's approach, the inhabitants would assemble in the half-darkness, men and women, the women being excused absence on few pretexts. Then a deal of solemn dancing and invocation would take place. There would also be singing, Mungo informs us, but refrains from mentioning the nature of the songs. Probably they were unprintable. Throughout this unauthentic jollification all the married women would wait uneasily, casting back their minds on such crimes of omission and commission as had marred the connubial harmony of late. Then, near midnight, Mumbo Jumbo would abandon preliminaries and get to business. This he did by indicating the offender he had come to chastise. Thereon the woman would be seized, stripped naked, tied to a post, and vigorously flogged by the Mumbo Jumbo. It was, in fact, a court of correction.

The unflogged women on each occasion, Mungo notes, seemed the most vociferous in their denunciations of the victim—a fact which might be paralleled in the psychology of all races. The flogging would last a considerable while till 'daylight puts an end to this indecent and unmanly revel'.

Next day they left Kolor and held by a waterless track through sparsely forested country to the village of Tambacunda. Still Mungo travelled unmolested and unhindered: the expedition was in good fortune. But he was still not far from the coast. Tambacunda is passed with no more than euphonious mention; on the 10th he slept at the town of

Kooniakary, on the 11th, near noon, he came to Koojar. This was the last large eastwards town of the kingdom of Woolli the hospitable. Two days' journey beyond were the beginnings of the kingdom of Bondou.

12 He was now on the verge of country untraversed by any European except the unfortunate Major Houghton. But Woollis's last town proved as hospitable as its first. The inhabitants stared at the tall young man, perspiring in blue coat and nankeen trousers, with a mixture of 'curiosity and reverence' and invited him to a wrestling match at the bentang tree. Here Mungo sat and witnessed the prowess displayed by various combatants who had anointed themselves with the native margarine, shea-butter, and grappled and clung and threw one another to the music of a drum. There succeeded a dance in which each dancer had his legs and arms decorated with little bells, a pleasing innovation. Mungo sat and enjoyed it all with that singular incapacity for surprise which was his. The flare of lights about the bentang, the tinkle of the bells, the posturing negroes, the heat, the smells and the hum of the insects are as missing from his account as is any picture of himself—alien and amazing, but unamazed, bending a dark, composed face into the sprayings of the torchlight to watch with a cool detachment the gesticulations and posturings.

The guide the king of Woollis had provided, far back in Medina, was now due to return to his home. Mungo presented him with some amber beads, and sought out new guides who would also be water-

carriers. For beyond Koojar, on the two days' journey to the borders of Bondou, was a waterless desert. Three elephant-hunters, having at the moment no elephants to hunt, offered their services. Mungo, somewhat imprudently, not only engaged them, but paid them in advance. Pleasantly composed by several draughts of very good beer, he retired for the night.

Next morning he encountered his first example of African perfidy. One of the elephant-hunters had absconded, pay and all. Mungo thereon commanded the other two to load their calabashes with water, and hastily summoned his caravan, and marched out from Koojar. He was determined not to allow these water-carriers out of his sight. Beyond Koojar his caravan halted Mungo, while a charm against the dangers of the wastes was prepared by the simple and economical means of each negro spitting upon a stone and then hurling the stone far down the track they were to take. Satisfied with this propitiation of the fussy forest devils, the caravan fell to the march again until noon. Here, in the waste land, they came to a large tree, called by the natives the *Neema Taba*, says Mungo. It was decorated with innumerable scraps of cloth, tied on by travellers about to cross the tundra. Mungo sought a rational explanation for this custom, unaware it was one spread widely across the world by the archaic civilisation, and known even in the reaches (and quite as irrationally) of his own far Scotland. With a bland acquiescence in native

custom, he himself 'suspended a handsome piece of cloth on one of the boughs'.

A well was rumoured to be near at hand. Mungo had the asses unloaded and fed, meanwhile sending one of the elephant-hunters to look for the well and planning to halt the caravan beside it for the night. The elephant-hunter returned with a blanched face : not only was the water black with mud, but near at hand were the marks of an encampment but recently deserted. Bandits were undoubtedly in the neighbourhood, his attendants impressed on Mungo. Somewhat reluctantly, he allowed the asses to be re-loaded and marched forward again through the cactus-clumps.

Noon passed and the evening with its coolness came on. Exhaustion had come before that, and, utterly wearied, Mungo at length brought his caravan to halt beside another watering-place.

Here the scare about bandits still held his attendants. They lay down in the pitch African night in the middle of a cleared space, Mungo, negroes, and asses, a gunshot from any bush. The negroes agreed to go sentry-go in turn. Fatigued, but imperturbable, Mungo slept.

Dawn awoke them, Mungo had the calabashes hastily filled at the bandit-haunted watering-place, and they crossed the border into the kingdom of Bondou. Tallika was the nearest town, inhabited chiefly by Foulahs, merchants and the like who lived by furnishing provisions to the slave and other caravans passing up and down from the coast to the

interior, and by the sale of elephant-ivory. Elephants were plentiful in the back-reaches of Bondou, though Mungo himself never glimpsed them. Nevertheless, when he told his companions how the elephant had been elsewhere domesticated with considerable success, they bared their teeth in wide grins. Good liars were liked in Bondou.

About eleven o'clock on the 13th of December, they came to Tallika, and Mungo made his way to the hut of the king's tax-gatherer. This individual permitted Mungo to pass the night in his house, and agreed to desert the tax-gathering of Tallika and guide Mungo on the road to Fatteconda, the capital. Mungo sat down in the sunset quiet and wrote a letter to Laidley, and handed it to the master of an ivory caravan bound for the coast.

They had journeyed in a somnolent peace and contentment hitherto ; but two miles or so out from Tallika next morning, a violent quarrel broke out between Tami, the Kasson blacksmith, and another individual whom Mungo neglects to introduce by name. It may have been Madiboo. They cursed each other very hotly, the blacksmith casting biological doubts upon his opponent's parentage. Thereat the opponent drew his cutlass and was about to dispatch Tami when the others seized and disarmed him. Mungo was moved from his cold impartiality a moment. He informed Tami's opponent, with a chill disinterest, that if he continued the quarrel, he (Mungo) would shoot him without further ceremony. This ended the incident.

The caravan resumed its way, sulkily, the negroes casting puzzled looks on the cool young man on horseback, hitherto so mild.

They had passed from the straggling forest country into a fertile plain. Nightfall found them at a village, Ganado, where Mungo observed a reconciliation effected between Tami and his nameless opponent. They exchanged presents and went through the African equivalent of kissing again with tears. Everyone cheered up and ate a large supper. A straying negro minstrel approached the festal hut and amused the company, says Mungo, with 'diverting stories', and played some sweet airs, by blowing his breath upon a bowstring, and striking it at the same time with a stick.

At daybreak next day, the 15th of December, the slatis, the Serawoolli slave-merchants, parted company with Mungo's caravan, going their own way south. They parted with some affection, and prayers for Mungo's safety. His following was now reduced to four, plus the Tallika tax-gatherer. Ganado passed into the early day-haze; the sunshine grew stifling as the day wore on. They crossed a branch of the Gambia where the steep banks were a-flower with mimosa, and blindingly sweet with the smell of it. Mungo surveyed its waters as his horse splashed through, and observed a number of large mussels in the ground. The mimosa, being inedible, he took for granted.

The noon-heat put riding out of the question for once. They camped under the spreading boughs

of a large tree, resting, and ate and drank pounded corn and milk purchased from some passing Foulah herdsmen. Sunset brought them from the forest to the high-walled town of Koorkarany, where Tami had relations. Mungo resolved to halt for two days, and explore the town.

13 He was hospitably received. Koorkarany was a remote outpost of Islamic learning, with a mosque and a marabout. The latter was in charge of the municipal library, a number of Arabic manuscripts which he showed to the traveller. In exchange, Mungo showed him a copy of an English-Arabic grammar he carried. The marabout, who probably had no conception of its use or meaning, politely expressed his admiration.

Evening of the second day ended these intellectual revels. Mungo drew together his depleted caravan and rode out of courteous Koorkarany. Three miles away they halted for the night at a village with the improbable name of Dooggii, a village of plenty, where provisions were so cheap that Mungo purchased a bullock for half-a-dozen small amber stones. He did this with a cool calculation: the more provisions he had, the greater the number of laggard negro loungers who would accompany him while those provisions lasted. And the forward country had a reputation for bandits.

Next morning, in admiring escort of Mungo and the remains of the bullock, a large portion of the inhabitants of Dooggii expressed their intention of accompanying him as far as the next village, rejoicing in the equally improbable name of Buggil. They seem to have tailed off as the day wore on,

however, though Mungo devotes his diary for the day to no further mention of them at all, but to a contrivance used in the land for urging forward the refractory ass : ' They cut a forked stick, and putting the forked part into the ass's mouth, like the bit of a bridle, tied the two smaller parts together above his head, leaving the lower part of the stick of sufficient length to strike against the ground if the ass should attempt to put his head down. After this, the ass walked along quietly and gravely enough, taking care, after some practice, to hold his head sufficiently high to prevent the stones or roots of trees from striking against the end of the stick, which experience had taught him would give a severe shock to his teeth.'

Buggil was a miserable and miserly place. No provisions were offered, and there was no bed in the hut where Mungo lay down. Imperturbably as ever, he records that the Buggili were very good at digging wells.

Midday of the next day, the 19th, found his caravan descending into a deep valley, and along the bed of a dried-up river-course. The mimosa blossoms were everywhere abundant. It must have been pleasant riding for once. But the courteous land of Woolli was left behind, and the white man, though an object of curiosity, no longer one of reverence. Evening brought a village which Mungo neglects to name, with a cold severity. Here the natives were clad in a fine gauze, well calculated to display the shapely thigh. This especially was the

case with the women : they displayed themselves in an altogether unrestrained manner to Mungo. Worse still, they expected a reciprocal exhibitionism. They swarmed about the tall young alien from the banks of the Yarrow, begging for beads and amber, stole the buttons off Demba's coat, tore Mungo's cloak, and played the devil generally. They were proceeding to other and more intimate researches, when Mungo tore his cloak from their grasp, mounted his horse, and fled from the village. Even so, a 'body of these harpies' followed him for half a mile. His coolness had been routed for the first time in Africa.

His caravan, probably giggling, came up, and they rode on, still east, reaching Soobrudooka in the evening. No shelter was offered the travellers here in spite of the fact that Mungo (whose company, what with the more voracious of the hangers-on, still numbered fourteen) purchased a sheep and a quantity of corn. A heavy dew fell in the night, as they slept by the asses' load, and Mungo, with chilled bones, took the road gladly enough next day, holding on through a country where the forests drew back their skirts to leave wide fields of corn waving green and fertile in the hot sun. They were nearing the banks of the Falemè river.

Here a village hove in sight where Mungo halted for an hour and inspected the native fishing in great detail. Walls of stone were built in converging fashion across the stream, causing strong currents, and the negroes wove strong baskets of split cane

(nets, in fact), which they set between the stones to catch the fish. Small hand-nets were used to catch a Falemè sprat, greatly esteemed as a paste. The negroes pounded them in wooden mortars and dried them in lumps in the sun—an odoriferous proceeding. These pemmican loaves were exported into the distant and fishless Senegal hinterlands.

The village also discovered to Mungo an old 'Moorish shereef', probably an Arab negro half-breed, who told him he had seen a white man before, not in Bondou, but eastwards in Kaarta. This white man had been Major Houghton, and the shereef told Mungo that Houghton had undoubtedly perished in the country of the Moors. This enthusiastic re-recounting of Houghton's fate, everywhere encountered, began to bore Mungo. He presented the shereef with some sheets of paper (on which to write charms) and resumed his journey along the Falemè.

Next morning was the 21st of December. Mungo could proceed up the river no further. His direction again lay west. He hired a canoe to ferry over his bundles, and himself rode through the stream, the water coming as high as his knees. How his followers crossed he makes no mention, disregarding them, as usual, except when mention is essential to explain his route or fortunes. Climbing up from the Falemè, they neared Fatteconda, the capital of Bondou. Here Mungo was invited to rest in the house of a 'respectable slati'; and here, after some account of his further adventures in Fatteconda, he

sets forth a minute description of Bondou in his usual manner.

The ruling caste was the Foulah, ranking themselves with the white men, Mohammedans in nearly every case. The king himself, however, was a pagan, though one with the Moorish name of Almani. They were a kindly pastoral people, leaving the trade of the country in the hands of the Mandingoes (probably autochthones) and the Senegal Serawoollies. One of the innumerable southwards extensions of the Berber peoples, they were yet not greatly given to religious persecution of their pagan fellow-citizens—they had no need to resort to such methods of persuasion. Multitudes of small schools had been established in which pagan as well as Mohammedan children were taught to read the Qûrân, and instructed generally in the religion of the Prophet. ‘Many of these little schools I visited in my progress through the country, and observed with pleasure the great docility and submissive deportment of the children, and heartily wished they had had better instructors and a purer religion,’ observes Mungo with a Selkirk-like sententiousness, and possibly (this being long after the days when he rode amidst the schools and scandals of these little kingdoms) an eye to his fellow-prigs in the reading-public.

He had been travelling into a congeries of little ‘kingdoms’, sometimes at war, generally living in a state of guarded neutrality one to the other. ‘Bondou is bounded on the east by Bambouk ; on the

south-east and south by Tenda and the Simbani Wilderness ; on the south-west by Woolli ; on the west by Foota Torra ; and on the north by Kajaaga.'

Coming from the south-west, Mungo's route was to cross the country and strike northwards into Kajaaga—a black kingdom, as he gathered in Fatteconda, not one settled by the browny men from the north. There lived the Serawoollies, great traders in slaves and gold.

An hour after his arrival in Fatteconda, a Foulah messenger came from the king of Bondou requesting Mungo's attendance upon his majesty ' if I was not too much fatigued '. Taking Johnson, his interpreter and servant, with him, Mungo set out with the Foulah, who began to behave suspiciously, guiding them quite out of the town and across some cornfields. Mungo halted and asked point-blank where they were going. Thereon the messenger pointed to an individual squatting under a nearby tree. It was the king of Bondou, an equally suspicious soul, who was in the habit of receiving visitors in this detached spot, and interviewing them alone.

14 The 'monarch' beckoned, and Mungo drew
nigh. The king invited him to share his mat.
Mungo, with a polite obsequiousness, acquiesced,
and commenced to outline his travels and intentions.
Almani listened without any comment. He prob-
ably considered Mungo a liar, for he broke in to
ask if the latter desired to purchase slaves or gold.
'Neither,' said Mungo. The surprised king sur-
veyed him doubtingly, and then dismissed him until
the evening, promising him a supply of provisions.

Mungo retired to his lodging with some qualms of
doubt, for he had heard of Almani's character before
coming to Fatteconda, and how he had maltreated
and robbed the unfortunate Houghton. 'As I was
now entirely in his power, I thought it best to smooth
the way by a present ; accordingly, I took with me
in the evening one canister of gunpowder, some
amber, tobacco, and my umbrella ; and, as I con-
sidered that my bundles would inevitably be
searched, I concealed some few articles in the roof
of the hut where I lodged, and I put on my new blue
coat, in order to preserve it.'

Thus guarded and equipped, he set out for the
royal residence, a collection of mud houses sur-
rounded by a high mud-wall. The sentry at the
gate stood armed with a musket : muskets were a
common form of tax paid by slatis passing through

Bondou. Inside Mungo found himself in a maze of passages. Wherever there was an opening stood another musket-armed sentinel. At the entrance to the Almani's own courtyard Johnson and the tax-gatherer of Tallika took off their sandals, for this was holy ground. The tax-gatherer then uplifted his voice and called the king's name until he was answered from within.

They were bidden to enter. Almani sat on a mat and took to questioning Mungo again, and with considerable suspicion, it would seem, though Houghton surely had returned much the same answers to his questions. He found it inconceivable that anyone in his senses should journey through the dangers of foreign countries merely to look on those countries and their inhabitants. At this Mungo blandly offered to display the contents of his packages to the king, who would then see that he was no trader. Somewhat taken aback, Almani took refuge in a sulkysilence till Mungo brought forward his presents.

At first all went well. Almani showed particular delight in the umbrella, furling and unfurling that proof of a superior civilisation with great zest, to the admiration (and probably the acute danger) of his attendants. However, the presents had merely whetted his appetite. He commenced a long and involved address on the excellent qualities possessed by the whites. He was particularly struck by their immense wealth and good dispositions and fine taste in garmenture. In fact, and alas, he wanted Mungo's new blue coat.

Mungo assessed the situation, and, as usual, took the correct line. The command of this African king could be no more effective than his request. Very quietly Mungo removed his coat and laid it at the hungry monarch's feet.

Moved by shame or gratitude, Almani sent him back to his hut in company with a large supply of provisions, and directed him to return the next morning. Mungo slept with what equanimity he could, and with the coming of morning light again repaired to the royal abode. Almani was in bed—sick, he declared, 'and wished to have a little blood taken from him'.

Mungo acceded to his request with a dour pleasure. He bound up one of the royal brown arms, and advanced with his lancet. Thereat Almani's courage suddenly went. He postponed the operation until the afternoon, at the same time, and somewhat ambiguously, declaring that he already felt better. It was probable enough.

Meanwhile, he observed that his women would very much like to see Mungo, and had him conveyed to the court and huts 'appropriated to the ladies', as Mungo courteously phrases it.

They were a dozen or so in number. They seem to have been mostly negroes, Serawoollies or Mandingoes, not Foulahs, black, comely, kinky and kindly. They found Mungo a fine diversion, and played with him as with a new toy. Politely obsequious, he listened to them beg for amber, physic, and blood-letting, and put them off as well

as he could. The whiteness of his skin and the prominence of his handsome nose intrigued them considerably : they advanced startling theories to account for both. The whiteness of the skin, they insisted, had been produced by dipping the infant Mungo in milk ; the unsightly nose had been encouraged to its present protuberance through unceasing pinching. Mungo, with probably a rapid flight of thought to the dairy at Fowlshiels and a picture of his mother ritually immersing him in the precious cream, politely failed to correct the seraglio. Instead, he flattered them basely, complimenting them on the glossy jet of their skins and the lovely depression of their noses. . . .

It must have been an amusing scene, the dour Scot paying heavy compliments and the giggling black women insisting coyly that he was a base flatterer, a honey-mouth. Further, they insisted that flattery was not esteemed in Bondou, and to prove the point they loaded him with presents at parting, a jar of honey and some fish. The harpies of the nameless village apart, Mungo was to prove a staunch favourite with the women of Africa.

That evening he paid a final visit to the king. Almani and he exchanged compliments and some small presents, and Mungo was informed (probably in return for the blue coat, Almani's slumberous conscience still troubled over the matter) that he could pass out of Bondou duty-free.

15 It was the 22nd. Next morning Mungo marched out his caravan, depleted in several senses, from Fatteconda, and took the northwards road. But the heat that day was as from the mouth of a furnace. He halted about eleven o'clock at a village he leaves unnamed, and determined to pass the rest of the day and the night there. Probably, though he makes no mention of the fact, he was physically and mentally little at ease, what with a fortnight's trek through the negroid kingdoms, strange food, strange faces, the ordeal of Fatteconda, the blank sense of lostness far from his own kind.

But his fellow-travellers were uneasy. The village was on the boundary between Bondou and Kajaaga, they pointed out, a place dangerous for travellers, what of bandits and raiding-parties. It was advisable to cross this waste debatable land without further halt.

Mungo agreed coldly. With moonrise that night they set out, the first time he had travelled abroad in the African forest after dark. The air was waiting and still in the deep solitude of the forest ; the great trees clustered about to watch them pass in the moonlight ; and the depths of the woods were alive with the howlings of wild beasts. It was Africa still untouched by the marauding hunter armed with the weapons of the whites. Wolves and hyenas

prowled the dim tracks ; they glided like shadows from one thicket to another in the flow of light from the great red moon. Dreams of Fowlshiels fulfilled !

Towards dawn they halted at a village and refreshed themselves and their asses, then pushed on to Joag in the black kingdom of Kajaaga, ' called by the French Gallam '. It was Christmas Eve, but Mungo seems to have been unmoved to the requisite pious reflections. He saw Joag rise up, a town of some two thousand inhabitants, walled, the walls loop-holed for musketry. Inside that wall, he found all the houses miniature replicas of the city—each wall-surrounded and also loop-holed. They took no chances in Joag.

Mungo was hospitably received and entertained by the headman, the duti ; and notes the latter title displacing the Arabic *el caid* (' Alkaid ') of the Foulah kingdom of Bondou. But Islam, negro though the inhabitants were, had penetrated into Kajaaga territory as well. The headman was a Mohammedan, though an unfanatical one. Mungo strolled out and viewed the town and its industries.

Madiboo, who had accompanied Mungo from Pisania, comes in for mention at Joag. His father and mother lived at the neighbouring village of Dramanet ; and towards nightfall he led Mungo and Tami the blacksmith over to Dramanet to look on at a dance of welcome. Large fires had been lighted, and the negroes of Dramanet danced with great abandon to the music of four drums. The dour young prig in the blue coat, so cold and kindly,

observes delightfully : ‘ The dances, however, consisted more in wanton gestures than in muscular exertion or graceful attitudes. The ladies vied with each other in displaying the most voluptuous movements imaginable.’

Mungo retired shocked, and walked back to Joag in the moonlight. There, for some reason, he made his bed on the bentang, the great platform under the usual tree in the village plaza, not in the house of the village duti. Probably it was too hot to sleep indoors. Johnson and Demba slept near by. Well after midnight Mungo was awakened by a hand tugging at the musket which lay beside him.

Saying not a word, he himself seized the weapon and clung grimly to it. Thereon the hopeful musketeer desisted for the moment, but sat down confidently on the bentang platform, apparently to await reinforcements or the dawn.

Shortly afterwards Madiboo and Tami the blacksmith came hastening through the night, returning hot-foot from the dance at Dramanet with disturbing news. This was that a party of horsemen, ten in all, of the army of Batcheri, king of Kajaaga, had arrived at Dramanet during the festivities and questioned the dancers as to the whereabouts of the white man journeying through these lands. Informed that he was at Joag, this cavalcade had ridden off in that direction, and Madiboo and the blacksmith had cut through a nearer way to give notice of their coming.

Even as Mungo sat up in bed to listen to this tale,

he and his people heard the sound of hooves. The ten sinister horsemen rode up to the bentang, dismounted, and seated themselves, musket in hand. The duti, very troubled, was now on the scene, and Mungo observed to him, loudly, that he hoped whatever the newcomers had to say they would say in Mandingo, as he did not understand Serawoolli. It was near dawn. The newcomers on the bentang growled an assent. One of the negro horsemen acted as spokesman, a short man loaded with charms.

In a lengthy African address he informed Mungo that he had committed a crime in entering the town without paying duties or making a present to the king. Wherefore all his goods were forfeited. Further, he was to be conveyed to Maana, the king's town, to explain his conduct to that dignitary in person.

As if at a signal, the rest of the horsemen stood up around Mungo, and asked if he was ready to proceed to Maana. A remarkably involved scene followed. Mungo answered obsequiously that he was quite willing to go with them, but first he must feed his horse and settle his bills with the duti. The horsemen appear to have assented to this. What was more remarkable, they made no objection to Tami the blacksmith drawing Mungo out of hearing and protesting in great fright against Mungo going to Maana. For Tami was a native of the nearby state of Kasson, and there was reason to believe that war would soon break out between that principality and

Kajaaga. Discovered as an alien enemy in the country, as he assuredly would be discovered by the prying royal guards at Maana, Tami would be enslaved and lose all the fruits of his four years work at the coast.

Mungo returned to the bentang and laid Tami's case diplomatically before the horsemen, saying merely that the blacksmith was a native of a distant country, and entirely unconnected with him (Mungo). He should therefore be allowed to stay in Joag.

More arguing took place as the African day brightened over the stilled curious town. The horsemen insisted that Tami also should go to Maana. Mungo insisted that he should not. To confirm this opinion, he drew aside the duti and asked his advice. That magistrate, ill at ease, was nevertheless friendly to Mungo and decidedly of the opinion that he should not go to Maana if he could possibly help it. The king of Kajaaga had a poor reputation among his subjects.

Back to the bentang again went Mungo, and had a respectful speech addressed to the leader of the ten horsemen, pointing out that he had sinned unwittingly, that he did not wish to go to Maana, but that he was now ready to pay the customs dues.

He handed to their leader the five drachms of gold presented to him by Almani of Bondou. But hereon the horsemen lost patience. They seized Mungo's baggage, tore it open, rifled it of what con-

tents they fancied, and departed, loaded with booty and half of Mungo's possessions.

He was now in very desperate straits. He had nothing left to trade for food in his long journey in search of the elusive Niger but a few beads and some amber. Here in Joag he dare not produce them, for word that he still had such treasures would undoubtedly reach the ears of the rapacious king or his horsemen. His black attendants he found very thoroughly frightened. They begged him to turn back, while Tami the blacksmith throughout the day tried as well as he might to hide himself from the gaze of the Kajaagans. The sun climbed and the heat of noon smote down on the hot platform where Mungo sat hungry, chewing a dry straw for lack of dinner, and revolving through his mind plans for pushing on with the coming of night. As the day waned hungrily his situation appeared the more desperate, but he faced it coolly enough. There would be no turning back.

And then a romantic incident of kindness took place, the first of many in the wild lands he was traversing. An old woman slave passing by the bentang with a basketful of groundnuts stopped and asked Mungo if he had had any food. He thought she was teasing him and made no answer, but Demba, his slave, answered that he had not : the white man had been robbed of all his goods by the king's horsemen. Thereon the slave presented Mungo with several handfuls of the precious nuts, and went on her way, leaving him for a moment

awkward enough, suddenly very near tears at that unexpected kindness, but already seeking to orient the act into priggish phrases that would leave him unmoved.

He ate the nuts, perhaps shared them with the others who sat hungry and hot on the platform, and then fortune turned her wheel yet another point. Kasson, the blacksmith's native country, lay eastward of Kajaaga, not a Serawoolli but a Mandingo land. It was ruled by one Demba Sego Jalla, and this potentate had despatched his nephew, of the same name, to attempt to settle the disputes which were bringing the two countries to the verge of war. The young African diplomat had met with no success in his mission. He had turned to ride home when he heard of the white man at Joag. And here he now was before the bentang platform, offering his services to guide Mungo out of unfriendly Kajaaga into friendly Kasson.

They set out next morning, December the 27th, Mungo riding in the midst of a numerous company, in his second-best blue suit, impoverished, uncertain of the future, but with at least temporary friends. Beyond Joag Johnson insisted on sacrificing a white cock, not to Aesculapius, but to the tree-spirits : he bound the chicken to a tree and left it there. Mungo priggishly admired his piety, but 'laughed at his folly'.

They were passing through the healthiest and most fertile country that Mungo had yet entered. The forests towered green and tremendous on the

high lands, but the valleys were cultivated and fertile, the air was clear and sweet, warmed and yet drained by the windings of the Senegal river. Hills towered on the skyline, blue-painted: in the valleys the mimosa were in bloom. And through those valleys the son of a peasant from the valley of the Yarrow rode by the side of a black noble exchanging genteel courtesies.

At noon they came on the town of Gungadi, with a mosque that was turreted—‘on the pinnacles of which were placed six ostrich eggs’. Evening brought in sight the wide flow of the Senegal river through a lush countryside. They halted for the night in sight of that cool torrent, and next morning marched up the river bank to the village of Sayee, below a great cataract. The spray and the thunder of it filled the air.

Across the river was the country of Kasson. Mungo’s company halted and yelled and fired their muskets till a canoe was paddled across the Senegal to take them from Kajaaga’s inhospitable shores.

16 There was trouble in crossing the Senegal. The horses were seized and hurled over a cliff in a fashion which the young Scotsman found extraordinary enough. Below, in the water, other negroes urged them forward. The asses led Mungo's convoy two hours' wet chase to and fro the banks. Mungo was not amused.

Finally, after numerous ferryyings, the original and apparently only canoe returned for Mungo and Demba Sego, that hospitable diplomat. Nearing his native shores, unfortunately, his diplomacy was wearing thin. Scarcely was the canoe launched than he commenced to investigate an article of Mungo's luggage, and in his eagerness to apprise himself of the treasures in a tin box overset the canoe. Wet, dripping, and Mungo politely murderous, they returned to the shore, re-embarked, and crossed into Kasson.

No sooner were they landed than the egregious Demba Sego addressed a short speech to Mungo, pointing out the benefits the latter had incurred from his Kasson escort, and hoping that these would be repaid by a handsome present. Mungo accepted the situation—Kajaaga to Kasson, devil to deep sea—coolly enough: the Senegal dip had reinforced his natural clear-eyed appraisal of things. Robbed though he had been at Joag, he must consent to be

robbed anew. He handed over fourteen shillings-worth of amber and some tobacco ; Demba Segó accepted the present with apparent contentment and without any shame. Then they re-aligned their damp and dripping caravan and wound off into the interior of the new ' kingdom '.

The nearest town in Kasson was Teesee, unwallèd but for a clay castle in which abode its headman, an elderly Mandingo negro bearing the flippant name of Tiggity Segó. Besides being the brother of the king, who dwelt at the distant capital of Kooniakary, this dignitary was the father of the astute Demba Segó. The night of the day that they forded the Senegal from Kajaaga, Mungo and his company reached Teesee, and next morning Demba Segó presented Mungo to his father. In the short parley that ensued Mungo explained his reasons for traversing the country, and, as usual, was considered a liar. Tiggity, however, made no other remark than that Mungo would have to visit the king in Kooniakary before quitting the kingdom. Mungo, dourly surprised at being left unrobbed, regarded the elderly headman with premature approval, and returned to his lodging.

That afternoon, driven to it by extremes that are left unrelated, one of Tiggity's slaves fled into the bush. A hue and cry was raised in pursuit. Demba Segó came and begged the use of Mungo's horse for the hunt. Mungo consented readily, and looked on coolly enough at the return of the slave, who was scourged and manacled. By placating Demba Segó

he hoped to be allowed to proceed swiftly through the country.

He was mistaken. For eight days he wandered the streets of Teesee, watching the play of native life, listening to native tales, noting down this and that curiosity of conduct or ethic. For Demba Segó, once having mounted Mungo's horse, had taken more than a fancy to that animal and had ridden off on it on a mission to a northerly land, Gadumah, inhabited by 'Moors'. Mungo curbed his patience as well as he might; ate the strange and not over-clean foods of Teesee; noted that the women of the town were never permitted to eat eggs; meditated at some length upon this fact, with that owlshness of which only a Scotsman is capable; attended a court-case where a Mohammedan priest was tried and found guilty of amorous intercourse with the wife of a young negro; and longed for the return of his horse. It was advancing into the New Year of 1796. He had been over a month on the road.

War and rumour of war was all over this congeries of little kingdoms that fringed the Senegal. Teesee expected to be attacked by the 'Moors' of Gadumah: it was a place half-pagan. Though unwall'd, Tiggity Segó was preparing it for a siege, laying up quantities of provisions brought in from the surrounding country. Mungo wandered out of the town on the 4th to watch one of these siege-trains entering Teesee, complete with musicians. Still there was no return of Demba Segó or his horse.

But the following day there was a curious happen-

ing throwing some light on the state of affairs in these lands. An 'embassy' arrived from Almani Abdulkadder, 'king' of Foota Torra, a north-westwards country which Mungo's march had avoided. It was Islam girt up, and presented Teesee with an ultimatum : either the inhabitants must publicly profess the Mohammedan religion *en masse* or Foota Torra would side with Kajaaga in the coming war.

After some consultation, the inhabitants of Teesee announced their unanimous and complete conversion to the tenets of Islam militant. Eleven prayers according to the Mohammedan rite were offered up by the inhabitants. Mungo looked on with a cold interest, his mind on his horse and the Niger.

Three days later Demba Segó returned. Mungo reclaimed his jaded mount and prepared to set out for the capital, Kooniakary. He laid this plan before Tiggity. That rubber-like ancient suddenly proved recalcitrant. What was Mungo's haste? And what small present was he to receive in return for the hospitality extended to the stranger in Teesee?

Mungo retired to sleep upon this question. Hardly was he awake next morning when Tiggity's son and a search party arrived to collect the 'present'. Knowing that resistance was hopeless, Mungo was not unprepared, though as coolly polite as ever. He offered Demba Segó another fourteen shillings-worth of amber and ten shillings-worth of tobacco. The

young negro took the presents, surveyed them very coolly, and then laid them down. Was this all ?

Thereon he and his party flung themselves upon the luggage of Mungo and his servants, gutted the bundles, gathered up about half of the contents, and departed, laden and laughing. Plus the similar robbery that had taken place in Kajaaga, three quarters of Mungo's original luggage had now disappeared.

17 There was no help for it. Mungo surveyed his littered luggage, assayed the loss, and observed his attendants exceedingly dispirited. Coolly, he purchased a sheep, had it killed and roasted, and watched the blacks recover, as Africans and Scotsmen are apt to do after a good meal. Then he lay down with determination to quit Teesee at daybreak on the morrow.

He did so, without opposition. It is one of the most remarkable features of his journey, this habit of constantly entering towns without opposition, being there abused or maltreated, and then allowed to depart, not only without opposition but apparently to the completest indifference of his enemies of church and state. Teesee slept. Mungo's men rode and plodded forward through rugged country. Hills rose; about midday from a rise Mungo halted and looked at the far hills that surrounded Kooniakary.

The record sinks into notes of travel and halt, halt and travel, for over two days. They crossed another tributary of the Senegal, passed yet another Medina (for once Kasson had been a country held by the Foulahs, those Arab half-breeds), and so came in mid-afternoon of the second day in sight of the village of Jumbo. This was the native village of Tami the blacksmith from which he had been absent at the coast for four long years.

Tami had an uproarious welcome from his fellow-townsmen, Mungo watching with a close curiosity, and, over one incident, with one of those sudden flashes of understanding that are as lightning-flashes in the drabness of his record. This was the meeting of Tami and his mother.

‘The blacksmith’s aged mother was led forth, leaning upon a staff. Everyone made way for her ; and she stretched out her hand to bid her son welcome. Being totally blind, she stroked his hands, arms, and face with great care, and seemed highly delighted that her latter days were blessed by his return, and that her ears once more heard the music of his voice. From this interview I was fully convinced, that whatever difference there is between the negro and European in the conformation of the nose and the colour of the skin, there is none in the genuine sympathies and characteristic feelings of our common nature.’

Mungo had sat down in the shade of a hut and for a while was completely unobserved by the rejoicing throng around Tami. That African Ulysses had launched into telling the tale of his adventures far from Kasson in the strange lands of the Gambia, and of his hectic return from there, greatly assisted by a white traveller. ‘And there he is,’ concluded Tami dramatically, pointing to the place where Mungo sat.

They stared at Mungo as though he had dropped from the clouds. Jumbo had never seen a white man before. The woman and children drew away

open-mouthed : indeed, for a long while the children would not be comforted whenever the young Scot turned his eyes upon them, but buried their faces in the places where their mothers, if Christians, would have worn petticoats, and wailed loudly. Fortunately, the adults soon recovered from their surprise, and came pawing and rejoicing around Mungo. He received the attentions of the black half-naked villagers with his usual cool politeness.

Jumbo feasted him and the blacksmith far into that night, the woods re-echoing to the songs for the exile's return. Tami probably drank too much, as the feast lasted far into the next day. Somewhere in the course of it he declared his undying devotion to Mungo and his intention not to abandon him until he (Mungo) had reached Kooniakary at least. Mungo received this declaration of alcoholic regard with his usual placid unsurprise, and prepared to march next day.

This day was the 14th of January. With Tami, Madiboo, Johnson and Demba, he journeyed southwards through the woods to a village called Soolo. Here lived a slati who was in debt to Laidley, in distant Pisania, to the value of five slaves. Mungo had been entrusted to collect the debt. In spite of this fact, the slaver received him hospitably, and was still entertaining him when Mungo was apprised of the fact that the Kasson government had not lost interest in his movements.

A party of horse appeared before the hut of the slave-merchant, led by the king's second son, one

Sambo Sego. They demanded in some heat why Mungo delayed in arriving at Kooniakary.

Apprehensive of darker things awaiting him on the morrow, Mungo reassembled his caravan and set out with this new escort.

They passed through the hills that guarded Kooniakary, coming to it an hour after dark. It was a great sprawling waste of huts, this capital, and into one of these Mungo stumbled sleepily, the hut of Sambo Sego. There, as usual not undressing, he lay down and slept, wondering if the head of the Sego family would prove as unpleasant as his relatives.

He was agreeably disappointed when next morning brought an interview with the king, sitting upon a mat in the large royal hut. Demba Sego Jalla was about sixty years of age, and had treated Houghton with great kindness when that unlucky traveller passed through his capital. He told Mungo, yet again, that Houghton had been murdered by the Moors: the name was beginning to have an ominous sound in Mungo's ears. Making no claim on Mungo's meagre belongings (he had not yet secured the price of the Laidley slaves from the slati of Soolo), the king dismissed him with the present of a large white bullock, a particular mark of favour. Mungo prepared to march eastwards as soon as possible.

But a new obstacle arose to his plans. Apart from the impending war between Kajaaga and Kasson, news spread about that Kaarta, the kingdom to the

east through which Mungo proposed to travel in his search for the Niger, was soon to be invaded by the forces of the great country of Bambarra, a negro principality still more deeply in the interior. Mungo would find himself involved in the marching and counter-marching of the tribesmen. Making enquiries, he determined to strike directly northwards, through the country of Fooladoo, the original home of the Foulahs, and prosecute his search by marching along the northern border of war-threatened Kaarta.

The king sent word that Mungo might take that route if he chose, but that he (the king) could supply him with no guide if he did, as there was a treaty between Kaarta and Kasson by which all eastwards travellers passing through Kasson were sent forward to undergo the customs dues of Kaarta. Mungo decided that immunity from war in Kaarta would not be compensation for the fact of being left without a guide to the borders of Fooladoo. Accordingly, war or no war, he determined to hold on through troubled Kaarta as soon as definite news of the state of affairs in that country reached him.

He retired to Soolo, to the hospitality of the slave-trader, to writing up his notes and to strolling about the rich fertile lands that interwove with the hills round Kooniakary. Those hills above Soolo were pitted with caves where wild beasts laired by day and from which by night they came howling forth to prowl the huts of Soolo. One night Mungo was awakened by the sound of a wolf-raid on the village

cattle-kraal. The beasts were ultimately frightened off, but not before they had killed five of the cattle.

There were other wolves. Africa spoke. Africa gossiped. The news spread about that the white traveller had received great sums from the slave-lati. One morning the unpleasing Sambo Sego arrived with his horsemen to demand from Mungo half of the immense sums paid to him by the slave-trader. This money, he said, was the king's right.

Probably his father was unaware of the raid, but Mungo was only too well acquainted by this time with the loose and indefinite authority carried by the various members of an African royal family. He prepared to part with half of the sum already received from the slave-trader.

His meekness seems to have infuriated that individual. He intervened, and forced upon Sambo Sego a compromise—thirty-two shillings-worth of various kinds of European goods and a 'donation' of powder and ball. Mungo comments on the entire transaction without either abuse of Sambo or praise of the slave-merchant. His chronicles meticulously lack abuse.

It was the 1st of February before messengers brought to Soolo news that the war had not yet commenced between Kaarta and Bambarra. Possibly Mungo might succeed in penetrating through the former country before the great Bambarran army invaded it.

Mungo made hurried preparations to depart on the attempt, and on February the 3rd took the east-

wards tracks through the hot rugged country, bidding farewell to Tami the blacksmith, who probably loved him (though Mungo does not know that word). It was tough travelling, by a rocky track through low hills in the burning air. Rightwards ran the river Krieko, a tributary of the Senegal. In front walked the two guides provided Mungo by the king ; behind came Mungo on horseback, browner and spare and with worn clothes and cool look, and behind him, with their asses, Demba and Johnson. It was two months since they had left the coast, and still the rumour of the Niger was distant.

18 They were nearing the borders of Kaarta, a fact made evident by the stream of fugitives pouring into Kasson. Bambarra was expected, as usual, to win in the coming war. On the afternoon of the 4th of February they came to a large village, Kimo, ruled by one Madi Konko, the eastwards captain of the Kasson lands. Here the Kasson guides returned, amid the streaming of fugitives from Kaarta into Kasson, to take part in Kasson's war with Kajaaga. Probably the comparative ease of Mungo's passage through the hilly grounds around Kimo was due to the fact that the inhabitants were distracted with news of the coming hostilities. Madi Konko, of the interesting name, was prevailed upon, after three days, to provide Mungo with one of his sons as a guide. Probably he cursed him as a nuisance and got rid of him gladly. Mungo set out again across rough and stony country, still holding by the banks of the Krieko.

Rightwards sprawled the many-villaged valleys between the hills that separated Kasson and Kaarta. Over those hills, as the afternoon of the 8th of February wore to evening, came further streamings of fugitives from threatened Kaarta. The negroes were flying westwards with goods and families and such-like effects, and Mungo spent many hours threading their flight. South-east,

very distant in the glare of the sun next day, rose the hills of Fooladoo.

It was the 9th of February before the caravan passed into Kaarta, descending a rocky precipice into the bed of a dried-up stream which Mungo refers to as a 'romantic glen', putting it to comparison with the vales of his Border minstrelsy. The trees met overhead for long distances in tenebrous tunnels and they travelled in cool shade, undisturbed and pleased. Mungo removed his beaver tile and wiped a tall damp forehead. At the foot of the river-course the trees drew back and they were on the verge of a barren waste separating the two kingdoms.

They crossed it, stopping at a water-hole where some shepherds dwelt in great affluence, with such store of the wealth of this world that they seldom, says Mungo, asked any payment for the provisions they gave to travellers. News of the invasion had left them undisturbed. They fed the Scot and his slave and servant and Madiboo, and watched them ride out of their lives, into Kaarta's border town of Feesurah.

Here Mungo, obtaining lodgings, but apparently making no official contacts, prepared to halt for a day the while his various grimy changes of under-linen were washed—had washed from them the stains and sweats of two months, the grime and smoke of the fires and moulds of Bondou, Kajaaga, Kasson. Mungo rested, trying to learn what was happening in the eastwards country. He arranged

for his landlord, a negro who had cheerfully embraced the full tenets of the Mohammedan religion and at the same time kept faithfully to a full observance of the pagan rites, to act as guide next day.

In the morning, however, this much-begodded black demanded from Mungo such an exorbitant sum for the lodging of the latter and his companions that the Scot point-blank refused payment. There were certain limits in money-matters—at least so far as private robbers, apart from official ones, were concerned.

Surprisingly, Mungo's attendants failed their master very completely, threatening, both Demba and Johnson, to abandon him to his fate unless he settled matters with the landlord. This is a mysterious moment in Mungo's career, for fear of hostilities in the future could have had no just pressure upon his black companions at the moment. Possibly they were leagued with the landlord. Mungo, assessing things again with cool wisdom, saw there was no help for it. He overpaid the landlord by making him a present of a blanket—it seems to have been Mungo's only blanket—and took the road for Kemmoo, Kaarta's capital.

But outside his native town of Feesurah the landlord insisted on halting and going through a bewildering amount of ceremonies, Mohammedan and pagan, to ensure their safety on the road. He whistled and prayed extensively, the while Mungo regarded him in some doubt, suspecting that he was summoning fellow-bandits to the robbery of the

white man. No bandits appeared, however, and the landlord at length declared that the way was now safe and fully sanctified.

They pressed forward through trackless cultivated lands with deserted villages : the inhabitants had fled to Kasson. Sunset brought them to the village of Karankalla, and, before lying down to rest in one of its huts, Mungo looked on the extensive ruins of the place, plundered and burned by the army of Bambarra nearly four years before.

Kemmoo was but a short day's journey from Karankalla, and for once Mungo took the road easily. He and his attendants wandered from the path as the day rose, and picked such fruits and corn as the fleeing inhabitants had left behind. Mungo wandered far from his companions, and at last lost them. He rode his horse up a rise to look about him, and then encountered a ludicrous adventure.

Two negroes on horseback came galloping through the bushes, halted at sight of him, stared appalled. Mungo urged forward his horse towards them. At that one of the horsemen, casting on him a look of incredulous disgust, rode off at breakneck speed ; the other, overcome by this first gaze upon the full horror of a white man's countenance, covered his eyes with his hands and burst into prayer. Praying, and still covering his eyes, he rode slowly away.

A mile to the east, however, he and the other fell in with Mungo's attendants and told them of the hideous apparition they had encountered, a devil

with a ghostly appearance who had descended from the sky in a cold blast of wind. Mungo's cold look, his mask from Fowlshiels, had summoned up an appropriate African myth to account for it.

At noon, collecting his attendants, Mungo rode across a two-mile plain which had been cleared of wood and scrub as a measure of defence. Midway on this plain squatted Kemmoo. Mungo entered it through a staring throng which appears to have overcome its revulsion and turned it into curiosity. Mungo lodged in a hut by the king's orders; it was found impossible to keep out the incredulous inhabitants. Thirteen times the hut filled and cleared as successive crowds entered to gaze upon the blue coat and black tile of Mungo, that horrific apparition from the banks of the Yarrow. Then the king's messenger came and led Mungo into the royal presence, through twisting lanes of huts and courts high-piled with fodder in preparation for the siege by the Bambarran army.

This king had the prepossessing name of Daisy Koorabbarri. Daisy, however (which modern philologists would transliterate unhumorously as *Desi*), was a title, though this Mungo learned later. He squatted throughout the reception on a bank of earth, clad in a leopard-skin, his household about him, arrayed, conjoint, warriors to the right, women and children to the left. The Daisy was an unusual man. He heard Mungo's story of the object of his travels *and did not believe him a liar!*

He is an attractive figure; one would like to hear

more of him. But Mungo, as usual, was concerned only with the king, not the individual. From him he learned that all communications between Kaarta and Bambarra were now over. Mansong, king of Bambarra, was already at the head of his army, marching up from Fooladoo to invade Kaarta : going towards Bambarra Mungo would undoubtedly be robbed or slaughtered as a spy of the Kaartans. The Daisy advised Mungo to return to Kasson and wait a more favourable opportunity for pushing forward on his search. He did not wish the white men to say that one of their number had been murdered in his country.

This scrupulousness of a native chief in the remote interior, with little to fear from white powers, and himself at the moment engaged in war with a powerful neighbour, reads as surprisingly now as perhaps it felt to Mungo a hundred and forty years ago. Yet not for a moment did he think of taking the Daisy's advice. He had made little or no progress in his exploration as yet. To rest even a little while in Kasson would be fatal : the hot season was approaching and after it the dreaded rains. If possible he must have reached the Niger and traced at least a part of its course and turned about and reached the coast again before the coming of those rains.

He thanked the Daisy and declined his advice. If the latter could not give him a guide into Bambarra, could he at least provide him a guide as near as possible to its hostile frontiers ?

Koorabbari brooded upon the matter, a kindly ruler vexed by war and greater matters, but still willing to help this freakish traveller. One route remained open, he said—from Kaarta into the kingdom of Ludamar, a principality of the 'Moors'. Mungo might take that, and have a guide ; but it was a route by no means free from danger.

Mungo thanked him : he would journey into Ludamar.

They fell to lighter conversation then, the Daisy asking how the riverine states had treated him in his journey up from Gambia ; and, doubtlessly moved to the joke by Mungo's solemn countenance, feigned to believe him a raiding slaver who would return to the coast with a great train of captives ! No doubt the court grinned suitably.

But the interlude was brief. A messenger arrived with a foam-spattered horse and disturbing news. The Bambarran army had marched through Fooladoo and was on the road to Kaarta.

Mungo returned through the town to his lodging—a town much be-mosqued and crowded with the Kaartan army, negroes with great cutlasses, with muskets, with antique weapons long ante-dating both. The Daisy sent Mungo a sheep for his supper, and while they dressed it the evening prayers were announced from the mosques not by the call of a muezzin but by blowing a wailing blast through great horns made of elephants' tusks—a melodious sound, melancholy and strangely close to the sound made by the human voice. So dusk came down

over waiting Kemmoo, waiting under the threat of invasion, and with Mungo's strange apparition forgotten.

He slept, woke early next morning, and sent his horse-pistols and holsters to the king as a present. Weapons he had found of little use in his travels : his was long before the day of the native-defying explorer in an armoured tank.

In return, just as morning came on Kemmoo, the Daisy sent back an escort of eight horsemen for Mungo. Shortly afterwards three of the Daisy's sons appeared, at the head of a cavalcade of two hundred, and undertook to see the traveller on his way. He left the town in triumph.

It was February the 13th. Evening brought the village of Marina. The king's sons had returned with their cavalcade and left Mungo with his eight guides. They were hardly of the quality of their master. At night robbers broke into the hut where Mungo's baggage was bestowed and stole clothes, beads and amber. In the morning Mungo discovered the theft and reported it to the Kaartan guides. They made no investigations and no enquiries. Probably they themselves were the thieves.

Mungo accepted the situation, and, having exhausted the best part of the morning already, relinquished the argument and urged his laggard escort and attendants on the trackless road to the Niger again.

He was in Lotus-land, though he had not known

it. In mid-afternoon his armed escort saw a couple of negroes squatting amid the bushes at a distance, and instantly presumed the squatters were runaway slaves. Forthwith the escort cocked muskets and rode at full speed in the direction of the negroes, expecting them to turn tail and flee. They did no such thing. Instead, rising at their leisure, they picked up their bows, strung them and affixed each a couple of arrows betwixt their teeth in reserve. Somewhat dashed, the escort halted and growled questions.

The imperturbable negroes replied that they were gathering *tomberongs*—they were gathering the berries of the *Rhamnus lotus*—lotus fruit in Kaarta !

Mungo rode nearer and inspected the negroes' baskets. They were filled with yellow-coloured berries 'of delicious taste'. An agreeable drink was made of them. And that was all. Lotus-land was a hot, prickly, active and altogether degenerate land from the sleepy afternoon of contentment and myth.

19 That evening half-a-dozen of the guides turned back. In the afternoon of the following day Mungo's caravan came to a town called Funingkedy, where the inhabitants, viewing the travellers from afar, took alarm at sight of the turban which one of the Kaartans wore. They imagined that a troop of Moorish bandits was approaching. But Mungo, whatever else he looked, had no resemblance to any conceivable bandit, and the alarm quieted away.

He slept that night at the house of a Gambia slave-trader, in his usual contentment with such company.

The road to Jarra, the Ludamar border town, was infested with bandits. Mungo waited in the town till a considerable body of travellers might set out for that centre. Funingkedy was meantime in a state of considerable woe and confusion. People of property were fleeing to Ludamar to escape the effects of the war : fled, their own effects, in the shape of cattle, were being impounded by raiding ' Moors ' from the very country to which they had fled. Mungo himself from the walls of Funingkedy on the afternoon of the 16th was witness of one of these raids, and the terror in which the ' Moors ' were held. Five horsemen were observed driving the town's cattle-herds close to the wells outside the

walls. There, very coolly, they selected sixteen of the best, and drove them away across the border at full gallop.

None of the inhabitants made any show of resistance, except one young negro outside the town. Him the Moors shot from his horse, and rode on.

Funingkedy's single hero was brought within the walls, and Mungo asked to attend him. He found that a musket-ball had passed through the young negro's leg below the knee, fracturing both bones. In the medical science of Mungo's day there was little hope for such a case. Nevertheless, possibly with cold qualms at the result, Mungo proposed that he operate and cut off the young man's leg above the knee.

Funingkedy greeted the proposal with horror. This white-faced stranger was evidently worse than a bandit. He delighted in deliberate torture. The young man was hastily removed from his care and consigned to that of some Mohammedan 'priests'. These, seeing that he would not recover, and that he was a pagan, very practically set to equipping the dying boy for the accidents and ferocities of the next world as a slight change to the accidents and ferocities of this. Mungo stood by and watched while a 'priest' whispered and whispered in the dying youth's ear, commanding him to repeat the whisper. This at last he was able to do, crying, 'There is no God but God, and Mohammed is his Prophet.' He died that evening.

Another idle day passed. But by nightfall of the

17th a caravan of thirty people had been drawn together to travel into Ludamar. It was resolved to set out at night, to evade the prowling bands of thieves on the roads. Till midnight travel they did at great speed and in great fright, when they halted at a nameless village where none of Mungo's fellow-travellers could sleep because of the cold. The thermometer was at 68 degrees.

At daybreak on the 18th of February, 1796, Mungo crossed the border of Kaarta and entered the Moorish kingdom of Ludamar, where unprecedented tribulations were to beset his search for the Niger. Of the Kaartan-Bambarran war that arose behind him he has left the most interesting account in his own words :

‘ This war, which desolated Kaarta soon after I had left that kingdom, and spread terror into many of the neighbouring states, arose in the following manner. A few bullocks belonging to a frontier village of Bambarra having been stolen by a party of Moors, were sold to the Dooty, or chief man of a town in Kaarta. The villagers claimed their cattle, and being refused satisfaction, complained of the Dooty to their sovereign, Mansong, king of Bambarra, who probably beheld with an eye of jealousy the growing prosperity of Kaarta, and availed himself of this incident to declare hostilities against that kingdom.

‘ With this view he sent a messenger and a party of horsemen to Daisy, king of Kaarta, to inform him that the king of Bambarra, with nine thousand men, would visit Kemmoo in the course of the dry season ; and to desire that he (Daisy) would direct his slaves to sweep the houses, and have everything ready for their accommoda-

tion. The messenger concluded this insulting notification by presenting the king with a pair of *iron sandals* ; at the same time adding, that “ until such times as Daisy had worn out these sandals in his flight, he should never be secure from the arrows of Bambarra ”.

‘ Daisy, having consulted with his chief men about the best means of repelling so formidable an enemy, returned an answer of defiance, and made a Bushreen write in Arabic, upon a piece of thin board, a sort of proclamation, which was suspended to a tree in the public square ; and a number of aged men were sent to different places to explain it to the common people. This proclamation called upon all the friends of Daisy to join him immediately ; but to such as had no arms, or were afraid to enter into the war, permission was given to retire into any of the neighbouring kingdoms ; and it was added, that provided they observed a strict neutrality, they should always be welcome to return to their former habitations. If, however, they took any active part against the Kaartans, they had then “ broken the key of their huts, and could never afterwards enter the door ”. Such was the expression.

‘ This proclamation was very generally applauded ; but many of the Kaartans, and amongst others the powerful tribes of Jower and Kakaroo, availing themselves of the indulgent clause, retired from Daisy’s dominions, and took refuge in Ludamar and Kasson. By means of these desertions, Daisy’s army was not so numerous as might have been expected ; and when I was at Kemmoo, the whole number of effective men, according to report, did not exceed four thousand ; but they were men of spirit and enterprise, and could be depended on.

‘ On the 22nd of February (four days after my arrival at Jarra), Mansong, with his army, advanced towards Kemmoo ; and Daisy, without hazarding a battle, retired to Joko, a town to the north-west of Kemmoo, where he

remained three days, and then took refuge in a strong town called Gedingooma, situated in the hilly country, and surrounded with high walls of stone. When Daisy departed from Joko, his sons refused to follow him, alleging that "the singing men would publish their disgrace, as soon as it should be known that Daisy and his family had fled from Joko without firing a gun". They were therefore left behind, with a number of horsemen, to defend Joko ; but, after many skirmishes, they were totally defeated, and one of Daisy's sons taken prisoner ; the remainder fled to Gedingooma, which Daisy had stored with provisions, and where he determined to make his final stand.

' Mansong, finding that Daisy was determined to avoid a pitched battle, placed a strong force at Joko to watch his motions ; and, separating the remainder of his army into small detachments, ordered them to overrun the country, and seize upon the inhabitants before they had time to escape. These orders were executed with such promptitude, that in a few days the whole kingdom of Kaarta became a scene of desolation. Most of the poor inhabitants of the different towns and villages being surprised in the night, fell an easy prey ; and their corn, and everything which could be useful to Daisy, was burnt and destroyed. During these transactions, Daisy was employed in fortifying Gedingooma. This town is built in a narrow pass between two high hills, having only two gates, one towards Kaarta and the other towards Jaffnoo. The gate towards Kaarta was defended by Daisy in person, and that towards Jaffnoo was committed to the charge of his sons. When the army of Bambarra approached the town they made some attempts to storm it, but were always driven back with great loss ; and Mansong, finding Daisy more formidable than he expected, resolved to cut off his supplies, and starve him into submission. He accordingly sent all

the prisoners he had taken into Bambarra, and having collected a considerable quantity of provisions, remained with his army two whole months in the vicinity of Gedingooma without doing anything decisive. During this time he was much harassed by sallies from the besieged ; and his stock of provisions being nearly exhausted, he sent to Ali, the Moorish king of Ludamar, for two hundred horsemen, to enable him to make an attack upon the north gate of the town, and give the Bambarrans an opportunity of storming the place. Ali, though he had made an agreement with Mansong at the commencement of the war to afford him assistance, now refused to fulfil his engagement, which so enraged Mansong, that he marched part of his army to Funingkedy, with a view to surprise the camp of Benowm ; but the Moors having received intelligence of his design, fled to the northward, and Mansong, without attempting anything farther, returned to Segó. This happened while I was myself in captivity in Ali's camp, as will hereafter be seen.

‘ As the king of Kaarta had now got quit of his most formidable antagonist, it might have been hoped that peace would have been restored to his dominions ; but an extraordinary incident involved him, immediately afterwards, in hostilities with Kasson, the king of which country dying about that time, the succession was disputed by his two sons. The younger (Sambo Segó, my old acquaintance) prevailed, and drove his brother from the country. He fled to Gedingooma ; and being pursued thither, Daisy, who had lived in constant friendship with both the brothers, refused to deliver him up—at the same time declaring that he would not support his claim, nor in any way interfere in the quarrel. Sambo Segó, elated with success, and proud of the homage that was paid him as sovereign of Kasson, was much displeased with Daisy's conduct, and joined with some disaffected fugitive Kaar-

tans in a plundering expedition against him. Daisy, who little expected such a visit, had sent a number of people to Joko to plant corn, and collect together such cattle as they might find straying in the woods, in order to supply his army. All these people fell into the hands of Sambo Sego, who carried them to Kooniakary, and afterwards sent them in caravans to be sold to the French at Fort Louis, on the River Senegal.

‘ This attack was soon retaliated ; for Daisy, who was now in distress for want of provisions, thought he was justified in supplying himself from the plunder of Kasson. He accordingly took with him eight hundred of his best men, and marching secretly through the woods, surprised in the night three large villages near Kooniakary, in which many of his traitorous subjects who were in Sambo’s expedition had taken up their residence. All these, and indeed all the able men that fell into Daisy’s hands, were immediately put to death.

‘ After this expedition, Daisy began to indulge the hopes of peace. Many of his discontented subjects had returned to their allegiance, and were repairing the towns which had been desolated by the war. The rainy season was approaching, and everything wore a favourable appearance, when he was suddenly attacked from a different quarter.

‘ The Jowers, Kakaroos, and some other Kaartans, who had deserted from him at the commencement of the war and had shown a decided preference to Mansong and his army during the whole campaign, were now afraid or ashamed to ask forgiveness of Daisy, and being very powerful in themselves, joined together to make war upon him. They solicited the Moors to assist them in their rebellion (as will appear hereafter), and having collected a considerable army, they plundered a large village belonging to Daisy, and carried off a number of prisoners.

‘ Daisy immediately prepared to revenge this insult ; but the Jowers, and indeed almost all the negro inhabitants of Ludamar, deserted their towns, and fled to the eastward ; and the rainy season put an end to the war of Kaarta, which had enriched a few individuals, but destroyed the happiness of thousands.’

20The first village reached in Ludamar was that of Simbing, where Major Houghton had halted to write his last letter to the coast. Mungo's company, however, made no halt there, but pressed on towards Jarra. Rocky hills towered to the north. By a stream Mungo saw wild horses disporting—horses which the natives hunted for food. At noon walled Jarra came close enough for Mungo's eyes to observe it clearly : a town of houses of stone and clay, sun-bleached, an Arab town differing very greatly indeed from the African villages of Kaarta and Kasson. Mungo was in a new land, where the proportion of ' Moorish ' blood was much higher than in the south, where the inhabitants considered themselves definitely a superior race—Saharan mulattoes, treacherous and debased from the norm of human kindliness by the rule of life led under the green flag of their bestial faith.

Hardly had they entered the town than Mungo was apprised of the fact that here dwelt two populations—the haughty riders of the waste, the kingly folk, and the subject negroes. The latter got hastily out of the way of a passing mulatto horseman. The whip ruled the blacks in Jarra. It was a very terrifying city from the point of view of Johnson and Demba.

Mungo had been given an order for money, to the

value of six slaves, on a Gambia *slati* who had corresponded with Laidley in remote Pisania. The slaver was sought out and received the traveller hospitably, though he could raise cash only to the value of two slaves. Nevertheless, he assisted Mungo to exchange his beads and amber into gold, a more portable form of currency, and more easily concealed from the mulatto Moors.

Mungo's two attendants, cowed by the overbearing appearance of the Moors in the streets, refused point-blank to accompany him into the dangers of Ludamar. Johnson appears to have been the moving spirit in this revolt, nor was it, as Mungo saw, an unreasonable one. They might very probably be seized and sold into slavery. Ludamar was an unhealthy land for the unprotected negro.

Mungo resolved to escape from it as soon as possible, and cross south-eastwards into Bambarra, for somewhere in that land flowed the Great River. Accordingly he had a messenger despatched to the Emir of Ludamar, one Ali, at Benowm, asking permission to proceed on this route. With the messenger he sent five garments of cotton cloth, and then settled down to await his return in the scowling unquiet of the Moorish town.

A fortnight went by. Mungo's blacks still lingered beside him, unable to make up their minds either to desert him or to go with him. Then at last one of Ali's slaves arrived with directions (so he pretended) to guide Mungo on the road to Bambarra. Mungo prepared to depart.

At that Demba the slave ceased wavering in his allegiance and resolved to accompany his master. But Johnson, the freeman, would not venture the tenebrous routes.

Mungo thereon made copies of all his papers, handed them to Johnson to take back to Laidley in Pisania, left with the slave-trader much of his luggage, that the Moors might have fewer inducements to plunder him, and on the 27th of February rode forth from Jarra into the land where Houghton had been murdered.

It was waste sandy land, on the southern fringe of the Sahara. The riding was toilsome and difficult and he made but slow progress through the maze of walled villages for several days. The further he proceeded, the greater grew the proportion of Moors. Finally, on March the 1st, he rode into the town of Deena, and encountered the ruling race of Ludamar at its worst. He lodged at the house of a friendly, though frightened, negro, in company with Ali's guide, Demba, and a black slave whom the Gambia trader of Jarra had loaned him. It was night-time. Soon the news of his arrival spread abroad in the town, and a great crowd of Moors came to make sport of the Christian.

Mungo was hissed at and abused, teased like a monkey, made sport of for a very long time. He sat still and paid his tormentors no heed, or patiently wiped his face as they spat on it to rouse him to anger. Angered, he might fight, and they would have excuse to seize his property. But with

a cool resolution he refused to be moved, the dark-souled Scot who sought the Great River. Suddenly the Moors remembered that it was unnecessary for Mungo to commit any crime in order that he might be robbed. Was he not a Christian, and therefore lawful spoil of the true believers ?

With yells they seized his baggage, tore it open, stole what they desired, and departed.

He records the incident in the barest of phrases. And that that haughty spirit suffered in the incident is by no means clear. He was remote, young, wrapped in his purpose ; more, there begins to show from now onwards in him that result of his early training that can be called nothing else than a courage of cowardliness. He was to descend into depths of humility and servility from which the average man would have revolted readily, even at the cost of his life ; and, in similar measure, he was, coldly and cool-bloodedly, to take risks and make ventures from which the average man would have turned away appalled.

One of these he resolved on now, as he stood robbed and spat upon in the hut of the frightened negro of Deena. The slave from Jarra refused to accompany him any further ; so did Ali's guide ; and so, even, did the faithful Demba. It was a madness to go on in this country of devils.

Mungo looked at them all with cold eyes and assented. Then, at two o'clock in the morning, he mounted his horse, rode him silently out of Deena, and faced the journey alone.

Beasts howled about him in the moonlight, but made no attack. Half a mile from the town he heard someone hail him in the moon-sheen, and looked back and saw the faithful Demba trotting in his tracks. The slave could not allow Mungo to face the wastes alone. They conferred for a little, Mungo perhaps with a slight twinge of emotion, and Demba offered to go back to the town and try and prevail on the slave of Jarra to go with them as well.

Mungo waited in the moonlight, hearing the cough of a hunting lion. Then Demba came back through the shadows in company with the Jarra slave, and they travelled on through the morning, across the sandy wastes, and on still until noon, putting as much space as possible between themselves and Deena. Near noon they came to a deserted village and Mungo sent the Jarra slave to fill a calabash with water at the pond that shone at a little distance. But as he neared the pond the slave heard the even nearer snuffle of a lion, and ran back to Mungo.

Thirstily they pushed on, and in the late afternoon reached a village of the Foulahs where they were spared insult and permitted to sleep.

Next day was the 4th of March. Mungo had swung southwards by now. The waste scrubland had given way again to woods and cultivated patches. After noon Mungo saw his first cloud of locusts in migration. Presently the trees grew black with them, and ' the noise of their excrement

falling upon the leaves and grass resembled a shower of rain'. Mungo halted his horse and shook a tree to watch the great cloud of insects fly forth from it.

At two o'clock they came to the town of Sampaka, a large place once part of the kingdom of Bambarra, but surrendered by that country to the Moors of Ludamar at the conclusion of the last war between the two countries. Here Mungo lodged at the house of a negro who engaged in the somewhat risky (as Mungo describes it) trade of manufacturing gunpowder. For this native manufacture sulphur was brought across the great desert from the Mediterranean. It was a poor powder, pounded in a wooden mortar, and Mungo noted the bluntness of its explosion compared with European powder.

Keeping this route, and though still in Ludamar, Mungo was now in territory definitely negro in population and sympathies. He had, it seemed, escaped the Moors with no more than a brush. His cool spirits rose next day as they marched through fertile land where herds of hobbled camels were feeding. Evening brought him to a town where he was welcomed with song and dance music: he is almost the only white man on record who has found the music of the native flute agreeable, or even endurable. So great a crowd assembled in his hut, however, to stare at him, not jeer at him, that he had to sit still until nearly midnight lest a movement disturb the throng.

By morning he considered this more than enough

of a good thing, and next day took himself and his attendants to the nearby village of Dalli, there to rest until a caravan of travellers could be got together to proceed to the town of Goomba, on the Ludamar-Bambarra frontier.

Dalli was a pleasant spot. No Moors appeared. The headman entertained Mungo hospitably, very proud of a white man in his hut, and Mungo himself relaxed after the strain of Jarra and Deena. He sat in conversation and gossip with the blacks, liking both their company and their manners. Beer was brought and distributed. It was very good beer. The young Scot drank it and thought it as good as he had ever tasted in Great Britain. The horror of the Moors was past and done with. He relaxed with the beer and good company, dreaming again the boy of Fowlshiels, seeing himself on a boat on the Niger, sailing down by templed Timbuctoo. . . .

21 At that moment a band of Moors entered the hut. They had tracked Mungo from Sampaka, coming to convey him, by Ali's orders, to Benowm.

It seems that for once Mungo's mask of coolness shivered from his face, caught as he was in his dream of the Niger. He stared, suddenly no more than a boy, at them in such surprise and terror that the Moors, moved perhaps by his youth and aloneness, told him he had nothing to fear. All that Ali wanted was to show him to his wife Fatima. That lady had heard of Christians (as ladies in Europe had heard of the unicorn, and apparently with much the same feelings), and wished to look upon such a peculiar animal. Looked on, he would undoubtedly be released and dismissed with a present.

The black slave from Jarra slipped away from the hut and disappeared. Mungo never saw him again. He knew the Moors too well. Seeing that resistance would be useless, Mungo collected both his goods and his self-possession, and allowed himself to be guarded back along the track he had traversed a day before.

On the road they overtook a woman and two boys who had been robbed by another party of Moors. Neither white Christian nor black pagan could look for much mercy from the Moor at this time of the

year, when his fanaticism was whetted by bodily discomfort. The great fast of the month of Ramadhan had just been ushered in.

They rode out for Deena on the morning of the 11th. Mungo had a calabash filled with water, from which the Moors drank freely during the journey, in spite of their fast. At Deena Mungo found one of Ali's sons in residence, and procured an interview with him. It was an inauspicious one. The Moor and a half-dozen of his companions were at their ceremonial ablutions, and at first took little or no notice of Mungo. Then the 'prince' picked up a double-barrelled gun, handed it to Mungo, and commanded him to dye the stock blue and repair one of the locks, which had broken.

Mungo protested, with obsequious politeness, that he knew nothing of the gunsmith's art. Thereat Ali's son, who was either crazed or merely capriciously cruel, demanded a present of knives and scissors. Mungo was assuring him, through Demba, that he had no such articles in his luggage, when the Moor snatched up a musket, levelled it at Demba's head, and was about to pull the trigger when one of his companions, through compassion or prudence, wrested the gun from him and signed to Mungo and his slave to clear out.

They returned to their hut, Demba very badly shaken. Even his allegiance could not endure the thought of re-facing such chances of cold-blooded murder as that endured in the hut of Ali's son.

Curiously, he seems to have said nothing to

Mungo of the matter. But that night he attempted to escape. The attempt proved abortive from the first. The guard of Moors slept across the door of the hut. Demba returned to sit shivering until daylight. Mungo slept.

Next day they set out for Benowm, where the Emir was in residence. They were back in the waste scrubland whence Mungo had imagined he had escaped three days before. Here the sun shone burningly. The watering-holes were drying up in this coming of the hot season. Presently the cavalcade was without water, and chewed gum as a substitute.

Towards five in the afternoon they sighted Benowm, no town but a wide encampment of hair tents. Amidst these wandered, odoriferously, camels, cattle, goats, and Moors. There was much stench and a drowsy life. It abandoned its drowsiness at sight of Mungo.

The men by the wells, drawing the evening water, flung down their buckets, horsemen mounted their horses, and a great concourse poured out on horse and foot to stare at the Christian. It was the free life of the Moor. This was the Emir's property, no doubt, but they might tease and poke and examine it for all that. They pummelled and prodded the young Scot, examined his hat, his clothes, his buttons ; one demanded threateningly that he repeat the declaration that there was no God but God and that Allah was his Prophet. Mungo maintained a ' prudent silence '.

At last the concourse took to motion again, and Mungo was conveyed through the winding lanes of tents to that of the Emir of Ludamar. He was an old man, white-bearded, sullen, venerable and rascally—a truly Moorish ruler. As Mungo arrived the Emir was sitting on a black leather cushion engaged in barbering his upper lip. In front of him knelt a female attendant with a looking-glass. Ali glanced at the stranger sullenly, and only paused from the clipping to enquire of the escort whether Mungo could speak Arabic. ‘Being answered in the negative, he appeared much surprised, and continued silent.’

The women, whom Mungo even in this pass refers to as ‘the ladies’, were less reticent. They searched his pockets, shrieked with laughter over his general appearance, counted his fingers and toes to make sure that he really was human, forced him to unbutton and display his whiteness and probably more convincing marks still of his humanity, though Mungo is silent on that point. His torment was ended only with the announcement of evening prayer by a marabout.

Thereat the Moors began to drift away, but with no great zeal. The Christian was too good sport to abandon in a hurry. Ali was seized with a subtle idea. He commanded some boys to bring a wild pig, and, on the animal being tied to the tent-strings, gestured benevolently towards Mungo. Here was his supper. Let the Christian kill and eat the hog.

Mungo was intensely hungry. He was also intensely prudent, strung up, and watchful. He replied that he never ate hog's flesh. Thereat, in the belief that hogs hated Christians as their inveterate devourers, Ali commanded that the pig be released in the hope that it would attack Mungo.

The pig's sympathies, however, proved definitely pro-Christian. The animal ran amok, biting indiscriminately every Moor it encountered. But Mungo it avoided religiously. Finally it took refuge under Ali's couch, though unfortunately it failed to bite him.

The entertainment for the moment suspended, Mungo was conducted to the tent of Ali's chief slave. He was not allowed to enter, however, but was provided with a mat, some boiled corn, salt and water. With this fare and furnishing he passed an uneasy night ; the Moors of the encampment hardly went to bed at all, coming in parties to poke the Christian to find where the squeak came from.

22 At sunrise next morning Ali appeared on the scene and gestured Mungo to follow him. A hut had been provided where the Christian could shelter from the sun. Mungo found the hut cool, pleasant, and clean ; but in the centre, tethered to one of the hut supports, was the pig which had played such an heroic part on the previous evening. The entertainment was about to begin again.

The pig, indeed, is the real hero of that day. Boys assembled in the hut and teased the animal to add to the discomfort of Mungo ; thereat it broke from its tether and bit them viciously. Mungo refrained from cheering. Presently the adult Moors began to assemble : their manners were slightly less good than those of the pig. Mungo was commanded to take off his stockings and show his feet : the Moors stared astounded. Real feet ! Then his coat and vest. Finally, probably all his garments.

The Moors came and went in relays, chattering, guffawing, staring, particularly intrigued by Mungo's buttons. From morning till night he sat in the sweating stench of the hut, disrobing and robing before his tormentors with a passive meekness. Then night came down, and Ali sent him some food and water. Mungo lay down to sleep with thoughts that escape his genteel pages.

But even in the night he was to find no rest. His

guard kept lighting wisps of grass and throwing them in the tent to make certain that he and Demba (who had shared with him the torments of the day) were still unfled. About two o'clock in the morning Mungo awoke to the presence of a creeping body in the hut. It was someone come to rob or murder him. Probably the latter. When the hand of the marauder actually touched his shoulder, Mungo sprang to his feet. Thereat the Moor, startled, did the same and turned to flee. In the pitch blackness of the hut, however, he stumbled over the sleeping Demba. The latter yelled. So did the Moor, pitching head-foremost on the tethered and valiant pig. The pig added its yell, a third chorus, and then, deciding on direct action, bit the Moor in the arm. The Moor yelled louder than ever.

Most of Benowm camp arose in alarm. Ali himself came hasting to the scene : his haste suggests that the marauder was one of his envoys, and that Ali had been waiting for news of the Christian's death. Pig-defended, Mungo was still unharmed. Disappointed, Ali went back to his tent, while the imperturbable Mungo resumed his sleep.

He had need of it. Morning brought back his tormentors, adults, and a cloud of boys, the tormentors of the pig. All that day, and for three more days, Mungo submitted with a staggering humility to insult upon insult. Never once did he lose his temper, kicked, spat upon, jeered at : there was the Niger beyond all this.

In the heat of the day waning into the discom-

forts of the night he remembered that fact : sleeplessness, lack of food, even of water, did not drive it away. Probably his tormentors were crueller in this season than in any other, sufferers under the rigours of Ramadhan. But they must have seemed an unending three days.

By the 17th of March, however, Mungo began to lose novelty and the prudent Moors to cast about on a method to make him a useful being of the community. Demba had already been impounded for hay-making. Now it was decided to make the young Christian a barber. He was given a small razor and ordered to shave the head of one of the Emir's sons.

Coolly, he had resolved that the best method of attaining to freedom was to prove himself incredibly useless. Accordingly, the watching Emir had the shock of seeing the head of his offspring red-gashed by the clumsy hand of the Christian. The razor was immediately snatched from Mungo and he was ordered from the tent. He went, obsequious, polite, and found a night's sleep.

But next day brought a disturbing visitor, in the person of Johnson, his freeman servant, bundled into the camp of Benowm by four Moorish horsemen. The unfortunate had been seized at Jarra before he could escape back over the border into Kaarta. He was led to Ali's tent ; with him were taken all the belongings Mungo had left with the Gambia slaver in Karra, except, fortunately, his papers.

Ali had the bundles searched and regarded them with disappointment. There were few treasures.

Probably the white man kept them on his person. That evening Ali despatched three servants to Mungo's tent and demanded that he hand over all his baggage. There were many thieves about and it was unsafe for Mungo to have his possessions unguarded.

Mungo had no doubt of the thieves. Ali was their Emir. All his belongings were taken away. He had not changed his shirt since that remote washing-day at Feesurah. He was not allowed to change it even now. With his resolution a little shaken, but cool enough still, he concluded that this would not be the end of the robbery. Accordingly, he buried one of his compasses in the sand floor of the hut. Without a compass he would be utterly doomed.

It was a wise precaution. Morning brought suddenly again Ali's three servants. Mungo was seized, searched, stripped, robbed of all his gold, amber, his watch, and all his other instruments, including his second compass. The proceeds were hurried to Ali's tent, and regarded without any great enthusiasm. Still little treasure. But the compass excited curiosity, especially the little bar of iron in the heart of it, pointing northwards ceaselessly however the instrument was moved or turned. Ali sent a messenger to bring Mungo and question him on this magic.

Mungo lied magnificently, considering the short warning he had and the fashion in which lies usually stuck in his throat. The needle, he said, pointed

northwards because his mother lived far beyond the confines of the Great Desert. While she lived, the needle would always point that way ; when she died it would point to her grave. Ali was amazed and awed, and did not, as he might, command Mungo to set about the instant manufacture of a score or so of such handy instruments. Instead he handed him back the risky magical device, and dismissed him.

Mungo was now alone in the deeps of Africa, without a change of clothes, baggage, a horse ; but with two compasses. Could he possibly survive ?

He was, in the future, to find a time when he had even less gear to encumber him. But of that time he slept unforeseeing. Next day Ali, his headmen and the priests held a council to decide on the Christian's fate. News of it was brought to Mungo by the son of Ali whom he had shaved so disastrously. The boy bore him no grudge ; indeed, apparently liked him, and was worried over the news he whispered. Some of the council had proposed to put the Christian to death ; others, to hack off his right hand ; finally, it was decided to put out his eyes, after he had been seen by Ali's wife, Fatima, at present in the north of Ludamar.

Mungo tells us nothing of his feelings when he heard this news. He slept that night undisturbed by Moors. Next day, the 21st of March, he went to Ali's hut and asked permission to return to Jarra. Ali was surrounded by Mohammedan teachers, the Bushreens. They whispered warily to the Emir that the Christian was seeking to escape. Thereon Ali

flatly refused his request, pointing out that Fatima had not yet seen him. When the queen had satisfied herself by gazing on the full horror of a Christian's countenance, Mungo would be released and given back his horse.

He went back to his hut and brooded on this reply. The heat was stifling on that desert edge. Escape was impossible without a horse, and to cross the sands, alone, in the stifling glare, madness. But the longer he delayed the worse was the forward route.

For now the season of the great rains drew nearer, and when, if ever, he won out of the Moorish lands and passed south to the negro states he would pass into a lush and flood-ridden land. The Niger? Suddenly his resolutions cracked: he was very bitterly alone and desperate, the cool youth who had withstood so much, alone, and remote from help, lost in the midst of an alien and hostile people. . . . He tossed restlessly on the sand that night while the Moors peered in at him, igniting scraps of grass to see that he had not escaped.

By morning he was shivering in fever. He wrapped himself in his horseman's cloak, to induce the freeing sweat. But scarcely had he done so when a party of Moors, bent on sport, came into the hut and pulled the cloak away. The Christian made signs that he was sick. This was great fun. The true believers prodded him and teased him, holding the cloak from him, spitting upon him, till at last even the patient heroic cowardice of Mungo almost

reached an end. Almost he started up to drive a fist or a foot in one of those grinning faces, to feel the pleasure of bones breaking under his hands, to strike and strike and if needs be die in the pleasure of striking. . . . And then he remembered the Niger.

He got to his feet, staggering, and made his way out of the hut, and so from the camp. A little distance beyond it was a grove of trees ; for a time left in peace, he lay down, the fever racking him. But soon the Christian was observed. One of Ali's sons was despatched to the grove with a band of horsemen. Mungo raised his head and begged to be allowed to lie where he was for a little. But the Moors were wearied of him by this time. One of them drew a pistol, and while his companions stood idly by, presented it at Mungo's head, and pulled the trigger twice.

By some accident the weapon failed to go off. As the Moor was cocking it a third time, Mungo got to his feet, and made his way back to the camp. The Moors went with him, driving him into Ali's tent. The white-bearded ruffian who ruled Ludamar Mungo found much out of temper. He sat and heard the account of Mungo's 'attempted escape' and then called for the pistol of the Moor who had attempted to settle the boring matter of the Christian out of hand. The weapon in his hand, he had Mungo informed that if he was seen outside the limits of the camp again, he would be shot out of hand.

That afternoon a minor sandstorm fell on the camp, and passed by together with Mungo's fever. Excitement and the fears of the day had sweated it out of him. In the late afternoon a deputation of the Moorish women waited upon him, on a blushful mission. This was to ascertain, by actual inspection, whether Mungo's genital organ had been suitably circumcised, or whether, like the pagans, a Christian was also unclean in this matter.

It was not the kind of request common either to Selkirk or the student's lodgings in Edinburgh. Probably Mungo had never yet slept with a woman. But he was learning fast. He had long laid aside the tabus of Yarrow. He replied that it was not the custom in his country to give ocular demonstrations in these matters to a large crowd at a time. But if the rest would retire, leaving the youngest and prettiest of the women (he pointed to her), he would be pleased to satisfy her curiosity completely.

Kinder, as usual, than the men, the women found the handsome stranger an agreeable wag. Probably they had made the request merely to tease him. They retired, laughing; and the pretty one, though she might have liked to remain for the inspection, forbore. She had Moorish male relatives. Instead, she contented herself with sending him meal and milk for his supper. It was an incident of light comedy in the threatening tragedy of Benowm.

23 The days dragged by. Mungo lay in his hut and watched them go, and turned and sweated on the moist hot sands, and wrote up his notes ; and smelt the smells of the camp, and heard the thin whine of the Moorish voices, and saw friendly only the face of Demba—yet that a permanently terrified face. Four months since he had left the coast, and he was yet (he guessed) long leagues from the Niger.

Ali told him nothing of his plans. When would Fatima journey down to look on this curiosity she had had plucked for her amusement ?

On the morning of the 28th of March a curious incident occurred, showing the comparative freedom with which the Moors behaved towards their rulers, showing also that in Ludamar, as in Scotland, there were individuals who could rise above the herd-prejudices and act according to more ancient codes than the Mohammedan. Mungo's horse had been ridden away many days before by a cattle-driver. Returning this morning, he came to Mungo's hut with the present of an antelope's leg, and the news that the horse, safe and sound, had been left tethered in front of Ali's tent. A little later Ali himself sent word that Mungo must be prepared to ride with him that afternoon, on a visit to some of his women.

The visit was inside the camp. But the riders of Ludamar would not stir a bare yard without their horses. Arriving to collect the exhibit, Ali and his courtiers, casting their eyes over Mungo, were suddenly and sincerely shocked. This was at sight of his nankeen breeches, tight, indecent in their tightness to the point where the Emir's women, however they might debate the Christian's circumcision, would otherwise have good proof of his virility. Mungo was ordered to wrap himself in his cloak, very closely. Murder, thievery and fornication were the ruling passions of the ruling caste in Ludamar : but Mungo's nankeen breeches had shaken them.

Four of Ali's wives were visited. At each tent Mungo was presented with a bowl of milk and water and a stare of affected horror. The women—Mungo's 'ladies'—were extraordinarily stout and haughty, unbending a little to examine Mungo's skin and hair, but shocked at the disgusting whiteness of the former. Fat, brown and prolific, Ali's wives were yet preferable to himself. The visits dragged out. Evening came on. Mungo's escort tired of convoying him from tent to tent and resolved on a little sport to refresh themselves. Mounting their horses, they galloped around Mungo, threatening him with their muskets, making mimic charges upon him with levelled lances, pulling up suddenly and showering him with dust. He withstood it all, obsequiously.

Again the days dragged. He stared out at the

passing life of unbearable Benowm, at the Moors who fed their horses on milk and starved their slaves, at the play of this alien life in all its heat-ridden drab aspects. On the 3rd of April a child died in the tent next door to Mungo's. Thoughtlessly, its parents neglected to accuse Mungo of having killed it by magic or the evil eye. The mother howled. Visitors came. These howled. Cool and professional, Mungo peered at the funeral in the hope of observing and reporting upon the ceremonial of the burial.

The heat he found almost unbearable. Even the currents of air blowing infrequently through the crevices in his hut were warmed as though from a furnace-mouth. It was impossible to walk out of doors bare-footed: the sands scorched the feet. Night brought little ease, but cloudings of flies and restless tossing in the sweating dark.

One day a great sandstorm hit the camp and half-wrecked it, blowing down one side of Mungo's hut. The glaring blue placidity of the sky was broken. A steady wind arose and blew from the jungles of the south. Next day the thunder and the lightning wove a garment of cloud over Benowm, and brought the blessing of rain, sweetening the air. Benowm lost its sickly appearance and smell for a day.

On the evening of the 10th a Moorish wedding took place. Mungo went to witness it, and was soon bored by the screaming and drum-beating. He returned to his hut and was just lying down to

rest when an old woman appeared, carrying a wooden bowl. She informed Mungo that she had brought a present from the bride. Somewhat surprised, he sat up to see it. Thereat the old woman discharged the contents of the bowl in his face. It was urine.

For a moment it is probable that the Christian's temper almost gave way. But an equally surprising thing followed. The old woman gave him to understand that no malice or mischief was intended. This was 'a nuptial benediction from the bride's own person', and a mark of singular favour. Wiping the filth from his face, Mungo sent the lady his acknowledgments.

Still Fatima tarried in her southwards journey to gaze upon that rare freak, a Christian. Mungo stared at the evening beams crossing the floor of his hut, day on day, and bringing the comparative peace of night. The nights were tolerable compared with the day.

Teasing the Christian had revived as a sport. Ingeniously, Mungo hit on a method of diverting his tormentors into educators. He pretended a passionate desire to learn Arabic. Whenever a particularly malevolent face appeared in the opening of his hut, Mungo would obsequiously beg assistance in the formation of an *aleph*. The plan worked excellently. Greasy tormentors turned to sweating instructors, scrawling the looping Arab symbols in the sand to help excavate the Christian from the pits of his ignorance. So the days passed.

He remained in the same hut with Johnson and Demba. The former had quite lost his spirit, half-starved as the three of them were. They were supplied with food once a day, at midnight. This was a bowl of kouskous, together with some salt and water. Sometimes the attendants brought the meal ; sometimes they forgot. Mungo, with a cool curiosity, observed the effects of hunger and privation upon himself, how sheer agony of hunger might be transmuted into a sharper interest in Arabic, for example.

At length the drowse of life in Benowm was broken. The Emir resolved to ride north and fetch his laggard consort, Fatima. This was on the 16th of April. Two days later, a fresh visitor took up residence in Mungo's hut. He was a merchant from Walet, a town in the state of Biroo. Strangely, he refrained from spitting upon Mungo. He had travelled afar and acquired the easy tolerance of all travellers, even those of Islam. Timbuctoo? It was a little town in the south-east, small compared with Houssa or Walet. Did Mungo intend to journey there? Then he had better avoid the Walet route. Christians were looked upon as the devil's children. No Christians were to be found in the country, though there were Jews in Timbuctoo itself. But even these wore the same clothes as the Arabs, and said much the same prayers.

His presence nevertheless cheered Mungo, and he spent a comparatively easy week in conversation with this 'shereef'. On the 24th another arrived,

one Sidi Mohamed Moora Abdalia. This latter was no negro-Arab half-breed, but a native of Morocco, driving down to Benowm and the saltless lands of the negro kingdom five bullocks loaded with salt. He had once resided in Gibraltar, the Sidi, and could speak a little English.

He must have seemed and sounded like an angel from heaven the first few moments when Mungo discovered him. He had crossed the Sahara in a five months journey, trading and marching, and gave Mungo an account of his itinerary, and was altogether as pleasant a man as the other merchant. But their pleasantness did not extend itself into hospitality. Food for Mungo and his attendants arrived at uncertain hours : for two successive nights no food came at all. The merchants, well fed, conversed amiably and regarded the starving Christian with a polite curiosity.

At length Demba could bear it no longer. He stole out to a negro village nearby and begged from door to door, returning with a few handfuls of groundnuts. Mungo ate these and revived for a little. Demba and Johnson were soon prostrate. Despite his resolution, as the hours wore into days and still no food came, Mungo found himself affected by fainting-fits when he attempted to sit up, and by a dimming of his eyes.

The merchants had gone. Food came at last. Mungo, with difficulty, stirred his exhausted blacks to interest in it. It was the 29th of April. Suddenly news came that Mansong, king of Bambarra, was

about to invade Ludamar. Benowm was thrown into confusion. One of Ali's sons came riding into the town of tents and ordered them to be struck immediately and all the cattle driven away to the north. Mungo looked on at the scramble and confusion of a Moorish settlement threatened by invaders. Northwards (but where exactly was not yet divulged) Ali was gathering the army of the tribe about him.

Next day Benowm struck camp. Baggage was piled on bullocks, and the fat females who had been roused to a tepid curiosity on the subject of Mungo's generation and genitals were piled on top of the baggage. Camels groaned under concubines. Concubines groaned under canopies and the stress of fear. Benowm decamped.

Mungo went with it, but whether on foot or horseback he does not say. The country was sandy waste. But towards evening they came in the neighbourhood of a thick low wood and a negro village. Mungo and a portion of the refugee exodus halted here, Mungo and his blacks left to fast, as usual.

Next day, the 1st of May, Mungo stole out to the negro village and begged food from its native governor, the duti. His wants were readily supplied. Like themselves, the negroes saw in him the tormented slave of the Arabs.

24 For nearly two months he had been a captive of the Moors—captured to satisfy a whim of Fatima, the chief wife of the Emir Ali. Now, on the 3rd of May, together with the hasting exodus from Bambarran-threatened Benowm, he came through thick woods to Ali's new camp. Near at hand was Bubaker, a town of the helot negroes. Mungo looked out on a city of black tents.

As soon as possible he made his way to Ali's tent. The Emir was unaccountably kindly. Probably he was bathing in uxorious delights. He shook hands with the astonished obsequious Mungo and conducted him to Fatima's room. Here was her Christian.

The queen of Ludamar had long black hair and a fat brown body. Womanlike, having had Mungo detained a prisoner two months and submitted to the filthiest of torments, she pretended to be shocked at his very presence. Presently curiosity overcame affectation. She began to question him through an interpreter as to the customs of the Christians. Hearing how these savages lived, she felt pleasantly superior, and presented Mungo with a bowl of milk.

Dismissed to a new hut, Mungo took up through reeking days the threads of much the same life as at Benowm. But the heat had grown steadily worse. The fiery rays, reflected from the desert sands that

fringed the woods, seemed to strike under his eyeballs and set his head afire. His tongue moved in a dry mouth, for water was very scarce. Day and night the wells were crowded with cattle, lowing and fighting with each other to come at the troughs ; excessive thirst made many of them furious ; others, being too weak to contend for the water, endeavoured to quench their thirst by devouring the black mud from the gutters near the wells, ' which they did with great avidity though it was commonly fatal to them '.

In this sheol of heat and thirst none suffered more than himself. Demba had been provided with a skin for carrying water ; but every time he attempted to fill it at the wells the Moors beat him away. Mungo went and begged a little water from Fatima. Sluggishly curious that Christians should suffer in this fashion, she allowed him a little from her own store. It merely whetted his cravings. Demba would no longer venture near the wells, where blows and threats awaited him, and no chance of water. Had the followers of the Prophet dug the wells, the shepherds would ask, that they might be defiled by the slave of a Christian hog ?

Mungo and Demba took to begging water throughout the camp from negroes and slaves who had been more fortunate than themselves in essays upon the wells. They were given a little now and then. Mungo began to weaken, was often delirious, especially with the fall of night, in the unease of half-sleep. He would hear rise in a volume-roar the

placid waters of Yarrow, sweet and grey and crystal-clear, and go scrambling down its banks from the grey homely lour of the biggings of Fowlshiels—down and down to drink there and lave there and forget the dream of the Great River he sought. Sobbing, he would come from sleep in the stifling dark, alone, a captive, in the hot dark only the tormented breath of his slave-boy, Demba.

One midnight, the fever upon him, he resolved to try his own fortune at the wells. They lay at a distance of about half-a-mile from the city of black tents. He set out, staggering with weariness. It was pitch dark, moonless, with a shimmer of stars. Beyond the woods he stood in doubt, and then was guided towards the wells by the lowing of the heat-maddened thirsty cattle. Even at this hour the shepherds were toiling there, filling the troughs in the light of great torches. By that the approach of the Christian was descried. The Moors paused in curiosity to hear his request, and then drove him away with curses and abuse.

But Mungo had sharpened his spirit to a steel-like point on humiliation and insult. Beaten away from one well, he would try another. So the thirsting hours wore on, with the dawn near. At last he came to a well where an old man and two boys drew the water. Hearing his request, the old man readily acceded and drew him up a bucket of water. Mungo was about to take it in his hands, when superstition suddenly overcame the old Moor's kindness. He recollected that this was a

Christian, and his touch polluting. Turning round, he poured the water into a nearby trough, where three cows already drank, and indicated to Mungo he could share with these beasts.

So the son of Mungo Park of Fowlshiels, that cold prim youth who had landed neatly clad and composed on the Gambia beaches six months before, knelt down in rags and filth among the kine, and drank and slobbered in their trough, crying with delight and fever as he drank.

But now the worst of the hot season was waning. Winds arose and whirled the desert sands icily about the encampment. Clouds came flooding up from the south, dimming the flare of the midday sky, and with them, presently, the flow of sheet-lightning unending upon the African horizon. The rainy season was near at hand. To Mungo this presented a new terror. The Moors were accustomed to retreat further out into the desert to escape the rains of the jungle belt. Would they take him with them?

But a fortunate accident prevented this. Daisy, the heroic king of Kaarta, having beaten the Bam-barrans and his own rebels, threatened Jarra, the frontier town on the Ludamar-Kaarta line. In Jarra were several hundred refugee and rebel Kaartans. They sent an embassy to the Emir Ali to hire a couple of hundred of his horsemen as mercenaries with which to assail Daisy, and Ali resolved to set out and treat with them in person. If only he would take his Christian captive as far as Jarra—

Mungo went to Fatima's shut and begged her to prevail on the Emir to this extent. The heavy Moor woman stared at him dully, then in a kind of stupid compassion. She would do what she could. She did. Ali consented to Mungo's accompanying him to the frontier town—a half-promise of liberty, as it were.

In preparation for this move, Mungo's bundles were excavated from Ali's tent, opened, spread out in the sun, and inspected by the Emir and his consort. Mungo was called in attendance to explain the nature and use of the various articles of apparel, and doubtless restrained himself with difficulty from a hungry gazing upon his changes of linen. But restrain himself he did, and was polite and slavish while initiating the Moors into the methods of putting on European stockings above desert-calloused feet. They were greatly tickled.

On the evening of the 25th of May Mungo was called to the tent of Fatima, who 'with much grace and civility' returned to him part of the clothes which Ali had stolen. That same evening his horse, with saddle and bridle, was also returned. Next morning, after twenty-three days of such experiences as he was never to forget, Mungo rode out of the camp of Bubaker in company with Demba and Johnson, and with a guard of Moors.

The heat shimmered greyly under a louring sky. Pale, haggard, dirt-caked and ragged, the young Scot rode his horse into the south with already dreams and plans for the Niger unfolding and re-blossoming in his mind.

25 But his trials among the Moors were not yet ended. Coming that night to Ali's camp in the desert near some wells, Mungo's escort found the tents too over-crowded to contain a Christian. Accordingly, he was detailed to spend the night in an open space in the midst of the tents.

Lightning bestrode the north-east all night, as Mungo saw wakening from uneasy sleeps. At daybreak a heavy sandstorm commenced, blowing about the ears of Mungo and the horses and asses which also occupied the central space. Presently the animals became irritated under the stinging particles of sand and ran about like mad creatures. Mungo had difficulty in saving himself from being trampled to death.

The storm cleared. The day drowsed past. But early next morning the Moors were astir, and ordered Mungo to saddle his horse and prepare to ride south. At that moment Ali's chief slave approached Demba and addressed him in Mandingo, 'In future Ali is to be your master.'

Mungo and the slave stared at the messenger uncomprehendingly. But he repeated his remark, adding that not only was Demba taken possession of, but that all the Christian's effects except his horse and Johnson were to be sent back to the camp at Bubaker.

For once Mungo was roused to a white heat of rage. He ran to Ali's tent and found the evil old man squatting at breakfast in the sunlight. Mungo told him that Demba was not a slave, had committed no crime, and could not be enslaved in Ludamar. Surely both he and his master, who also had committed no crime, had suffered enough already?

For answer Ali replied with a malignant smile that if Mungo did not mount his horse immediately he also would be sent back to Bubaker a slave. Mungo stared at him a moment, his hands itching to grip the shrivelled brown throat, regicide riding his mind in a white heat. . . . Then his hands dropped and he turned away to bid goodbye to Demba.

They had journeyed together from Pisania, through all the dangers and discomforts of the negro kingdoms, through Woilli, Kasson, Kaarta, endured the torments of captivity, drank the last drops of water from a waterskin together. Demba had penetrated through the cold reserves of the young white man to that clear-eyed, if dark-souled self that lay beneath; Mungo had found the young negro cheerful and happy and kind. . . . For once he broke down and wept in front of the sneering Africans. Then swearing to Demba that somehow he would procure his freedom, Mungo mounted his horse and rode south and never saw Demba again.

On the southwards road in the next three days Ali gradually mustered his levies. Finally, on the

2nd of June, he entered Jarra with some two hundred horsemen and immediately set about intimidating the refugee Kaartans into paying him a large bribe.

Mungo made his way to the house of the Gambian slave-sluti : the old man stared at him as one returned from the dead, then welcomed him, fed and clothed him. Hardly had he rested than Mungo set about the attempt to procure Demba's release from Ali. He had the slave-trader approach the latter and offer the value of two slaves for the Gambian youth. Ali replied significantly that he would not sell the boy back to the Christian, but that the slave-trader might, in the future, purchase the boy for his own uses. Demba, as Ali knew, spoke Bambarran, and would be useful to Mungo should the latter succeed in crossing the border from Ludamar.

It is evident that Ali had no intention of releasing his Christian toy. He played with him, in feline fashion, and found amusement in the gaunt cheeks and savage obsequiousness of Mungo. On the 8th of June, having raised the price of his promised help to the refugee Kaartans against their own king, he departed to Bubaker, instructing Mungo to wait at Jarra until he returned. He calculated that the white man would be unable to escape back into Kaarta and its war-disturbed lands ; equally, he would hardly dare push on into Bambarra without guide or interpreter. But Mungo grimly prepared in secret.

Next day was the Ludamar Saturnalia, the *Banna Salee*. Mungo, religiously note-taking again, saw slaves clad and happy, hunger banished from Jarra for a day. But meanwhile the war-clouds began to roll ominously up towards the frontier town. A wounded man staggered in with the news that the heroic Daisy of Kaarta, not content with repulsing the Bambarrans and subduing his own rebel subjects, had made war on Sambo, king of Kasson, Mungo's ancient enemy, and carried fire and sword into his territory. Further, hearing of the Moor-aided army which the Kaartan refugees were raising against him in Ludamar, he was marching his army up against Jarra itself.

At this news the refugee Kaartans sent urgent messages to Ali, calling on his promised two hundred horsemen. Mungo prowled the streets and heard the news. Presently the messengers returned from the north. Ali was sorry: his cavalry were otherwise engaged.

The refugee Kaartans, desperate, decided to risk a battle with their own forces. Mungo saw them assembled on the evening of the 18th June, under the walls of Jarra. Eight hundred strong, they departed with nightfall, into Kaarta and the south, to do battle with the redoubtable Daisy. Turning back from watching that spectacle Mungo felt the falling of raindrops on his face. The rainy season had commenced.

How should he act? The slave-trader was evidently uneasy at his presence and wished to be

rid of him. He had no money, no instruments, few clothes and only one jaded horse. He had no servants if he went forward—for Johnson was steadfast in refusing to accompany him. And he could not speak the language of any of the forward countries.

But he could not return to England. The Niger had faded a little, we may imagine, in the thirsts and sands of Bubaker. Pressing up in its place came now shame at the thought he had accomplished so little. He would press on, though he must do it alone : and anyhow, he thought grimly, if the rains held he was unlikely to die of thirst.

Suddenly there came news of the civil war in Kaarta. The refugee-rebels from Jarra had seized a town and enslaved its inhabitants, though they did not dare engage the Daisy in open battle. Presently, laden with booty, the visitors marched back into Jarra, driving cattle and slaves. Mungo looked on with a cool interest, seeing nothing in the incident to help his plan. He was mistaken. The Daisy of Kaarta was not the man to brook such a raid, whether or not it came from over the border of a powerful state like Ludamar.

He marched north with a revengeful and starving army. On the 26th of June he captured Simbing : messengers brought the news that he would be in Jarra the next day. Terrified, the Jarrans set about the evacuation of their town, trailing away towards Deena and hoping to gain the shelter of the Bam-barran border. All the next day Mungo watched

from the wall the ant-like crawl of refugees streaming eastwards. Night fell with the exodus still in full swing.

In the forenoon of the 27th, however, the Jarran sentinels gave the alarm. The Daisy was close to Jarra. In the night-time the rebel Kaartans had gone out to engage him, but had fled without striking a blow. Instantly the town was flung into great confusion, and Mungo sat and debated his own fortunes in this coming invasion while around him sounded the screaming of strayed children, the calling of demented women, and the scrape and clop of hooves of hastily-ridden horses. The Daisy had treated him kindly ; but would his followers—especially if they came upon him suddenly in the midst of the sack of a town and mistook him for a Moor ?

Johnson was now prepared to accompany him a little distance. Mungo found his horse, saddled it, and together with the black rode out through the confusion of invasion-threatened Jarra. Herds of sheep, cows and goats choked the roads. Men carried their sick and aged. Women were burdened with children too small to walk. Mungo's heart was moved to a spasm of compassion for the refugees : then he shut his mind away from their plight and turned it to his own.

For two days, halting now at one village, now at another, the Jarran exodus poured south-eastward towards the Bambarran country. Then the tempo slackened. Mungo and Johnson halted for two

days at the village of Queira while Mungo groomed and fed and refreshed ' that small, but very hardy and spirited beast ' which he had ridden since he left Pisania, seven months before.

In this confusion of war and retreat he imagined himself forgotten or abandoned by the Emir of Ludamar. He was mistaken. On the afternoon of the 1st of July a party of Moors arrived to take him back to Bubaker.

26 With their usual dilatoriness, however, they put up at the house of the village duti. Johnson spied upon them and told the news to Mungo, who was tending his horse in a field outside the village. Mungo almost fainted, remembering the horrors of Bubaker, seeing himself undergoing them for many more months, perhaps a slave all his life in the desolate lands that fringe Sahara. He resolved to escape that night, riding into Bambarra himself. Johnson, reasonably, refused to accompany him. He was to make his way back to the Gambia with a slave-caravan.

Nevertheless, all that night the black spied on the movements of the Moors the while Mungo prepared his scanty wardrobe and collected some provisions. He had two shirts, two pairs of trousers, two pocket-handkerchiefs, an upper and under waistcoat, a hat, and a pair of half-boots. Apart from his horse, this was the total of his possessions. He had no money and no trade articles of beads or amber with which to purchase guidance or protection in the wild lands towards the Niger.

About daybreak the Moors, who had chattered all night in the hut of the duti of Queira, fell asleep. Johnson came and whispered the news to Mungo. A cold sweat broke out on the latter's forehead. Gripping his bundle of clothes, he made his way

to the outskirts of the village, stepping cautiously over sleeping negroes—sleeping in the open, the refugees of Jarra. Here his horse stood saddled in readiness, and here, in the false dawn, he shook hands with Johnson, mounted, and rode away towards Bambarra.

Each bush that waved by the track seemed to him to hide a Moor. He became conscious how ragged were his nerves, and attempted to calm himself. Then it was he stumbled upon disaster again. Losing his way in the uncertain light, he had approached the watering-place of Queira where Moorish shepherds gathered with their flocks. The well-guardians recognised the Christian, and set up a howl of recognition ; Mungo put his horse to a trot, and, though the shepherds followed him for about a mile, hooting and stone-throwing, they did not overtake him. It was evidently merely an idle sport to bored and idle men. Mungo heaved a sigh of relief. He had escaped.

At that very moment he heard a loud halloo behind him, and looked back. Three Moors, well-mounted and brandishing muskets, were riding in his track.

The courage of despair came on Mungo. He wheeled round his horse and rode back to meet them.

The Moors seemed a little surprised. Mungo stared at them indifferently. So let it be. Captivity, death, what did it matter ? His captors wheeled

round their horses and rode by his side, and he looked forward to the long rides up through the bitter lands of Ludamar and the long months and perhaps years that awaited him there.

Then came an unexpected turn of events. The Moors demanded to see the contents of the bundle he carried on his saddle.

Wondering, he opened it for them. They turned over his gear in apparent disgust, stole his cloak, clapped spurs to their horses, and rode away. Mungo, in a daze, called loudly upon them to return his precious cloak. For answer, one of them presented his musket at the Christian's head and told him to get about his business.

The morning behind them, they disappeared. Slowly the situation dawned on Mungo. They were no emissaries of Ali. They were merely Moors engaged in supplementing their ordinary incomes by a little honest robbery.

He had escaped.

27 His route was east-south-east, avoiding Deena and making for the Bambarran borders. It was a wild sandy land, with here and there clumps of ragged trees erupting from the tundra—a debatable land belonging neither to Kaarta, Ludamar nor to Bambarra. Under the glow of the sun its desolation became every moment the more obtrusive. But for long it looked to Mungo a land of peace, a haven of safety. He had escaped.

He straightened his shoulders and sat upright on his horse. A murmuring of old songs came to his lips, a great gladness to his heart. Penniless but happy, he rode forward into the sun-glow. Far down in the east a range of hills winked and shone in the bright day.

About ten o'clock he made a detour from the track to avoid the neighbourhood of a herd of goats. Probably they were guarded by Moors. Noon approached. Some of his light-heartedness began to evaporate under the stress of thirst. Abandoning the track to avoid the goats, he seemed to have abandoned all road to human habitation. He urged his horse up a little incline and looked about him. Nothing moved or cried in that desolate land. The sands were a winking mirror flinging the heat back blindingly upon the burnished bronze mirror of the sky. The trees and cactus-clumps wilted under the

glare. Mungo's tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. He dismounted from his horse and climbed a tree the better to view the countryside, but still saw no signs of a well or of human habitation.

In mid-afternoon he came on two Moorish boys guarding a herd of goats which they told him belonged to Ali. They stared their wonder at his appearance, but were merely shy, not insolent. They had no water : they had seen no water anywhere. Mungo thanked them and rode on.

His lips were by this time ridged and inflamed, his mouth felt like a volcanic cavern. He plucked the leaves of some shrubs and chewed them. But even the leaves seemed to have no moisture in them, and merely increased his thirst. Sometimes the world about him reeled and grew dim, and he rode half-delirious. In a clearer moment towards sunset he again dismounted from his horse and again climbed a tree. Everywhere around stretched the same dismal landscape, the horizon as level and uninterrupted as that of the sea.

Descending from the tree, he stared at his horse. There was no need for it to perish as well as himself : it was too weak to carry him further. He was fumbling at the bridle and saddle to remove them and allow the beast to shift for itself when he fainted.

When he recovered his senses the night had come down, and with its coming was a little wind that blew in his face. His horse stood patiently beside him. Revived, he got up and resolved on another

attempt to reach a well or a village. Driving his horse before him, he stumbled through the evening.

The wind rose. Presently he saw a play of lightning pallid upon the north-eastern horizon. With that to companion him he stumbled forward hopefully. It was now quite dark. Thunder growled over the desolate treey countryside. Then Mungo heard the pattering of the thousand footsteps of the rain, and halted, and raised an open mouth to the sky.

Instantly his mouth was filled and choked with particles of sand. So stingingly were they driven upon his face that for a moment he was blinded ; his face and neck and shoulders smarted under the sting of the sand-hail. Sobbing, he mounted his horse and drove it under the lee of a bush. The sandstorm raged by. Mungo spat the dust from his mouth and trudged forward again.

About ten o'clock the thunder again awoke, and again there came the pattering of the storm's feet. But this time it was really rain. Mungo halted and tore off his clothes and spread them on the ground. The thunderclap broke overhead. Blessedly refreshing, the rain pelted him and his horse, drenching both, drenching again and again the clothes spread out on the sand. Mungo quenched his thirst by wringing out the water from the clothes into his mouth, all in the deep moonless dark. The provident shower had saved his life.

Revived, he tramped on again, consulting his compass every now and then by the flashes of lightning. About midnight that ceased and darkness

unrelieved fell upon him and his weary horse. Now he could not see a hand's breadth in front of his eyes, and groped forward with outstretched fingers. Suddenly his horse flung up a startled head. Looking askance, Mungo perceived a distant light among the trees.

Here was surely a village and shelter. But as he neared the light and heard the calling of voices and the lowing of cattle, Mungo saw that it was merely another Moorish watering-place. In the light of the torches a party of Ludamar herdsmen were drawing water for their cattle. Mungo, hungry and again thirsty though he was, turned to sneak back to the trackless woods. But in the darkness he almost stumbled over a tent, and was seen by a woman who screamed in alarm. Others came running to look. Mungo and his horse hid behind a bush, and waited for the noise of the search-party to die away.

He travelled all the remainder of the night. At daybreak the croaking of frogs led him to some shallow pools in the woods, frog-filled, so that it was difficult to see the surface of the water. Mungo beat away the frogs with a branch of a tree, allowed his horse to drink, drank himself, and climbed a tree to spy out the land. Remotely, east-south-east from the pools, a pillar of smoke rose blue in the quiet air,

It was some twelve or fourteen miles distant. All that forenoon Mungo pressed on towards it through the scrubland, his horse very fatigued. Near noon he came on a corn plantation where negroes worked, and was told that the village nearby was a Foulah

village, Shrilla, owned by the unescapable Ali, Emir of Ludamar. In other circumstances Mungo might have mounted his horse and spurred from the spot. But both he and his horse were too exhausted to venture further in the heat of the day. He rode into the village and sought out the duti's hut.

The duti refused him either food or drink. Unsurprised, and well acquainted by now with the most likely place to obtain succour in an African village, Mungo directed his steps to the poorest quarter. In front of a hut an old woman sat spinning cotton. Mungo made signs to her that he was starving. Thereat she laid aside her distaff, beckoned him into the hut and fed him on a dish of kouskous. Mungo devoured it with a sleepy gratitude. He had not slept for a very long time. But in retrospect, at least, he was moved to appropriate Biblical genuflections :

‘ Overcome with joy at so unexpected a deliverance, I lifted up my eyes to heaven, and whilst my heart swelled with gratitude, I returned thanks to that gracious and bountiful Being, whose power had supported me under so many dangers, and had now spread for me a table in the wilderness.’

These Psalmistic exercises completed, Mungo overheard a whispering outside the old woman's hut. Some Foulahs had assembled and were debating the impounding of Mungo, and forwarding him captive to Ali. Mungo hastily finished the kouskous, went out of the hut, tied up some corn for his horse in a bag, and set out in a northerly direction to give the

villagers the notion that he had nothing to fear from the Moors, and, in fact, was travelling into their country. The village children followed him for a mile or so, crying rude things. Mungo would willingly have wrung their necks. Instead, he smiled upon them politely. Thereat they abandoned him.

Relieved of their presence, he sought shelter under a large tree, spread himself a bed of twigs, and fell blissfully and completely into a profound sleep. But even in this he was not allowed to remain for long. Three Foulahs passed by about two o'clock and, observing Mungo asleep, were suitably shocked. They took him for a Moor and imagined he had overslept the midday prayer. They shook him awake. Mungo stared at them, saddled his horse in dead silence while they looked on, and rode off to the south-east.

The country took to itself a greener and more fertile aspect. He was passing from the regions of the scrubland into the true African forest again. The grass rose lush and gigantic. Behind the great tree-boles the shadows lay fervid and blue. Near sunset Mungo's horse came upon a track through the forest, and followed it until midnight, when the track ceased in a pool of rain-water. Here Mungo, dismounting and feeding his horse, determined to camp. It was a silent and solitary place. He made his bed under the stars and lay down to resume the sleep from which the three Foulahs had evicted him. But, in the northern sands, he had forgotten the accompaniments of forest life in the night. Drove

of mosquitoes came from the pool to vex him. Now and then a lion howled dangerously near at hand ; and twice, when he had dozed off uneasily, he awoke to the squall and cry of wild beasts hunted or hunting under the trees.

He turned on another shoulder and let them squall.

At daybreak he resumed his ride through the now silenced woods. The forest thinned out. Low hills appeared before him. Wild hogs grunted amid the tree-clumps, and he saw ostriches and antelopes upon the hills. About eleven o'clock he climbed a tree and surveyed the countryside. Several miles distant in the south were red patches in the forest-land. He judged these to be cultivated tracts and rode towards them.

He was not mistaken ; they were Foulah fields, surrounding a village of Foulah tents. Here neither the name nor the fanaticism of Ali were emulated. One of the natives summoned Mungo into his tent and fed him on a dish of boiled corn and dates, asking no return. The shepherd sat and watched, amused by his freakish visitor. The shepherd's wife and offspring were less amused. The children huddled up to their mother in the darkness of the tent, and howled their horror of the Christian. Their mother was scarcely less moved. At last she could bear it no longer, and ' crept slowly towards the door, out of which she sprang like a greyhound, and was instantly followed by her children '. Mungo and the shepherd continued on good terms. Cutting

some brass buttons from his once gay coat, Mungo purchased a small bag of corn for his horse, and again set out on his travels.

Near the end of the daylight, he came on a track that wound definitely through the woods in the direction of Bambarra. This he followed. But about eight o'clock, hearing the noise of a party of men approaching from the Bambarran border, his confidence forsook him. He rode his horse into the shelter of some thick woods that grew by the side of the track—a dangerous retreat, for it was in such clumps that wild beasts laired. Fortunately, he trod on none. He dismounted and listened. The voices came nearer. Mungo grasped his horse by the nose to prevent him from neighing, and listened in a silence broken by the pounding of his own heart.

The newcomers from Bambarra had seen him or his shadow glide round the thicket. They searched it in an idle fashion, missed Mungo, and went on their way into the night.

He crept out, his face a fine mist of sweat, and mounted the weary horse. Towards midnight the croaking of frogs guided him to a pool. There he and the horse drank, their faces darkly mirrored in the starshine. Near at hand, in an open space, grew a great tree. Mungo tethered the horse under it and himself lay down to sleep.

28 It was a hungry forest. Towards morning he was wakened by the patter and scuffle of a pack of wolves circling the tree. The morning was scarcely yet come, but he saw the light gleam in their eyes. He rose and rode away into that morning, and the wolves gave him up.

Somewhere in that morning he passed over the border of Ludamar into long-sought Bambarra. The country became cultivated. About ten o'clock he came in sight of high-walled Wawra, and rode through its gates, wearily unobservant, to the hut of the duti. That individual, one Flancharee, had once been a slaver on the Gambia. He received Mungo with a hospitable surprise, and provided him with food and a bed. The young Scot lay down on a dried bullock's hide and slipped over a precipice into a pit of sleep.

But two hours later he woke to the sound of an argument. The Wise Men of Wawra had assembled to peer at the traveller. Some averred he was an Arab : others that he was certainly the Sultan of some Moorish state. Flancharee observed dryly that Mungo was none of these things, certainly a white man, and certainly a poor one at that.

Mungo rested for the remainder of the day in Wawra. Flancharee's welcome ebbed towards evening. He seized on the bundle on Mungo's

saddle, opened it, and examined its contents. The examination must have confirmed his previous guess : this white man *'was* a poor one. Disgusted, Flancharee directed Mungo to depart in the morning.

The morning came in rain. Mungo rode out through it in the direction of a village called Dingyee. For about a mile a negro traveller accompanied him on an ass. At the end of the mile the ass decided against the journey and kicked its rider off. The rider picked himself up and obediently returned to Wawra. The ass passes *un-saga'ed* from the story.

In Dingyee Mungo was hospitably entertained by an old Foulah who had developed a remarkable theory. White men knew a lot. This knowledge they lodged in their heads. White men had hair. Therefore, were one lucky enough to secure sufficient hair from the head of a white man to construct a reasonably large charm, one would automatically come into a great deal of white wisdom.

Mungo remarked, with sardonic politeness, that he had never before heard of so simple a mode of education. But he had no objection to enlightening the darkness of the old Foulah. 'And my landlord's thirst for learning was such that, with cutting and pulling, he cropped one side of my head pretty closely ; and would have done the same with the other, had I not signified my disapprobation by putting on my hat, and assuring him that I wished to reserve some of this precious merchandise for a future occasion.'

About midday on the 8th of July, he arrived at the village of Wassiboo. A dense forest lay to the south. Through this was his route. But it was a forest without tracks, and he must wait for guides.

Four days went by. Mungo rested and fed his horse, and stared at the sky for signs of the rains. The sun shone from a clear sky. Abandoning his notes, Mungo went out with the hospitable villagers to help them sow their crops in a rich earth. They were a happy and a well-fed folk, though they had to go armed even to the fields because of the constant threat of Moorish raids.

On the evening of the 11th a party of refugee Kaartans, evicted from Jarra, arrived in Wassiboo. Transferring their allegiance from the Daisy to Ali, they had found themselves even more bitterly oppressed. Now they purposed seeking out Mansong, the ruler of Bambarra, and offering allegiance to him. They offered to guide Mungo through the trackless southern woods as far as the town of Satilè.

At daybreak on July the 12th, all mounted, Mungo and the Kaartans entered the forest. In the dense avenues they made good progress, for the underbrush was thin. Twice they halted at water-holes as the day passed, and once at the ruins of a village destroyed in the wars. Emerging from the forests in the later afternoon, the cavalcade was sighted by the toiling inhabitants of Satilè, engaged on their plots of land. Instantly a wild hullabaloo broke out. Satilè slaves galloped hither and thither, driving the cattle into the town. Drums beat and

summoned the inhabitants to arms. The newcomers had been mistaken for a band of Moorish marauders.

The gates were shut in their faces, and a long argument through them took place with the duti of Satilè. Convinced of their harmlessness at last, that official ordered the gates to be opened and the travellers admitted. Meantime the sky had become overcast and a stiff wind blew. As Mungo sought his bullock-hide bed in the village guest-house he heard the wailing coming of the rain on the roof.

Next morning he and the Kaartans rode through a land rivuleted and green and refreshed with the night's tornado. But Mungo's horse had had its spirit broken while a fellow-captive with its master among the Moors. By noon it was too exhausted to bear him further. They were again deep in forest-land. Mungo dismounted and told the Kaartans to go on ; he would follow when his horse had rested a little.

It was a land of contrasts—of bands of thieves and bands of harassed kind-hearted refugees. The Kaartans refused to leave him. This was lion country, and though a lion might fear to attack a body of men, it would, if hungry, have no such scruples in attacking a single individual. Finally it was agreed that one of the blacks should stay with Mungo and assist in driving the horse, while the others went ahead to the town of Galloo to procure lodgings.

Presently Mungo and the black, assiduously beat-

ing forward the horse, emerged from the forest in sight of Galloo, standing at the lip of a green and fertile valley. Rocky hills rose about it, a pleasant town to look upon after the dripping dankness of the forest. Its duty was equally pleasant. He presented the travellers with a sheep for themselves and corn for their horses.

It was, indeed, a land of corn that through which they were progressing towards the mysterious Great River of which Mungo now heard more and more. The land was fertile and the inhabitants hospitable, in accordance with a law of social development of which Mungo had never heard. Sometimes they were loaded with more provisions than they could eat. Mungo's horse recovered considerably, while he himself had allowed the dread of the Moors to slip from his mind. Yet they would still raid down as far as this from Ludamar, though the cavalcade saw nothing of them then, nor were to see anything.

By the 18th of July, however, they were coming into more populous country, daily traversed by caravans of natives journeying to and from Segó, the capital of Bambarra. The villagers were now less hospitable. Sometimes Mungo and the Kaartans passed from village to village, begging for food and being refused it. Mungo's horse was again a miserable wreck. More often than not he got off and drove the beast before him, rather than ride it. Rains came with nearly every sunset, drenching the weary travellers and turning the forest paths to winding tracks of glaur.

On the morning of the 19th the party set out for Doolinkeaboo. Mungo's fellow-travellers had had their care and compassion for him worn thin in the week's journeyings. Presently they disappeared, leaving him to follow barefoot, driving his gaunt-ribbed Rosinante. So it was that he met his first slave caravan.

It was coming from the direction of Segou, a band of seventy slaves, many of them women, many thin and staggering with fatigue. They were tied neck to neck by thongs of bullock-hide, and the headman in charge of the caravan told Mungo they were to be driven up through the Sahara, five months' march, and sold in Morocco. Mungo stared at him and them, politely curious. One wonders how many of those slaves survived that march.

The owners of the caravan followed at a distance of a few hours behind. In the late afternoon they encountered Mungo. Here, in Bambarra, they were politer than in Ludamar, though very inquisitive. The Christian looked too poor to rob and too peaceable to provoke. They rode on and left him to trudge the miry tracks, very footsore.

Doolinkeaboo was a miserly village. Mungo's Kaartans had pushed on ahead, but Mungo was forced to pass the night there. Its headman limited his hospitality to the offer of a drink of water. Next morning, having procured a little meal to mix with the water, Mungo (with perhaps a sigh of memory over the flowing brose-caps of Fowlshiels) drank down the tasteless mess, and took the road again.

Those endless trackless roads haunt his tale. But the object of his search was close at hand, though hidden yet in the ventures and fortunes of two days. He came to a watering-place where some hospitable Foulahs gave him a drink of milk. Here he found two negroes who were journeying to Segou, and who did not refuse his company when he offered to companion them. Well fed and complacent, they could bear even the company of this poor white trash.

In the afternoon the three of them came to a small and nameless village where some sort of public entertainment was in progress. Everyone was drinking beer—great quantities of beer, women mixing freely with the men. The three travellers were invited to join in the revels, and Mungo's throat was cleansed of much dust and aching unease in the excellent beer of Africa. Many of the natives were intoxicated, he tells. But he offers none of his usual reproofs on such un-Selkirk-like behaviour. They might drink, he probably felt, and be damned.

Nearing the capital of Bambarra, the ragged white man became an object of mirth. The two negroes repented of their good-nature in allowing him to travel with them, being sensitive souls in whom ridicule bit deeply. Children hooted from the village gates. Bourgeois Bambarrans drew aside their skirts in distaste as the barefooted dusty unshaven Mungo plodded forward behind his staggering horse. Proletarian Bambarrans grinned widely, exchanging broad witticisms. Here was a pilgrim from Mecca, they called : you could see it by his

clothes. And his horse ! God of the Prophet, *was* it a horse ? Of course it was a horse—only a trifle sick. . . . And so forth. Mungo smiled upon the wits and meekly declined jocular offers to purchase his beast as a zoo curiosity. He could withstand with ease the guffaws of Bambarra after enduring the buffets of Benowm.

As darkness came down they reached a small village where Mungo succeeded in obtaining food for himself and some corn for his horse in exchange for one of his precious brass buttons. It was lion country. The gates were closed soon after sunset and no one allowed to go out. Mungo, lying down to sleep, heard the roar of the beasts and their snuffling inquiries outside the gates. Poor Rosinante trembled. Mungo tossed from side to side on his hard bed, vexed by mosquitoes and that bright possibility awaiting him on the morrow. Finally, finding it useless to court sleep, tired though he was, he got up and prowled the hours of the dark.

Long before daylight he had his horse saddled and waiting, and watched with impatience the sky flush in the amethyst of the African dawn. Presently the birds began to call, the strange birds of the African wilderness. Cattle lowed and moved in the kraals. Yawning and sleepy, the guardians of the gates flung them open. Mungo and the two blacks took the road to Segó.

It was market-day in the capital, and the roads were crowded. Some stopped and gaped at Mungo with open mouths. Everywhere his advent was

greeted with giggles. Sego had seen many funny sights, but none quite so funny as this. Imperturbable, Mungo rode forward. Presently he overtook a body of horsemen who turned out to be the fugitive Kaartans who were going to Sego to ask the protection of Mansong. Rather ashamed of their recent desertion of Mungo, they offered to introduce him to the ruler of Bambarra when they should come to the capital.

Here a stretch of marshland edged the road, with tall grasses which cut off the view. But presently one of the Kaartans pointed ahead, ‘*Geo affili*—See the water !’

A moment later Mungo saw it himself—‘ the long-sought-for majestic Niger, glittering to the morning sun, as broad as the Thames at Westminster, and flowing slowly *to the eastward*. I hastened to the brink and, having drank of the water, lifted up my fervent thanks in prayer, to the Great Ruler of all things, for having thus far crowned my endeavours with success.’

Thalassa ! Thalassa !

29 Here was the Great River—and *flowing towards the rising sun*. That much at least he had ascertained. But how could it flow eastward and yet emerge on the western coast? Did it, after all, seep away into the sands of the interior? Mungo stared at its placid waters with a kindling heart. Only by embarking on these could he hope to answer that question, and only by obtaining an audience with Mansong, the king of Bambarra, could he hope to proceed on the journey.

He made his way into the nearer town. The Kaartans had disappeared. Probably they found him, poverty-stricken, an embarrassing companion, a hang-dog poor relation, in these cided surroundings. Now Mungo was made aware that Sego consisted of four separate towns, two on the northern bank and two on the southern. Mansong resided on the south bank. It would be necessary to obtain a passage across the river.

There were three ferry routes and innumerable ferrymen, as Mungo discovered when he made his way to the bank. Also, there was a great crowd awaiting transport across to the south bank. The crowd stared and giggled. Mungo surveyed it blandly. Sweating, the slave ferrymen pulled off with loaded canoes. Here the currency was the cowrie shell, that ancient symbol of the fertility of

women. Mungo had no cowries, nothing to pay in the country's currency for his passage to Mansong's town apart from a few surviving buttons.

He sat down to await his turn in the great flat-bottomed canoes. They were so large that even horses were being ferried across. In the sun-shimmer the walls of south-bank Segou glimmered white. The crowds around Mungo had every appearance of prosperity, and far as the eye could see beyond the town-walls lay fertile and cultivated fields. No wild and deserted river-stretch, but a prosperous and civilised countryside in which he came upon the Niger. He was greatly cheered, in spite of the sun-glare.

But meantime news had been carried to Mansong that a white man, that unicorn of the African interior, was waiting on the north bank and was coming to see him. Mansong received the news uneasily. The mullahs probably dictated the message he sent across the ferry : Mungo must not cross until he obtained permission.

What was he to do then ? Mungo enquired. The messenger scratched his head. Spend the night at that village along the bank, he advised. In the morning he would come back with further instructions.

Dispirited, Mungo turned his weary horse in the direction indicated. The shimmering Niger lost something of its brightness.

The villagers would have none of him, regarding him with fear and repulsion. Foodless, and without

water, he sat all day in the shade of a tree, watching the sky becoming overcast with heavy rain-clouds. Sunset drew near, and he became faint for lack of food. This again, and the Niger beside him !

He took the bridle and saddle from his worn horse and slapped the animal on its lean haunch. It must shift for itself. Then, remembering the plenitude of wild beasts in this neighbourhood, he prepared to climb into the tree and spend the night there.

But again a woman of Africa took compassion on him, a peasant woman returning from her work in the fields. She stopped and looked at him without fear and asked what was wrong. As well as the parched nature of his throat would allow, Mungo explained that he had had no food or water for many hours. The woman stared her pity, and then, more practical, caught up his bridle and saddle and gestured to him to follow her.

The darkness had come down as Mungo came to her hut. A fire burned smokily in front of it. The woman went in and lighted a lamp, spread a mat, and invited Mungo to sit down. Her daughters, sitting spinning in the hut, gazed their astonishment. But this was a peasant woman of the same nature as her of Fowlshiels, strong and self-reliant. She went and broiled fish for Mungo and presently came back with the dish. While he fed she turned her eyes away from his famished attack on the food and ordered her daughters to get on with their work. There was probably a dryness in her own throat, as in Mungo's.

The light flickered in the crude lamp as the women fell to their task, presently breaking into a sweet and plaintive song on Mungo and his condition :

*The winds roared and the rains fell ;
The poor white man, faint and weary,
Came and sat under our tree.
He has no mother to bring him milk,
No wife to grind his corn
Cho. : Let us pity the white man,
No mother has he.*

Mungo turned his face to the wall and wept.

He stayed three days in that village by Niger-bank, waiting for Mansong's messenger to return. The villagers presently lost their fear of him, and came and gossiped sympathetically. From them Mungo learned that the Moors and slatis in Segó were already plotting against him, suggesting to Mansong that he was a spy. On the forenoon of July the 22nd, a tardy messenger arrived from the Bambarran court. Where were Mungo's presents for the king ?

In Ludamar, retorted Mungo, stolen from him by the Moors. The messenger retired abashed.

Next afternoon another came. He brought in his hand a bag which he handed to Mungo together with the king's message. The latter was that Mungo was to depart at once from Segó. The bag contained a present of five thousand cowries, sufficient to pay for the provisioning of Mungo and his horse through a period of nearly two months.

Mungo sat and stared dazed at this wealth suddenly thrust upon him. Then he learned from the guide that Mansong, though naturally suspicious of a white man who was reputed to have come into his dominions solely to look upon the Great River (were there no rivers in his own country, and was not one river like another, anyhow?), would nevertheless have admitted him willingly enough to south-bank Segou but for his Moorish counsellors. As it was, Mungo's life would be seriously endangered from the fanatical populace if he crossed the Niger. The king had done what he could. Let Mungo depart.

He does not seem to have hesitated a moment in his choice. This was the Niger : but it was not yet Timbuctoo. He resolved to press on to that city by way of Sansanding and Jennè.

Mansong's messenger agreed to guide him to the former. Mounting his horse, Mungo bade farewell to the African woman who had succoured him, tied his wealth to his saddle-bow, and rode through the heat of the rest of that day till he came to a village where some acquaintances of his guide lived. Here Mungo was hospitably received, but fell in with a garrulous individual who proceeded to curdle his blood. Jennè? True it was nominally a Bamarran town. But most of the inhabitant were Moors, hating Christians like poison. They would probably murder or enslave him. And even if he escaped them, what would his fortune be in still more distant and still more savage Timbuctoo?

But Mungo was not to be turned back. He had learned too little to have definite information of value to his employers, suffered too much not to believe he could endure hardships in the towns of Niger-bank. All the next day he journeyed by that placid slow-flowing river, through a rich and fertile land that minded him of England, so kempt and clipped it was. Here was the home of the shea-butter industry ; the trees hung ripe with the nuts. Villages, fishermen's villages, drowsed on the Niger's banks. It was a land of peace.

Sansanding was reached towards five o'clock in the afternoon. It was a large walled town, containing from eight to ten thousand inhabitants. Here the ruling caste was again the Moor, and Mungo directed his guide to conduct him to the house of the duti by as secret a way as possible. In the narrow tortuous streets they nevertheless encountered many of the negro populace. These mistook Mungo for a Moor and made way for him with the usual fear of negroes for the oppressor. All went well. Mungo endeavoured to look as Moorish as possible, and the deception was passing off happily until, emerging near the river bank, they came on a genuine Moor. This individual, having glanced at Mungo, set up a loud howl of distaste, and summoned a number of his countrymen. The whole pack swarmed at Mungo's heels as he made his way to the house of the negro duti.

By the time he reached that house his convoy had swelled to hundreds, negroes and Moors. A babel

of different dialects smote the air. Half-a-dozen different men and women claimed acquaintance with Mungo. One woman even declared that she had kept house for him for three years at Gallam on the Senegal. While Mungo was denying acquaintance with the lady, the Moors shouldered the negroes aside, and commanded Mungo to declare his religion.

Mungo pretended an obtuse ignorance of what they meant. Thereat they summoned two Jews to hold converse with him. These far stragglers from the tents of Israel Mungo regarded with a priggish dislike. And them also he pretended he could not understand. The Moors lost patience. One, a shereef from a town in the Sahara, was the ring-leader. He proposed to have Mungo dragged to the mosque and there made to repeat the ceremonial prayers.

At this point, however, the duti, somewhat timidly, intervened on behalf of the 'king's stranger' and saved him from immediate physical violence. To quiet the threats of the Moors he consented to ascend a high seat by the door of the mosque. There, until sunset, he sat and was stared upon by the inhabitants of Sansanding—a populace so anxious to gaze upon him that they climbed walls and peered from windows and stood on each other's shoulders. Mungo sat prim and polite, disregarding their more obnoxious remarks as well as he might.

Sunset brought relief. The duti had him con-

veyed to a neat little hut surrounded by a courtyard. But even here the Moors broke in, climbing over the mud-wall, to see Mungo perform his evening devotions—and eat eggs. Mungo answered that he had no objections to eating the eggs, if they would bring them. Thereon, watched by a multitude, the duti laid seven hen's eggs in front of Mungo and waited for him to commence operations. Mungo remarked that he never ate raw eggs, a remark received with considerable surprise by the entire throng. Sansanding understood that white men lived on raw eggs.

Convinced at last that he was amenable to more ordinary fare, the duti had a sheep killed and part of it roasted for Mungo's table. About midnight the yawning Moors, cheated of any great measure of amusement after all, began to trail out of the courtyard. Mungo was asked for a written charm by the duti, and wrote him out the Lord's Prayer. Then he lay down and slept.

He left Sansanding early the next morning and for three days rode forward as rapidly as possible along the Niger banks, passing from village to village without interference and everywhere hospitably entertained until he reached the Foulah town of Nyamee. Here the duti refused to see him, but sent his son to guide Mungo through the thick woods about that place.

It was again a land of lions. The duti's son kept peering fearfully at every bush they passed. Mungo asked him in some impatience what he feared, and

received the lion alarm somewhat sceptically. Shortly afterwards he saw his first giraffe. It trotted away sluggishly, turning a tall neck to observe if the Scot and his guides were in pursuit. Mungo's horse would have had difficulty in pursuing a tortoise. Presently the forest thinned, and they came on an open waste dotted with ragged bushes. Suddenly the guide called out in alarm—'A very large lion!'—and gestured to Mungo to turn and ride back.

Mungo knew better. His horse was incapable of flight, and probably the guide had been mistaken. He rode slowly forward. The guide had not been mistaken. At his next ejaculation of 'God preserve us!' Mungo raised his head and saw a great lion squatting by a bush, regardant, his head on his paws, his eyes surveying the travellers with a mild disinterest.

Mungo felt his heart beat painfully. He pulled his feet from the stirrups in order to throw himself on the ground when the beast sprang. The horse moved slowly forward. The lion watched them go by. Mungo heaved a sigh, and refrained with an effort from imputing a minor miracle to the Almighty.

They left the woods and took to a swampy track. Lions were seldom found in swamps. Sunset brought them to the village of Modiboo, 'a delightful village on the banks of the Niger' it seemed to Mungo at first sight. Here the Great River flowed wide and majestic, gathering its waters from many

a streaming rivulet of the forests ere it entered the heat-belts of Timbuctoo and swung about on its long mission down to the open sea. Out from Modiboo were green islets where Foulahs pastured their herds in safety from the lions.

But the paradise was undefended against mosquitoes. It was as hospitable to the latter as to Mungo. They assembled in battalions and with whirs of delight, feasting on his white flesh and savouring its unaccustomed bouquet. Ragged and shoeless Mungo had little defence against them. All night he tramped up and down his hut, fanning himself with his hat. By morning he had developed a slight fever which showed in his eyes and gestures.

The duti of Modiboo had no passion for nursing the sick. One glance at Mungo, and he summoned a servant to guide the white man out of the village and on the road to Kea. Mungo rode with a swimming head. His horse shambled, similarly afflicted. Half-a-dozen miles from Modiboo, the horse stumbled and fell, and refused or was unable to rise. Mungo saw that it was finished. He removed the saddle and bridle from the much-tried beast, patted it, gathered grass for it to eat if it should live, and then followed his guide through a long and headachy hour's tramp to Kea.

Here the duti, a surly ancient sitting by the wall-gate, declined to know Mungo. The latter addressed him with his usual politeness. The duti was unmoved, observing sardonically that fine speeches didn't move *him*, he knew a thing or two, *he* did.

At that moment a fishing-boat came paddled down the Niger close to the shore. Here was a method of getting rid of this ragged alien. The duti summoned the fisherman to take Mungo out of his sight.

Here the guide turned back, and the negro fisherman, with considerable reluctance, allowed the ragged and flushed-faced Mungo on board. At four o'clock, after some fishing exploits by the way, they came to Moorzan, a town on the northern bank. Mungo desired to cross to Silla, a much larger place on the south bank, and, having attained that haven, appears to have remained considerably at a loss for the rest of the day. Probably he was dazed with fever. He sat down under a large tree.

Silla was delighted. It thronged out in hundreds to look at him and speculate on him. As a front line of spectators moved off, another took its place. But they threw neither insults nor old boots, as at Benowm. They had the good humour of civilised humankind inspecting a strange but harmless animal. Towards the fall of darkness, Mungo made his way into the town. Rain was coming on. The duti proved of a surly nature and only after long entreaty would he allow Mungo shelter. That shelter proved to be a vilely leaking hut. Here Mungo laid down his aching bones and an aching head, and, somewhere in the darkness of that night, came to a hesitating decision.

He could go no further. Even with the king of Bambarra's cowries he was poorly equipped to press the down-river search. Probably they would not

act as currency in the Moorish lands along the Niger. .
And in those lands, footsore, unmounted, ragged,
what protection would he have ? The rainy season
had definitely come down, closing many routes. So
it closed down his hope of reaching Timbuctoo.

He resolved to turn back.

30 It was the morning of July the 30th, 1796, when Mungo, having collected a vast and varied amount of information concerning the forward waters of the Niger, the towns of Timbuctoo and Houssa, and the habits of the man-eating inhabitants of Maniana, had himself rowed across the Niger to Moorzan, and from there set out on his return to the coast, five hundred miles away.

The Niger was now in flood with the rains, and it was impossible to go up river except by canoe. After some bargaining, Mungo hired a canoeman for the sum of sixty cowries, and was paddled up the river to Kea, where the duti, that hard-headed antique, insisted that he pay down another forty cowries for the privilege of passing the night in a leaking hut in company with a black slave. Too weary to argue, Mungo lay down in the hut, and in the nighttime found that the slave had taken compassion on him and covered his rags and sores with a cloth to keep away the mosquitoes.

Next morning Mungo set out for Modiboo in company with the brother of the duti of Kea, a gushing negro who offered to carry the saddle of Mungo's horse : Mungo still had the saddle borne with him in his travels. Now, when Sego was reached, he resolved to present it to Mansong. The track led along the river bank, and all went well

for a time, till the negro observed in the mud the pug-marks of a lion. Thereat, with great prudence, he suggested that Mungo walk in front. If the lion was hungry, it was surely better that he should eat a white scarecrow than a respectable black.

Mungo mulishly refused to see this point of view, and they stood and squabbled in the path. It was a far cry from the days of the cool and composed young Scot who rode into the woods of Woollie. Finally the duti's brother hurled the saddle to the ground and disappeared into the woods.

Mungo shrugged his shoulders, and resolved to burden himself no longer with the saddle. Accordingly, he detached the stirrups and flung the thing into the Niger. At that the duti's brother, who had been hiding behind a bush, jumped into the river in pursuit of the saddle, fished it to the bank with his spear, and again disappeared amid the trees. Mungo resumed his way alone, wary for lion.

Late in the afternoon he reached Modiboo and found there his late guide, complete with saddle. He had been afraid Mungo would inform Mansong of his conduct. While they stood in argument, Mungo heard the neighing of his horse. The beast had been rescued from the woods by the village headman. That worthy pressed Mungo to take it away : it was eating its head off.

Next morning Mungo set out for Nyamee. Presently it began to rain. By the time he reached Nyamee it was pelting. For three days the sky cascaded water, while Mungo sat in a hut and looked

out at it. On the 5th of August the sky cleared and he took the westwards road again. The savannahs were knee-deep in water. Mungo waded through them hour on hour, driving his horse before him. He came to Nyara, and stayed there for another day of rain, then took to wading the swamps again.

The roads grew worse and worse in the following days. On August the 10th Mungo joined company with a Moor and his wife who were riding into Segó to sell salt. They were mounted on bullocks and conversed in friendly fashion with Mungo. But they knew as little of the country as he did. Presently the woman, mounted on her bullock, set out to cross a stretch of swamp while Mungo and the husband eyed her venture with a prudent interest. Half-way across the expected happened: the bullock sank to the flanks in a hole, hurling woman and salt among the reeds. The husband stood petrified for some time, Mungo notes, he himself standing by and regarding with a polite disinterest the efforts of the Moorish lady to prevent herself from drowning.

At sunset, still on the road to Segó, they came to the village of Sibity. The rain had come on again. The headman received Mungo coldly, and lodged him in a damp and shaking hut. Mungo lay awake in hourly expectation of the roof falling in under the pelt of the water. Thrice throughout the night he heard the crunch and crumple of other huts, and in the morning counted fourteen which the rain

had whelmed since the beginning of the rainy season. Sibity's architecture was as indifferent as its hospitality. The duti compelled Mungo to depart at once on the road to Sandsanding.

He found himself now a suspected person, shunned by the inhabitants of the villages which had formerly received him with open arms. It was said that he was a spy. Mansong had listened to this tale, and had sent out various messengers to have the white man arrested at Jennè and brought back to Segó. These messengers had gone on down river, and missed Mungo, now turned in his tracks. None of the natives showed any eagerness to arrest Mungo ; equally, they refused to assist him.

In Sansanding, the duti, formerly Mungo's protector against the Moors, refused to see him publicly ; but he came to the white man privately, under cover of darkness, and told him the news, strongly advising him to avoid Segó.

Mungo took the road early next morning, unobserved of the hostile Moors. As he neared the negro village of Kabba in the afternoon, a black came running from the gates, caught his horse by the bridle, and led him round the walls of the town. Then, pointing into the west, he told Mungo to begone at once, or it would be the worse for him. Mungo argued the point : he could not spend the night in the woods at the mercy of the rains and wild beasts. Thereat the black, and some others who had come running out from the village, urged him not to be a fool, and begone while he could.

The reason suddenly dawned on Mungo. Mansong's messengers must be in the village, waiting to arrest him, and these blacks were attempting to save him out of pure goodness of heart. He struck spurs into his horse and rode into the woods.

Three miles away, as the day waned, he came to a village which refused to admit him, closing up its gates. Mungo tried another village, with similar fortune. Women again came to his aid, and he was permitted to sleep in a drying loft. Again it rained in the night. Pushing off early next morning Mungo was forced to another decision of importance. By the alternate warnings and hostilities of the villagers, it had become clear to him that to venture into Sego would be equivalent to running his head into the jaws of one of those lions he heard prowling the village boundaries at night. He must avoid Sego and leave Bambarra as soon as possible. In what direction ?

Ludamar was an impossible route. Directly into Kaarta was equally out of the question. Should he swim the Niger and hold due south for Cape Coast, through the mysterious kingdom of Kong ?

This was the most attractive route in many ways. But also it was the most uncertain—it would mean venturing into lands of an unknown language and civility. Halting under a tree to fight the matter out, he decided he would hold due westwards along the Niger as far as he could, and then trust to fortune to lead him through Manding and Foola-

doo, whose mountains had towered in the south as he had made his eastwards journey through the negro kingdoms many months before.

That night he lodged in a Foulah village, paying two hundred cowries for the privilege. Dawn on the 24th of August found him holding his way through populous and well-cultivated tracts he had not previously traversed. The inhabitants took him for a Moor. He looked as Moorish as possible, yet had not sufficiently the look to cheat the duti of Binni village, who almost turned him adrift that night in spite of the fact that he had paid for his lodging. Again a woman interceded for him.

But the further west he went, the scarcer grew provisions. The inhabitants were saving against the duration of the rains. For two days now he had subsisted on raw corn, like his horse. He began to ache unhappily. Bending from his saddle by a wayside pool, he would see a haggard young-old face surmounted by a tattered mop of hair. His person was clad in ludicrous rags. But he still had a few cowries left and a change of clothing cannily retained for the worst emergencies.

On the 15th of August ' I passed a large town called Sai, which very much excited my curiosity. It is completely surrounded by two very deep trenches at about two hundred yards distant from the walls. On the top of the trenches are a number of square towers, and the whole has the appearance of a regular fortification. Inquiring into the origin of this extraordinary entrenchment, I learned from two of the townspeople the following parti-

culars, which, if true, furnish a mournful picture of the enormities of African wars. About fifteen years ago when the present king of Bambarra's father desolated Maniana, the Dooty of Sai had two sons slain in battle, fighting in the king's cause. He had a third son living, and when the king demanded a further reinforcement of men and this youth among the rest, the Dooty refused to send him. This conduct so enraged the king, that when he returned from Maniana, about the beginning of the rainy season, and found the Dooty protected by the inhabitants, he sat down before Sai with his army, and surrounded the town with the trenches I had now seen. After a siege of two months, the townspeople became involved in all the horrors of famine ; and whilst the king's army were feasting in their trenches, they saw, with pleasure, the miserable inhabitants of Sai devour the leaves and bark of the Bentang tree that stood in the middle of the town. Finding, however, that the besieged would sooner perish than surrender, the king had recourse to treachery. He promised that if they would open the gates, no person should be put to death, nor suffer any injury but the Dooty alone. The poor old man determined to sacrifice himself for the sake of his fellow-citizens, and immediately walked over to the king's army, where he was put to death. His son, in attempting to escape, was caught and massacred in the trenches, and the rest of the townspeople were carried away captives, and sold as slaves to the different Negro traders.'

Leaving Sai, he came to a village where, bearded like the pard, he was mistaken for a Moorish shereef. A pious villager bestowed on him a gift of corn, asking merely his good Islamic blessing in return. Mungo solemnly blessed him in plain English and they parted mutually satisfied.

Evening of this day brought a less agreeable adventure. He came to the village of Song. The inhabitants closed the gates, refusing him admittance. Lion-marks were all about the road he had traversed to the village, and Mungo, with a sinking heart, determined to keep as close as he could to the gate. Perhaps the lions would not venture so near. He tethered his horse and lay down under a tree. Presently, very weary, he fell asleep. But about ten o'clock the hunting roar of a lion aroused him, and, unarmed and weak for lack of proper food, his courage went. He banged desperately at the gates of Song. Song's guardians told him to begone; then relented, and said they would question the duti. The lion growled, briskly, even nearer. Mungo heard the pad of its great paws, and the rustle of the beast in the long grasses. It stood outside the range of his vision, tail-switching. He bolted back to his tree and climbed high.

Song, yawning, wakened its headman. Yawning, but refreshed by a nap, he consented to come to the gates. Mungo was hailed down from his tree, and complimented (perhaps mistakenly) on the moderation of his language. He could be no Moor, they were convinced, for no Moor yet ever waited any time at the gate of a village without cursing the inhabitants.

Mungo felt an unexpected fellow-feeling with Moors.

In spite of the sour wetness of the flooded lands,

he was slowly recovering from the effects of his last bout of fever. Exactly a year before, and five hundred miles away on the Gambian coast, he had been recovering from the first fever he had met with in Africa.

31 The country began to rise into hills. Tall mountains towered to the west, their summits hid under the louring canopies of rain. The Niger had now risen to such height as to overflow to a wide extent the flat lands that bordered it, and the tracks amid the fields had long since disappeared. Mungo and his horse splashed through mud and water mile on mile, the horse up to the belly in water. At last, crossing a swamp, the horse slipped into a pit and was almost drowned. So was Mungo. He dragged out his woebegone mount, and surveyed his own reflection. He was plastered from head to foot in mud.

There was nothing to be done in the matter but ride on. Shortly afterwards he passed the village of Callimana. Callimana held its sides and rocked, shouting that here were a couple of dirty elephants come to town. Mungo rode on, seeking the town of Yamina, sacked a few years before by the Daisy of Kaarta, but slowly recovering to prosperity. He purchased some corn on the outskirts, and then, in order to satisfy his still-unextinguished passion for note-taking, rode through the town-centre. His heart missed a beat as he saw great numbers of Moors in the streets. People stopped and stared astonished. Assuming an air of indifference, Mungo rode briskly out of Yamina before the

inhabitants could recover sufficiently to question his origins or theological notions.

That night, the 16th of August, he received hospitality from the headman of a village called Farra, and next day took his way through a land even more deeply flooded than hitherto. Presently the road forsook the lowlands, seeping wet, and climbed for safety to the shoulder of a hill. Mungo climbed with it, passing ruined villages sacked by the Daisy in his raids and wars. Near one of these ruins Mungo climbed a tamarind tree, tasted its fruit, and found it sour. Then he hung in the branches and surveyed the dripping world below him. The Niger seemed to have broadened into a lake, reflecting the great sailing barges of the clouds mile on mile from a tideless surface. And the worst of the rains had not yet come.

That night he was received with hospitality again, and next day was astir early, feeding his horse. Still, miraculously, it held out against complete collapse. Here the country grew great mattings of grass and reeds, and Mungo was unable to survey the lands he traversed. Presently, in that green reed-jungle, he lost the track for several hours. At length he caught a glimpse of the Niger far to the left and made his way towards it through squelching bogs. About two o'clock he came to the banks of a small river, and saw a track wind up from the other side. In weather less moist this had been a ford. Now the water flowed high and strong and rapid. Mungo sat down and stared at it.

But no one came to tell him what to do. With a groan he took off his clothes, tied them above his head, and dragged his horse into the water in an attempt to gain the opposite bank. The water rose rapidly to his neck, and the full force of the stream was slewing him about when he heard a voice hail him from the bank he had just left. It was a black, in considerable distress. He yelled to Mungo to come out at once : the river swarmed with man-eating alligators.

Hesitating not at all, Mungo splashed back to the bank. The black had not observed before that he was a white man. Now as Mungo's unshielded person arose from the water, he gasped with a hand at his mouth, ' God preserve me, who's this ? '

Mungo explained—he was now in a country which spoke almost pure Mandingo and he was easily understood. The black's astonishment moderated, and he assisted Mungo to cross the river by the aid of a canoe.

That evening brought the traveller to the walled town of Taffara. The duti being newly dead and no new headman elected, the inhabitants prudently declined to entertain him. Mungo spent the better part of the night under the village bentang, later in the corner of a damp court. He succeeded in begging a little food for himself, but none for his horse. Next day, very hungry, he held through a rain-gloomy land. At the village of Sooha, while he was begging food from the duti, and being told by that individual that there was none to spare, he

observed a slave digging a hole in the ground with a spear. As the duti continued to eye him bitterly and mutter in his beard words like 'Good for nothing!' and 'A plague!' Mungo arrived at the conclusion that the slave was digging his grave. He prepared to decamp forthwith, when the grave-digging slave, his pit ready, went away and a moment later returned with the corpse of a boy, quite naked. This corpse the slave carried by an arm and a leg, and when he reached the side of the pit hurled it therein with such savage indifference as Mungo had never seen. He felt sick and rode away.

Coasting the Niger and spared the rain for the rest of the day, he came to the great salt market of Koolikorro. Here he managed to find lodging at the house of a much-travelled Bambarran trader, whose travels, though they had made of him a child of Islam, had not lessened in any degree his belief in the power of charms. This, indeed, was what procured Mungo his lodging. Hearing that the dirty elephant was a Christian, the merchant brought out his writing board and offered to cook Mungo a fine dish of rice in return for a written charm against the machinations of wicked men. Mungo complied without scruple, covering the board from top to bottom with scrawled gibberish at which the merchant gazed in a satisfied awe. 'To be certain of having the full force of the charm, he washed the writing from the board into a calabash with a little water, and, having said a few

prayers over it, drank this powerful draught ; after which, lest a single word should escape, he licked the board until it was quite dry.'

The news spread through Koolikorro. The headman sent his son for a charm. Mungo, completing unarduous tasks as a literatus, ate largely, was given a good bed, and slept the sleep of the just.

For two days, splashing through swamps and swimming minor rivers (with his records concealed for safety in the crown of his much-battered beaver tile), Mungo held uncertainly westward, along the banks of the Niger. It was a land of floods and low hills, continuous rains and jungles of reed. The further he went, the more uncertain he became of the nearest way to the coast. But, on the evening of the 23rd, coming to another great salt market, Bammakoo, he was lodged with some hospitality at the house of a Serawoolli negro and visited by a number of Moors. Far from their own country, they were reasonably polite and given to gossip. All agreed that Mungo would find it almost impossible to proceed westwards at this time of the year. The rains and the Niger floods had closed up all the routes. The best thing he could do was to halt in Bammakoo for many weeks.

But he had not sufficient of the cowrie money left him to last more than a few days. In the morning he pressed his landlord for definite information. Was there no single route still open to the westward? The negro scratched his head and then shook it—a native gesture of assent. Yes,

there was one—northwards, over the hills, to the town of Sibidooloo. Sibidooloo attained, Mungo might, with the aid of God and great good luck, travel forward through Manding, the original home of all the Mandingoes.

An itinerant Jilli Kea, or singing man, offered to guide Mungo over the hills to Sibidooloo. They set off on the morning of the 24th of August up a rocky glen. The rocks were ironstone and schistus, with detached pieces of white quartz, Mungo noted in a sudden recrudescence of geological interest. Possibly his companion was similarly engaged, for, reaching a village in an hour or so, he declared that they had strayed from the right road, and would never reach Sibidooloo at this rate. Thereat, slinging his drum upon his back, he clambered up the hills and disappeared, absent-mindedly forgetting Mungo and his needs. The latter, after sardonically admiring the black bard's agility, sought through the hills for a path that his horse could travel.

He was in a maze of small valleys. To the south-east towered gigantic a misty range of mountains. Villagers told him that these guarded the mysterious kingdom of Kong. But Kong was out of the question for him to visit.

Night was coming. He had attained the north-west side of the hills and was looking around for a suitable tree to shelter under in the fashion to which he had become all too accustomed, when the horse's weary pace brought him to the lips of a fertile

valley and so to a 'romantic village called Kooma'. Kooma was romantic in that it belonged to a Mandingo merchant who had fled the wars to take up his life anew and apart in these glens, subject to neither the patronage nor the outrage of the bickering kings. Here he and his family dwelt in obscure retreat, a pocket of contentment and prosperity in war-vexed Africa. Visitors were scarce phenomena in Kooma, and Mungo was welcomed with open arms.

But he might not stay even in this kindly village where he and his horse were fed, and a fire lighted in his hut. The rains followed in his tracks. He found two Kooma shepherds who were journeying towards Sibidooloo, and with them to companion him set out next morning up the steep and rocky tracks through the hills. His horse frequently stumbled. Unshod, it had cut its hooves on the sharp quartzite splinters of the hills. The path grew ever steeper, and Mungo, had his stumbling horse stumbled a little more than usual, would have been hurled over a precipice to certain death. He had taken too many risks to let this disturb him, and rode ahead imperturbably.

The shepherds grew tired of waiting on the stumbling Rosinante and gradually drew ahead. About eleven o'clock, when Mungo had dismounted by a wayside rivulet to drink, he heard a wild screaming break out ahead. Imagining one of the shepherds had been seized by a lion, he vaulted on to his saddle and looked about him. There was no sign

of either shepherds or lions. Mungo urged forward his horse, calling out to his late companions : so calling, his eyes fell on one of the shepherds, lying in the long grass by the side of the road. Mungo imagined him dead, but when he had ridden nearer, was startled when the corpse raised his head and whispered that the track was infested with armed men. His companion had been seized and arrows fired at himself as he escaped.

Mungo looked about him. At a little distance an armed black sat on the stump of a tree, regarding him unpleasantly. The heads of six or seven more appeared above the tall grass. The shepherd, recumbent on the ground, evidently escaped their attention. Mungo did not. He rode towards them, blandly, and inquired if they were elephant-hunters ; and had they had a good bag ?

Without returning an answer to this flippancy, one of the blacks commanded him to dismount ; then, changing his mind, waved a hand for Mungo to proceed on his way. So he did, thankfully ; but had gone but a little way when he heard a loud hail behind him. The elephant-hunters were running in his tracks, commanding him to halt.

There was nothing else for it. Up came the blacks, and, having concocted the tale to suit the occasion, informed him that they had been sent by the king to seize him and convey him to Foola-doo.

Mungo shrugged and went with them. The forest grew thicker. Here the sun fell hardly at

all through the spreading branches. Suddenly Mungo's escort halted. This place would do.

Immediately one snatched off Mungo's hat, another cut off the solitary metal button remaining on his waistcoat ; finally, to make sure of the nature of the haul, they stripped him naked. He made no resistance : it would have meant instant death. One stared loutishly at the compass, and, when Mungo begged for its return, cocked a musket and swore to shoot the white trash should he lay hands on it. Mungo did *not* lay hands on it. It was a poor enough haul they had made, but robbers could not be choosers and they made no complaints. Instead, they commenced to debate an interesting point : Should they leave the white man naked, or give him something to shelter him from the sun ?

The second school of thought carried the day. The worst of Mungo's two shirts was returned to him, and the most ragged of his pairs of trousers. Then, driving his horse before them, the robbers vanished into the forest. Mungo called after them, asking for his hat. In its crown all his memoranda were concealed. The robber who had taken this share of the plunder weighed the thing in his hand for a moment. It was both heavy and uncouth. With an appropriate exclamation, he hurled it back at Mungo.

A few moments later he stood alone, in the wilds of Africa, without a horse, without weapons, without money, in the two miserable rags left to

him. He was five hundred miles from the nearest European settlement. The rains still held. He was completely abandoned, 'naked and alone ; surrounded by savage animals, and men still more savage'.

32In this situation, Mungo recollected his religion, that of the Established Kirk of Scotland. As always, recollection of his God stirred and cheered him. It was inconceivable that his deity should abandon him in these wilds, without hope or succour. The gods of the nations whose lands he had traversed abandoned their worshippers with the greatest complacency as the occasion arose. Mungo, convinced of the superiority of his own deity, prepared to face Africa again.

Further, at this moment, and in accordance with the best conventions of the genteel religious literature of his century, his eye lit on 'the extraordinary beauty of a small moss, in fructification. . . . I mention this to show from what trifling circumstances the mind will sometimes derive consolation ; for though the whole plant was not larger than the top of one of my fingers, I could not contemplate the delicate conformation of its roots, leaves, and capsula without admiration. Can that Being (thought I) who planted, watered, and brought to perfection, in this obscure part of the world, a thing which appears of so small importance, look with unconcern upon the situation and sufferings of creatures formed after his own image?— Surely not !'

Surely not. Inspired by this fine admixture of sceptical doubt of his own mental equipment and hazy acceptance of his physical importance, Mungo, who had sunk to the ground overpowered, stood up again. He felt strangely and serenely reinvigorated. A conviction came upon him that help was close at hand.

Nor was he mistaken. At a village a little further on he came on the two shepherds. Both had escaped the robbers, both stared at Mungo as an apparition from the dead. Then they guided him on through the hills for the rest of the day and at sunset brought him to the gates of much-desired Sibidooloo—hill-defended, in a fertile valley.

Here his luck held. The headman—all over Manding known as the Mansa—sat on a mat in his hut, smoking his pipe, when Mungo was brought before him. All the time Mungo was telling his tale of highway robbery and despoilment, the black ruler sent up clouds of contemplative smoke. But he proved less phlegmatic than his appearance warranted. At the end of Mungo's recital he commanded him to sit down, and swore that everything of which he had been robbed would be returned to him. 'Give the white man a drink of water,' he concluded magnanimously.

For two days Mungo sat in Sibidooloo, waiting to hear news of his missing property. But provisions were very scarce, and he anxious to press on to the coast. He interviewed the Mansa again, and that individual, smoke-blowing, gave him

permission to go on as far as a village called Wonda. There he hoped Mungo would tarry until news of the thieves came through. 'Give the white man a drink of water,' he concluded magnanimously.

Wonda Mungo reached about noon of the next day, the 30th of August. He found it a small town with a mosque and a school. The latter also acted as guest-hut, and here Mungo was allowed to take up residence the while he waited for news from Sibidooloo. His head frequently swam in attacks of malaria. Once or twice, sitting dozing at nights, he fainted. Still no news came, and, what with the fact that his clothes were perpetually damp, the fever mounted. His situation was very desperate, for famine had begun to walk the land, and he observed his landlord bend on him a scowling glance.

He took to hiding during the greater part of the day, out of doors, in the cornfields or under trees, dozing and waking there unhappily through the long blink of the African day, seeing pass in front of his eyes an unending slow gleam of pictures, drowsing to sleep and dreams of England, Yarrow-bank, of the red months of heat in the horrors of Benownm and Bubaker. At night he would creep back to the guest-hut and the muttered reproaches of the landlord.

The famine increased. Mothers sold their children to the village Mansa in exchange for a few days' corn. Hearing of this, Mungo, his Scots sentiment not yet withered, desired to look on the

face of the female monster who had consented to one of these monstrous transactions. One of the women was pointed out to him. She had nothing cruel or savage in her countenance : it was merely a thin human face, bitterly emaciated. Manners makyth monsters.

Then, on the morning of September the 6th, hope revived. Two men came plodding up the tracks from Sibidooloo, driving in front of them an antique wreck, bearing a bundle. It was Mungo's horse, and the bundle his clothes, recovered from the robbers. No tale of the recovery came with these effects, and Mungo seems to have been too busied in examining them to make inquiries. He found his pocket-compass broken to pieces, and stared at that discovery aghast.

Yet something of the wreck was retrieved, and now he could push on with some more help than that of Shanks's mare. He was mistaken. Next morning, out grazing, Mungo's horse, a laggard skeleton with a thin covering of skin, fell into a well. Mungo went and looked at the beast and mentally gave it up. A great disgust with horses came upon him. The villagers were less pessimistic. They assembled in some numbers, and lowered an athlete who fastened withies under the horse's belly. So they drew it up, and presented him to Mungo.

But Mungo would have none of the beast. He made him a gift to the village Mansa, sent back the saddle and bridle to the smoke-blowing Mansa of

Sibidooloo in thanks for that potentate's drinks of water and recovery of his possessions, and prepared to set out for the coast on foot. He had exchanged the fragments of his boots for sandals ; his landlord had furnished him with a spear and a leather bag in which to carry the miserable tag-end of his baggage. On foot through the squelching roads he set out, sick, staggering, and resolute.

For two days, with varying fortune, he wandered from village to village. The Niger was long lost to view ; his only concern now was to reach the coast ere he died of exposure. In that starving country this was a clear enough likelihood. He lay all the night of the 9th of September, without food, at the village of Nemacoo. All the next day it rained, and the inhabitants kept to their huts. But in late afternoon a trader, one Modi Lemina Taura, hearing of the white man so journeying in the village, came to see him, and was astounded and distressed at Mungo's condition. He himself had a house in the next village, that of Kinyeto, and in Kinyeto he promised Mungo a welcome.

All the next day Mungo tramped through the stinging rainfall, seeking Kinyeto. He had hurt his ankle on the way, and by the time he arrived at Taura's village in the evening it was red and inflamed. Next day it was swollen to such a degree that Mungo could not set his foot on the ground, and Taura asked him to stay in his hut till it mended. For three days Mungo lay and watched it mend. The rains kept on, dripping from the roof-sides,

drumming on the roof-ridges, in the air the smell of mould and green vegetal life in surgence. Mungo slept and slept, saving his strength for that second vision that now led his eyes—the coast—as once the Niger had beguiled his feet eastwards into the interior.

His ankle-swelling down, he set out again on the 14th, hobbling on a staff. Fever had returned as the ankle bettered : he was delirious all the night of the 15th and 16th, in a hut in the village of Dosita. It was a hilly and inhospitable land ; the villages crouched in the valley amid their terraced plantations. At Mansia the headman demanded payment for the small provision of corn he provided for the white man's supper. Mungo answered that he had nothing left to pay with. Thereat the headman impounded his spear—until the morning.

Suspiciously, Mungo considered there were other considerations moving the landlord. He sought round the village until he found a venturesome soul among the blacks, willing to share the guest-hut with him. This individual brought his bow and arrows, and he and Mungo lay down in a light sleep.

About midnight Mungo awoke to the sound of someone approaching the door. Starting up on his elbow, he saw a man stepping cautiously over the threshold. Immediately Mungo snatched up the bow and quiver. At the sound of its rattle, the intruder fled, but not before Mungo's companion, peering after him, identified the intruder as the

village Mansa. Later, after Mungo had barricaded the door with a block of wood, a heavy weight in the night pressed against it with considerable force. Mungo called aloud to his companion to let whoever was out there enter. As his companion made to obey they heard the sound of running footsteps in the dark.

At dawn Mungo's companion stole into the Mansa's hut and stole back Mungo's spear. Then, bidding farewell to this nameless companion of his dark hours, Mungo trudged away through the hills.

Towards evening these petered out in a wide slope, and at the bottom of this slope he came upon the town of Kamalia, where they dug gold from the hillsides. Here the Mohammedan converts, the bushreens, lived apart from the pagans, and here, in the house of one of those bushreens, Karfa Taura, brother of the hospital merchant of Kinyeto, Mungo found sanctum.

He found more. Karfa, when Mungo entered his hut, was seated on a mat with some fellow-slavers, reading from an Arabic script. He asked if Mungo understood what he read. Mungo shook his head, in little mind for discussions of the sickening pot-hooks of Bubaker. Thereat, with a grin, Karfa remarked that he had in his possession one book which the white man would surely understand. He had this book brought, and Mungo recognised it as the English Book of Common Prayer. It had journeyed up from the coast in the spoil of some caravan.

The slatis who were sharing Karfa's hut glowered sideways on Mungo in considerable distrust. A white man?—with that yellow hide and that long beard? And who ever saw a white man so ragged or so forlorn, or, for that matter, wandering the countryside like an idiot when he might have stayed at the coast in comfort and grown wealthy and fat with slaves in his barracks and fat women in his bed? It was more than likely this was some villainous Moor.

But Karfa, convinced by Mungo's evident understanding of the Prayer Book, had no doubts at all, and sat and listened to all Mungo's story as the ever-threatening rain resumed and drummed across the roofs of Kamalia. Go west? That would be impossible for many months to come. Right in the track lay the wilderness of Jallonka, with eight unfordable rivers, swollen by the rains, traversing it. No one ventured on that track until the rains subsided and the grass was burned, unless he sought certain death.

The wearied young Scot made an impatient gesture. Quite so. But what else was there for him to do? He had no money to pay for his keep in Kamalia through long months. He must either die here or risk dying in the wilderness. Personally, he preferred the chances of the wilderness.

He was unaware, while protesting thus, that he was looking upon his saviour. Then Karfa outlined his plans. He himself, when the rains had cleared, was proceeding down to the Gambia.

Didn't the white man know that he was a slave-trader? He was—the greatest of slave-traders. Very good. Throughout the next few months he would collect a great caravan of slaves here in Kamalia. Why should not Mungo wait till the caravan was ready to move, meantime living on Karfa's bounty? When they reached the coast, Mungo could repay him as he thought proper.

It sounded like the voice of an angel in a dream, that of the slave-trader to the wearied youth who had sought and attained the Niger, and turned back from it into a waste of rain and malaria-haunted days. He managed, with a relic of native caution, to ask Karfa if the price of a slave would be sufficient for all this attendance when they reached the coast? Karfa answered in the affirmative, and Mungo was delivered.

But for the happy accident of his coming to Karfa's house, it is probable that he would have pushed on the next day and perished in the Jallonka wilds. He never forgot this fact in the succeeding days, remembering it to Karfa's credit—remembering it, perhaps, to the credit of all slavers when at last he sat down to prepare a narrative for publication from that mass of memoranda he had carried through the African jungles concealed in the roof of the famous beaver tile.

33 Yet, saved though he was from starvation or violent death in the flooded Jallonkadoo, the fever woke again in him, this time to alarming temperatures. Karfa had provided him with a hut for himself, a mat to sleep on, and all necessary furniture known to Kamalia. Twice a day he sent slaves with food and water. But he knew even less of treating a fever than did Mungo, that graduate of contemporary European science, whose knowledge was negligible. Weak and delirious though he frequently found himself, Mungo took pains to conceal the fact as much as possible. Karfa was kind—yes. But should he find he had a dying man in his hands, one who would never survive to repay him in the Gambia, would he not more than likely turn him adrift?

He assumed the appearance of a visitor of normal interests and in the enjoyment of normal health. Probably he looked like a partially revived corpse, and did Karfa an injustice, the slaver staring at him in polite surprise as he staggered out on formal visits by the side of that individual. Down poured the rains. Through them, staring, bearded, yellow-faced and haggard, Mungo staggered on rounds of visits to Karfa's friends. He was twenty-five years of age, but he looked nearly fifty. At last, on one of those jaunts, seized by a fit of faintness, he fell

headlong into a clay pit. Karfa, repressing mirth, dragged him out, and politely assured him there was no need to abandon his hut at all when he was in such a condition. Let him remain in it and he would soon recover.

Freed of that haunting vision of himself turned adrift, Mungo kept his bed for a long five weeks, while the rains fell and fell, and seemed unceasing. Bright and translucent they waved their misty veils down over the ringing hills, and Mungo's fever, quietening away one day, would revive the next. Sometimes, in hours of daylight, when the rain had cleared for a little, he would crawl to the door of his hut and sit in the sunshine, with closed eyes, day-dreaming dourly. In other and more frequent hours of the day and night, darker memories came on him, doubts and a despair of himself and all he had done. Karfa had loaned him the far-travelled Book of Common Prayer, but in those hours it was little help ; not till convalescence came did he turn to it and its politic sonorities for the help which that lost starved thing within him, his genteel eighteenth-century soul, called for so urgently.

Convalescence came with the clearing of the weather. The sun returned in full force on a country matted with vegetation. The air smelt strong and quick. Mungo had his sleeping-mat dragged out to the shade of a tamarind tree, and there, through long hours, drowsed his way back to health and a polite curiosity in all things, flora

and fauna, about him. Opening his eyes and gazing upon the coming of the corn, he felt as though he with it had returned from Persephone's kingdom of shades.

Kamalia was a halting-post for slavers and their cattle. One day a Serawoolli slati arrived from Sego, the capital of distant Bambarra. In common with other slavers, he took an instant dislike to Mungo and his influence over Karfa—he of the Prayer Book. Innumerable tales, mostly discreditable, were whispered to Karfa concerning the character and activities of the white man. But Karfa, either out of goodness of heart or from policy, turned a deaf ear to these shady informants. So he turned to the Sego slati. Mungo, with the help of the sun and a shaky convalescence, wandered out to look at that individual's convoy, sitting chained and half-starved.

As he surveyed them with his usual polite disinterest one of them begged him for a little food. Mungo answered he had none to give—he himself was a stranger and an alien here. Thereat the chained black exclaimed, 'Yet I have given *you* victuals when you were hungry. Have you forgot the man who brought you milk at Karankalla? But the irons were not then on my legs!' Mungo, in some horror, recognised him, and begged some groundnuts from Karfa to feed the one-time freedman. He had been captured by the Bambarrans and sold into slavery; four days later he departed from Kamalia and out of Mungo's life.

The weeks dragged by. Karfa had gone to the great slave-trading centre of Kancaba on the Niger to make up his caravan for the Gambia coasts. Mungo, left in the care of the village schoolmaster, won back his strength, and sat long hours in the shade of his hut or out under the tamarind tree, jotting down notes on the customs and habits and fortunes of the men of that region bounded by the 12th and 15th parallels. In Mungo's day publication of these notes was to send a wave of interest through all the reading public, but they belong, these notes, to an age when scientific comparison and observation was barely beginning among travellers. Mungo wrote with a strange admixture of genteel admonition and genuine cold-blooded impartiality, the first overpowering the second in just the places where it should not. Also, he generalises to an unwarranted extent, describing customs as general when they are particular to one phase of culture and one tribe. This was partly due to lack of a knowledge of other languages than Mandingo. Mandingo, indeed, is the folk and the speech with which he is best acquainted, and his notes have still value with respect to that people and their state a hundred and forty years ago—whether in their methods of smelting iron in circular towers of clay or their habit, in the marriage ceremony, of rousing the newly wedded couple to inspect the sheets.

It was now mid-December. Looking out from his hut, Mungo saw the rains clear off from the

surface of the drenched earth. A dry and parching wind blew from the north-east, rapidly soaking up the moisture from the flooded lands and bringing trees and plants to sudden leafage. The world steamed : Mungo felt as though he steamed with it. For the first time in months he could lie down in clothes that were dry, if ragged. Balance and clearness came with that good wind : he was never to forget the blowing of those fresh days from the dry wastes of the Sahara as he and the schoolmaster of Kamalia sat and compared notes on the Mohammedan and Christian faiths, and Mungo discovered that the Muslim also had a knowledge of the old Testament heroes, Abraham, Abel, Solomon, even here in the wilds of Africa. Politely complimenting the schoolmaster on his erudition, he was nevertheless politely regretful that the Mohammedans should have such advantages over Europeans in these lands ; and drew up a short scheme, which never came to fruition, for translating the Bible into Arabic and distributing it up and down the wild lands he had trod. This he envisaged as ' ameliorating manners '.

Meantime the long grasses that matted the countryside around Kamalia grew dry and withered. Every year at this season it was burned by the natives to clear the roads for transport, and to clear the ground and manure their crops. Mungo one midnight went out to see the flames. Earth and sky seemed ablaze for many miles around. Through that general dun lowe great pillars of fire

marched and countermarched as the night waned to dawn. In the daytime great pillars of smoke were vanishing eastwards over the horizon leaving a blackened countryside.

But under that blackness the new verdure was coming. Still not over-hot, the sun shone down, and the clink of the slaves' tools in the plantations around Kamalia rang pleasantly in the ears of Mungo as he sat at his notes, bearded and thin, but less yellow-faced now. His hands had ceased to tremble in ague, and he could walk now without crutches to his tamarind tree and drowse.

December passed and New Year came. Where had he been this time a year before? Under the tamarind tree he lay and dreamt back across the wild routes of his exploration. Ah, he remembered now. In Teesee of Kasson, in the city of Tiggity Segó, waiting the return of his horse. He wondered if that horse was still alive.

On the 24th of January, the genial Karfa came back to Kamalia from Kancaba. Thirteen prime slaves, lashed neck to neck, trudged at his heels. Mungo, diligently note-taking, went amongst them and questioned them on their antecedents and opinions. Eleven of them had been slaves all their lives : they had merely, in the Bambarran-Kaartan war, suffered a change of master. All of them stared at Mungo in horror. Finally, one of them plucked up courage to ask if it was really true that his countrymen were cannibals.

Mungo tried to reassure them. He thought his

own beard was at fault, but further inquiries elicited the information that it was the common belief among slaves travelling towards the coast that the white men purchased them for no other purpose than to transport them across the water to their own lands and there devour them in sickening orgies. White men were a foul and unclean race, of low mental and moral calibre.

Mungo noted down all this and pried round the slave huts, much as Leonardo da Vinci pried round the execution pits, in search of further information. Slaves ordinarily were chained leg to leg and neck to neck. But the sullen or discontented were further secured by a heavy billet of wood stapled about the ankle. Every morning, being valuable cattle, they were led out to the shade of Mungo's tamarind tree and encouraged to sing and play ; nighttime saw them back in their huts under a strong guard. Mungo records his appreciation of the good treatment undergone by the slaves.

The slaves themselves appear to have been less appreciative. One night one of them, after hours of heroic labour, opened the rings in his fetters, pried up the staple, and made his escape. He was the only one. Had Mungo himself seen the escaper in the midst of his labours he would undoubtedly have fetched out his notes and written up the entire procedure, neither hindering nor helping.

February came. Kamalia grew crowded with slavers and their merchandise awaiting the move

of the great caravan on the first stretch of its journey down to the Gambia. Again and again Mungo put his few effects together under the impression that the caravan would depart on the next day. But the merchants awaited signs for a lucky march, or had daughters to marry, or a ceremony to observe, or just one more slave to purchase. Finally, the fast-month of Ramadhan was upon them when it was wellnigh impossible to travel day in, day out, without food or drink from dawn till sunset. Mungo sat down to endure it.

He fasted three days, politically, to show respect for the creed of his host, and then went note-taking. The days dragged past. It grew very hot again. The last day of the fast-month came, and the native Mohammedans assembled in the fall of the evening to welcome the new moon. It was cloudy weather, a dragging wisp of vapours passing from the face of Africa in the rear of the rains. No moon could be seen, and with inward groans the more zealous Mohammedans went home to fast anew. But hardly had they gone when Selene obtruded a horn from under the sailing cloud-drift. Drums and musket-shots greeted her. Ramadhan was over, and the slave caravan might set out for the coast.

The augurs determined the 19th of April as the lucky day for the departure. Only with that decision did it come on Mungo how homesick he was, how he hated Africa and the browns and blacks of the African faces, their drums, their

slaves, their superstitions, their drinks and their sickening foods. England and Yarrow—white faces, courteous voices, grey buildings under a grey sky—they seemed part of another existence, and his return to them as struggling up, resurrected from the dead.

He again assembled his bundles, and on the morning of the 19th of April, 1797, trudged out from Kamalia eastwards in company with seventy-three others, slaves and slavers.

34 Many of the slaves had been in irons for years, accustomed, when they walked at all, to take short mincing steps as result of the heavy fetters between their legs. They suffered considerably by the time they had gone a mile ; two were unroped and allowed to follow more slowly, in charge of an overseer till they came to the walled town of Maraboo. Here the caravan gathered fresh provisions. At the next village, that of Bala, they spent the night of the 19th, and late next day reached Worumbang, on the frontier between Manding and Jallonkadoo.

The great Jallonka wilderness was near at hand, and Mungo tightened an already overstrained belt in preparation. Fortunately, the caravan decided to avoid the wilderness as far as possible by a detour to the town of Kinytakoorro. On the 21st they hurried forward at a run rather than a walking pace as the heat of the day rose. Mungo and the light-loaded merchants set the pace. Behind, sweating under burdens, came the slaves. Behind these walked more of the merchants, whips in hand. Mungo heard the crack of those whips rise louder as the hours went by.

They came presently to the Dangerous River, Kokoro, a tributary of the far Senegal. It was dangerous because of its crocodiles. Mungo saw none : the river had already fallen from the spates

of the rains to a trickling stream. The caravan made a short halt, and then splashed through and climbed the banks on the road to Kinytakoorro. Two slaves, a man and a woman belonging to a slati of Bala, proved especially laggard throughout the course of the day. Lashed by the whips, they stumbled forward until about three o'clock in the afternoon, when they began vomiting in an unrestrained manner, as Mungo observed with interest. They vomited *clay* : they had been eating quantities of clay through hunger or desperation.

The caravan entered Kinytakoorro in style, with drums and singing men. Here they were provided with lodgings, slaves and free, and took up residence there until the 22nd of April. That day they marched only seven miles. This brought them to a village which believed itself about to be invaded by the Foulahs. The villagers had abandoned the plain and taken to the rocky hillsides. There they had built temporary huts and assembled great piles of stones to roll down on the heads of trespassers. Mungo greatly admired these defences, and, with a passing twinge of regret that he had not arrived at the village at the time when the Foulahs were carrying out siege operations, prepared to enter the Jallonka wilderness.

Some little way within its borders they came on two looted and burned villages : the Foulahs had been here. At ten in the morning another Senegal tributary hove in sight, so thick with shoals of fish that the very water tasted and smelt fishy. This is

Mungo's one fishy tale. Beyond this stream the caravan drew in to a semi-military marching order—guides and young men in the van, women and slaves in the centre, free men of consequence in the rear.

Jallonka : Mungo stared about him in surprise. Here was no wilderness, but a well-wooded land of glen and hill. Partridges and guinea-fowl clucked in the undergrowth, disturbed by the feet of the slaves. Deer trotted away in dappled herds. Presently they came to another stream where Mungo stripped and bathed and felt greatly refreshed. The caravan halted, sweating, and looked on. Three miles further on they halted at the verge of a thick wood, and made camp for the night. They had travelled a good thirty miles that day.

The fires kindled. Karfa sent a slave to make a brushwood bed for Mungo. Kouskous was eaten, the slaves put in irons. Then Mungo and his compeers lay down to sleep with Jallonka about them. Sleep came but slowly to Mungo, what with the continual howling of wild beasts in his ears. Also, ants got into his clothing and went through unceasing evolutions and excavations all through the hours of the night. Day-coming was a relief.

Hot gruel was served to the slatis and Mungo and the other free men. The slaves looked on hungrily. One of Karfa's slaves, a woman named Nealee, was offered some as a special favour and declined it, sulkily. She was to regret that ere the day was spent. Jallonka wilderness suddenly changed in character.

No longer did they march through a fertile forested land but wild and rocky country, without shade for a great part of the way. Mungo's feet were cut and bruised to such an extent that he was in fear of the caravan's going ahead and leaving him to perish in that waterless land. But he soon observed that many of the others were in similar straits, particularly the woman Nealee. Her load was taken from her and piled on that already carried by one of her fellows. Karfa was a kindly slaver.

About eleven o'clock they came to a small stream, and rested there, laving their faces. Unfortunately, despite the heat and the rough track they had crossed since daybreak, there were still some adventurous and restless souls in the caravan. Some of these pried around the bank of the stream until they came upon a hive of wild bees in a hollow tree. They were proceeding to take out the honey, when the largest swarm that Mungo had ever beheld emerged from the tree and put the entire caravan to flight. Merchants and slaves scattered yelling in all directions, Mungo himself proving so fleet of foot that he outdistanced even the most persistent denizen of the hive. He was accordingly in a position to take notes, as usual. Far beyond the stream the caravan gradually drew together again, licking its wounds or sucking out stings. Then an appraisal of casualties was made and it was discovered that many of the slaves had dropped their burdens in the flight, while the woman Nealee herself was missing.

The slavers hit upon an ingenious idea. A slight wind had got up from the west, blowing towards the rivulet and the hive. Setting fire to the grass, several of the slavers pursued the widening sheet of flame back to the stream. The bees fled. Pushing through the debris of the flames the slavers came on the lost bundles and also on the sulky and unfortunate Nealee. She had crawled to the side of the stream and attempted to escape the bees, bound as she was, by throwing water over herself. The bees had disregarded the water and stung her from head to foot.

Karfa and his friends bent over the slave and picked out as many of the stings as they could see, and then washed her from head to foot and rubbed her with bruised leaves to ease the pain. Nealee accepted these attentions, but, through her moans of pain, declared she was unable to walk another step. Karfa threatened and cajoled for a while. Then whips were applied to the blistered black hide of the slave-girl. After the third or fourth lash, Nealee screamed, staggered to her feet, and trudged on with the rest of the caravan.

But her trials for the day were not yet over. In the afternoon she attempted to escape. She was overtaken in the long grass where she had fallen down exhausted, and bidden to rise. She tried but could not. Again she was lashed with the raw-hide whips. Still she lay unmoving. Karfa saw that valuable merchandise was being damaged. He ordered her to be placed on the ass which carried the caravan's dry provisions.

But the ass would have none of this. It bucked and kicked in such a manner that the black girl was unseated again and again. At last a temporary litter was constructed and Nealee laid down in it. In this manner she was carried forward until darkness fell, and the caravan camped for the night.

The slaves had had no food for a day. Some of them were very exhausted, travelling under a hot sun with burdens upon their heads. Manacled and sweating, they sat and snapped their fingers, a sure sign, says Mungo, of desperation in a negro. Observing this finger-snapping, the slatis immediately put the slaves in double chains, while the most despondent were led apart from the rest and had their hands tied to cure their despondency. In the morning, says Mungo, 'they were found greatly recovered'.

Next day was the 25th of April. The caravan roused with aching limbs. None ached so much as the flogged and bee-stung Nealee. She could not stand, far less walk. Karfa had her tied on the ass's back as the caravan set out, her feet under the belly, her hands round the beast's neck. She was quickly thrown off, and had one of her legs damaged. The caravan became impatient and a unanimous cry arose 'Cut her throat, cut her throat!'

Mungo's note-taking passion suddenly deserted him. He marched ahead with the body of the caravan, while a group drew in around the tortured body of the black girl. About a mile further on, one of Karfa's domestic slaves drew level with Mungo.

He had Nealee's single garment slung on the end of his bow and remarked casually, 'Nealee is finished.'

Mungo asked how—had *he* cut her throat? The slave replied that Karfa and the Kamalia schoolmaster had been against that. Nealee had merely been stripped and left, still chained, to perish in the wilderness.

The schoolmaster, an enthusiastic Mohammedan, was greatly upset by the incident and fasted the whole day as a penance. Nealee, being devoured by wild beasts back in the wilderness, would no doubt have felt consoled. Mungo records how upset the whole caravan was over the incident—even those who had cried out that the girl's throat be cut. The incident had upset their digestions.

They pressed on at the same exhausting speed as on the former day. The slaves shuffled forward unmurmuring, apprehensive that they might share Nealee's fate. Mungo was soon dripping with sweat and limping bloody-heeled. He threw away his Sego spear : it was no help as a staff and unneeded for protection. Noon came : they raised their heads and saw on the forest fringe a great herd of elephants feeding. For a moment the caravan shook in apprehension, and then crept past on silent feet. The great beasts paid them no heed.

Jallonka still about them, they camped that night by a small stream, and next morning took their way over a low range of hills, trackless and rocky, which tore at the feet of black and white. The sun now blazed in full heat on the parched treeless country.

Afternoon took them across the Boki stream and so to a cross-roads. Here were the marks of many horses' hooves. Karfa and his peers debated these marks and decided that a band of mounted men, and therefore plunderers, was in the region.

Accordingly the caravan was dispersed and wandered through the grass and weeds for the rest of the day, mixing their tracks to throw pursuers off the scent. Sunset brought them to a white sand well, and here they rested for the night.

Great thickets of dry bamboos obscured the western trail. They struggled through them the next morning and knew at their hither side that the wilderness was being left behind. Afternoon brought them to Sooseeta, their first village in five days' march. They had crossed Jallonka at its narrowest stretch, a distance of a hundred miles.

Sooseeta they found almost destitute. Its inhabitants had had no corn for a month, living on mimosa seeds and seeds of the bamboo-cane. Much affected at this tale of hardship, the soft-hearted slavers shared their evening meal with their hosts. In return the hosts during the night attempted to abduct a boy belonging to the schoolmaster of Kamalia. The boy woke and yelled, was smothered to silence, and carried captive away. In the woods, however, his captor discovered that he was the property of the schoolmaster, whose place of residence was only three days' journey away. Disgusted, he stripped the boy and released him. Kept as a slave, he would be recognised too easily.

They were travelling now through the real land of African rumour and romance. There was no central authority among the Jallonkas. Tribe warred on tribe. Thieves strayed about the land in gangs. Next day the caravan came to Manna, and there paid tribute for the privilege of crossing the Black River near that town—crossing it on a singular bridge made of two trees ‘ tied together by the tops ’ and slung from bank to bank. They paid and hurried across, quaking.

The villages refused them food or shelter all that afternoon. Worse came. Towards twilight news was brought that a band of two hundred Jallonkas had assembled at the town of Melo with intent to fall upon the caravan and despoil it. Karfa instantly altered the route of march to evade this fate, and towards midnight they approached another town, Koba. Outside its walls they halted and called the roll, to discover that a free man and three slaves were missing.

Everyone presumed that the slaves had murdered the free man and made their escape. A party was sent back to investigate the route for clues. Meantime Mungo and the rest of the cofle lay down in a cotton field, and watched the lights of Koba, desiring to enter it, and yet afraid of the possible consequences. They had had no food, slavers or slaves, for over twenty-four hours.

Towards morning the search party returned with the news that there were no signs of the slaves or the free man. The hungry caravan received the news

with indifference. Finally, as the hasting African day came up out of the east, it was determined to enter Koba, risk or no risk.

Koba received them with a business-like geniality, sold them ground-nuts, and allowed them to rest in the huts for the day. Before noon the free man and the slaves put in an appearance—they had been lost in the bush as night fell, and the free man had chained the slaves and stood guard over them like a good and faithful servant. Mungo approved of him, coldly.

Meanwhile Karfa had determined to halt in Koba until he had collected an armed guard of mercenaries. On the 30th of April, with a sufficient number of these marching in and around the caravan, it got in motion again, passing in the course of the day through a village with the pleasantly tinkling name of Tinkingtang. Beyond here rose mountains, serrating all the western sky, and Mungo, trudging along in his dress of a slave-merchant, viewed them with apprehension as he thought of his naked feet.

They climbed. The air grew thinner and colder. On the western slopes of the mountains they traversed a silent land, stony and barren, where only the wild birds cried. The slaves panted, deep-breathing, under their burdens. Mungo looked back to see that barrier tower up behind him, cutting off the dark Niger lands in which he had adventured, reddening as the day waned.

With that day waning they came to another

village, Lingicotta. 'Cotta' was the district suffix, meaning town. They stayed there three days, allowing the slaves to recuperate and devour the last of the provisions. Help was near at hand : the home-town of the schoolmaster of Kamalia was Malacotta ; there he assured them of food in plenty.

They halted at noon on the 3rd of May at a village on a westward-flowing stream, waiting for news of the messenger whom they had despatched to Malacotta. Mungo looked down at his stained and tattered self and then at the swift-flowing waters. Here was blessed relief. He stripped on the banks, to the alarm of the natives. They came shouting the news : Didn't the fool realise that the water was deep ? If he ventured into a pool the water would come over his head—and where would he be then ? In hell, of course. Swimming was an unknown art in the village near Malacotta.

At ten o'clock a party of men was seen nearing the village from the west. It was the messenger and the schoolmaster's brother. Biblically, they fell on each other's black necks. The prodigal had returned, and the parable was fulfilled to the letter. Not only he but Mungo and the whole caravan was entertained to three days' feasting in pleasant Malacotta.

35 Mungo was now definitely in land unremote from the coast. Leaving Malacotta, the caravan threaded the great hills of Konkadoo, 'the Country of Mountains', in the blinding glare of heat. These were the great gold-bearing hills of West Africa; the natives smashed the white quartz with stone hammers to bring forth the tiny grains they showed to Mungo. He looked at them with a polite disinterest, staring into that waiting west that was still so far to seek.

For four days they climbed and adventured in this hill-land. On the road Mungo encountered his first negro albino, and stared at him in considerable distaste, a dank cadaverous creature. The negro stared back an equal disgust. Probably he was no true albino, but a native afflicted with leprosy. On May the 11th the weary footsore caravan arrived at the town of Satadoo, where the inhabitants lived in a state of terror on account of the raiding depredations of the nearby Foulahs. These raiders would descend through the forests at night and carry off men and women into slavery, blandly abducting them from the verge of the cornfields, or even when they gossiped around the village-well. The caravan made haste to be gone.

Next day they came to a ford in the Falemè River. Long months before, Mungo had encountered and

crossed this river in far Bondou, in his journey into the dark eastern lands. Beyond was a village called Medina, and as they rose from their lodgings there on the morning of the 13th of May, they were joined by another slave caravan. Karfa and the Serawoolli newcomers agreed to join forces, for in front of them lay a long and dangerous tract of forest.

As usual when facing such a portion of the march, the Africans went at a headlong pace which Mungo kept to, gasping. The slaves of the caravans panted and groaned in distress. Near noon one of these, of the Serawoolli caravan, dropped his load in exhaustion. The lash was applied, the sound of it ringing through the forest. Mungo stopped and noted the procedure with a calm disinterest. Dragged to his feet again, the load was replaced on the flogged slave's back, and the caravan resumed its racing speed through the track overtowered by dark forest boles. A mile from the place where he was flogged, the slave again dropped his bundle. Again the whips of the slavers were brought into play, and again the wretched black resumed his load and staggered forward. Near two o'clock the heat became stifling and the caravan was obliged to halt. The slave lay and gasped by a pool of water, and was so obviously exhausted that even his master saw it. Reluctantly he freed this unprofitable merchandise from the rope of the gang, and left him to be brought into the next town in the cool of the evening.

This town was Baniserile. Here Mungo witnessed a curious example of the power of affection over hygiene. One of the slavers in the caravan was a native of the place, though he had not seen it for three years. He was welcomed with loud rejoicings. At the threshold of his house his intended bride brought him a gourd of water in which to wash his hands. No sooner had he done so than the bride-to-be elevated the calabash to her mouth and drank down the water with every appearance of enjoyment. Mungo greatly approved this manifestation of 'fidelity and attachment'.

Towards eight o'clock of that evening the slaver who had been left in charge of the exhausted slave back in the woods entered the town alone. The slave, he reported, was dead. No one had any doubt of how he had died. He had been despatched by a knife-thrust, or else hamstrung and left to perish.

The morning of May the 16th saw the caravan winding out from the streets of Baniserile and taking the road westwards through land again densely afforested. The hills were a shimmer far down in the east. In the afternoon they came to Kirwani, the great iron-smelting town of the district. Here Mungo was pleased to observe how the natives used cattle dung to manure their fields, a thing not attempted elsewhere in the Africa he had travelled. Civilization was spreading. They lay down in huts and awaited the morning.

Morning brought a slaver of the place who

proposed a deal with Karfa. He had in his possession, he said, a slave who was dangerous for the reason that he came from a nearby territory. He might easily escape and return to his home. Would Karfa exchange one of his slaves for this individual, whom he could easily convey to the coast, far from his home?

Karfa, his hesitations oiled with a gift of shea-butter, agreed. The slave was brought and told the news. He leapt to his feet and bounded over the courtyard wall. He was immediately pursued, overtaken, kicked, brought back, and placed in irons. Then Karfa handed over his exchange, and the caravan resumed its way to the coast.

They had come to the verge of the wilderness of Tenda, a rugged land of forests and thickets of bamboo, shelving towards the south-west. Hardly had they entered it when they encountered a caravan coming from the Gambia, and bearing trade goods and bad news. Slaves would hardly sell at all on the coast: no slaving ships had arrived there for many months. At this news the Serawoilli caravan made up its mind not to attempt the Gambia but to turn northwards into Kajaaga. Mungo saw them depart with relief. They were a cruel and unkindly people compared with his favourite Mandingoes.

The heat grew burning and the bamboo thicket difficult to penetrate. It was a waterless tenantless land—tenantless except for lions. At sunset they arrived at a pool of water under a great tree, and

were greatly rejoiced at the sight. But as next day promised a march of equal fatigue, Karfa resolved to spend the night in travel, rather than the hot sun-hours.

With this resolve, the tired slaves were roused from where they lay and the caravan drawn into a compact body. It filed away through the howlings of the beasts. It was cool and terrifying in the forest. Near daybreak they halted and called the roll, fearing that some slaves might have slipped away during the dark hours. Instead, it was discovered that a free woman was missing.

Either she had mistaken her road or a lion had seized her. Either way, the caravan cursed her, but resolved to send back a search party. Three miles back inside the forest they came upon the woman, stretched by the side of a small stream, not dead, but fast asleep. She was roused, without politeness, and hurried on to rejoin her waiting fellow-travellers.

Marching again, unslept though they were, they reached the walled town of Tambacunda—a hospitable town, though it caused them to halt for four days while an unending palaver went on regarding a woman who had bigamously married a second husband while the first remained distant, but alive. Mungo did not see the end of the dispute : probably it is still going on. They left it to drone on under the bentang tree and took the road again on the morning of the 26th.

It was again wild and rocky country, its forests

alive with wild beasts and the calling of troops of monkeys amid the trees. Streamlets flecked this land in bright ribbons, seeking the bosom of the Gambia. Fish was added to the caravan's scanty diet, but otherwise there was little amelioration of the journeying. On the 30th of May they came to the village of Jallacotta, still suffering from raids by Foulah bandits from Bondou. The day before the arrival of Mungo and his caravan these bandits had descended through the forest and stolen twenty head of cattle.

The slaves in the caravan were a thin and unhealthy folk by this time, and one was found unable to proceed any further. His master arranged to exchange him with one of the slave girls of the town. 'The poor girl was ignorant of her fate until all the bundles were tied up in the morning, and the cofle ready to depart; when coming with some other young women to see the cofle set out, her master took her by the hand and delivered her to the singing man. Never was a face of serenity more suddenly changed into one of the deepest distress; the terror she manifested on having the load put on her head, and the rope fastened round her neck, and the sorrow with which she bade adieu to her companions, were truly affecting.' Mungo was genteelly moved.

At nine o'clock that day they crossed a large plain covered with ciboa trees, and so came to a tributary of the Gambia. Beyond this ford the singing men with the party burst into song, for

they had now reached the 'West country', The Land of the Setting Sun. That day it hardly seemed that it would set at all. It blazed down on the unshielded heads of Mungo and his companions, so that they plucked leaves from the ciboa palm and bore these over their heads as umbrellas. Presently the sun vanished and the rain came, the umbrellas submitting to double service. The country was level, with a clayey soil which the water presently churned into an agreeably moist mud, refreshing to the parched feet of the travellers. With sunset the rain had cleared and they sheltered for the night under the leaves of a large tabba tree, near the ruins of a nameless village.

At two o'clock of the following afternoon, Mungo, raising his bearded face, looked once again on the Gambia. It was eighteen months since he had last seen it.

36 They were on the borders of the kingdom of Woolli. On the morning of the 4th of June Karfa's slave caravan arrived at the walls of Medina, where long before Mungo had been entertained so hospitably by the venerable and kindly Jatta. From a customs officer he heard that Jatta was lying dangerously ill. But Karfa would halt the caravan for no enquiries. Medina's towers faded behind and Mungo tramped on into the west.

Two days later they came to Jindey, where Mungo had parted with Laidley and the two Ainslies eighteen months before. In all that time Mungo had not once seen a white face (unless that of the albino in Konkadoo) nor heard the sound of an English voice.

Here Karfa decided to leave his slaves until better times came at the coast, and he could sell them with some profit. He, Mungo, and a Foulah merchant prepared to set out for Pisania. In that last moment Mungo, strangely moved from his usual calm rectitude, remembered the slaves who had trudged behind him over so many dreary African miles ; he remembered their kindness and their care for him, laden down though they were by far heavier torments of their own. Something caught him almost to tears as he went and bade them farewell. He gave them his good wishes : he had no more to give them.

On the 9th of June he and his two companions reached the house in Tendacunda where the aged Seniora, that relict of a coastal trader's embraces, kept her house. She stared at Mungo. A white man, ragged like that and bearded like this? He was undoubtedly a Moorish imposter.

Mungo succeeded in proving his identity and his innocence, and then sat down in a house with European furnishings to hear the story of his own demise. The news had drifted through the black kingdoms back to Gambia that, like Houghton, he had been killed by the Moors in Ludamar : none had ever expected to hear of or see him again. Neither Demba nor Johnson had reached the Gambia ; so far as Mungo was to know, those two servants of his never did reach the coast, slain or enslaved in the lands of the barbarous Moors.

But already in these lands the dirt and disease and the long days of torture were enwrapping themselves in Mungo's mind in the glamour of a far-off tale.

Next morning one of the Ainslies came riding through the woods to carry Mungo to Pisania : the news of his return had spread like fire. Laidley was trading down the coast, but would soon return. Mungo rode to Pisania on horseback, the impressed Karfa trotting at his heels. Beyond the trading station as they emerged from the woods they saw the Ainslie trading schooner swinging on the sluggish Gambia tide, and Karfa, who had never

seen a ship before, spent his hours in Pisania staring at it openmouthed.

Two days later Laidley returned from his trading and received Mungo as one returned from the dead. The cold young man had had a place in the heart of the genteel white slaver. Mungo asked for the clothes he had left in Laidley's care, and found them intact and got into them with the feeling that he was sloughing his skin. A razor removed the venerable beard that through a long year and more had sprouted so richly on his chin, and he emerged on the sight of the dumbfounded Karfa as a strange alien boy.

He was little more in years : he was twenty-six years old. But in the last eighteen months of his life he had lived richly and fully and wonderfully, to the crown and peak of twenty-four years of dreaming existence.

The hotseason burned on the Gambia. Mungo was sick with desire for the grey quietness of the English skies. And still there came no ship. Laidley at Mungo's instruction paid double hire to the slaver Karfa, who went back to his caravan at Jindey. Mungo settled down for many months, as he thought, to wait for the hot season to pass, the rains to drench the land and pass, and a ship at length to come.

But on the morning of the 15th of June the American slave-ship, *Charlestown*, was seen warping a slow way up the mangrove swamps. She was hailed and slowly brought in to anchor. She had come for slaves.

All the Gambia slave-huts were filled with the merchandise, awaiting shipment, and in a few days Captain Charles Harris had disposed of his cargo of rum and tobacco in exchange for a hundred blacks. Then he proposed to sail up the coast to Goree and complete his cargo there.

Mungo sat and debated the matter. To go with the *Charlestown* would mean that he would be taken far out of his direct route, and cross the Atlantic twice. But no English ship might put into Gambia waters for another six months. He made his arrangements with the slaver-captain.

On the 17th day of June, 1797, he leaned over the rails of the *Charlestown* and watched the town of Kayee fade back into the green glare of the mangrove swamps, with Laidley and the Ainslies waving goodbye from the shore. It was hot moist weather and the river raised up a mist that speedily blinded from his eyes sight of that shore he had hailed so eagerly, in spite of his cool exterior—that shore that led to the hinterlands where he had adventured so terribly and ludicrously in search of the Niger's waters.

37 But he had not yet finished with Africa. As the *Charlestown* swished its slow way down the sluggish Gambia flow, the weather grew still warmer. Dense clouds of mosquitoes assailed the ship ; under the hatches the slaves lay in sweat-baths of stench. They lay on their sides, fitted one into the other in the fashion of spoons in a box, and vomited and wailed ungladly as the ship began to heave in the rollers of the Atlantic.

Meantime several sailors were down with fever. Soon the ship surgeon succumbed. Mungo became aware of the fact that he had taken passage on a ship that was no more than a hulk with sails—and a leaking hulk at that. Africa slumbered malignantly westward, watching their passage up the coast. The sailors and slaves lay in the stupors of malaria or groaned in delirium through the long hours of the hot days and the longer hours of the stifling nights.

Goree at last. The surgeon was dead, four of the seamen and three of the slaves. Thirty fresh slaves were shipped ; and Mungo waited for the *Charlestown* to turn about and broach the creaming surf of the Atlantic.

But Goree was short of provisions, had no provisions to equip the slave-ship for its passage to America. The heat increased. July came, August,

September, and still the *Charlestown* swung and baked with fraying ropes and rotting sails in the harbour of Goree. Mungo watched the months fade with an exasperation that presently gave way to a dull indifference. He had re-assumed his armour, except when he descended between decks at night to tend the ailing negroes. Two at least of these had seen him as he passed through Bondou in his wanderings long months before ; most were prisoners from that series of wars into which he had ventured his unwelcome presence in his search for the Great River. He had volunteered to act as surgeon, and he found the task arduous enough, what of the sick and dispirited cargo the *Charlestown* had gathered to itself. By the end of September eleven more of the slaves were dead. Another month at Goree—

Goree at last had the requisite supplies of provisions. Early in October the *Charlestown* faced out on its passage, and lurched and swayed away from the bright glimmer of the African coast into long weeks of sun-glister and sickness. Leaks were sprung and stoppered. The winds failed and left them long days becalmed on a glassy ocean, tideless, unmoving, the stench from the hold a miasma upon the hot waters. What with the number already dead, the crew was weak, and the slaves were kept rigorously chained until the third week at sea. Then the *Charlestown* sprung such a leak that the crew could not keep pace with the work at the pumps. Harris descended to the hold and had the chains struck

off the legs and necks of the more muscular blacks. Driven to the deck, these were set to work at the unfamiliar pumps under the lash. The leak increased ; Mungo, stumbling around below on his surgeon's duties, heard the whistle of the whips overhead mingling with the unending creak of the pumps.

Throughout the next ten days the leak gained steadily : the slaver was little more than an antique sieve. The crew began to murmur that it was suicide to attempt an American port. They must turn the *Charlestown* towards the West Indies.

Harris objected—probably violently and blasphemously though that part of the record thins down in Mungo's phrase to the statement that the captain made 'some objections'. But at last even Harris saw the folly of attempting to make an American port. The ship's course was directed to Antigua.

The island was sighted on the 5th of November. Ludicrously, disaster had not yet finished with it. The ship struck a rock, the Diamond Rock, and with difficulty disentangled itself and squattered into St. John's harbour like a wounded duck. Mungo made haste to disembark and found a welcome lodging at the house of the Governor. Thereafter, except for noting the fact that the vessel was condemned as unfit for sea, the *Charlestown* disappears from his record and his life.

Antigua had no regular sailing times, and Mungo might have to wait more weary months but for the

fact that a ship from the Leeward Islands, bound for England, touched at Antigua for mails on the 24th of November. Mungo immediately booked a passage.

A month later, the 22nd of December, 1797, he arrived in England after an absence of two years and seven months. As he told to an intimate later, when he saw the English shore he laid his head on his hands and wept with gratitude that God had so cared for him and guided him as to bring him back to land that had seemed no more than a mirage in the dark tents of Bubaker.

38The ship had put in at Falmouth. Mungo collected his scanty luggage and the coiled masses of notes that had once reposed in the crown of the beaver tile, and went ashore into the chilly blow of December England. About him rose the houses, the sea, and the green lands he had longed for. He stared at them in that passionate delight no traveller knows to such full ecstasy as the Englishman returned from far wanderings. Falmouth slept under the brisk morning wind and knew nothing of Mungo or his history : tall young men with black-brown faces were common enough phenomena in its streets.

He set out for London by coach, through mired roads where the winter halted, where the villages lay deep in the wet December mists and the sea curled ashen to the south. Those winds blowing through the coachwork stirred uneasy qualms in Mungo ; the food he ate brought twinges of dyspepsia. He shivered and wrapped his coat about him, watching that cold grey landscape slide past to the clop of the horses' hooves. He had returned : it was no dream, he was safe and free from all that long tale of travail memorised in his notes : he roused to a drowsy resolve. There were details in those notes—details of indignities and torments and random consolations he must delete

ere they reached the eyes of even a restricted public.

For two days the coaches changed and exchanged. It was early on Christmas morning when he came to a sleeping London. Dismounting from the coach, he stared at the shuttered houses and knew that the Dicksons would not yet be awake. He drew his cloak about him and wandered off into the pallor of the London streets. Presently the darkness began to lift, and Mungo stopped and looked at that cold coming of the dawn. Then he saw that his feet had brought him to the entrance of the gardens of the British Museum, and that, even thus early, the gates stood open. He walked in and strolled about the deserted grounds, where the flower-beds were heaped with manure from the winter chill and the artificial pools gleamed under a scum of ice. So it was that Dickson found him.

He was in charge of the gardens then and had risen early that morning, minding some detail of commission or omission that took him out, hasting, to get finished with the business and back for the Christmas-day jollities. He came hurrying into the gardens and saw in the grey light of the dawn a tall figure strolling to and fro in the bitter wind. Some restless fool, he thought testily, and glanced at him again as he passed. The tall figure had something queer and familiar about it. Then his heart almost failed, for it was a face of one long-dead that he looked on, the face of his brother-in-law, Mungo Park.

‘It’s me, Jamie,’ the apparition said, and for a minute thereafter they both mislaid their masks, hugging each other in the deserted garden. And James Dickson leads him from there and from our sight.

39 Sometimes he would wake in the dark, in the agonies of the dyspepsia that now haunted his life, and hear the hiss of rain on the roof and the beat of the wind in a loosened shutter of the Dickson house. And thereafter for long hours he could not sleep, and his mind would turn and peer back into those years already growing dim. How did the Niger turn beyond Jennè? Did it really lose itself in the sands, as Rennell supposed, or somewhere find an outlet to the sea?

He would doze off again, in the beating of the rain, and hear it in sleep and know it the singing of the sand pellets smiting the tents in Bubaker. Then the door would open and Ali's slaves would thrust in the pig to torment him, and he would sit with the servile smile on his face while they jeered at him and spat on him, and the grunting pig was teased by the naked boys, and the sweat poured down his back from the blaze of the day without. . . . Sweating, he would struggle awake and see the London morning coming through the shutters.

It was spring. He had been three months in London, three months when London, with the African Association as publicity agent, had offered to fête and entertain the tall cold-eyed young Scot as lavishly as it knew how. But it had found him a

difficult subject. 'He has the manners and dignities of one of his Niger kings,' wrote one aggrieved lady, not unjustifiably, for his height combined with his mask chilled hero-worship. Underneath that mask the boy of Fowlshiels struggled, torn betwixt shyness and an uncertain triumph. He had put his schoolboy dreams into action, which few men do. Now he could have the tale of it written and be finished with the thing forever.

But his was a slow and unskilled hand with a pen : the learned journals and the unlearned idlers of the London coffee-rooms, moving their attention a moment from the atrocities of murder and misgovernment so upsetting for the genteel to gaze upon across the Channel, clamoured for an account of Mungo's travels. Had he really discovered golden Timbuctoo? Had he married Queen Fatima, the beautiful girl who ruled a lost kingdom? Had he—?

Bryan Edwards, a retired West Indian planter with a facile pen, a passion for politics, and a great belief in slavery, undertook to draw up from Mungo's notes an abstract of his travels. Mungo helped and superintended, strolling up and down the room as he spoke of Benowm. Rennel drew the maps, and the work progressed, mere abstract though it was, slowly and toilsomely as June drew on. Mungo took to staring northwards at night, taking his thoughts beyond these miles of road and field to that Scotland which, like the good Scot of his age, he was so shy in acknowledging.

But as the warmth of June came in he could abide London no longer. Like many another who had lived in a tropical land, he found the English summer of overwhelming heat and distress. The Yarrow, turbulent with waters, haunted him like a passion—the first of the two rivers that haunted his life. In June he hastily packed his belongings, and set out for Scotland.

So, after long wanderings, he came down the Selkirk road to Fowlshiels when the hills were green and glowing, and the Yarrow banks bright with heather. And along the road glimmered the whinstone walls of Fowlshiels, with his mother and a brother awaiting him.

The elder Mungo was dead, the rest of the family scattered. His mother greeted him with sardonic affection—that eternal refuge of the sentimental Scot. He sat a long first evening with her, mostly in silence, says one chronicler, his hand on a Bible, the other on her knee. As the day waned and drew the splendours of summer from the Scots earth and flung them, palely colourful, into a Scots sky, he found perhaps the first true peace from himself in a stretch of twenty years.

40 Somewhere in the following days he paid his first visit to the home of Anderson, that polite and jovial practitioner, who received him much in the old manner, without hero-worship. And here was Ailie, tall almost as himself, handsome, amused, but impressed, with dark eyes quieting their fun as she looked at him. It was no longer the raw boy who had sailed for Bencoolen, but a young man with grave eyes very sincere in their admiration.

A change came on Ailie with Mungo's visits—light-hearted Ailie whose father adored her, a born flirt and pleasure-seeker. So she could still be, laughing at Mungo, teasing him, but putting that mood aside for a still deep gravity that had not seemed in her nature. And soon, in the months that followed, that starved side of Mungo responded. Perhaps he never loved her at all as a woman should be loved—as a lover. The mother-complex of Fowlshiels was too deep in him, body and mind, for that. Perhaps it was the aura of Ailie in those months that led him to look back with such a quiet glow of gratitude on the African women he had encountered :—

‘In all my wanderings and wretchedness, I found them uniformly kind and compassionate ; and I can truly say, as my predecessor Mr. Ledyard has eloquently said before me :—To a woman I never addressed myself in the language of decency

and friendship, without receiving a decent and friendly answer. If I was hungry or thirsty, wet or sick, they did not hesitate, like the men, to perform a generous action. In so free and so kind a manner did they contribute to my relief, that if I was dry I drank the sweetest draught, and if hungry I ate the coarsest morsel with a double relish.'

For he had taken up the writing of his *Travels* in earnest now. Rising early in the morning, he sat and moiled in the little-anticipated agonies of authorship. Unlike those facile letters invoking the Almighty to genteel miracle, which in his early youth he had found a positive pleasure in compiling, the account of route and road, king and camel, came slowly and haltingly from his pen. He would lift his eyes from the scrawled sheet and stare through his cold composed mask at the summer waning from Fowlshiels, then shake himself impatiently, and bend to his allotted task again till Mistress Park would open the door and call him through to a meal in the kitchen. A braw son, hers, though he wasted his time with his writings and rubbish.

After dinner he bent to the *Travels* again ; but evenings brought escape either to Ailie or long solitary strolls down Yarrow or up into the fastnesses of the hills, where only the peewits cried and now in the autumn the purple of the heather shimmered to its queer beauty of blue in the half-twilight. Here, with a book of ballads, the stuff that had made and amazed his youth, he could find peace and great delight till the dark came down.

Once or twice he vanished for several days from Fowlshiels, the atmosphere stifling, the quiet, the attentions of his mother, the soft glow and gurgle of Yarrow maddening. Then what *did* he want, where *could* he go? And more and more as that year wore to its close the answer was 'Ailie'.

Sometime in that year he asked her to marry him, and Ailie ceased to tease, and was grave, and returned his grave cold kiss. Then he went back to his unfinished *Travels* and the correspondence he carried on with Bryan Edwards.

He had written to Edwards and asked him to help with the complete *Travels* as with the earlier abstract. This had now been issued to subscribers to the African Association, and readers, in the phrase of a novelist still unquoted, asked for more. Mungo had now decided that that 'more' he alone was incapable of supplying with any grace or intelligibility. He wrote later that 'not being in the habit of literary composition, he was obliged to employ someone to put his manuscript into a form fit for the public eye; but that every sheet of the publication had undergone his strict revision, and that not only every fact but every sentiment was his own.' It was this sentiment which was to occasion the Abolitionist outcry.

Bryan Edwards was a notorious anti-Abolitionist. He approved of slavery. How otherwise would the West Indian plantations be worked? And his efforts at combating the propaganda for freeing the slaves were ceaseless: he conceived it as his special

mission. And to him with a mass of materials regarding the country whence issued the raw material of slavery came young Mungo Park, seeking a literary guide.

Bryan Edwards supplied his not solely altruistic aid. So the *Travels* were prepared without a word in condemnation of the institution of slavery. Down in London again in December of that year and January of the next, Mungo and Edwards repolished and straightened up the narrative to its final form. The book was published in the early spring of 1799.

Mungo had kept his public waiting long, but not too long. His *Travels* reached a third edition in as many months. People who had never heard of him before, heard of the book, bought it, read it, marvelled upon it, hated it, admired it. The flat genteel writing was to the taste of his period, as was his fondness for recording his invoking of the Deity and his pious reflections on life and death and the advantages of European civilization and the Christian gods. London and the provinces devoured the book ; the critics expended their pages mostly in quotations from it. There was a general applause, except from the Abolitionists.

They raised the cry that Park had written little of the *Travels*. It was the work of the notorious Edwards. And if not, Park was of the same calibre as his colleague. Did he denounce slavery or the system guilty of the horrors he had observed ? Were not all his sympathies indeed pro-slaver ?

It is a controversy now long smothered over in the dust of years. Biographers of Mungo were to find many excuses for him, holding that he had refrained from condemning slavery and left the evidence to speak for itself ; holding that but for his friendship with the slaver Karfa he would have made a whole-hearted denunciation of it ; holding many opinions that now seem quite unwarrantable to the unprejudiced eye. They attempt to make of Mungo what he most certainly never was, a humanitarian or even a sociologist. There can be little doubt but that he accepted slavery as a divine institution. Such was the temper and twist of his mind, so commonplace but for his one over-riding passion, that had he himself been perpetually enslaved he might have pitied himself (as he pities others), hated his master, attempted to escape, but never would have hated the system and led a slave-revolt. His was perhaps the stuff of an Æsop ; certainly never of a Spartacus.

The Government had twice offered to employ Mungo in a survey of New South Wales. Twice he refused the offer, resolute of a far more definite reward forthcoming. He had lost something of his cold simplicity ; the dyspepsia that gnawed at him, haunting memory of horrific meals by many an African stream and under many a bentang tree, had given him a cold arrogance of demeanour. He haughtily awaited honours which never came.

For, though the sales mounted and the African Association made him a generous gratuity in return

for his services, the ninety days' wonder—as it was in those unhasting times—of Mungo and his adventures began to die down. Suddenly he remembered his Ailie. He gathered up his goods and departed for Selkirk, summer, Ailie, and the Yarrow.

They were married two months after his return. He took her to Fowlshiels, and his mother gave them the parlour to bide in, and there with the sound of Yarrow in his ears tall young Mungo lost perhaps all the masks he had accumulated as he looked into Ailie's eyes and the dark came down.

41 He lived with her in complete and unbroken happiness for five long years. However she impressed others of that time and region, sober folk, un-gay, with heavy souls, as little fit to companion the explorer in his exploration of the mysteries of life, she remained for Mungo the shelter and salvation final and complete. There was seldom he could not find ease and peace under the touch of her hands. She loved him and cherished him and bore him children in great gladness and listened to him uncomprehendingly through those five years.

But they were long years. Fowlshiels had soon begun to pall upon him : and as that first year waned Ailie was with child. The little whinstone house could not much longer contain them. Mungo, who had rejected the Government twice, now wrote and asked for employment in New South Wales. The reply was curt. The employment had been given elsewhere.

Brother Archibald was a tenant farmer in Buccleugh. He came on a visit to Fowlshiels, a giant of a man, tall as Mungo, but red-cheeked and powerful, reeking of strength and rude health. He reeked of advice as well. New South Wales? Let Mungo start farming at home. There was some

fine land he knew of that Mungo could tenant well. Let his brother say the word—

Mungo said the word and Archibald went off on his mission. He found it more difficult than he had anticipated. The 'fine land' was not to be vacated after all. It was as well. Mungo had sickened of the thought of farming very quickly. He sickened of the thought of most things quickly those days, racked with pains that would send him raving across his bed or across a chair, biting twisted lips. . . . Till his 'lovely Ailie' would come running to his help and the twist would turn to a smile—for a little, for her.

So his first child was born, after all, at Fowlshiels, and Ailie came through that safely while Mungo still fretted over his future life and kept writing his London friends those stilted obsequious letters that guised his soul in epistolary matters as the cold voice did in oral communication. Goree had been captured from the French: it was a splendid chance for making it a base of future operations into the African hinterlands. Sir Joseph Banks wrote back consolingly: he would do what he could to lay Mungo's views in front of the Government.

The Government was busy and unimpressed. It scratched its head and attempted to remember this Mungo Park.

Mungo in the little rooms of Fowlshiels faced up to his destiny. He had had his chance—more than most men ever had—to adventure greatly in a land

of youth's dream. And that chance was past, and the thing was finished.

With sudden energy he mounted his horse and toured the countryside. In September he came back to his Ailie with a definite plan. He was to settle in Peebles and set up a practice there.

To Peebles they moved in October of 1801. Peebles was a small town wrapped in sleep, as indifferent to the coming of the new century as it was to the coming of Mungo. He purchased another horse to ride the rounds of what patients the gods of ill-health would send, and settled down in a house at the head of the Northgate, one of the large and expensive houses of Peebles, with pillars at the door and a real carpet in the living-room. One wanders through it in this later day with a feeling of pity for Mungo in the stifling constriction of its mean little rooms. But Mungo was probably very happy there for a while, with his Ailie and his growing family.

So 1801 went out and the next year came, and Dr. Park became a notable and trustworthy citizen of Peebles. His practice ranged far and wide over that hilly and poverty-stricken countryside. He would ride out at the dead of night to some cottar's house miles away through sodden tracks, and labour to help in bringing yet another hungry Scot into the hungry world in the reek of a one-roomed cabin. Then he would sit and refresh himself with a bowl of oatmeal brose and ride home again, with dyspepsia gnawing at his entrails. He remained

to the end careless in his meals, convinced there was no cure for his complaint. Or he dosed old women for aches like his own or loaned his comfort to cases beyond his cure. And now and then, with someone mangled by a plough or the wheel of a cart, he had the business of sawing bones and patching torn arteries in the doubt as to whether he would ever collect 'enough to pay even the bill for the splints'.

Presently, what with increasing practice and increase of family, he was forced to open a surgery in Peebles High Street. It was little more than a shed. The winter winds blew coldly through the cracks as he sat and pounded medicines or wrote off to Edinburgh for supplies through the unchancy conveyance of the local carters. Only with the move to the surgery in High Street does a full and complete distaste for his life and profession seem to have come on him—though that move was mark of an increasing prosperity. He sat long hours by himself in that little shed and knew himself one not only beaten by life, but idiotically unable to accept the defeat.

Archibald had introduced him at Fowlshiels to Mr. Walter Scott, the poet and Sheriff, and in the company of the latter he could find some ease in the kingdoms of imagination and memory that Ailie might not enter. They had minds of a singular similarity in many ways: both in most matters were rigid conservatives and conventionalists; they had the same barrenness of creative talent, the same admiration for the second-hand and shoddy in

literature and art. And both could stir like antique border raiders to the trumpet cry of that fine essence of life which they called Romance. They rode the Peebles hills together, and talked with great affection in the stilted jargon of their times. Mungo seems to have done most of the talking—talk that returned again and again to his quest of the Niger.

His hunger for those days shone through his speech even while he would tell of the horrors of Bubaker or Benowm, of curious experiences, ludicrous, frightful, obscene, that he never confided to the pages of his *Travels* lest he be mistaken for another Munchausen. Scott once interrupted such a recital to ask, 'And you want to go back there again?' and Mungo's mask went down for a moment. He would rather brave Africa and all its horrors than spend his life in long toilsome rides amidst the hills, 'for which the remuneration is hardly enough to keep body and soul together'.

There was little society in Peebles to suit Mungo's taste. But near at hand lived an old soldier, Colonel John Murray of Cringletie, with whom he struck up a friendship. They would sit at table in Murray's house arranging battles in African fashion, and facing up imaginary European levies against Ali's wild tribesmen of Ludamar. It must have been a consoling pastime, this routing of Ali in imagination.

Another year, and yet another, recordless but for little notes of the day-to-day life in slumbering

Peebles. In October of the year he settled in his practice, Banks had written from London that in consequence of the signing of the Peace with France, the African Association was preparing to revive, in conjunction with the Government, the project of another mission to the basin of the Niger. The command would certainly go to the former explorer. For a week or so this news had buoyed up Mungo, but as the long months went past he had mislaid it from his memory. It was merely another will o' the wisp to torment the drabness of his Peebles days.

But he was mistaken. Suddenly, in the autumn of 1803, a letter was delivered into his hands from London. It was from the Colonial Secretary of State, desiring his immediate presence in London.

It was the second chance in life that he had thought would never come again.

42 Lord Hobart was Colonial Secretary of the day. Arrived in London, Mungo went immediately to his office and heard outlined the proposal of the Government. It was to equip an expedition to penetrate and navigate the Niger. A guard of soldiers was to be raised from the English garrison at Goree, and Mungo given the command and a brevet rank of captain. Would he accept the commission?

Strangely, he hesitated for a little while, the tall young man, a little over thirty, a cold formal demeanour masking his excitement. He must first return to Scotland and consult on the matter. Hobart consented genially.

Back to Scotland and his Ailie. It was memory of her had made him hesitate to grasp at the opportunity he had prayed for and dreamt of through five long years. But now he saw her left desolate, without her 'tall loon' to comfort—she found such comfort in comforting him!—and with the four children on her hands. He couldn't leave Ailie.

Yet, riding north, he knew that he could, that he would even if Ailie begged him not to. So, a man torn between the two great loves of his life, he came to Peebles.

And there Ailie did not fail him—bright-eyed

Ailie of the ready laugh and still with the gay smile. She knew him too well to seek to deny him that which had haunted many a long sleepless hour of his nights. Mungo rode back to London and threw himself into preparations for departure.

His brother-in-law, Alexander Anderson, wrote him : he had heard from Ailie of the expedition. Should he join it? Mungo does not seem to have hesitated in sending him a welcome, though Alexander's constitution was in no way equal to his own in facing such trial as an African march. Here, in London, he met another old acquaintance, one George Scott whom he had known in Peebles, and now a Government draughtsman. Scott also was eager to join the expedition, and Mungo had him enrolled.

For his brother-in-law he secured the brevet rank of lieutenant as surgeon to the expedition, and fought out other matters in wearying detail between the offices of the African Association and the Colonial Secretary. At length, in spite of delays, all the plans of the expedition had been counter-signed by the Secretary.

Mungo wrote off a joyous letter to his 'lovely Ailie' : 'When that is accomplished I shall not lose one moment in returning to you. My darling, when we meet I shall be the happiest man on earth. Write soon, for I count the days till I hear from you, my lovely Ailie.'

It was February, 1804. The ship was ready at Portsmouth and letters of credit in hand from

Hobart when a change in the government wiped out Mungo's plans from immediate practicability. The immediate sailing was countermanded, and the question whether the expedition would set out at all left to the new Secretary, Lord Camden.

Mungo lost his temper and bearded the new Secretary in the Colonial Office. Was the expedition to go, or was it not? The Secretary temporised. When he had looked into all the details—Meantime, he understood from his officials that Mungo was by no means proficient in Arabic and had suffered considerable inconveniences in consequence on his previous exploration. Had he not better remedy this by tuition during the next few months?

Fuming, Mungo sought round London for an Arabic tutor. Presently he laid hands on him in the person of a stray Moor, one Sidi Ambak Bubi, a pallid man shivering in the sharp blow of London March. He was to shiver with considerable more intensity in a week or so. With Mungo he journeyed up to Peebles, where his advent woke that somnolent borough to interest for the first time in its recorded history. Peebles ran and gaped and stared much as the African villages had done at sight of Mungo. The Sidi's opinions of his reception are not recorded. One hopes he later returned to Barbary and wrote an account of his *Travels in the Interior of Scotland*.

Mungo gradually allowed his practice to collapse while he toiled in the mazes of the Arab script or kept up dinner-time converse with the Sidi in the unauthentic Arabic of the Barbary coast. It was,

however, authentic enough for Mungo's purpose of meeting the South Saharan Moors in terms of intelligibility. At the end of three months, with news from London that the new Secretary was at last beginning to move in the matter of the expedition, Mungo closed down his house at Peebles and removed his goods, his Ailie and his four children back to Fowlshiels and the welcome of the greying Mistress Park.

Here, in those solitudes which had seen the earliest strayings of his feet, he wandered much through that autumn, his Arabic grammar in his hand ; or at home, in the parlour of Fowlshiels, brooded over those matters of sextant and astronomical calculation on which he had previously been so ignorant. Ailie watched him with unswerving affection, bright and clear always. Now and then he took to wanderings across the hills on horseback, and found at the end of a long day the dyspepsia that had haunted him passing away. The mere thought of the terrors of Africa braced him as nothing else.

He took to living on the plainest of food in preparation for the journey, and to remembering old ways of conserving his life from the dangers of stream and torrent. Scott one day rode over to the whinstone cottage and asked for Mungo, and was told he had gone for a stroll along the Yarrow. The Sheriff followed him along the rocky path and presently sighted Mungo, seated, by the edge of the river, the greying grasses of autumn about him, dropping large stones into the rush of the Yarrow

below him, and peering anxiously at the bubbles as they rose. In some amusement Scott asked the purpose of this singular ploy, and was told by Mungo that in this fashion he had been wont to ascertain the depths of an African river before venturing to cross it. He told this light-heartedly and with a smile, seeing ahead in vision many a river to cross.

At last there came news from London. The expedition was authorised, and Mungo was to go south and take charge, preparatory to immediate sailing from Portsmouth. Something tugged at Mungo's heart when he saw Ailie's face as she heard the news. 'Ailie, say the word and I'll stay,' he cried. But Ailie shook her head. She knew her Mungo well, and with him busied the last few days in leave-taking with friends. Word was sent to her brother Alexander, summoning him to join Mungo. Mungo himself, the last day but one, rode over alone to Ashiestiel to bid goodbye to the Sheriff.

Scott pressed him to stay the night, and they sat and talked on Mungo's new venture far into the morning hours. That morning came in heavy mist, and Scott was unaccountably depressed. He mounted his horse and rode with Mungo up through the hills that divide Tweed from Yarrow. No sun came, but only a low smoulder through the mists. When they gained the Williamhope ridge they looked down on those mists, sailing and indeterminate, and Scott's ready imagination was troubled, romantically and easily, as always it could be

troubled. Was not his friend about to set out on a journey through a land of mist ?

While their horses stood deep-breathing, Scott tried again to dissuade Mungo from the venture. The two score troops the Government proposed to raise for defence of Mungo's expedition at Goree were entirely inadequate for defence. They were more likely to enrage the negro kings than overawe them. Mungo, who had ridden as silent as his friend till then, awoke to interest. Just the reverse was likely to happen. The little kingdoms were yearly traversed by small caravans of aliens. So long as these paid customs they were seldom molested. A single European traveller would be in danger : a white regiment would raise up the black levies to war. But his two score from Goree would be neither attacked nor regarded with suspicion.

They had shaken their horses into a trot again by then, and Scott, seeing that his friend would not be dissuaded, gave up the argument. They are a curious pair to our eyes on that last ride together. They had talked over their favourite Border ballads on the night before, in between stretches of the talk on Africa ; and, when now they came to the road in the moorland where Scott was to turn back, an incident stirred all those slumbering memories of tenebrous superstition that the ballads bore. Mungo cantered his horse across the ditch to the road, but the beast was clumsy, catching its hoof in the ditch and nearly falling. Scott watched Mungo pull it up.

‘ I’m afraid, Mungo, that that’s a bad omen.’

Mungo smiled at him over his shoulder, the last look on his face Scott minded : ‘ Freits follow those that look to them,’ he said.

Then he waved his hand, struck spurs into his horse, and cantered away. Scott never saw him again.

43 At the end he could not bear any formal farewell with Ailie and the children. He went off to Edinburgh and wrote from there, telling them he was leaving for London, and so for the Gambia. He would not put to test again Ailie's understanding : at the last it might fail, or his own resolution, as he wrote. There was a kind of premonition in that writing.

But the mood cleared as he neared London and vanished in London itself. The delay was short enough. On the 28th of January he and Alexander Anderson and George Scott travelled down to Portsmouth, where the *Crescent* transport was waiting to embark them. As well as Mungo's two friends, five artificers from the Portsmouth dockyards, whose task it would be to build the boats that were to sail the Niger, clambered aboard the *Crescent* and found berths for the weary days of voyaging that ensued. Mungo was in high spirits. He sent a last letter to Ailie, telling her he was convinced of a speedy success and return. Then the *Crescent* unreefed her great sails and slowly lurched out through the darkling waters of the morning of the 30th of January, 1805.

Their destination was the Cape Verde islands where Mungo had authorisation to purchase such

transport animals and provisions as he thought needful. It was a short two weeks' sail in normal weather, but even at the outset the second expedition was faced with ill-luck. The Bay of Biscay was at its worst ; it drove back the *Crescent* again and again into the shelters of the French coast. February dragged past, a month of pelting rain and lashing tides, in Mungo's ears the whistle of cordage and in his face the salt of blown spray while he tramped the quivering deck in quivering impatience. Towards the beginning of March the winds began to abate, and the *Crescent* slipped south in a week of calm. On the 8th of March they reached St. Iago of Cape Verde.

Mungo and Alexander went ashore with George Scott and the three began to buy asses. The more of them he saw the better Mungo liked the beasts : he and his two friends ranged the town in search of hardy and spirited donkeys. In two weeks they had purchased forty-four, and a large supply of corn and hay. The captain of the *Crescent* drew the line at more, seeing the likelihood of his vessel foundering in the Atlantic under the weight of an overshipment of donkeys. They sailed for Goree on the 21st.

Early on the 25th of March the coast of Africa came blue and gold up out of the forward horizon on Mungo's gaze—that coast he had seen sink behind him eight years before as the slave-ship *Charlestown* groaned her way westwards. Alexander and Scott came to his side and watched that thin

defilement of the ocean's floor change and enlarge till it dominated all the forward sky.

Three days coasting brought them into the roads of Goree. Mungo landed and presented his credentials to the commander, one Major Lloyd. His commission was to enlist for the journey such of the garrison as would volunteer, Mungo to offer such inducement as he might think fit. His arrival stirred all the garrison from the sloth and boredom of African service, and Mungo and the officers came to an agreement that the most tempting bait to offer the rank and file would be double pay and discharge from the Army at the end of the expedition. A garrison order was posted accordingly.

Goree gave a shout and flocked to volunteer, Englishmen sick of the unending heat and monotony of garrison life in a time and an age without sport or entertainment or elementary sanitation. Mungo was overwhelmed with volunteers, but he chose as discreetly as the circumstances permitted a total of thirty-five privates. An artillery officer, one Lieutenant Martyn, a vivacious and unstable individual, so pressed his services that Mungo, willing to have an officer in his company who was acquainted with the soldiers, engaged him as well. In Goree roads lay the *Squirrel* frigate, and its captain allowed two of the sailors to volunteer to accompany Captain Mungo Park to the Niger to assist in sailing his boats.

Mungo, as he wrote to the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, had the four carpenters

from England attested (it seems somewhat against their will), that they might come under the same discipline as the others. All this was accomplished in the space of nine days, and if the blank refusal of every likely black in Goree to volunteer service in company with the whites was disappointing, Mungo shrugged the matter aside as a triviality. Some breath of dislike or distrust of the fellow-blacks of the interior. . . . He gave orders for the soldiers to embark.

It was the 6th of April. The guns of Goree thundered and the soldiers cheered and cheered again in excitement as the *Crescent* drew out in the roads and turned south for the Gambia.

Three days later they came to Jillifree. Ten years before Mungo had strolled round its bazaars, a lone young alien, and diligently noted its products, its morals, and its appearance. He had more arduous duties now. From here he wrote out for the Government a neat report of his activities so far ; then had the *Crescent* sail up the sluggish Gambia to Kayee.

From the deck he saw the mangroves riding again the oily brown tides ; the vessel slipped and jarred into the backward country with already a breath of that dank warmth raising the sweat on the unaccustomed faces of the white newcomers. But all the soldiers were in excellent spirits, lolling the deck or starting up to stare at the wonders of the river, bragging of their intention of sacking Timbuctoo, and looking forward to the entire

venture as a glorified spree. Lieutenant Martyn alone kept ominously sane and normal.

At Kayee the expedition disembarked, and the *Crescent* turned about and departed. Mungo set to work in search of an efficient guide. Finally, he alighted on the person of one Isaaco, a Mandingo 'priest' who was also a travelling merchant and professed to have made many long journeys into the interior. It is probable that he told the truth ; but the exact degree of his truth-telling in relation to the fortunes of the second expedition will always remain uncertain. Mungo trusted him implicitly.

It was the 26th of April. Next day he determined to set out on his march into the interior. He sat down and wrote letters, official and unofficial, including one to his Ailie in far Fowlshiels :

' KAYEE, RIVER GAMBIA,
April 26, 1805.

' I have been busy these three days in making preparations for our journey, and I feel rather uneasy when I think that I can receive no letters from you till I return to England ; but you may depend on this, that I will avail myself of every opportunity of writing to you, though from the very nature of the undertaking, these opportunities will be but few. We set off for the interior to-morrow morning, and I assure you, that whatever the issue of the present journey may be, everything looks favourable. We have been successful thus far, beyond my highest expectations.

' The natives, instead of being frightened at us, look on us as their best friends, and the kings have not only granted us protection, but sent people to go before us.

The soldiers are in the highest spirits ; and as many of them (like me) have left a wife and family in England, they are happy to embrace this opportunity of returning. They never think about difficulties ; and I am confident, if there was occasion for it, that they would defeat any number of Negroes that might come against us ; but of this we have not the most distant expectation. The king of Kataba (the most powerful king in Gambia) visited us on board the *Crescent* on the 20th and 21st ; he has furnished us with a messenger to conduct us safely to the king of Woolli.

‘ I expect to have an opportunity of writing to you from Konkodoo or Bammakoo by some of the slave traders ; but as they travel very slowly, I may probably have returned to the coast before any of my letters have reached Goree ; at any rate, you need not be surprised if you should not hear from me for some months ; nay, so uncertain is the communication between Africa and England, that perhaps the next news you may hear may be my arrival in the latter, which I still think will be in the month of December. If we have to go round by the West Indies, it will take us two months more ; but as Government has given me an unlimited credit, if a vessel is coming direct, I shall of course take a passage in her. I have enjoyed excellent health, and have great hopes to bring this expedition to a happy conclusion. In five weeks from the date of this letter the worst part of the journey will be over. Kiss all my dear children for me, and let them know that their father loves them.’

44 Either a kind of blindness to the situation came upon him, or he deliberately closed his eyes to the probable mischances that awaited the caravan. He was seriously behind time with his programme. A month before he should have left Kayee. But the long delay in reaching the Cape Verde Islands and in finding a guide in Gambia had pushed the march of the expedition close to the times when the rain would come in the interior. He had met those rains in all their horror in his previous venture, and one can only suppose that his plunge into the interior was taken in deliberate disregard of the known risks. His buoyant letters to England probably concealed a dark enough shadow in his heart.

Captain Park issued instructions for the first stage of the march. That was to Pisania, where ten years before he had received shelter and comfort from the hospitable slavers, Laidley and the Ainslies. Now Laidley was dead and the Ainslies gone. Mungo turned from the thought of them to reorganising his caravan. Even in the space of the short march from Kayee it had become obvious that more asses were required. These were not purchased until six days had been spent in the wranglings of native negotiation.

He planned to reach the Niger by much the same

route as he had taken in returning from it. The next wide stretch of his march was to Medina, the capital of Woolli. A long and colourful procession, the soldiers with their muskets slung, in their stifling red coats, marching or riding on laden donkeys, strung through the forests from Pisania, seeking the cool shade of the giant trees as they marched, and at night the shelter of the village huts. In the dark the Goree soldiers would listen with a catch of breath to the cough and growl of prowling lions, and loosen their soaking uniforms from about their heat-perspired bodies, gasping for a draught of fresh air, hoping for another long halt.

But Mungo was now insatiable of speed. The heat did not affect him, nor Alexander Anderson nor Scott at first, though their food and gear were much of the quality of the soldiers'. Mungo's dyspepsia had shown no sign of returning. He was cold and yet on fire with resolution, rousing the heat-hazed laggards each morning to take the trail through the wilting grasses of the wilderness.

It grew more and more hot and the air more stifling as they marched into the interior and the rainy season. They would loosen their tunics and kneel by pools in the forest, drinking the stagnant water, the soldiers. Mungo himself knew nothing to forbid the practice. Presently two of the men fell ill of dysentery, and staggered in great pain in the rear of the caravan. Mungo came to a swift decision. On the 8th of May he abandoned them

to the care of a village through which the caravan was passing.

Three days later he came to Medina and halted there hardly at all, paying his customs dues in haste, and marching out the now silent bodyguard through staring crowds of blacks. His brother-in-law Alexander seconded him in everything. Mungo came to depend on him at the rear of the caravan, as he himself headed the van. Martyn had already proved useless : it seems probable, looking back from this distance in time and space, that Martyn was out of his mind. He had probably suffered from sunstroke.

From Badoo on the 29th of May Mungo despatched two letters to England, one to Ailie and one to Sir Joseph Banks. Both letters contain lies, telling of the complete health and happiness of the expedition. This, when already the soldiers dragged their feet and shivered in recurrent fevers ! But Mungo closed his eyes to these facts as he did to the wet season they now approached. To Ailie he wrote ' we are half through our journey without the smallest accident or unpleasant circumstance '. . . . Three days before his caravan had been assailed and scattered by a swarm of bees. Six of the asses had been lost. A fire had broken out in the camp as a result of the confusion and a large portion of the baggage had been destroyed. . . . But though he might commit such facts to his diary, he committed to Ailie a picture of carefree success :

‘ We carry our own victuals with us, and live very well ; in fact we have only had a pleasant journey, and yet this is what we thought would be the worst part of it ! I will indulge the hope that my wife, children, and all friends are well. I am in great hopes of finishing this journey with credit in a few months ; and then with what joy shall I turn my face towards home ! ’

He expected to reach the Niger in a month. Instead, it was to take him almost four—one of the most remarkable and ruthless marches in the history of exploration.

45 The tornadoes that heralded the great rains now swept the land, bending the boughs of the forest trees and whistling through the crevices in the walls of reed huts. The soldiers staggered in the hot dank blow of those winds, pressing down the jungle paths in the track of Captain Park. Presently all the eastwards sky was a fiery lowe that darkened into cobalt, as though the sky were afloat with the brown detritus of the forest. Then, on the 10th of June, the first of the rains smote the caravan.

Dysentery and fever increased. Soldiers began to fall out. Mungo had them left at this village and that, and pressed on ruthlessly. At night, in some leaking hut, while his companions turned in uneasy sleep, he sat down, cool and composed, to write up his journal. At Shrono in Dentila he halted to make inspection of the gold mines there, and compiled a monograph on the subject—a model piece of writing. Then he mustered the depleted levies of Goree to the track again—track that now wound through the wild and picturesque mountains of Dindikoo. June pursued them with rains through the passes and beside the gulping precipices. Each night they halted soaked, attempting to dry their clothes by fires that sputtered smokily in the

downpour. The forests shook upon them great gatherings of moisture as they plodded east in the morning.

They waded through steaming rivers as they came again to the low country, making a northwards detour to avoid the Jallonka wilderness. In one of these rivers the enigmatic Isaaco, that Mandingo 'priest', was chased by a crocodile and severely bitten. He was dragged out bleeding and groaning. Mungo halted the caravan and patched his wounds, for he could not lose his guide. At the halt more soldiers fell ill. When the march was resumed they straggled out behind the caravan in the course of each day. Sometimes they overtook it at night. Sometimes they never appeared again, perishing of thirst or hunger or devoured by the prowling carnivores of the woods.

Inspired by his daemon, Mungo fought on south-eastwards through July. Then, as August came, more misfortunes came. He found his trade goods greatly spoiled by the ceaseless rains and the depredations of the porters. Coming to a stream, the Ba Woilli, on the 9th of August, he entered into long and complicated negotiations with the duti of a neighbouring town for the transport of his luggage. The sick soldiers lay down in the canoes and were paddled across; the asses were dragged over by the aid of ropes. In the strong current the animals were almost swept away. Mungo was everywhere, directing, controlling under the relentless downpour of the rain. One soldier had died in the night;

Mungo, impatiently, had him buried. They were on the borders of Bambarra at last.

Next morning, crossing the frontier, a soldier, Ashton, declared himself unable to walk. Mungo advised him, coldly, to make an exertion and come on. Scott was staggering with fever, and Alexander Anderson also seemed weak. Mungo had no time to bother on the ailments of private soldiers. Ashton was left behind, and the caravan disappeared into the forest.

Mungo plodded in the rear, driving the last ass. At four o'clock he came to the bank of a westwards-flowing stream, and found several of the soldiers lying there exhausted, unable to cross. More serious still, his brother-in-law lay under a bush, apparently dying. Mungo surveyed the scene coolly, picked up Alexander on his back, carried him across the stream, returned for Alexander's horse, for his own ass, and for various other articles he could not spare. Then, leaving the soldiers to their fate, and feeling 'somewhat fatigued' after crossing and recrossing the stream sixteen times, he trudged on to the village of Dabadoo where the head of the caravan had already found sanctuary. Alexander was in great pain.

Next day he was much worse, unable either to walk or sit upright, and Mungo halted for a whole twenty-four hours to help him recover. Various soldiers straggled in from the westwards track. Martyn still kept his health and Scott had a little recovered. Mungo himself was in splendid con-

dition—it was as though, from the ebbing vitality of his companions, he drew fresh reserves of ruthless strength. He resolved to march again on the morrow.

That morning dawned in rain, but cleared towards eleven o'clock. Mungo helped Alexander into the saddle, and walked beside him, holding him there. Isaaco, invaluable Isaaco, saw to the baggage asses. A sick soldier was mounted on Mungo's horse. A little way into the forest Mungo came on a soldier who was in charge of an ass carrying a load of gunpowder. The soldier had fallen down, unable to proceed. Mungo drove on the ass ; the soldier he never saw again.

All that day, till early afternoon, the caravan straggled through the slushy forest tracks, a caravan of men dying and doomed, dropping by the way members who perished alone and far from either attendance or comfort. At half-past two Anderson's strength failed him. Mungo dismounted him from the horse, and sat down, waiting for him to die. He could not abandon Ailie's brother.

But Alexander did not die that day. In late afternoon a breeze came sighing through the trees, reviving him. Mungo helped him up on the horse again, and then urged forward that animal at a spanking pace. They had not gone very far, being by themselves and the rest of the caravan nowhere in sight, when Mungo heard a noise like the barking of a great dog, ' but ending in a hiss like the fuf of a cat '. He thought it the noise of a monkey, and joked

on the subject with the pain-racked Alexander. But the barking came nearer, accompanied now by growls. Suddenly, through an opening in the bushes, Mungo saw three lions coming towards him.

He was beyond the starts and fears of that far-off first expedition ten years before. He halted Alexander's horse, cocked his musket, and walked forward towards the beasts. Within shot of them, he fired at the centre one. The lions, unhurt, looked one at the other, then at Mungo, and finally turned tail, hesitatingly. As they disappeared into the undergrowth Mungo reloaded his piece and rejoined Alexander. Then they resumed their way.

The lions kept pace with them to the right for a while, summoning up courage to charge. They were evidently very hungry, and a twinge of uneasiness came on Mungo that they might follow him until dark fell, and then spring on him or his brother-in-law when he could no longer see to fire. But he shrugged aside the possibility and presently heard no more of the lions. Doubtlessly they ranged back into the evening and sated their hunger on the flesh of some dying soldier from Goree.

Half the caravan that night failed to reach the village they had planned, but wandered or slept in the gullies of a range of hills. Mungo, himself lost, lighted a fire and wrapped Alexander in his cloak and laid him beside it. All night he watched unsleeping, hearing the howls of the feasting lions in the distance. Presently the dark began to break, and he was aware of another morning come.

With sleep-heavy eyes he roused Alexander to horseback again.

They came to a village, Koomikoomi. Watkins, one of the sick who had managed to straggle in, died here. The rain had cleared: it always cleared at this season for a space of eleven days, the blacks told Mungo. The sun shone on a fragrant earth. As the caravan resumed its way, they were almost 'blinded with the pollen of the male flowers'. It was the 15th of August.

Presently the weather broke and the rain again descended, despite the confident assertions of the weather-prophets in Koomikoomi. Alexander was now carried in a hammock by four negroes whom Mungo had hired for the purpose. The shrivelled-faced ailing soldiers who survived, straggled far up and down the trail, but none perished that day, all attaining by evening, except Scott, the town of Doombila. For a little Mungo mislaid worry over his non-appearance in greeting a negro who came forward with a grin on his face. It was impossible: but it was no other than Karfa Taura, the slave merchant who had rescued him at Kamalia in the first expedition and taken him down to the coast. He had met many old acquaintances in his journey up from the Gambia, but the meeting with Karfa seemed to wipe away the years as nothing else. The slaver offered to help him forward to Sego, and Mungo gratefully accepted the offer.

Night fell, but there was still no sign of Scott. Mungo sent back messengers to look for him, and

these penetrated as far as Koomikoomi without setting eyes on the unfortunate draughtsman from Buccleugh. Mungo halted all the next day at Doombila, and then, giving up Scott, again put his caravan into motion. The roads were steep and hard to travel, though Mungo notes that they halted at a village en route where there was good beer on sale. Rain kept off throughout the day, but began again with the fall of darkness. Soon the tents were sopping wet and the soldiers sought the shelter of a nearby village. Again Mungo found no sleep, trudging about in the dark downpour to keep the asses from breaking loose and eating the corn of the villagers. With the coming of the morning light he sat down and made some interesting notes on African law in the matter of ass-trespass.

Next day was the 19th of August, a memorable day. Alexander was loaded into his hammock, and the caravan climbed through mountains until three o'clock. There, at the summit of a ridge, Mungo 'once more saw the Niger rolling its immense stream along the plain' !

His heart rose high at the sight. Three-fourths of the soldiers were dead (before he reached the town of Bambakoo that evening three more of them had fallen out and been left to perish by the wayside) ; the carpenters from England were dead or dying in remote villages back in the west ; much of his trade goods had been lost or destroyed : but there, after the space of ten years of hunger for the sight of it, was the Niger again !

46 His company now consisted of himself, his brother-in-law, Lieutenant Martyn, six soldiers and one carpenter, besides Isaaco and other blacks. Late in the evening, in view of the swollen Niger, they descended the hills to Bambakoo and pitched their tents under a tree near the town. It was a land of large and ferocious wolves. The survivors heard during the night the howling of these animals close at hand, and in the morning discovered they had gnawed the coverings off two bundles of trade goods, and then, balking at a diet of beads, abandoned them.

Mungo halted his caravan for two days and surveyed his losses. The wolves prowled close as the darkness came, tearing the bowels from a bullock purchased to feed the caravan. Mungo set about hiring canoes to transport them down to the town of Marraboo. Even with the greatest exertion, it was found impossible to engage sufficient to take the soldiers and asses. Mungo embarked himself and Alexander, together with the baggage, and directed the scowling Martyn to mount the soldiers on the asses and march down to Marraboo by land. Then the swift current swept the canoes out into the Niger.

All that afternoon Anderson and Mungo lay flat in the canoes, in a blessed ease, while they

floated down with the river, over low rapids and past low islands. On one of these islands Mungo saw a large elephant, 'of a red clay colour, with black legs', and records that he would certainly have had a shot at this pantomime beast but that he was too unwell with dysentery to sit up. The rain kept off and the heat of the day was tempered by the coolness of the water. Near sunset one of the canoemen speared a large turtle, and they paddled to the bank, cooked the reptile, and ate it. But before this tit-bit was half-dressed the rains began. They pelted down all night on the suffering Anderson and the shivering crews. Mungo sat in the darkness and stared at the dark flow of the river, hearing its wisp-wisp ceaseless against the banks as it flowed swift and strong on into the night—whither? Into the far sands? Into the Congo? In—by some unguessable route—to the Atlantic?

Morning found them all soaked and sleepy. But, early in the forenoon, they came to Marraboo and found shelter and rest there. Martyn arrived in the evening with five of the soldiers: the carpenter and the last soldier came up later. Mungo resolved to halt at Marraboo while he sent forward an embassy to Mansong, the king.

Meantime his own attack of dysentery increased to such an extent that he knew it likely to prove fatal unless he took desperate remedies. He did—devouring such a quantity of calomel that for six days he could neither sleep nor speak. The remedy proved efficacious: with a supreme selfishness or

indifference, he had never thought of applying it to the soldiers who perished of dysentery in such numbers on the march. But perhaps he had recognised the probability that not one of them would survive administration of the cure.

Isaaco had been sent down the river with presents for Mansong. He failed to return. Instead, there came a cloud of rumours. He had deserted the expedition. Mansong had killed him with his own hands. Mungo, cool and composed, looked round the neighbouring countryside for suitable wood for canoe-building and exchanged a large part of his money into Bambarran cowries. August went out in these pursuits, and September came in. The soldiers were still weak, shaking in recurrent spasms of fever. One, Thomas Dyer, died on the 6th, and Mungo had to pay a thousand cowries for the privilege of having him buried.

But on the 8th, Bookari, Mansong's poet laureate, arrived at Marraboo with six canoes and an invitation from Mansong for Mungo and his company to descend to Sego. Mansong was in a genial mood. He had liked Mungo's presents: he felt that all white men were admirable creatures, and sent expansive offers of hospitality. Instead of embarking the whites immediately, however, Bookari insisted on displaying a sadly unpoetic outlook on worldly matters, feasting and beer-drinking at Marraboo for another four days. But at last he tore himself away from these flesh pots, embarked the white men, and for four days paddled

them down the river—days of such ease and peace as they had not known since they left the Gambia, and, indeed, were never to know again.

In a maze of little riverside halting-places and villages, Mungo talked and debated with representatives of Mansong while September slipped to its end. For he still refused to see them, though he sent a friendly soul, Modibinnè, his prime minister, who accepted Mungo's presents and lectured him on the Good Life. He had met his match. Mungo lectured him in return : they lectured each other for hours, finding great satisfaction and soul-comfort in the exercise. Then Mungo turned to the commercial advantages which would accrue to Bambarra with the establishment of a permanent trade-route to the coast, undominated by the Moors. Impressed, Modibinnè returned to his master.

The expedition had halted at Samee. While they awaited the return of Modibinnè with Mansong's answer, two of the soldiers died, one of fever, the other of dysentery. Mungo had now only four soldiers, a carpenter, Martyn and Alexander, left of that brave show which had wound out through the woods from Pisania so long before. Imperturbable, he ordered the two soldiers to be buried. Then he turned to tend the ailing Alexander. The latter showed no sign of recovery, lingering like a pale ghost by Mungo's side.

Not till September's end did Mansong send permission for Mungo to proceed down river to Sansanding and there await a gift of canoes.

Mungo loaded his goods and his invalid expedition, and launched out on the Niger again. Protected now under Mansong's name, he came to Sansanding and met his old friend, the duti of that town, who had brought him raw eggs to eat ten years before. He extended an official welcome to Mungo and provided him with two huts for himself and his party. Mungo resolved to set up shop and dispose of his trade goods for the cowrie currency of the country.

While he made preparations, two more of the soldiers died. It was October the 2nd. In the night the wolves came and carried away the corpse of Garland, one of the soldiers. This was in the heart of Sansanding, not the wilds of the country. Mungo noted the event in his diary, and went on with his preparations to turn himself into a shop-keeper.

His mood induced an unusually flippant style. He records that he opened shop, and 'had of course a great run'. Sansanding flocked to buy the cloth and beads and leather goods lugged from the coast on the backs of sweating porters and sweating asses. Mungo proved an ideal salesman—polite, exorbitant, servile and imperturbable. The Moorish traders of the town were beating up an agitation against him : he disregarded them coolly, sweeping up the loads of cowries which customers brought. With these and canoes——

The waters were sinking. It was time to be gone. Still the promised canoes failed to arrive from

Mansong. Alexander Anderson grew steadily worse. Waiting, Mungo heard definite news from Koomikoomi that George Scott was dead—had died in unknown circumstances back on the trail where he was deserted. He received the news with his usually icy indifference, turning to peer up the Niger again for the promised canoes.

At length they arrived—two rotten and heat-frayed hulks. Mungo protested ; but there was no help for it but repair them. He resolved to transform the two canoes into one, and with the help of one Private Bolton, the only soldier who could keep his legs, set to work in the glare of the sun at this unforeseen shipwright's task. October slipped away while they toiled, sweating, under the curious gaze of the negro loiterers on Sansanding's waterfront. Inside the hut Alexander Anderson now sank very low. Mungo would go in to tend him now and again, then return to hammer and saw upon the canoes in the glare of the light from the sky, and the glare from the Niger nearby. The waters sank steadily.

On the morning of October the 28th Alexander Anderson died. Mungo stood dry-eyed beside the dead body, but his heart was wrung painfully—the cold ruthless heart untouched by the deaths of the thirty soldiers far back in the westward trails. Since the landing at Gambia he had marched unheeding death and pain in a kind of moral myosis. But with Ailie's brother dead, something of the old Mungo stirred to horror and regret for a

moment. Then the curtain cutting off that antique self closed down. His journal has as cold-blooded an entry as he might well have penned :

‘ I shall only observe that no event which took place during the journey ever threw the smallest gloom over my mind till I laid Mr. Anderson in the grave. I then felt myself as if left a second time, lonely and friendless, amidst the wilds of Africa.’

47 All was ready. The canoe, transformed into a 'schooner' forty feet long and six feet broad, was of ample size to hold a hundred men. Mungo and Bolton had patched its rents and stocked it with provisions. Two soldiers and a carpenter still survived. But the latter was out of his mind, and useless either in helping to keep the schooner *Joliba* afloat, or in helping to sail it. Martyn, in excellent health, was indifferent and insubordinate. The impartial historian has his sympathies with Martyn, who had looked on the ruthlessness of Mungo all the way from the coast, but himself refused immolation. As Isaaco was returning to the coast, Mungo engaged another guide, one Amadi Fatoumi, to journey with them as far as Houssaland, beyond Timbuctoo. Then he purchased two slaves to help with the *Joliba* and sat down to write his last letters to England.

He sent his Journal back with Isaaco for transmission to the Colonial Office. He wrote a short cold note to Anderson in Selkirk, and one equally stilted to Banks in London. His was no condition or mood for superlatives or excuses. Only in Ailie's letter did the mood soften a little :

' SANSANDING, 19th November, 1805.

' It grieves me to the heart to write anything that may give you uneasiness ; but such is the will of Him who doeth all things well ! Your brother Alexander, my dear

friend, is no more ! He died of fever at Sansanding on the morning of the 28th of October ; for particulars I must refer you to your father.

‘ I am afraid that, impressed with a woman’s fears and the anxieties of a wife, you may be led to consider my situation as a great deal worse than it really is. It is true, my dear Friends Mr. Anderson and George Scott have both bid adieu to the things of this world, and the greater part of the soldiers have died on the march during the rainy season ; but you may believe me, I am in good health. The rains are completely over, and the healthy season has commenced, so that there is no danger of sickness, and I have still a sufficient force to protect me from any insult in sailing down the river to the sea.

‘ We have already embarked all our things, and shall sail the moment I have finished this letter. I do not intend to stop nor land anywhere, till we reach the coast, which I suppose will be some time in the end of January. We shall then embark in the first vessel for England. If we have to go round by the West Indies, the voyage will occupy three months longer, so that we expect to be in England on the 1st of May. The reason of our delay since we left the coast was the rainy season, which came on us during the journey ; and almost all the soldiers became affected with the fever.

‘ I think it not unlikely but I shall be in England before you receive this. You may be sure that I feel happy at turning my face towards home. We, this morning, have done with all intercourse with the natives ; and the sails are now hoisting for our departure for the coast.’

His letter to Lord Camden, with its admixture of truth and falsehood, genteel bombast and unselfish single-heartedness, was Mungo in epitome :

‘ ON BOARD OF H.M. SCHOONER *Joliba*,
AT ANCHOR OFF SANSANDING,
November 17, 1805.

‘ MY LORD,

I have herewith sent you an account of each day’s proceedings since we left Kayee. Many of the incidents related are in themselves extremely trifling, but are intended to recall to my recollection (if it pleases God to restore me again to my dear native land) other particulars illustrative of the manners and customs of the natives, which would have swelled this bulky communication to a most unreasonable size.

‘ Your Lordship will recollect that I always spoke of the rainy season with horror, as being extremely fatal to Europeans ; and our journey from the Gambia to the Niger will furnish a melancholy proof of it.

‘ We had no contest whatever with the natives, nor was any one of us killed by wild animals or any other accidents; and yet I am sorry to say that of forty-four Europeans who left the Gambia in perfect health, five only are at present alive—viz., three soldiers (one deranged in his mind), Lieutenant Martyn and myself.

‘ From this account I am afraid that your Lordship will be apt to consider matters as in a very hopeless state ; but I assure you I am far from desponding. With the assistance of one of the soldiers I have changed a large canoe into a tolerably good schooner, on board of which I this day hoisted the British flag, and shall set sail to the east with the fixed resolution to discover the termination of the Niger or perish in the attempt. I have heard nothing that I can depend on respecting the remote course of this mighty stream, but I am more and more inclined to think that it can end nowhere but in the sea.

‘ My dear friend Mr. Anderson, and likewise Mr. Scott, are both dead ; but though all the Europeans who are

with me should die, and though I were myself half-dead, I would still persevere ; and if I could not succeed in the object of my journey, I would at last die on the Niger.'

48The *Joliba* was launched out on the Niger's waters on the 19th of November, 1805. Though the river had sunk below the flood-level of the rains, it flowed deep and smooth and rapid, and soon Sansanding was left behind. Mungo resolved to land at no spot on the banks as long as his provisions lasted.

The canoe went on through the day and all through the night, the slaves and Mungo and the guide Amadi taking turns in steering. In the clear bright night air Mungo steered by the stars and the sound of the waters, with the ghostly banks slipping away to right and left. With dawn they were beyond the borders of Bambarra, in the country of the Moors.

They made no halt for forty-eight hours, till they came to the village of Silla. Here Mungo, without landing, purchased an extra slave, and pushed out again into the river. Thereafter, for day on day, the current swept them deeper into the interior ; and we see Mungo as in a glass darkly, through that recorded clamour of attack and repulse which the guide Amadi was to give to the world seven years afterwards. Armed canoes came out against them at the village of Dibbie : Mungo had them beaten off by a volley of musket-shots. So at Kabra ; so at the port of Timbuctoo. At Tim-

buctoo the slaughter of the hostile canoemen was outrageous. The day when Mungo desired to land in amity among the natives and explore that city of legend was long past. His one aim now was to attain the outlet of the Niger—into the waste sands of the interior, or into the Atlantic.

The glare of the sun grew stronger. The news of the coming of the canoe ran along the banks like fire, and stirred the tribes to oppose it. Sixty canoes paddled out from the banks at one place to dispute their passage. Mungo and Martyn directed volley after volley upon them, till the guide Amadi was sickened at the slaughter. He made a protest to Martyn—in unfortunately familiar terms. Thereat Martyn turned in the canoe with a threatening gesture, and a quarrel would have broken out with disastrous consequences to the *Joliba* had not Mungo himself intervened. The river swept them on.

Rocks appeared. The *Joliba* struck on one, and while they laboured to push her off a curious hippopotamus rose near at hand and approached to investigate. Muskets were used against it, as against the natives. The hippopotamus retired and the canoe was edged off the rock.

That evening they came to an island in mid-stream, thick with hippopotami which rushed into the water and nearly upset the *Joliba*. They coasted on past the island in the darkness, and in the morning light saw three canoes in pursuit. Again Martyn, Mungo, and the two soldiers lay and

fired into the brown of the natives, beating them off. One of the soldiers had died of fever and had been dropped overboard.

Day after day the *Joliba* swept down the Niger, halting only when it must, for food and water, making small presents to this chief and that, Mungo himself never abandoning the canoe. Sometimes they seemed to be sailing a deserted river, through the waste scrubland of a world deserted but for themselves. Nothing moved or cried on empty shores. And then the jungles would rise in the south—for now they had turned south-east—and mantle all the southern horizon and presently the banks on either side. The Niger was passing through the Houssa lands.

It had been agreed between Mungo and Amadi that the latter should come no further than the Houssa country. So Mungo had the *Joliba* anchored in midstream for two whole days, the while he sweated to memorise the names of food and peace and water in the multitude of tongues spoken down the further course of the Niger or as far as Amadi's linguistics reached. But beyond certain limits Amadi's knowledge grew dim. It was unknown land down there.

It was resolved to land Amadi at Yaour, a little further down the river. From there he might work his way back, by slow stages, to his home in Sansasding. Anchoring opposite Yaour, Mungo sent ashore his guide with a present for the resident headman. The 'king' himself had his residence

a little inland. Unaware of this fact, Mungo sent no present for that greater dignitary, and Amadi, through deliberate treachery or forgetfulness, left him ignorant of his omission. The headman took the gifts and asked if the white man would return that way again. Amadi answered 'No,' and in so doing sealed Mungo's fate.

The little plot gathered to fruition in the course of a night and day. Mungo sailed from Yaour, bidding farewell to Amadi, confident that the worst of his travail was now over, that the country of the negroes, not the fanatical Arabs, was at hand, people who had always liked him as he them. He knew nothing yet of the cannibals of Benin who clustered their strange towns about the lower Niger : nor was he ever to know.

For, while the *Joliba* swung with slow and hesitating currents south-eastwards, the king of Yaour received a message from the headman of the port that the whites had passed without paying tribute or leaving a present. Instantly the king raised an armed body and despatched it across country to await the coming of the *Joliba* by the river-bank, at a spot where 'there is a rock across the whole breadth of the river. One part of the rock is very high ; there is large opening in that rock in the form of a door, which is the only passage for the water to pass through ; the tide current is here very strong.' Here the Yaour army prepared to ambush the *Joliba*.

There is no such rock in the whole stretch of

the Boussa rapids. So it was that Mungo met his end in a place of fantasy in a land of myth. He and the others must have seen from the *Joliba* the banners and spears of the army gathered about the opening in the impossible rock. But there was no turning back, nor any attempt to do so. Mungo steered the canoe for the narrow 'door' where the tide current foamed.

At the approach to that door, the battle opened, the Yaour tribesmen hurling lances, arrows, and stones upon the *Joliba*. Mungo and his companions fired and fired again, but the aim was uncertain as the *Joliba* rose and fell and twisted in the currents. Perhaps the canoe grounded and smashed. Under the hail of the arrows, and seeing that he might not save the canoe, Mungo conferred with Martyn. Suddenly Martyn seems as cool and heroic as himself. They each seized a soldier—the two remaining soldiers could not swim—in their arms and jumped into the water.

The tribesmen leant from the rocks, shooting at the bobbing heads and thrusting with their spears. Presently the white men failed to reappear. The breathless natives turned their attention upon the canoe, where a lone slave still wailed unkilld.

The noise of the fighting died down far off by Boussa. The waters gurgled and spun past Wuru with the coming of the evening. Under the stars they swung by Jebba, east again, long flowing through dense lands where great trees gathered, mirrored in plumage, where lights danced and spun

as the singers sang the harvesting songs of Rabba and Egbom. Morning found the waters whirling around the points of templed Baro, south, tributary-laden, from the unceasing jungle, till near Lokoja, through the forest stretches, the river sighted such another as itself, on as ardent a mission, pouring south. They joined and greeted with a rush of waters, Kwara and Benue, then poured in a broadening and quickening stream by the mountains of Dekina, tall and barren, their sandy slopes gleaming in the hot sun-glare. Ida saw them pass as the afternoon came ; from Asaba that night the wood-carvers looked from the faces of their imaged devils and saw the Great River's water gleam under a moonless sky, down the forest tracks to Ndoni.

But morning found the traveller in a low dank land ; reeds whistled in the strange salt wind that came from the place the sunrise had not yet touched. The waters flowed slow with silt, and broke and spun in long slow eddies through the hot mist. As the day rose they split in a dozen streams and quested west, the Nun, the Brass, New Calibar, Bonny, Opobo and Wari. Mangroves clawed at them with dripping roots. The day-heat rose and passed over the uncertain flow, till remote in the sunset, by a dozen mouths, the waters that rose in the far-off mountains of Liberia passed out to the open sea.