

A CENTRAL SOUDAN TOWN.

BY JOSEPH THOMSON.

THE general public, gathering its impressions from contemporary literature, has come to look upon the whole of central Africa—or, in other words, that part undiluted by contact or intermixture with foreign or Asiatic races—as a region wholly inhabited by barbarians, chiefly characterized by extraordinary customs, the most degraded forms of fetichism and cannibalism, with, it may be, a decided taste for gin.

That this popular notion is erroneous in a marked degree it will be the object of this article to point out. With this view I propose to describe a town inhabited by purely African races, and situated in the central part of that continental zone called the Soudan—a term now too often popularly restricted to the eastern division, or Egyptian Soudan.

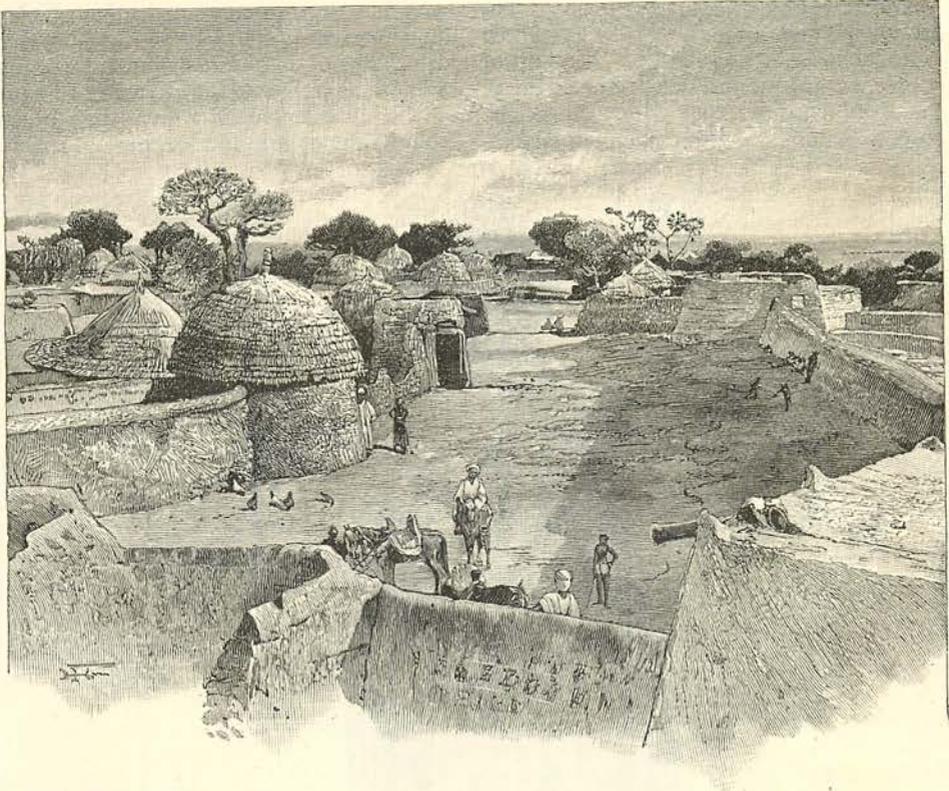
Let us imagine that it is the month of June, near the close of the dry season; that, personally conducted by me, a party, consisting of the readers of this article, have voyaged along the west coast of Africa to the mouth of the river Niger, safely passed the malarious region of the delta and lower reaches of that famous river, and then, by excessively weary overland marches, come from the south to the neighborhood of the central Soudan town which has been the goal of our pilgrimage. As we struggle up a low rocky hill of lava aspect we are reminded by the terrific heat that Herodotus describes the people we are now among as being in his time strangely characterized by the daily custom of cursing and shaking their fists at the sun at mid-day. We have long ceased to wonder at this, for we have enjoyed experiences unknown to the illustrious geographer, and exposed as we are to the sweltering heat of his solar majesty unmitigated by the shadow of a cloud, we are painfully aware of a tendency to revert to the primitive habit.

The worst, however, is over, and the crest of the hill is reached, and as we pause to regain breath and mop our streaming faces, we may, as is the habit of personally conducted parties, improve our mind by a few judicious remarks tending to make clear our whereabouts. We are now at a distance of 1500 miles south of the Mediterranean, about the

same west from the Atlantic, though only about 800 miles north from the Gulf of Guinea, so that there is no mistake about our being in the heart of Africa. Immediately to the north of us lie the wild and inhospitable plateau lands of Asben, passing into the barren wastes of the Sahara; to the west rolls the Niger, and beyond lie regions yet unpenetrated by the restless energy of the white man, for its savage tribes and pestiferous forests are more formidable barriers than even waterless and burning deserts; to the south lie the countries which we have just traversed, equally deadly and dangerous, and which, like the district to the west, would have been impenetrable but for the fact that the Niger winds in glistening reaches, cleaving a way through the primeval forests and malarious delta to the ocean, as if for the special advantage of the ubiquitous traveller; eastward extend wildernesses as barren and hazardous as those to the north. It will thus be seen that if our town is tinged with the bright flush of dawning civilization, it owes little to its environment.

The landscape which lies below and in front of us, owing to the unseasonable period of the year, is not by any means an attractive one, though in its apparent desert-like barrenness not without a certain element of impressiveness. The scorching dry season, now drawing near a close, has transformed the whole country into a series of bare rocks, glaring sands, and red fields, which seem incapable of raising anything for either man or beast. The air heated on these furnace-like plains rises in hazy undulations, and comes wafted to us laden with dust in an almost unbreathable condition. The only feature which relieves the unutterable monotony of the scene is the occurrence here and there of grim, rugged, solitary trees, which bid defiance to the scorching sun and arid soil, and the appearance of a serpentine line of green stretching snake-like along the plain, indicating the verdure-clad banks of a dried-up stream winding westward toward the Niger.

If we now turn our attention to the northern aspect of the hill on which we stand, we shall observe extending forward a low broken platform some three



Drawn by Harry Fenn.

A VIEW IN WURNU.

Engraved by Grimley.

miles in circumference. Westward this platform grades into the plain, while north and east it drops abruptly in rugged precipitous cliffs. The scene which this platform presents is one of refreshing beauty in contrast with the surrounding landscape. At first we might imagine that a delightfully green and shady grove lies there—nothing, in fact, but a veritable oasis in the desert. We have no difficulty in distinguishing the now familiar abnormally bulky trunk of the ba-boah, which looks trebly monstrous beside the graceful feathery acacias surrounding it; there are also numerous dūm-palms, strangely branched, as if in Bohemian protest against the prim mast-like stems which otherwise invariably distinguish the family of trees to which it belongs, and which is typically represented in our landscape by the tall and stately fan-palm.

A closer inspection of this seeming grove soon dispels our first impression. Huts and houses in great numbers are observed

peeping from amongst the trees, looking cool and cozy or hot and repellent, according as they lie in shade or sunshine, and at last the fact dawns upon us that here exists a town of several thousand inhabitants, and that we have almost unawares reached our goal, for the town is Wurnu, residence of Umuru, King of the Mussulmans of the Soudan, and Sultan of Sokoto.

The whole of the town is protected, as can be easily seen, by a massive wall of sun-dried bricks externally plastered with mud. The western front, being more liable to attack than the hill and cliff defended aspects of the other sides, is further strengthened by a deep dry ditch or fosse running along the outside of the wall. In all Soudan towns the great aim is to prevent a sudden surprise from cavalry, the chief strength of the Soudanese armies, and with such precautions as we have here it has often happened that towns have stood months and even years of regular siege before being reduced.

The entrances or gateways to the towns are conspicuous enough by the forts which guard them, not less than by the sight of people passing in and out. One of these, the Kofa-n-Rima, from which starts the road to Kano, the great commercial em-

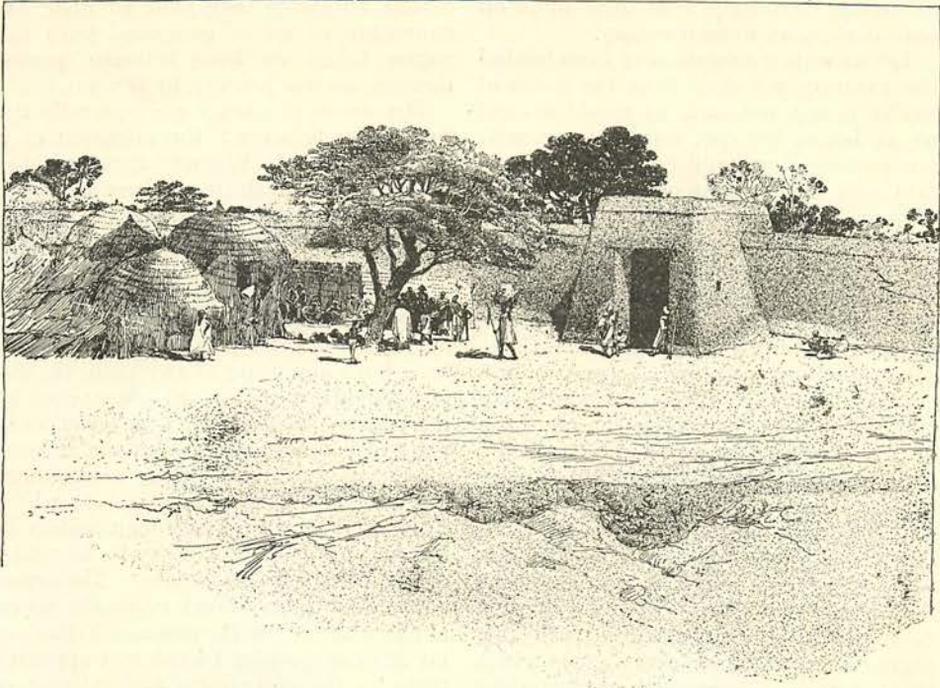
travellers that enter, and thus constitute an effective news agency to spread a knowledge of distinguished or interesting arrivals, as well as of the affairs and events of the outside world, which they glean from strangers and foreign merchants.



A SOUDANESE MERCHANT.

porium of those regions, appears prominently right below us. Protected by a massive square-built and flat-roofed tower, and with a door formed of thick roughly cut planks, and covered with iron plates, it can bid defiance to any destructive weapon which an enemy can bring to bear upon it. A leafy, wide-spreading sycamore on the outside forms an admirable lounging ground for the gossips and idlers of the town, who watch the various

The only other features to be noticed from our point of vantage are the indications of life which one naturally expects near a town of this size. It is only early in the morning or late in the afternoon, however, that the stir is great, as none but those who of necessity must be out and active venture beyond the shelter of their houses, or from under their shady trees. A government messenger careering off on horseback, a humble trader, foot-sore, ur-



A GATEWAY OF WURNU.

ging on with voice and hand his heavily loaded and life-burdened ass into the town, a lazy group of cattle under a tree, a herd of camels ruminating by the wayside, a few toilers in the dusty fields, or a woman here and there coming or going to the neighboring wells with large water-jars picturesquely poised on their heads, alone seem to indicate that Wurnu is not quite a Sleepy Hollow, but that some life throbs within its mud walls.

Let us now descend from the hill and seek shelter from the sun. But first let me note the fact that we are the only Europeans who have entered this city since Barth, thirty years ago, visited it on his way to Timbuctoo, while he again was preceded by Clapperton in 1837, who died shortly after at the neighboring town of Sokoto. There is another matter about which it may be as well you should be prepared beforehand. Our reception will be something unique in the experience of most in our company.

As we approach the town, and when least expected, a party of horsemen in fierce Bedouin-like array will spring from behind some cliff or out of an unseen hollow, and with marrow-piercing war-cries

and unearthly screams, spears levelled or swords uplifted, bear down upon us like a whirlwind, amid clouds of dust, apparently bent on annihilating or sending to Gehenna such infidels as ourselves. But even though you feel a decided want of backbone, a dozen spears, as it were, already quivering in your bodies, and your heads not worth the purchase, pray do not run away, nor even blench for one moment. Assume an indifferent expression, as if being chopped up or spitted on spears was a daily experience. If you can smile in the emergency, all the better, for just as we seem to feel the hot breath of their horses on our cheeks, and in a bewildered sort of way realize the disagreeable proximity of several spears, another shout will fill the air, the galloping horses as if by magic will stand stock-still, enveloping us in a cloud of dust, and by the cordial shouts of welcome and hearty salams we shall find a most pleasant assurance that all this fiendish display is intended as an honorable welcome to their town. Barely shall we have realized that this is the way they do these things in central Soudan, and that instead of being among foes we are among friends, when the horsemen are

off again, seemingly bent once more on annihilating an unseen enemy.

Let us wait a minute, and from behind the gateway we shall hear the notes of native music, not such as would delight us at home, but yet harmonizing with our surroundings, and not without a certain wild, weird charm of its own. Some of you may have heard similar shrill melancholy strains in the streets of Cairo in festival processions, or still more appropriately in Arab camps. Presently, however, the music will cease to monopolize your attention, as the musicians themselves advance with their huge trumpets six feet long, their pipes and hour-glass-shaped tomtoms, heralding the approach of a Fillani nobleman. Following at no great distance comes the respected magnate, voluminously clothed, and mounted on a prancing fiery-eyed horse, one mass of rich trappings, which jingle and rustle at its every step. This is the messenger sent to bid us welcome by the Sultan—a task which he will perform with that dignified bearing and inborn grace which seem somehow specially characteristic of Mohammedan races. This ceremony over, the horsemen will once more engage in mimic battle, showing their modes of fighting, and the skill with which they wield their weapons and manage their horses. Thus escorted, we shall be expected to fall into procession, and headed by a court singer, who improvises a chant in our honor, which is accompanied by the pipes and accentuated by the stentorian notes of the trumpets and the unmusical notes of the tomtoms, we shall be conducted through wondering but respectful crowds to the quarters specially provided for us in the town.

Let us imagine that this quaint and interesting ceremony is over, and that we are safely housed, that we have listened to a second messenger from the Sultan, and looked over the abundance of good things sent for our immediate entertainment, and finally have been left alone to refresh ourselves and rest after the excessive fatigues of our journey.

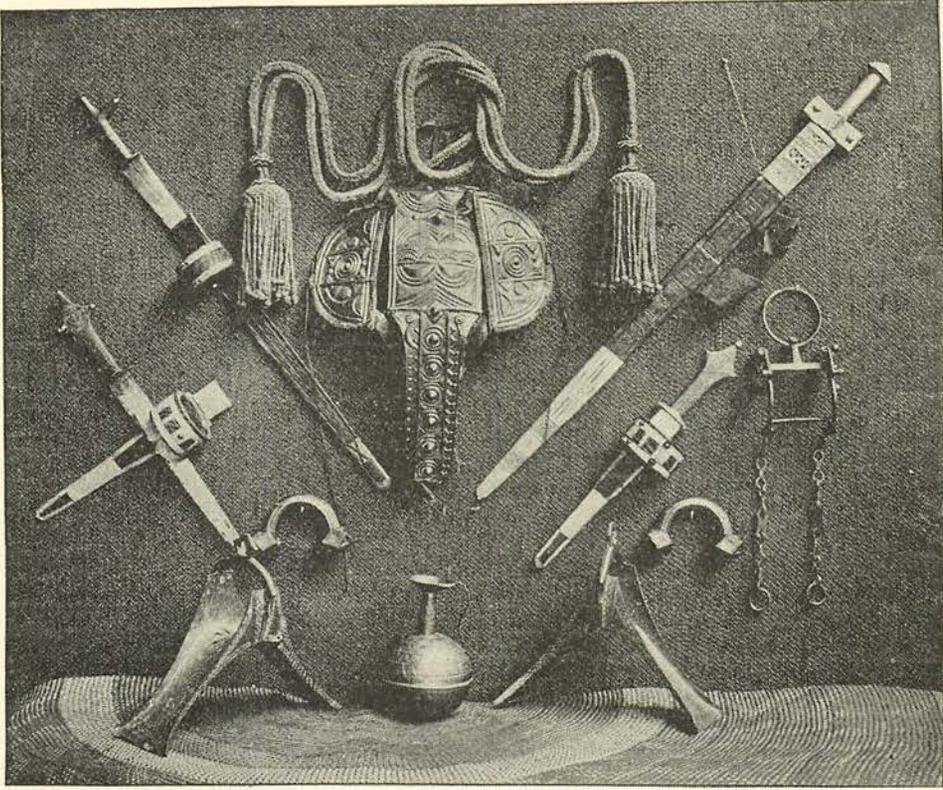
Toward the cool of the evening we can afford to wander forth once more, and seek new sights and scenes to gratify our lively curiosity. We must be prepared to be followed by crowds of the lower classes, more eager to see us than even we can be to see them. But observe how respectful they are, and how little of bar-

barous vulgarity they have in their examination of us, as compared with the pagan tribes we have hitherto passed through on our journey to Wurnu.

The streets of a town are generally the first thing to attract the attention of a visitor. Not so in Wurnu. Streets, in the ordinary sense of the term, there are none, for the simple reason that the whole area within the walls is divided into a series of compounds or courts, in which are situated the various huts and houses for the use of the inhabitants. As the high boundary walls of these private areas have not been built according to any plan, the different quarters of the town are reached by bewildering lanes, which are not only lines of communication, but not uncommonly, as we can easily see, used also as a convenient kind of *cloaca*, into which all manner of refuse may legitimately be thrown, from a dead donkey to the refuse of the kitchen or the stables. The aspect of these lanes very much belies the general character of the Hausa and Fillani, as no African peoples I have met approach them in the cleanliness and tidiness of their own persons, and of the precincts of their courts and houses.

Leaving for another occasion the examination of the inside of their houses—their *penetralia*—let us wander through the town. Long dead-walls of glaring red clay suggesting prisons are varied by the occurrence here and there of a square tower-like building having an ordinary doorway to the street. From the roofs of these towers project long clay pipes to drain off the water from the flat roofs. Sometimes, instead of a flat-roofed building, a conical-roofed erection takes its place, and in place of the ordinary European-like doorway characteristic of all the square buildings, a horseshoe-shaped entrance performs the same duty. Mats or fences of sorghum stalks replace not infrequently the massive mud walls which enclose the compounds of the wealthy. These are all the architectural features which meet the inquiring gaze of the traveller.

Having thus little to note in the houses, we must turn to other objects for points of interest. And truly there is no lack. In shady nooks sit picturesque groups of natives in all kinds of combinations discussing the news of the day, haggling over a purchase, or busily engaged in embroidery or making up of gowns and



WEAPONS OF WAR AND CAVALRY ACCOUTREMENTS.

trousers. This trade, we may note, is here entirely in the hands of men, who ply the needle with much skill. Further on we meet a courtier gorgeously dressed, looking in his voluminous garments a very Falstaff in bulk, as he goes ambling past on his still more richly decorated horse, bent on a little exercise in the cool of the evening. Of the personal appearance of this aristocrat I shall not now speak, but we may take notice of the horse. By good luck here happens to be one standing waiting to be mounted, so we can more conveniently examine steed and trappings in detail. The animal before us is a very fair specimen of a Soudanese horse. It is somewhat lanky, with little beauty of line, but it is fiery-eyed, and its tail and mane, being uncut, give it a somewhat wild appearance. Soudanese horses are generally very vicious and difficult to manage, stallions alone being used for riding purposes. They are specially trained for sudden forward charges, to stop within their own length when in full gallop, to

turn with equal rapidity, and away like the wind out of harm's way. At other times the favorite mode of progression is by making the horse's left legs simultaneously alternate with those of the right side, a method of travelling which is very pleasant and easy. The riders are fond of making their horses prance and plunge about with fierce and fiery action. There is nothing which the central Soudanese is so proud of as his horse, and nothing to which he devotes more time and attention than its appearance and trappings. The head-gear is almost one mass of brass-plated ornaments, little bells, and a thousand tassels and flaps of leather in yellow, light blue, or dark red. The beautifully plaited reins would almost hold an elephant for strength, while the bits are perfect instruments of torture. The lower jaw passes through a ring of iron, which is attached to a T-shaped bar lying in the mouth, and the whole arrangement is such as to give sufficient leverage to break the lower jaw without much difficulty.

So powerful is the bit that the slightest touch of the reins is sufficient to cause the poor brute to rear in the air, and not uncommonly fall back.

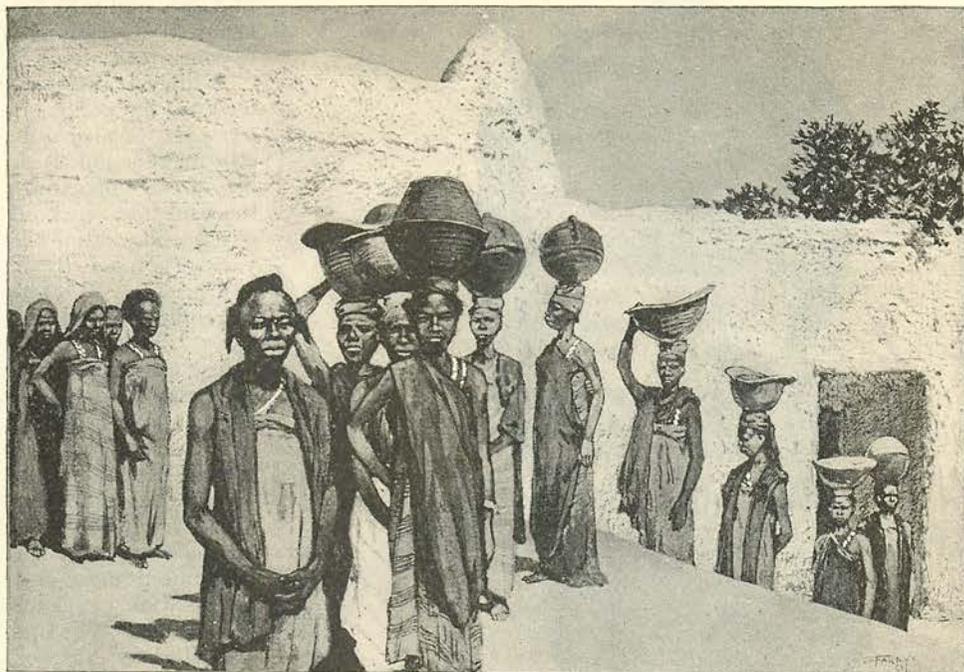
The saddle is of the most ponderous as well as the most gorgeous description. The Soudanese artist revels here in his most intricate patterns and his richest colors, the favorite being crimson, blue, and gold. Gold-lace and fringes, velvets and silks, are alike impressed into use as they are for no other purpose. The rider sits bolstered up before and behind by erections a foot high, which make mounting the saddle almost impossible without assistance. The stirrups are in keeping with the rest of the trappings, of great size, generally triumphs of the brass-worker's art. The riding requirements are complete with the addition of a pair of shoes, to the heel of which are attached some formidable spikes, to do duty as spurs, to put new mettle in the horse by the drawing of some blood. Apart from the bits and the spurs, the native rider is most careful of his horse, and the fact that travellers stopping at a town for a night have always a present of grain sent for their horses before they themselves are served speaks for itself.

But we must continue our ramble before the night sets in. You will observe that as we advance we are leaving the aristocratic west end, or court quarter, and gradually entering more frequented parts, where the life of the town throbs with more force and vigor. To one thing, however, our attention is drawn more forcibly than agreeably: we are reminded only too soon of a characteristic phase of Mohammedan countries. At every point of vantage—near the gateways, at the outskirts of the market-places, or along the more busy thoroughfares—beggars in every degree of emaciation or of loathsome disease appeal to you in the name of the Prophet, and as you hope for a place in paradise, to minister to their wants. In vain, on finding you have empty pockets, you try to evade them. The deformed and the cripples grovel in the dust at your feet with piteous cries; the blind, of whom there are large numbers, guided by children, throng round you with their empty eye-sockets turned on you, more eloquent than words; women with hardly a rag to cover their miserable skeletons hold up their fleshless arms with empty calabashes, shrilly demanding alms in the name of God. To

see these miserable creatures dragging out a life of semi-starvation for a few years, one is almost tempted to ask if the methods of more barbarous races were not better.

Invoking the aid of the guides sent us by the Sultan, we are at last relieved of the pitiful presence of the army of beggars, and able to enjoy once more the scene around us. We have now reached the industrial quarter of the town, and we are speedily surprised to observe the length to which the division of labor has proceeded among the Hausa. With a dense population, a soil unproductive except in the rainy season, and an unequal division of property, the Soudanese have learned by hard experience that each man cannot supply all his wants by his own direct labor. Hence has arisen that division of tasks which has made him more dependent on his fellow-men, and raised him in consequence a great step in the ladder of civilization; for he has thus come under a law which by its action and interaction has widened his requirements and developed a taste for something which will minister not merely to the animal cravings of the body, but to the more noble delights of the mind and soul. Wonder not, then, that in one quarter you hear the measured clang of blacksmiths' hammers answered by the clinking taps of the brass-workers or the dull rhythmic beats of cloth-beaters. Peeping into this court or the other, you may see the weaver bending over his primitive though effective apparatus, and with swift action pass the shuttle from hand to hand as he works with well-timed movement of the feet the treadles to produce the necessary alternation of threads at each passage of the weft. The web he manufactures is rarely more than four inches broad, but it is well woven, and he likes it narrow. You observe some men near a number of circular pits, two feet in diameter and eight to ten feet deep; approach nearer and you will observe that these pits are filled with a thick, dark blue fluid, while at the same time your nose is assailed by a very strong odor. This is the Marina, or place for dyeing cloths with indigo—an art for which the Hausa are justly famous, as the colors they produce are most beautiful and very lasting.

If you now look beyond the Marina you will observe a low kiln-like erection, from which much smoke is rising. There pottery is being burnt for domestic pur-



PALACE SLAVES CARRYING COOKED FOOD.

poses. Within a very small area you may meet leather-workers, or tanners, tailors, saddle-makers, straw-hat weavers, and men engaged in a score of other crafts which need not be further specified.

Having proceeded thus far in our examination of the town, we may now proceed to a more detailed examination of a Fillani household and compound. You have learned already that the natives of Wurnu, following the custom of their co-religionists in other lands, keep their wives as much secluded as possible from contact with the outside world. They have, as you have seen, built large walls of mud, or, in the case of the poorer people, erected mats of the stalks of Kaffir-corn, to produce the required degree of seclusion. For greater privacy, those who are able to afford it subdivide the compound by other walls, forming courts within courts, there being an inner sanctum in which the chief wife is enclosed like the queen-bee in her cell, and which she will seldom leave, except for some very special reason. The family compound is entered through the portals of what may be called the master's day-room, or entrance hall, or audience cham-

ber, according as it may suit your fancy. This hall is usually flat-roofed, covered with rafters and a thick bed of clay, and supported by mud walls and central massive pillars in number according to the size of the house. An outside door gives admission from the lane, and an inner, so situated as not to afford a view of the court, leads into the private quarters. In this cool and airy retreat all business is transacted, and the master of the house, if he is a man who can indulge in idleness, receives his friends and discusses the current gossip, the affairs of the realm, or the progress of the true faith by missionary enterprise or with fire and sword among the Kaffir tribes of the south.

Let us suppose ourselves to have been introduced to a friendly Fillani, who, being somewhat lax in the stern rules of his religion about contact with infidels, and made otherwise accommodating by judicious presents, will give us a glimpse into those precincts which are sacred to the family. Arriving at his door with all the pomp and circumstance at our command—for display is always judicious in uncivilized lands—we dismount and enter the hall of audience. We find our friend



seated cross-legged on a circular mat at the back of the apartment. He does not think it necessary to rise in greeting us, but contents himself with leaning forward as he takes our hand, with the salutation of "Lafia! lafia!" Meanwhile attendants spread out mats for us to sit on, if we have not brought our camp-stools as more adapted to our habits. As soon as we are seated our host begins the business of making an interminable series of questions about the state of our health and that of every living thing connected with us. These inquiries he plentifully mingles with compliments and Arabic exclamations. Everything he is told is apparently a signal illustration of the greatness

of Allah, and calls for renewed expression of devout gratitude.

While our interpreter does the polite on our part we may quietly make a judicious use of our opportunities and take stock of our friend, noting his various points in dress and person. We observe that he is slenderly built, small-boned, and with little muscular development, though he seems wiry and tough. He has the negro's length of arm, but little else except his dark color. His face is good, with well-raised nose, and not too widely expanded nostrils. The lips are slightly thicker than the average European's, but the jaws are not more prominent. Curiously enough, he has a beard, though not luxuriant—a feature which belongs neither to the pure race of nomads from which he springs nor to the negro race with which his ancestors have intermarried, for neither is usually characterized by the possession

of this appendage. The hair is shaved from the head. The eyes are his most pleasing feature, and have that liquid softness and clear depth which so much enhance the beauty of many Eastern races, and he has fine teeth.

Such is a typical specimen of the Filiani people—an alien race ruling by force of character over the Haussa, who form the mass of the population.

Turning mentally from the person of our host, whose portrait is given above, we are at once struck with surprise at the weight and astonishing number of yards required to make a nobleman's dress. We have often heard of "baggy Turkish trousers," but the roomiest Turkish trousers

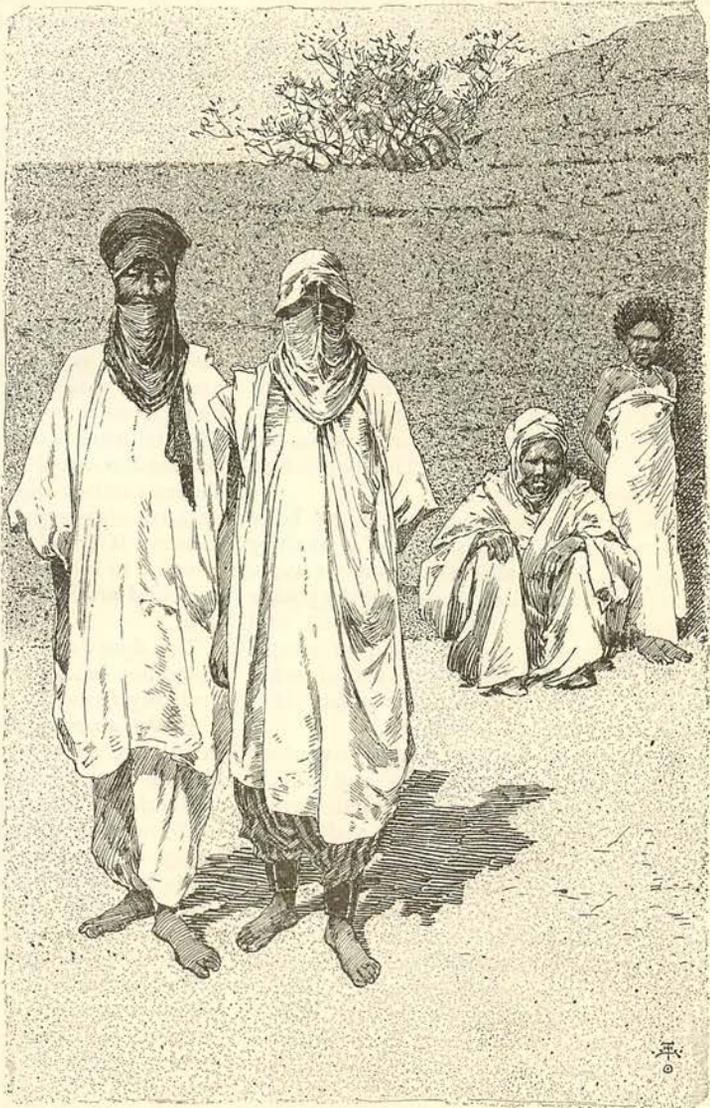
would be positively tight in comparison with the capacious depths of Soudanese unmentionables, and no wonder the natives of those parts think our European trousers improperly scanty when we observe that a pair of theirs would make half a dozen of ours.

Imagine to yourself an enormous sack twelve feet broad when stretched out flat, and two feet deep, and you have their aspect when off. At the bottom corners of this sack are the two holes for the passage of the feet. Our friend is only required to put his feet through the holes, to draw the string which encircles the twenty-four feet of cloth till he has reduced it to the circumference of his waist, and he finds his legs swathed in a voluminous series of folds, which, if not comfortable, are at least picturesque, especially when the wearer is seated. The appearance of this article of dress is enhanced by tasteful embroidery in intricate Moorish patterns round the ankles and up the legs.

Over the trousers is placed the gown, or *tob*, known generally under the descriptive title of the "elephant shirt," for it is of a size sufficient to cover that bulky quadruped, and is thus in keeping with the trousers. I cannot do better than describe it also as a huge sack, which, when stretched out, is from eight to twelve feet broad and five feet deep. At the top of the gown—or, in

other words, the bottom of the sack—there is a slit, as in the Mexican *poncho*, for the passage of the head, while each side of the sack or gown is open for about three feet for the passage of the arms when necessary, the extra yards at the side being hitched on to the shoulder when the arms are wanted free. The front of this is ornamented, as a rule, with the most beautiful and intricate silk embroidery, requiring a considerable development of artistic taste and skill with the needle.

The head-gear next demands our attention, and here we find the character of



FILLANI NOBLEMAN AND WIFE.

the dressing almost as remarkable, requiring, as it does, quite as many yards of material. The face is enveloped in a white gauze cloth (sometimes exchanged for a dark blue one), known as the *litham*. This article of dress is borrowed from the wild Tuareg tribes of Asben, among whom it may serve the double purpose of evading recognition (and so providing a means of safety in blood feuds), and of keeping out of the nose and mouth the fine dust eternally blowing in suffocating clouds in the parts he inhabits. Only on state occasions do the Fillani and Haussa retain the *litham* on the face; at other times it is dropped to the chin, or even to the breast. Of the turban it need only be said that it is in keeping with the rest of the dress, and therefore large in the extreme. White is the popular color in Fillani dress, but not infrequently some tint of blue is adopted. The cotton of which their clothes are made and the indigo with which they are dyed are both native products, while the weaving and sewing are equally home industries, everything being marked by the absence of shoddy, and by the manipulator's skill.

The Fillani, it may be remarked in passing, are distinguished by their cleanliness, soap and water being largely used not only in the ablution of their persons, but in washing their clothes. The soap is also home-made.

The dress whose peculiarities we have been noting is of course that of a wealthy man, but it remains the same in type, though differing in size, among the poorer classes. It is what they all aim at, and if the poor man may be seen in simple loin-cloth or ragged remnants of what had once been an "elephant shirt," it is his misfortune, not his choice.

Having thus made a mental inventory of our entertainer's person and habiliments, we are ready, on the conclusion of the polite preliminaries of our visit, to accept his guidance into the sacred precincts of the inner compound.

Our unexpected apparition in these preserved grounds is followed by an amount of delightful and piquant confusion, indicated by feminine half screams, half giggles, which show how the susceptible hearts of the ladies have been fluttered by our intrusion. We are only in time to catch glimpses of retreating feet and skirts, and are left to answer as best we may the questioning looks of some goats,

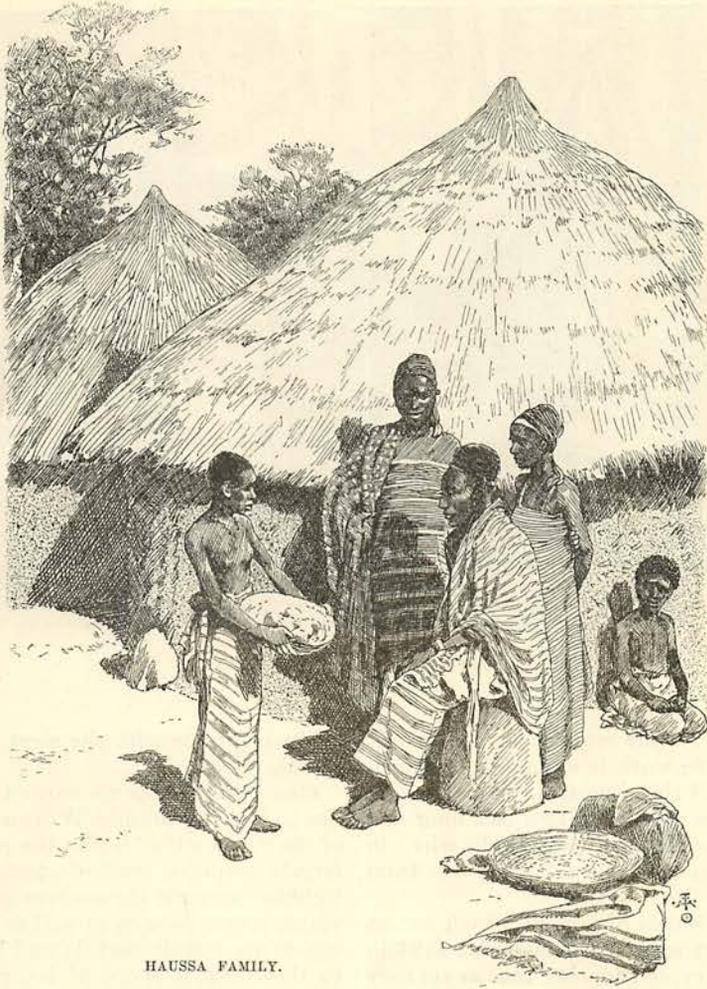
which stamp indignantly their feet, and seem to inquire what we want there.

In looking round we note the scrupulous cleanness of everything—the well-swept yard, the well-washed earthen-ware, cooking pots, and other kitchen utensils, the daintily carved calabashes for milk, water, and a variety of purposes. Here stands part of a tree hollowed into a mortar for pounding certain grains, and there a bedded coarse-grained stone, on which the family meal is ground. Everywhere are to be observed evidences of the thrift and industry which distinguish the Soudanese household. Unlike the domestic establishments of most Mohammedan parts, there is no pampered laziness or voluptuous ease. Wife and slave alike are busily engaged in household duties, or work which will bring money to the workers. Here is cotton being teased and cleaned, then with spindle and wheel turned into thread. Food simmers or boils on the fire in the various savory, if oily, dishes for which the Haussa women are famous. We note that no heavy or unwomanly tasks are laid upon the females.

The insides of the various huts, as in the case of the court, are models of cleanliness, the walls being frequently ornamented with colors in various designs. The furniture is of the simplest. A raised bedstead covered with mats, some calabashes, earthen-ware water-pots, one large unburnt-clay receptacle to hold grain and preserve it from rats, another for articles of value to secure them in case of fire, are the chief articles which attract our attention.

The doorways are noticeable as being horseshoe-shaped—a design borrowed probably from the north.

In the store-rooms and master's apartments are to be seen a great variety of objects heaped together or lying about without any attempt at order. Here may be found the owner's weapons of war—many double-edged swords, with scabbards handsomely ornamented with leather and brass, and suspended by elaborate and betasselled silk ropes, daggers intended to be attached to the wrist by a leather band—the cross-shaped handle when thus carried almost lying in the palm of the hand—beautiful long iron spears neatly and prettily inlaid with brass bands, and generally barbed, revolvers and pistols of the most obsolete types, as well as flint-lock guns which look

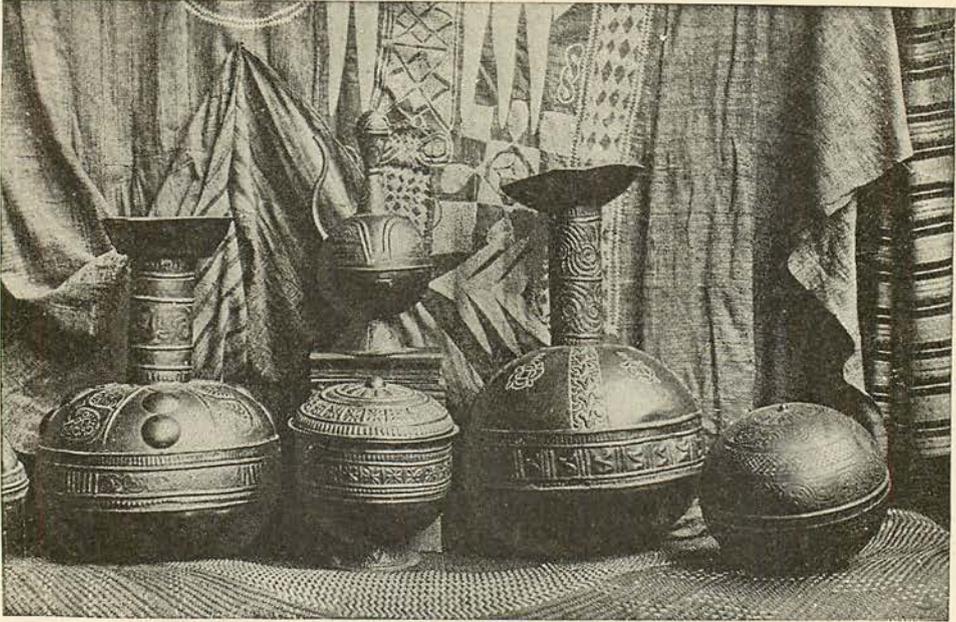


HAUSSA FAMILY.

as if they would be as dangerous to the user as they could possibly be to an enemy. Such are the offensive weapons. But there are also to be seen war dresses of enormously thick quilts, intended specially as a protection against poisoned arrows. The warrior when encased in these cumbersome garments looks the most unwieldy and barrel-like of African Falstaffs, as he can neither mount his horse nor dismount without assistance, and if unhorsed he is perfectly helpless. Many of the wealthy chiefs have also very beautiful coats of chain armor, with head-gear to match, which are probably of old Moorish workmanship, and are said by the natives to be as old as David, and are accordingly valued at a great price.

Besides the objects which savor of war,

numbers of other things lying about in artistic disorder attract attention. Brass vessels are the most conspicuous, and indicate a manipulative skill and an artistic taste which we would certainly not expect in such a country. The chief types of native work are large circular salvers or trays, globular vessels, others carafe-like in form, urns resembling coffee-pots. They are all elaborately ornamented, either in repoussé or chased in the intricate manner which characterizes Moorish art. Many of the designs are most beautiful, and worked out with patient care. In the brass-worker's art, as in so many other things, the influence of North African ideas is easily traceable, though how they have come to take such fixed root in the Soudan it would be diffi-



BRASS VESSELS AND NATIVE GOWNS.

cult to say. Our wonder at the quaint and effective work is enhanced on learning that all these vessels are hammered out of brass rods, each two feet long and of the thickness of telegraph wire, in which form it reaches these parts from Europe.

The specimens of pottery which we see lying about exhibit a wonderful skill in that industry, considering that as yet they have not adopted the potter's wheel. The most extraordinary objects, however, which attract our attention are the skin vessels for holding oil. In some way or other they are moulded into the required forms out of raw hide, and so constructed in a single piece as hardly to show the slightest trace of a joint. They are not sewed, but the two edges of the skin are made to adhere most firmly by some means. The outer aspect is ornamented in black, white, and light brown with strips of skin having those colors. The hair is left on except on the neck. They are ingeniously fitted with caps or lids to keep out any foreign matter. Only oil or grain is kept in them, as water softens the untanned skin. In some cases they are clearly intended more for ornament than use, as frequently four smaller vessels of the same pattern are attached

to the chief one with the most happy and artistic effect.

One thing which we cannot fail to notice in looking round a Wurnu household of the "upper ten" is that the people have largely acquired æsthetic tastes, and delight to surround themselves with articles which please the eye, as well as with those which are merely useful; and to minister to this taste a score of industries have sprung up.

By the time we have finished our survey and made these mental notes the women of the household have got over their first tremors, and come to the conclusion that we are a good-natured and a harmless looking sort of fellows. At first they peep over the wall or out of neighboring doorways, till, growing bolder, they venture in groups out of their hiding-places to see, and doubtless to be seen. Not to alarm them, we take notes surreptitiously, and observe that they make up quite an ethnological collection of African types. Filiani and Haussa women from the neighborhood, Nupè and Yoruba specimens from the Niger districts, and others from the tribes of Adamawa and the Benuè region. Clearly our friend is a man of catholic tastes in the matter of women. His harem presents all kinds of face and

figures, from the copper-colored Fillani, with slender, lithe figure, well-shaped face, and positively beautiful eyes, to the shapeless form, black skin, ugly face, and muddy eyes of the lowest negro type. They are all dressed alike, with a lower *turkedi* or cloth round the waist, hanging to the

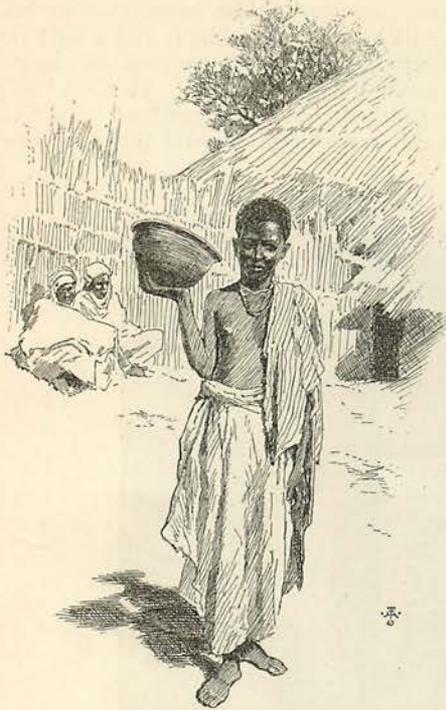
ankles are adorned with enormously heavy anklets of solid brass, the bar being little short of an inch and a half in thickness, the ends ornamented with neatly made polygonal beads. Nothing better finished could be turned out of a European workshop. Round the wrist are



SKIN VESSELS AND NATIVE CLOTHS.

ankles, a second sheet wound round the body under the armpits, and a third worn in the varied modes of a shawl on the head and shoulder. The hair is gathered into a solid ridge of grease and hair, which extends from the brow to the nape of the neck, something after the manner of the crest of a helmet. From each temple hangs a kind of stiff love-lock. The

placed several more brass bracelets, not so expansively made, but collectively so heavy that to ease their arms the wearers are frequently to be seen with hands clasped behind the head or hanging down their backs. Their ornaments usually include a string of agate beads made in the country. The women, unlike the men, do not affect white colors, the more fash-



SWEETMEAT SELLER.

ionable cloths being checks of dark blue, a medium tint of the same, white, and Magenta. Among those who can afford expensive articles, the latter two colors are prevalent.

I have said that strangers are not usually admitted into the family compound, but it must not be supposed that the women are strictly kept inside and never let out. Quite the reverse. In the evenings they are almost invariably left at liberty to wander forth and join in any dance or merry-making there may be afoot, and I would not like to be responsible for the statement that their behavior is always of the best on these occasions. During the day, also, if any of the women have anything to buy or sell at the market, there is no restriction to their going thither. In the more wealthy families, however, there is always one if not two wives who are kept in strict seclusion, and not unfrequently eunuchs are employed to guard the morals of the harem.

Such are the main features of a Wur-

nu household, and from prince to pauper it is the same in kind, if differing in degree. We have now but to drink a calash of *fura*, a kind of thin acid gruel largely drank during the heat of the day, and also chew a portion of kola nut, a fruit which largely takes the place not only of the tobacco and snuff of other lands, but also of the spirits and beer, and then we may bid adieu to our host and return to our quarters.

Our trip together through the town must now end, though we have left some of the most noteworthy features of Wur-nu life untouched. It would, if circumstances had been favorable, have been no small pleasure to me to act as your guide to court and introduce you to the Sultan. Still more profitable would it have been to study in your company the religious life of the Soudanese, and note how largely they have been influenced by the teaching of the Koran, and how clearly they have grasped the elevating idea of a spiritual Being, and how they mirror in their lives the truths they believe. We might have visited their mosques, and seen them with heads bowed to the dust acknowledging the greatness of a compassionate God. In their schools could we have seen the children learning in noisy chorus at once the tenets of their religion and the elements of their language. These aspects of central African negro life would indeed have been fascinating, but not less attractive would have been the teeming market-place with its bewildering hurryscurrying thousands and deafening though not discordant din. The types of people, the variety of goods, and the picturesque arrangement of stalls and booths would have presented a thousand objects of attraction.

Delightful also would it have been to have wandered outside the walls in the cool of the evening, to have sat by the well and entered into conversation with the people, and noted the picturesque groups of damsels drawing water, gossiping with their friends, or with free and easy carriage walking away with their water-pots poised elegantly on their heads. Inexorable fate, however, has ordained otherwise, and for the present we must remain content with such peeps and glimpses as circumstances have made possible for us.