

two to ten guns, according to the size of the party staying at the house. The mountain hares when alarmed immediately make for the crags, where they take refuge like rabbits in holes and crannies. We take our measures accordingly. Each sportsman (sometimes alone, and sometimes with a keeper to load and carry his second gun) quietly occupies a spur of rock commanding some likely defile. The gillies meantime have been forming an extended line, one end of which rests on the base of the hills, while the other stretches far out into the boggy moor. They are under the command of old Hugh the hill-watcher, who joined us at the little "bothy" half-way up the ascent. When we are all ready, the signal is given, and the row of beaters slowly advances in a direction parallel with the line of hills. The scene as we move along the heights is most animated and exciting; but it requires no little activity and exertion to keep up with the beaters below. Up and down ravines, now on a patch of springy mountain turf and now on a projecting crag, we scramble along, firing as we go at the hares, which are scudding in all directions. After some hours, a truce is proclaimed. We halt round some bubbling spring, where the provision-pony has been ordered to meet us. We are fully prepared to do justice to the manifold good things which appear, as we had only a bannock and a cup of milk before starting. These pic-nic luncheon-breakfasts were equally pleasant and picturesque. Stretched by the side of a sparkling rill, in some soft and shady nook, we were busily occupied in satisfying the hunger produced by the exercise in the keen mountain air, and in comparing notes of our success. The keepers and gillies formed another group close at hand. After about an hour's rest we renew the war, and as the afternoon wanes we turn our steps homeward in time to dress for dinner; putting up coveys of grouse as we go, and chatting over the morning's adventures. At the close of one of these field days we counted our hares by scores, to the great joy of the farmers in the valley. The beaters were rewarded in kind, each getting a hare for his day's work, which however he seemed to enjoy as much as any of us, being "to the manner born." Even after this deduction, there would be enough left to supply the household with hares and hare-soup, till even the servants got tired of eating it. All this, however, was merely a sort of prelude to the grouse-shooting.

On the morning of the twelfth of August, and for some days afterwards, we were on the moors by four o'clock A.M., and were out for twelve hours. At the end of the first week, we found we had walked 100 miles, had been out fifty hours, and had shot 350 head of game, a large part of which was duly distributed far and near, and, we trust, thankfully received. It is amazing to find what an amount of exercise one can take in the Highlands without feeling fatigued. The pure mountain breezes have almost the effect of laughing-gas, which is probably due to that mysterious agent, ozone. We used to think nothing of following the dogs day after day for twenty miles, carrying our guns over hills, through heather, and across bogs. It would not be easy to do this day after day in a lowland atmo-

sphere: "the spirit of the hills," says Ruskin, "is action, and that of the lowlands repose." We thus laid in a rare stock of health, our best justification for thus spending our time.

[To be continued.]

#### THE DAHOMIANS AND ASHANTEES.

A BIT of intelligence from Western Africa lately arrived, which many regarded as startling news, but which, in fact, happens to be no news at all. It is a mere reiteration of a stale subject, relating to nothing more than a common-place matter *there*, that is very offensive to our susceptibilities *here*, and we don't like to hear of it. We are told that "His majesty Baddahung, king of Dahomy, is about to make the 'grand custom' in honour of the late king Gezo. Determined to surpass all former monarchs in the magnitude of the ceremonies to be performed on this occasion, Baddahung has made the most extensive preparations for the celebration of the 'grand custom.'"

Well, there sounds no harm in this. We have our grand customs, anniversaries, and ceremonies. There is something charming, too, in celebrating, in a public festival, the memory of a great man, and that man a king. But the statement proceeds as follows:—"A great pit has been dug, which is to contain human blood enough to float a canoe. *Two thousand* persons will be sacrificed on this occasion. The expedition to Abbeokuta has been postponed, but the king has sent his army to make some excursions at the expense of weaker tribes, and has succeeded in capturing many unfortunate creatures. The young people among these prisoners will be sold into slavery, and the old people will be killed at the 'great custom!'"

And this, be it observed, is an *annual* "custom." I have stated that it has been going on for many years. I will tell you, good reader, presently, how many years I have traced it as a matter of certainty; and though the magnitude of the ceremonies in matters of detail may perhaps be surpassed in the present instance, I undertake to say that it will fall short in the number of victims on some former occasions, if limited to 2000.

But let us first see in what part of Africa these grand "customs" are, as far as we know, *exclusively* practised. If we trace the direction of the western shores of the continent from the northward, we find it inclining towards the south-east in the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone, till within the fifth and sixth degrees from the equator. It here turns more directly eastward, and pursues a tortuous course for nearly a thousand miles before it again curves round to the southward towards the Cape of Good Hope, and forms that extensive embayed region named the Bight of Benin. On this line of coast our earliest African settlement is identified with that portion of it known as the "Gold Coast," and we here exercise a sort of protectorate over the neighbouring tribes, considerably beyond our legitimate jurisdiction, or the limits of the territory we claim under the name of "Cape Coast Castle." With the two prominent exceptions



in the people whose national designation we have given at the head of this paper, nearly the whole of the maritime districts of this extensive range of country is inhabited by numerous distinct tribes, forming petty oligarchies or patriarchal states, and generally exhibiting that restless licentiousness incident to the frequent recurrence of desolating wars, and rendered more degraded still by the insidious influence of a grovelling superstition, and the demoralizing intercourse they have so long sustained with Europeans and Americans. But this revolting aspect of humanity is not to be wholly ascribed to the natural instincts or habits of the people, or to the demoralizing influence of the slave trade. I am speaking now with some personal knowledge of Africa and the Africans. We behold, in truth, in these scattered tribes, in the wide-spread tokens of towns devastated or deserted, and in the extensive fertile tracts laid waste, the débris of several long-settled communities forming "states," known and spoken of by Europeans as "important centres of great trade with the interior;" within the period of a century from the present time; and nature herself, at the passing moment, confirms the testimony given of the former prosperity and fruitfulness of the country.

Dahomy was not known to us, even by name, at the commencement of the last century, when the slave trade was unrestricted, and the avenues of general commerce and intercourse with the natives had been open to Europeans for upwards of two centuries, and we had held Cape Coast Castle upwards of fifty years; and yet it was within only a few days' journey from the coast, with only two independent states intervening, and with several lines of communication open to traders with the interior. Of these two states, with the coast for their southern boundary, as will be seen in the accompanying map, one was known to us as the "flourishing kingdom of Whydah," the other adjoining it and extending further inland, as the "kingdom of Ardra," whose people had so far advanced in intelligence as to be able to correspond with each other after the manner of the Peruvians. At this time also, the Eyeos, a numerous warlike people to the north-east of Dahomy, with a formidable army of cavalry, had long claimed supremacy over the regions between themselves and the sea, and had recently possessed themselves of Ardra, on an appeal from the Ardranese against the tyranny of their chief.

But at this period there lived one of those extraordinary men who, whether for good or evil, whether among the civilized or the savage, come into the world to mark an era in the history of their race. This man, by name Guadjá Trudo, was then king of Dahomy, and in 1727 he not only claimed to be known to us with as good a title of a hero or conqueror as any barbarian that was ever dignified with the appellation, but he claimed also for his descendants and their subjects the hideous notoriety they have so well sustained to the present hour. Animated by a crafty and savage ambition, this monster, in the year named, suddenly invaded with an overwhelming force the two states of Ardra and

Whydah, committing the most horrible cruelties upon the inhabitants, reducing to desolation the most beautiful country then known to us in Western Africa, and successfully extending his dominions to the sea coast. During the brief remnant of his reign, he carried misery and desolation into other states. He died in 1731, and was succeeded by his son Bossa Ahadee, who possessed the same restless ambitious spirit, though with less of the martial talents of his father.

It was some years later, however, before we became acquainted with the true character of the Dahomian government and people, and with the celebration of these "grand customs" on and after the death of Trudo. But that they existed before his time, we have evidence incidentally conveyed to us in a speech of Ahadee's successor, addressed to one of our governors of Cape Coast Castle. *How awful* the reflection, then, that during the one hundred and twenty-nine years that have elapsed since 1731, *two hundred and fifty-eight thousand* human victims have been sacrificed at these "grand customs," even if we take the lowest computation of two thousand annually, though they have frequently exceeded that number. And yet, this is only an item in the account from that date alone; other sacrifices of a more *impromptu* character are constantly occurring throughout the year, at the mere whim or caprice of the "king," and in which his own subjects are also the victims.\* My limited space, however, precludes a recital of the circumstances which commonly call for them; and it compels me also to dispose of Bossa Ahadee with credit, after a long reign, for nearly as much mischief of the same character as that committed by his paternal predecessor. He also was succeeded by his son Adahoonzou, and with *his* "walk through blood to the throne," according to "custom," we arrive at the end of the last century.

There is one feature, however, in the government of this state that we must not pass over: a large portion of its army, including the king's body-guard, is composed of *women!* and, strange as it may seem, so far from this service being repugnant to them, or its imposition the effect of despotic rule, they have quite a passion for it, although they are bound to perpetual celibacy and chastity, under the penalty of death. They are regularly trained to the use of arms under generals and subordinate officers of their own sex; parade in public with their standards, drums, trumpets, and martial music, and perform their military evolutions with as great dexterity as any of the Dahomian troops. Animated, moreover, by their love of "glory" and their attachment to their

\* Conceive this "horrid king"—and, in speaking of him, we for brevity sake speak also of his neighbouring ally, the king of ASHANTEE—conceive him indulging in the notion that he is in constant communication with his deceased father, or other relative, and whenever he wishes to "consult" him, or convey to him a message, he sends for one of his ablest messengers, and having delivered to him his errand, coolly chops off his head. Conceive him, also, the next moment perhaps, recollecting something that he had forgotten; in which case another messenger is sent for, and despatched in like manner, and probably with strict injunctions that he "make haste and endeavour to overtake *the preceding messenger.*" In conceiving this, good reader, you will simply conceive a reality of frequent occurrence.



sovereign, they are the most furious in battle. When Gezo, the late king, so recently as March, 1851, attacked Abbeokuta with a force estimated at 10,000, the "Amazonian" division comprised six thousand of the number.

But what of the Ashantees? What if, for the sake of brevity, we say, let the foregoing particulars of the Dahomians represent them and their career; their sacrifices a reduplication of the others! We shall not be far from correct. Their State also, though only at a trifling distance further from the coast, had remained concealed from our knowledge to a still more recent date.\* In like manner, the maritime districts of Aquamboe, Dinkira, and other "powerful states" intervened between it and the sea; and it was not until 1808 that we were "startled" into an acquaintance with it, precisely after the fashion of the Dahomians. In that year these states had yielded to the desolating inroads of the Ashantees, who, with a force of 15,000 warriors, now entered the territories of the Fantees in the very vicinity of our settlements, laying waste the country with fire and sword, routing and putting to death a body of 9000 Fantees who had rallied near the British fort of Anamaboe, and then attacking the fort itself, in which a few of the Fantees had sought protection. Here, however, they were repulsed with considerable slaughter. In 1811, and again in 1816, they made similar incursions; and in 1817 we honoured them with a special embassy to "propitiate"—what? it is the diplomatic phrase, good reader, we employed on the occasion—to propitiate their favour—of course on behalf of humanity and commerce; and to discover, in the peculiar character of their government and policy,

in their "grand customs," and in their steadfast adherence to the doctrine of "passive obedience and the divine right of kings," their remarkable resemblance to their neighbours the Dahomians. His Majesty of Ashantee had just sacrificed on the grave of his mother *three thousand* human victims, two thousand of whom were Fantee prisoners. We nevertheless concluded a treaty. But in January, 1824, the Ashantees having again entered the Fantee territory with a force of 15,000 men, our authorities on the coast interposed, and Sir Charles McCarthy hastened from Sierra Leone to take command of the small force we could collect to repel them. Ill informed as to the strength of the enemy, he met them with scarcely a thousand British, and was deserted by the native auxiliaries in the action; from neglect and confusion he found himself without a needful supply of powder, and, surrounded by his savage enemies, he was taken prisoner, and his whole force perished on the field or underwent the more cruel fate of captivity in the hands of the victors. Three officers, and they wounded, alone escaped to tell the dreadful tale. The head of Sir Charles McCarthy was severed from his body immediately after his capture. Thus perished one of the best of men, and certainly the best Governor of Sierra Leone, where his name is still revered.

The philosopher, the statesman, the philanthropist, and the christian have in these sad records much food for reflection. Truly "the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." While every political and commercial influence should be brought to bear, our main hope for Africa must be in the spread of that Gospel which, through the Divine power, in other lands, once as degraded as Dahomy, has broken the reign of superstition and crime.

\* It now, with its conquered territories, adjoins that of Dahomy, to the left in our map, its capital, Comassi, lying N.N.E. of Cape Coast Castle.

