

Collier's
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Old Calabar

While I was up the Congo and the Kasai rivers, Mrs. Davis had remained at Boma, and when I rejoined her, we booked passage home on the *Nigeria*. We chose the *Nigeria*, which is an Elder-Dempster freight and passenger steamer, in preference to the fast mail steamer because of the ports of the West Coast we wished to see as many as possible. And, on her six weeks' voyage to Liverpool, the *Nigeria* promised to spend as much time at anchor as at sea. On the Coast it is a more serious matter to reserve a cabin than in New York. You do not stop at an uptown office, and on a diagram of the ship's insides, as though you were playing roulette, point at a number. Instead, as you are to occupy your cabin, not for one, but for six, weeks, you search, as vigilantly as a navy officer looking for contraband, the ship herself and each cabin.

But going aboard was a simple ceremony. The Hôtel Splendide stands on the bank of the Congo River. After saying good-bye to her proprietor, I walked to the edge of the water and waved my helmet. In the Congo, a white man standing in the sun without a hat is a spectacle sufficiently thrilling to excite the attention of all, and at once Captain Hughes of the *Nigeria* sent a cargo boat to the rescue, and on the shoulders of naked Kroom boys Mrs. Davis and the maid, and the trunks, spears, tents, bathtubs, carved idols, native mats, and a live mongoose were dropped into it, and we were paddled to the gangway.

"If that's all, we might as well get under way," said Captain Hughes. The anchor chains creaked, from the bank the proprietor of the Splendide waved his hand, and the long voyage to Liverpool had begun. It was as casual as halting and starting a cable-car.

According to schedule, after leaving the Congo, we should have gone south and touched at Luanda. But on this voyage, outward bound, the *Nigeria* had carried, to help build the railroad at Lobito Bay, a deckload of camels. They had proved trying passengers, and instead of first touching at the Congo, Captain Hughes had continued on south and put them ashore. So we were robbed of seeing both Luanda and the camels.

This line, until Calabar is reached, carries but few passengers, and, except to receive cargo, the ship is not fully in commission. During this first week she is painted, and holystoned, her carpets are beaten, her cabins scrubbed and aired, and the passengers mess with the officers. So, of the ship's life, we acquired an intimate knowledge, her interests became our own, and the necessity of feeding her gaping holds with cargo was personal and acute. On a transatlantic steamer, when once the hatches are down, the captain need think only of navigation; on these coasters, the hatches never are down, and the captain, that sort of captain dear to the heart of the owners, is the man who fills the holds.

A skipper going ashore to drum up trade was a novel spectacle. Imagine the captain of one of the Atlantic greyhounds prying among the warehouses on West Street, demanding of the merchants: "Anything going my way, this trip?" He would scorn to do it. Before his passengers have passed the custom officers, he is in mufti, and on his way to his villa on Brooklyn Heights,

or to the Lambs Club, and until the Blue Peter is again at the fore, little he cares for passengers, mails, or cargo. But the captain of a "coaster" must be sailor and trader, too. He is expected to navigate a coast, the latest chart of which is dated somewhere near 1830, and at which the waves rush in walls of spray, sometimes as high as a three-story house. He must speak all the known languages of Europe, and all the unknown tongues of innumerable black brothers. At each port he must entertain out of his own pocket the agents of all the trading houses, and, in his head, he must keep the market price, "when laid down in Liverpool," of mahogany, copra, copal, rubber, palm oil, and ivory. To see that the agent has not overlooked a few bags of ground nuts, or a dozen puncheons of oil, he must go on shore and peer into the compound of each factory, and on board he must keep peace between the Kroom boys and the black deck passengers, and see that the white passengers with a temperature of 105, do not drink more than is good for them. At least, those are a few of the duties the captains on the ships controlled by Sir Alfred Jones, who is Elder and Dempster, are expected to perform. No wonder Sir Alfred is popular.

Our first port of call was Landana, in Portuguese territory, but two ships of the Woermann Line were there ahead of us and had gobbled up all the freight. So we could but up anchor and proceed to Libreville, formerly the capital of the French Congo. At five in the morning by the light of a ship's lantern, we were paddled ashore to drum up trade. We found two traders, Ives and Thomas, who had waiting for the *Nigeria* at the mouth of the Gabun River six hundred logs of mahogany, and, in consequence, there was general rejoicing, and Scotch and "sparklets," and even music from a German music-box that would burst into song only after it had been fed with a copper. One of the clerks said that Ives had forgotten how to extract the coppers and in consequence was using the music-box as a savings bank.

In the French Congo the natives are permitted to trade; in the Congo Free State they are not, or, rather, they have nothing with which to trade, and the contrast between the empty "factories" of the Congo and those of Libreville, crowded with natives buying and selling, was remarkable. There also was a conspicuous difference in the quality and variety of the goods. In Leopold's Congo "trade" goods is a term of contempt. It describes articles manufactured only for those who have no choice and must accept whatever is offered. When your customers must take what you please to give them the quality of your goods is likely to deteriorate. Salt of the poorest grade, gaudy fabrics that neither "wear" nor "wash," bars of coarse soap (the native is continually washing his single strip of cloth), and axe-heads made of iron, are what Leopold thinks are a fair exchange for the forced labor of the black.

But the articles I found in the factories in Libreville were what, in the Congo, are called "white man's goods" and were of excellent quality and in great variety. There were even French novels and cigars. Some of the latter, called the Young American on account of the name and the flag on the lid, tempted me, until I saw they were manufactured by Dusseldorffer and Vanderswassen, and one suspected Rotterdam.

In Ives's factory I saw for the first time a "trade" rifle, or Tower musket. In the vernacular of the Coast, they are "gas-pipe" guns. They are put together in England, and to a white man are a most terrifying weapon. The original Tower muskets, such as, in the days of '76, were hung over the fireplace of the forefathers of the Sons of the Revolution, were manufactured in England, and stamped with the word "Tower," and for the reigning king G.R. I suppose at that date at the Tower of London there was an arsenal; but I am ready to be corrected. Today the guns are manufactured at Birmingham, but they still have the flint lock, and still are stamped with the word "Tower" and the royal crown over the letters G.R., and with the arrow which is supposed to mark the property of the government. The barrel is three feet four inches long, and the bore is

that of an artesian well. The native fills four inches of this cavity with powder and the remaining three feet with rusty nails, barbed wire, leaden slugs, and the legs and broken parts of iron pots.

An officer of the W.A.F.F.'s, in a fight in the bush in South Nigeria, had one of these things fired at him from a distance of fifteen feet. He told me all that saved him was that when the native pulled the trigger the recoil of the gun "kicked" the muzzle two feet in the air and the native ten feet into the bush. I bought a Tower rifle at the trade price, a pound, and brought it home. But although my friends have offered to back either end of the gun as being the more destructive, we have found no one with a sufficient sporting spirit to determine the point.

Libreville is a very pretty town, but when it was laid out the surveyors just missed placing the Equator in its main street. It is easy to understand why with such a live wire in the vicinity Libreville is warm. From the same cause it also is rich in flowers, vines, and trees growing in generous, undisciplined abundance, making of Libreville one vast botanical garden, and burying the town and its bungalows under screens of green and branches of scarlet and purple flowers. Close to the surf runs an avenue bordered by giant cocoon palms and, after the sun is down, this is the fashionable promenade. Here every evening may be seen in their freshest linen the six married white men of Libreville, and, in the latest Paris frocks, the six married ladies, while from the verandas of the factories that line the sea front and from under the paper lanterns of the Café Guion the clerks and traders sip their absinthe and play dominoes, and cast envious glances at the six fortunate fellow exiles.

For several days we lay a few miles south of Libreville, off the mouth of the Gabun River, taking in the logs of mahogany. It was a continuous performance of the greatest interest. I still do not understand why all those engaged in it were not drowned, or pounded to a pulp. Just before we touched at the Gabun River, two tramp steamers, chartered by Americans, carried off a full cargo of this mahogany to the States. It was an experiment the result of which the traders of Libreville are awaiting with interest.

The mahogany that the reader sees in America probably comes from Haiti, Cuba, or Belize, and is of much finer quality than that of the Gabun River, which latter is used for making what the trade calls "fancy" cigar-boxes and cheap furniture. But before it becomes a cigar-box it passes through many adventures. Weeks before the steamer arrives the trader, followed by his black boys, explores the jungle and blazes the trees. Then the boys cut trails through the forest, and, using logs for rollers, drag and push the tree trunks to the bank of the river. There the tree is cut into huge cubes, weighing about a ton, and measuring twelve to fifteen feet in length and three feet across each face. A boy can "shape" one of these logs in a day.

Although his pay varies according to whether the tributaries of the river are full or low, so making the moving of the logs easy or difficult, he can earn about three pounds ten shillings a month, paid in cash. Compared with the eighty cents a month paid only a few miles away in the Congo Free State, and in "trade" goods, these are good wages. When the log is shaped the mark of the trader is branded on it with an iron, just as we brand cattle, and it is turned loose on the river. At the mouth of the river there is little danger of the log escaping, for the waves are stronger than the tide, and drive the logs upon the shore. There, in the surf, we found these tons of mahogany pounding against each other. In the ship's steam-launch were iron chains, a hundred yards long, to which, at intervals, were fastened "dogs," or spikes. These spikes were driven into the end of a log, the brand upon the log was noted by the captain and trader, and the logs, chained together like the vertebræ of a great sea serpent, were towed to the ship's side. There they were made fast, and three Kroomen boys knocked the spike out of each log, warped a chain around it, and made fast that chain to the steel hawser of the winch. As it was drawn to the deck

a Senegalese soldier, acting for the Customs, gave it a second blow with a branding hammer, and, thundering and smashing, it swung into the hold.

In the "round up" of the logs the star performers were the three Kroo boys at the ship's side. For days, in fascinated horror, the six passengers watched them, prayed for them, and made bets as to which would be the first to die. One understands that a Kroo boy is as much at home in the sea as on shore, but these boys were neither in the sea nor on shore. They were balancing themselves on blocks of slippery wood that weighed a ton, but which were hurled about by the great waves as though they were life-belts. All night the hammering of the logs made the ship echo like a monster drum, and all day without an instant's pause each log reared and pitched, spun like a barrel, dived like a porpoise, or, broadside, battered itself against the iron plates. But, no matter what tricks it played, a Kroo boy rode it as easily as though it were a horse in a merry-go-round.

It was a wonderful exhibition. It furnished all the thrills that one gets when watching a cowboy on a bucking bronco, or a trained seal. Again and again a log, in wicked conspiracy with another log, would plan to entice a Kroo boy between them, and smash him. At the sight the passengers would shriek a warning, the boy would dive between the logs, and a mass of twelve hundred pounds of mahogany would crash against a mass weighing fifteen hundred with a report like colliding freight cars.

And then, as, breathless, we waited to see what once was a Kroo boy float to the surface, he would appear sputtering and grinning, and saying to us as clearly as a Kroo smile can say it: "He never touched me!"

Two days after we had stored away the mahogany we anchored off Duala, the capital of the German Cameroons. Duala is built upon a high cliff, and from the water the white and yellow buildings with many pillars gave it the appearance of a city. Instead, it is a clean, pretty town. With the German habit of order, it has been laid out like barracks, but with many gardens, well-kept, shaded streets, and high, cool houses, scientifically planned to meet the necessities of the tropics. At Duala the white traders and officials were plump and cheerful looking, and in the air there was more of prosperity than fever. The black and white sentry boxes and the native soldiers practicing the stork march of the Kaiser's army were signs of a rigid military rule, but the signs of Germany's efforts in trade were more conspicuous. Nowhere on the coast did we see as at Duala such gorgeous offices as those of the great trading house of Woermann, the hated rivals of "Sir Alfred," such carved furniture, such shining brass railings, and nowhere else did we see plate-glass windows, in which, with unceasing wonder, the natives stared at reflections of their own persons. In the river there was a private dry dock of the Woermanns, and along the wharfs for acres was lumber for the Woermanns, boxes of trade goods, puncheons and casks for the Woermanns, private cooper shops and private machine shops and private banks for the Woermanns. The house flag of the Woermanns became as significant as that of a reigning sovereign. One felt inclined to salute it.

The success of the German merchant on the East Coast and over all the world appears to be a question of character. He is patient, methodical, painstaking; it is his habit of industry that is helping him to close port after port to English, French, and American goods. The German clerks do not go to the East Coast or to China and South America to drink absinthe or whiskey, or to play dominoes or cricket. They work twice as long as do the other white men, and during those longer office hours they toil twice as hard. One of our passengers was a German agent returning for his vacation. I used to work in the smoking-room and he always was at the next table, also at work, on his ledgers and account books. He was so industrious that he bored me, and one day I

asked him why, instead of spoiling his vacation with work, he had not balanced his books before he left the Coast.

"It is an error," he said; "I can not find him." And he explained that in the record of his three years' stewardship, which he was to turn over to the directors in Berlin, there was somewhere a mistake of a sixpence.

"But," I protested, "what's sixpence to you? You drink champagne all day. You begin at nine in the morning!"

"I drink champagne," said the clerk, "because for three years I have myself alone in the bush lived, but, can I to my directors go with a book not balanced?" He laid his hand upon his heart and shook his head. "It is my heart that tells me 'No!'"

After three weeks he gave a shout, his face blushed with pleasure, and actual tears were in his eyes. He had dug out the error, and at once he celebrated the recovery of the single sixpence by giving me twenty-four shillings' worth of champagne. It is a true story, and illustrates, I think, the training and method of the German mind, of the industry of the merchants who are trading over all the seas. As a rule the "trade" goods "made in Germany" are "shoddy." They do not compare in quality with those of England or the States; in every foreign port you will find that the English linen is the best, that the American agricultural implements, American hardware, saws, axes, machetes, are superior to those manufactured in any other country. But the German, though his goods are poorer, cuts the coat to please the customer. He studies the wishes of the man who is to pay. He is not the one who says: "Take it, or leave it."

The agent of one of the largest English firms on the Ivory Coast, one that started by trading in slaves, said to me: "Our largest shipment to this coast is gin. This is a French colony, and if the French traders and I were patriots instead of merchants we would buy from our own people, but we buy from the Germans, because trade follows no flag. They make a gin out of potatoes colored with rum or gin, and label it 'Demerara' and 'Jamaica.' They sell it to us on the wharf at Antwerp for ninepence a gallon, and we sell it at nine francs per dozen bottles. Germany is taking our trade from us because she undersells us, and because her merchants don't wait for trade to come to them, but go after it. Before the Woermann boat is due their agent here will come to my factory and spy out all I have in my compound. 'Why don't you ship those logs with us?' he'll ask.

"Can't spare the boys to carry them to the beach,' I'll say.

"I'll furnish the boys,' he'll answer. That's the German way.

"The Elder-Dempster boats lie three miles out at sea and blow a whistle at us. They act as though by carrying our freight they were doing us a favor. These German ships, to save you the long pull, anchor close to the beach and lend you their own shore boats and their own boys to work your cargo. And if you give them a few tons to carry, like as not they'll 'dash' you to a case of 'fizz.' And meanwhile the English captain is lying outside the bar tooting his whistle and wanting to know if you think he's going to run his ship aground for a few bags of rotten kernels. And he can't see, and the people at home can't see, why the Germans are crowding us off the coast."

Just outside of Duala, in the native village of Bell Town, is the palace and the harem of the ruler of the tribe that gave its name to the country, Mango Bell, King of the Cameroons. His brother, Prince William, sells photographs and "souvenirs." We bought photographs, and on the strength of that hinted at a presentation at court. Brother William seemed doubtful, so we bought enough postal cards to establish us as *étrangers de distinction*, and he sent up our names. With Pivani, Hatton & Cookson's chief clerk we were escorted to the royal presence.

The palace is a fantastic, pagoda-like building of three stories; and furnished with many mirrors, carved oak sideboards, and lamp-shades of colored glass. Mango Bell, King of the Cameroons, sounds like a character in a comic opera, but the king was an extremely serious, tall, handsome, and self-respecting negro. Having been educated in England, he spoke much more correct English than any of us. Of the few "Kings I Have Met," both tame and wild, his manners were the most charming. Back of the palace is an enormously long building under one roof. Here live his thirty-five queens. To them we were not presented.

Prince William asked me if I knew where in America there was a street called Fifth Avenue. I suggested New York. He referred to a large Bible, and finding, much to his surprise, that my guess was correct, commissioned me to buy him, from a firm on that street, just such another Bible as the one in his hand. He forgot to give me the money to pay for it, but loaned us a half-dozen little princes to bear our purchases to the wharf. For this service their royal highnesses graciously condescended to receive a small "dash," and with the chief clerk were especially delighted. He, being a sleight-of-hand artist, apparently took five-franc pieces out of their Sunday clothes and from their kinky hair. When we left they were rapidly disrobing to find if any more five-franc pieces were concealed about their persons.

The morning after we sailed from Duala we anchored in the river in front of Calabar, the capital of Southern Nigeria. Of all the ports at which we touched on the Coast, Calabar was the hottest, the best looking, and the best administered. It is a model colony, but to bring it to the state it now enjoys has cost sums of money entirely out of proportion to those the colony has earned. The money has been spent in cutting down the jungle, filling in swamps that breed mosquitoes and fever, and in laying out gravel walks, water mains, and open cement gutters, and in erecting model hospitals, barracks, and administrative offices. Even grass has been made to grow, and the high bluff upon which are situated the homes of the white officials and Government House has been trimmed and cultivated and tamed until it looks like an English park. It is a complete imitation, even to golf links and tennis courts.

But the fight that has been made against the jungle has not stopped with golf links. In 1896 the death rate was ten men out of every hundred. That corresponds to what in warfare is a decimating fire, upon which an officer, without danger of reproof, may withdraw his men. But at Calabar the English doctors did not withdraw, and now the death rate is as low as three out of every hundred.

That Calabar, or any part of the West Coast, will ever be made entirely healthy is doubtful. Man can cut down a forest and fill in a swamp, but he can not reach up, as to a gas jet, and turn off the sun. And at Calabar, even at night when the sun has turned itself off, the humidity and the heat leave one sweating, tossing, and gasping for air. In Calabar the first thing a white man learns is not to take any liberties with the sun. When he dresses, eats, drinks, and moves about the sun is as constantly on his mind, as it is on the face of the sun-dial. The chief ascent to the top of the bluff where the white people live is up a steep cement walk about eighty yards long. At the foot of this a white man will be met by four hammock-bearers, and you will see him get into the hammock and be carried in it the eighty yards.

For even that short distance he is taking no chances. But while he nurses his vitality and cares for his health he does not use the sun as an excuse for laziness or for slipshod work. I have never seen a place in the tropics where, in spite of the handicap of damp, fierce heat, the officers and civil officials are so keenly and constantly employed, where the bright work was so bright, and the whitewash so white.

Out at the barracks of the West African Frontier Force, the W.A.F.F.'s, the officers, instead of from the shade of the veranda watching the non-coms teach a native the manual, were themselves at work, and each was howling orders at the black recruits and smashing a gun against his hip and shoulder as smartly as a drill sergeant. I found the standard maintained at Calabar the more interesting because the men were almost entirely their own audience. If they make the place healthy, and attractive-looking, and dress for dinner, and shy at cocktails, and insist that their tan shoes shall glow like meershaum pipes, it is not because of the refining presence of lovely women, but because the men themselves like things that way.

The men of Calabar have learned that when the sun is at 110, morals, like material things, disintegrate, and that, though the temptation is to go about in bath-room slippers and pajamas, one is wiser to bolster up his drenched and drooping spirit with a stiff shirt front and a mess jacket. They tell that in a bush station in upper Nigeria, one officer got his D.S.O. because with an audience of only a white sergeant he persisted in a habit of shaving twice a day.

There are very few women in Calabar. There are three or four who are wives of officials, two nurses employed by the government, and the Mother Superior and Sisters of the Order of St. Joseph, and, of course, all of them are great belles. For the Sisters, especially the officers, the government people, the traders, the natives, even the rival missionaries, have the most tremendous respect and admiration. The sacrifice of the woman who, to be near her husband on the Coast, consents to sicken and fade and grow old before her time, and of the nurse who, to preserve the health of others, risks her own, is very great; but the sacrifice of the Sisters, who have renounced all thought of home and husband, and who have exiled themselves to this steaming swamp-land, seems the most unselfish.

In order to support the 150 little black boys and girls who are at school at the mission, the Sisters rob themselves of everything except the little that will keep them alive. Two, in addition to their work at the mission, act as nurses in the English hospital, and for that they receive together \$600. This forms the sole regular income of the five women; for each \$120 a year. With anything else that is given them in charity, they buy supplies for the little converts. They live in a house of sandstone and zinc that holds the heat like a flat-iron, they are obliged to wear a uniform that is of material and fashion so unsuited to the tropics that Dr. Chichester, in charge of the hospital, has written in protest against it to Rome, and on many days they fast, not because the Church bids them so to do, but because they have no food. And with it all, these five gentlewomen are always eager, cheerful, sweet of temper, and a living blessing to all who meet them. What now troubles them is that they have no room to accommodate the many young heathen who come to them to be taught to wear clothes, and to be good little boys and girls. This is causing the Sisters great distress. Any one who does not believe in that selfish theory, that charity begins at home, but who would like to help to spread Christianity in darkest Africa and give happiness to five noble women, who are giving their lives for others, should send a postal money order to Marie T. Martin, the Reverend Mother Superior of the Catholic Mission of Old Calabar, Southern Nigeria.

At Calabar there is a royal prisoner, the King of Benin. He is not an agreeable king like His Majesty of the Cameroons, but a grossly fat, sensual-looking young man, who, a few years ago, when he was at war with the English, made "ju ju" against them by sacrificing three hundred maidens, his idea being that the ju ju would drive the English out of Benin. It was poor ju ju, for it drove the young man himself out of Benin, and now he is a king in exile. As far as I could see, the social position of the king is insecure, and certainly in Calabar he does not move in the first circles. One afternoon, when the four or five ladies of Calabar and Mr. Bedwell, the Acting

Commissioner, and the officers of the W.A.F.F.'s were at the clubhouse having ice drinks, the king at the head of a retinue of cabinet officers, high priests, and wives bore down upon the clubhouse with the evident intention of inviting himself to tea. Personally, I should like to have met a young man who could murder three hundred girls and worry over it so little that he had not lost one of his three hundred pounds, but the others were considerably annoyed and sent an A.D.C. to tell him to "Move on!" as though he were an organ-grinder, or a performing bear.

"These kings," exclaimed a subaltern of the W.A.F.F.'s, indignantly, "are trying to push in everywhere!"

When we departed from Calabar, the only thing that reconciled me to leaving it and its charming people, was the fact that when the ship moved there was a breeze. While at anchor in the river I had found that not being able to breathe by day or to sleep by night in time is trying, even to the stoutest constitution.

One of the married ladies of Calabar, her husband, an officer of the W.A.F.F.'s, and the captain of the police sailed on the *Nigeria* "on leave," and all Calabar came down to do them honor. There was the commissioner's gig, and the marine captain's gig, and the police captain's gig, and the gig from "Matilda's," the English trading house, and one from the Dutch house and the French house, and each gig was manned by black boys in beautiful uniforms and fezzes, and each crew fought to tie up to the foot of the accommodation ladder. It was as gay as a regatta. On the quarter-deck the officers drank champagne, in the captain's cabin Hughes treated the traders to beer, in the "square" the non-coms of the W.A.F.F.'s drank ale. The men who were going away on leave tried not to look too happy, and those who were going back to the shore drank deep and tried not to appear too carelessly gay. A billet on the West Coast is regarded by the man who accepts it as a sort of sporting proposition, as a game of three innings of nine months each, during which he matches his health against the Coast. If he lives he wins; if he dies the Coast wins.

After Calabar, at each port off which we anchored, at Ponny, Focardos, Lagos, Accra, Cape Coast Castle, and Sekonni, it was always the same. Always there came over the side the man going "Home," the man who had fought with the Coast and won. He was as excited, as jubilant as a prisoner sentenced to death who had escaped his executioners. And always the heartiest in their congratulations were the men who were left behind, his brother officers, or his fellow traders, the men of the Sun Hat Brigade, in their unofficial uniforms, in shirtwaists, broad belts from which dangled keys and a whistle, beautifully polished tan boots, and with a wand-like whip or stick of elephant hide. They swarmed the decks and overwhelmed the escaping refugee with good wishes. He had cheated their common enemy. By merely keeping alive he had achieved a glorious victory. In their eyes he had performed a feat of endurance like swimming the English Channel. They crowded to congratulate him as people at the pit-mouth congratulate the entombed miner, who, after many days of breathing noisome gases, drinks the pure air. Even the black boys seem to feel the triumph of the white master, and their paddles never flashed so bravely, and their songs never rang so wildly, as when they were racing him away from the brooding coast with its poisonous vapors toward the big white ship that meant health and home.

Although most of the ports we saw only from across a mile or two of breakers, they always sent us something of interest. Sometimes all the male passengers came on board drunk. With the miners of the Gold Coast and the "Palm Oil Ruffians" it used to be a matter of etiquette not to leave the Coast in any other condition. Not so to celebrate your escape seemed ungenerous and ungrateful. At Sekondi one of the miners from Ashanti was so completely drunk, that he was swung over the side, tied up like a plum-pudding, in a bag.

When he emerged from the bag his expression of polite inquiry was one with which all could sympathize. To lose consciousness on the veranda of a café, and awake with a bump on the deck of a steamer many miles at sea, must strengthen one's belief in magic carpets.

Another entertainment for the white passengers was when the boat boys fought for the black passengers as they were lowered in the mammy-chair. As a rule, in the boats from shore, there were twelve boys to paddle and three or four extra men to handle and unhook the mammy-chair and the luggage. While the boys with the paddles maneuvered to bring their boat next to the ship's side, the extra boys tried to pull their rivals overboard, dragging their hands from ropes and gunwales, and beating them with paddles. They did this while every second the boat under them was spinning in the air or diving ten feet into the hollow of the waves, and trying to smash itself and every other boat into driftwood. From the deck the second officer would swing a mammy-chair over the side with the idea of dropping it into one of these boats. But before the chair could be lowered, a rival boat would shove the first one away, and with a third boat would be fighting for its place.

Meanwhile, high above the angry sea, the chair and its cargo of black women would be twirling like a weathercock and banging against the ship's side. The mummies were too terrified to scream, but the ship's officers yelled and swore, the boat's crews shrieked, and the black babies howled. Each baby was strapped between the shoulders of the mother. A mammy-chair is like one of those two-seated swings in which people sit facing one another. If to the shoulders of each person in the swing was tied a baby, it is obvious that should the swing bump into anything, the baby would get the worst of it. That is what happened in the mammy-chair. Every time the chair spun around, the head of a baby would come "crack!" against the ship's side. So the babies howled, and no one of the ship's passengers, crowded six deep along the rail, blamed them. The skull of the Ethiopian may be hard, but it is most unfair to be swathed like a mummy so that you can neither kick nor strike back, and then have your head battered against a five-thousand-ton ship.

How the boys who paddled the shore boats live long enough to learn how to handle them is a great puzzle. We were told that the method was to take out one green boy with a crew of eleven experts. But how did the original eleven become experts? At Accra, where the waves are very high and rough, are the best boat boys on the coast. We watched the Custom House boat fight her way across the two miles of surf to the shore. The fight lasted two hours. It was as thrilling as watching a man cross Niagara Falls on a tight-rope. The greater part of the two hours the boat stood straight in the air, as though it meant to shake the crew into the sea, and the rest of the time it ran between walls of water ten feet high and was entirely lost to sight.

Two things about the paddling on the West Coast make it peculiar; the boys sit, not on the thwarts, but on the gunwales, as a woman rides a side-saddle, and in many parts of the coast the boys use paddles shaped like a fork or a trident. One asks how, sitting as they do, they are able to brace themselves, and how with their forked paddles they obtained sufficient resistance. A coaster's explanation of the split paddle was that the boys did not want any more resistance than they could prevent.

There is no more royal manner of progress than when one of these boats lifts you over the waves, with the boys chanting some wild chorus, with their bare bodies glistening, their teeth and eyes shining, the splendid muscles straining, and the dripping paddles flashing like twelve mirrors.

Some of the chiefs have canoes of as much as sixty men-power, and when these men sing, and their bodies and voices are in unison, a war canoe seems the only means of locomotion, and a sixty-horse-power racing car becomes a vehicle suited only to the newly rich.

I knew I had left the West Coast when, the very night we sailed from Sierra Leone, for greater comfort, I reached for a linen bed-spread that during four stifling, reeking weeks had lain undisturbed at the foot of the berth. During that time I had hated it as a monstrous thing; as something as hot and heavy as a red flannel blanket, as a buffalo robe. And when, on the following night, I found the wind-screen was not in the air port, and that, nevertheless, I still was alive, I knew we had passed out of reach of the Equator, and that all that followed would be as conventional as the "trippers" who joined us at the Canary Isles; and as familiar as the low, gray skies, the green, rain-soaked hills, and the complaining Channel gulls that convoyed us into Plymouth Harbor.