

# The Slave Trade in the Congo Basin

By One of Stanley's Pioneer Officers.

Illustrated After Sketches from Life by the Author

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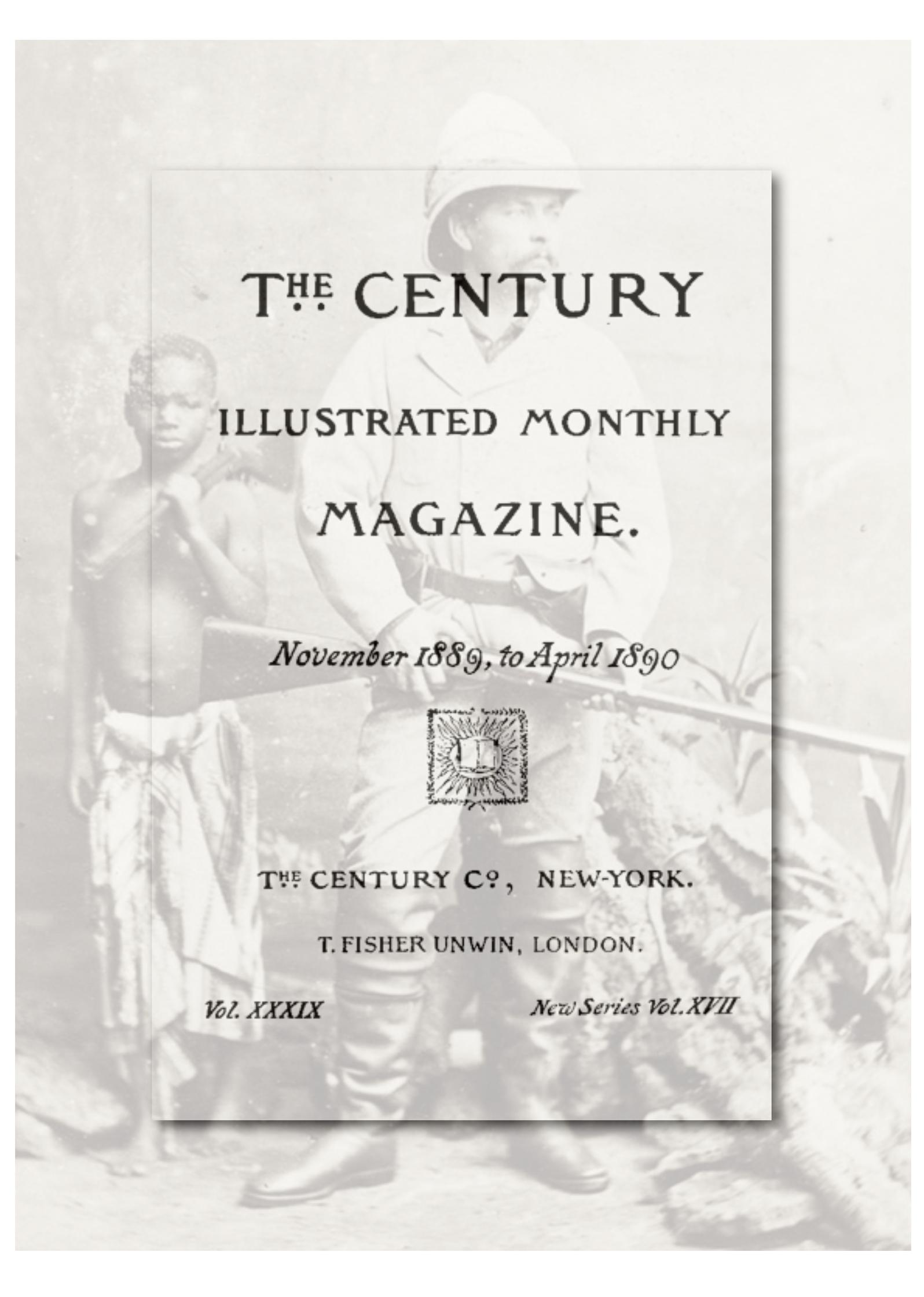
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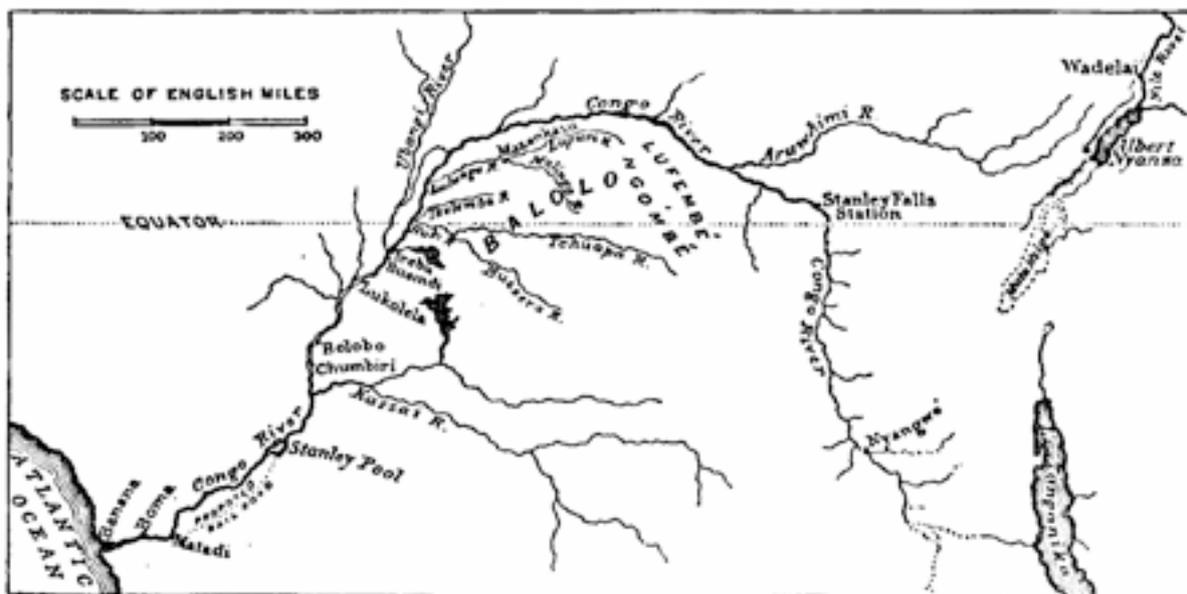
## WITH STANLEY



CANE HANDCUFF.

The heart of Africa is being rapidly depopulated in consequence of the enormous death-roll caused by the barbarous slave-trade. It is not merely the bondage which slavery implies that should appeal to the sympathies of the civilized world; it is the bloodshed, cruelty, and misery which it involves.

During my residence in Central Africa I was repeatedly traveling about in the villages along the Congo River and its almost unknown affluents, and in every new village I was confronted by fresh evidences of the horrible nature of this evil. I did not seek to witness the sufferings attendant upon this traffic in humanity, but cruelties of all kinds are so general that the mere passing visits which I paid brought me in constant contact with them.



THE CONGO BASIN.

It is not alone by the Arabs that slave-raiding is carried on throughout Central Africa. With respect to slavery in the Congo Free State, the

western limit of the slave-raiding operations of the Arabs is the Aruwhimi River, just below Stanley Falls, but intertribal slavery exists from this point throughout the State to the Atlantic Ocean. During my six years' residence on the Congo River I saw but little of the Arabs, and therefore in this article I am detailing only my experiences bearing upon the subject of slavery among the natives themselves.

I first went to the Congo in 1883, and traveled without delay into the interior. Arriving at Stanley Pool, I received orders from my chief, Mr. Henry M. Stanley, to accompany him up river on his little boat the *En Avant*. Stanley at that time was engaged in establishing a few posts at important and strategic points along the upper river. Lukolela, eight hundred miles in the interior, was one decided upon, and I had the honor of being selected by him as chief of this post. As no white man had ever lived there before, I had a great deal of work in establishing myself. The position selected for our settlement was a dense forest, and until now it had been more familiar with the trumpeting of elephants and the cry of the leopard than with human beings. At first the natives rather objected to my remaining at all, and stated their objections to Stanley. Said they:

*“We have promised to allow you to put a white man here, but we have been talking the matter over, and we have concluded it would be better to put your white man somewhere else. We, the assembled chiefs, have held a council, and have come to the conclusion that it is not desirable to have such a terrible creature in the district.”*

Stanley said:

*“Why, what is there in him that you object to? You have never seen him.”*

(I had not yet landed, being at that time very sick and unable to leave the boat.)

They said,

*“No, we have not seen him, but we have heard about him.”*

Stanley then said,

*“What have you heard about him?”*

They replied:

*“He is half a lion, and half a buffalo; has one eye in the middle of his forehead, and is armed with sharp, jagged teeth; and is continually slaughtering and devouring human beings. Is this so?”*

Stanley answered them,

*“I did not know that he was such a terrible creature; but I will call him, and let you judge for yourselves.”*

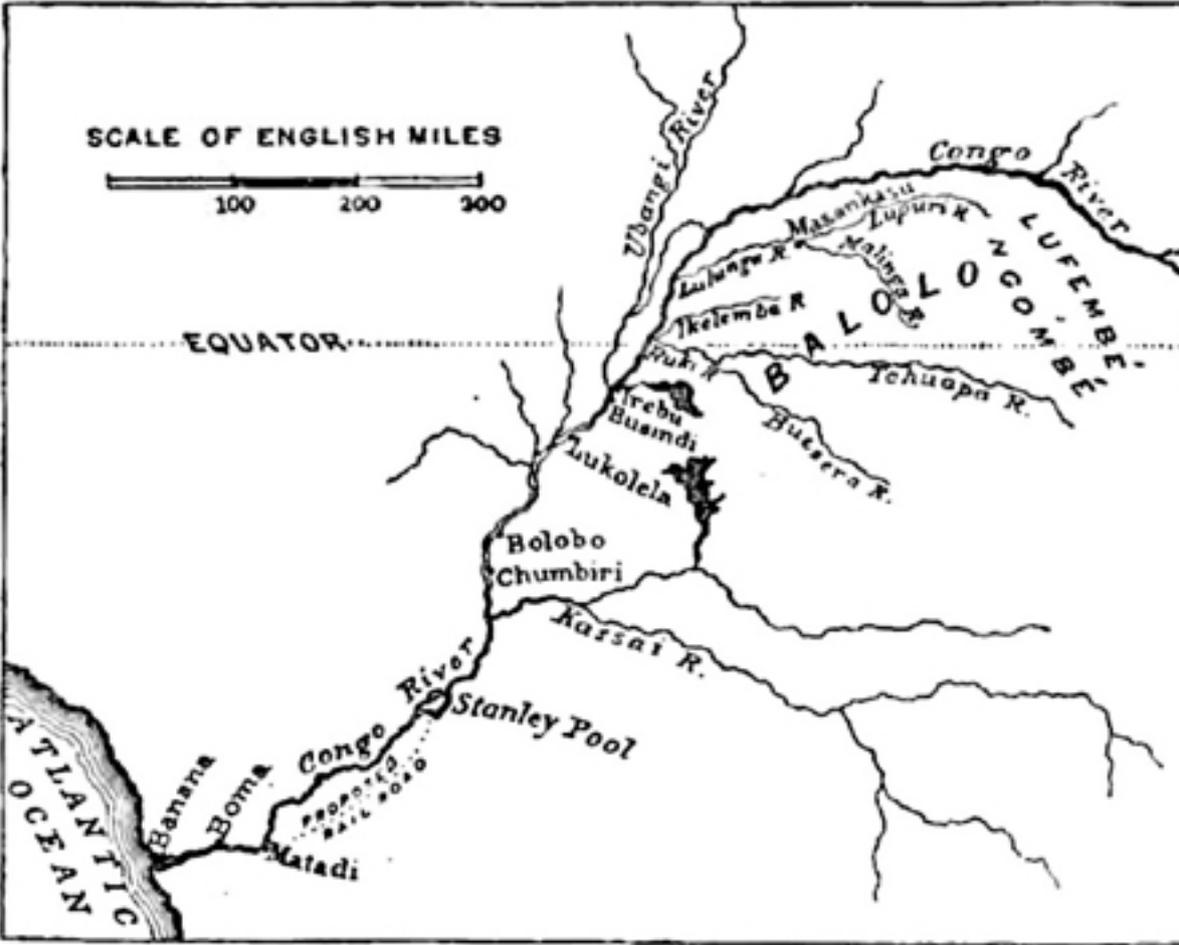
Upon my appearing this illusion was immediately dispelled, as, after suffering several days from an acute sickness, I really did not look very formidable or bloodthirsty.

Here I lived for twenty months, the only white man, so that I had every opportunity of studying native character and customs.

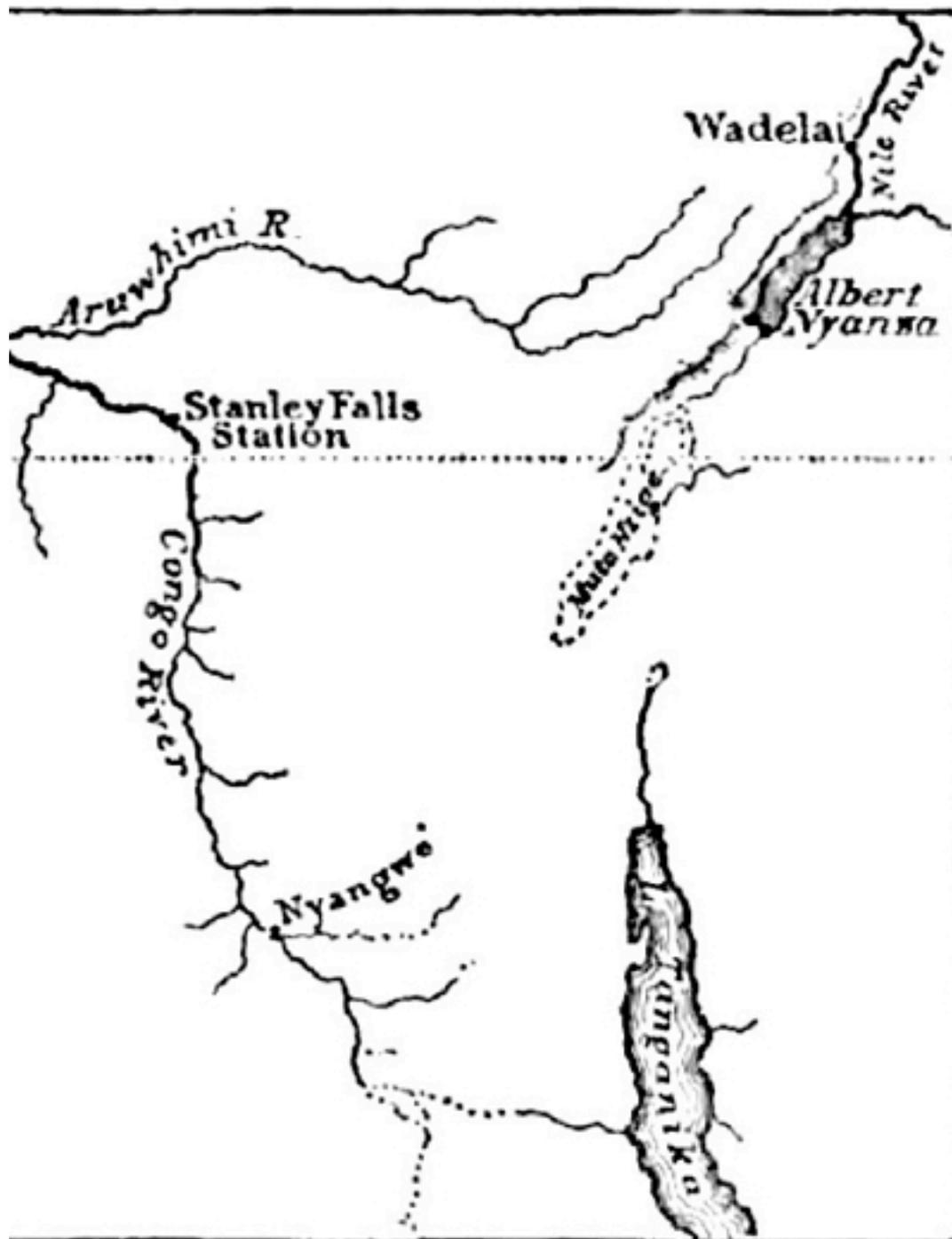
## **NATIVE LIFE**

In order to place before the reader a picture of savage life untouched by civilization, I could hardly do better than lightly sketch a typical

village at Lukolela as I have intimately known it. The whole district contains about three thousand people, the land occupied by them extending along the bank for two miles, the villages being dotted through this distance in clusters of fifty or sixty houses. The houses are built on each side of one long street or in open squares. They are roofed with either palm leaves or grass, the walls being composed of split bamboo. Some of these dwellings contain two or three compartments, with only one entrance; while others are long structures, divided up into ten or twelve rooms, each with its own entrance from the outside. At the back of these dwellings are large plantations of banana trees; while above them tower the stately palm trees, covering street and hut with their friendly shade.



THE CONGO BASIN.



It is in the cool of the early morning that the greater part of the business of the village is transacted. Most of the women repair, soon after six, to their plantations, where they work until noon, a few of them remaining in the village to attend to culinary and other domestic matters. Large earthen pots, containing fish, banana, or manioc, are boiling over wood fires, around which cluster the young boys and girls

and the few old men and women enjoying the heat until the warm rays of the morning sun appear. Meanwhile the fishermen gather up their traps, arm themselves, and paddle off to their fishing grounds; the hunters take their spears or bows and arrows and start off to pick up tracks of their game; the village blacksmith starts his fire; the adze of the carpenter is heard busily at work; fishing and game nets are unrolled and damages examined; and the medicine man is busy gesticulating with his charms. As the sun rises the scene becomes more and more animated; the warmth of the fire is discarded, and every department of industry becomes full of life — the whole scene rendered cheerful by the happy faces and merry laughter of the little ones as they scamper here and there engaged in their games.



WAR HORN AND OTHER MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.

At noon the overpowering heat of the tropical sun compels a cessation of work, and a lazy quietude prevails everywhere. Then all the shady nooks of the village are filled with groups who either sleep, engage in conversation, or pass their time in hairdressing or in attending to some other toilet matter which native etiquette demands, such as shaving off eyebrows or pulling out eyelashes — an operation which is also extended to all hairs on the face except those on the chin, which are plaited in the form of a rat's tail. The closer the finger nails are cut, the more fashionable is it thought. At the finger ends the nails are cut down to the quick, and any one posing as either beau or belle always has some of the finger and toe nails pared entirely off.

The midday meal is now eaten, the whole village assuming an air of calmness, broken only by the occasional bursts of boisterous mirth from groups engaged in discussing the merits of the native wine.

All mankind have the same weakness in requiring at times drink stronger than water. Nature has provided the African with the juice of the palm tree, a most palatable beverage, resembling when fresh a very strong lemon soda, but intoxicating in its effects. It is obtained in the following way: the villagers in charge of this particular industry climb the tree, trim away some of the leaves, and then bore three or four holes, about half an inch in diameter, at the base of the frond, to the heart of the tree. From each of these holes will flow each day about half a pint of juice, a small gourd being first placed to receive it. The contents of these gourds are collected every morning. This beverage is called by the natives *malafu*, and is well known to all European travelers as palm wine.

Between three and four o'clock the village again resumes its air of activity, which is kept up until sundown. In this region, being close to the equator, the sun sets at six o'clock. All tools are put away, and work is suspended. The fires are again lighted, mats are brought out and spread about, and the principal meal of the day is eaten; after which the natives gather around the fire again and talk over the events of the day and the plans for the future. The young people repair to the open places and indulge in their native dances until midnight.

This dancing at night is a sight to be remembered. The performers arrange themselves in circles and dance in time to the beating of the drums, which is their only accompaniment, and occasionally break out into native songs. The surrounding tropical scenery stands outlined in bold relief, the nearer trees occasionally catching the lurid light of the fires, which also strikes on the gleaming bodies of the dancers, making a violent contrast of light and shade, the whole scene being rendered impressive by the wild but harmonious music.

At midnight, when all the villagers have retired to their huts, stillness reigns, broken only at times by the weird call of a strange bird, the cry of a prowling leopard or some other wild animal, and the varied sounds of tropical insects.

## **THE EFFECT OF SLAVERY**

This is a fair picture of the life carried on from day to day in a hundred Congo villages, and but for the existence of slavery it would continue undisturbed from one year's end to another. It is the presence of the slave in the village that brutalizes the otherwise harmless and peaceful community. It is the baneful influence that gives one man the power of life and death over the wretch he has purchased that impels the savage instinct to spill in executions and ceremonies the life-blood of the man, woman, or child he has obtained — perhaps in exchange for a few brass rods or two or three yards of Manchester cloth. Here at Lukolela, for instance, I had hardly settled down in my encampment when I was introduced to one of those horrible scenes of bloodshed which take place frequently in all the villages along the Congo, and which will be enacted so long as the life of a slave is counted as naught, and the spilling of his blood of as little account as that of a goat or a fowl.

In this particular instance the mother of a chief having died, it was decided, as usual, to celebrate the event with an execution. At the earliest streak of dawn the slow, measured beat of a big drum announces to all what is to take place, and warns the poor slave who is to be the victim that his end is nigh. It is very evident that something unusual is about to happen, and that the day is to be given up to some ceremony. The natives gather in groups and begin studiously to arrange their toilets, don their gayest loin-cloths, and ornament their legs and arms with bright metal bangles, all the time indulging in wild

gesticulations and savage laughter as they discuss the coming event. Having taken a hasty meal, they produce from their houses all available musical instruments. The drums are wildly beaten as groups of men, women, and children form themselves in circles and excitedly perform dances, consisting of violent contortions of the limbs, accompanied with savage singing and with repeated blasts of the war horns, each dancer trying to outdo his fellow in violence of movement and strength of lung.



CONGO KNIVES.

About noon, from sheer exhaustion, combined with the heat of the sun, they are compelled to cease; when large jars of palm wine are produced, and a general bout of intoxication begins, increasing their

excitement and showing up their savage nature in striking colors. The poor slave, who all this time has been lying in the corner of some hut, shackled hand and foot and closely watched, suffering the agony and suspense which this wild tumult suggests to him, is now carried to some prominent part of the village, there to be surrounded and to receive the jeers and scoffs of the drunken mob of savages. The executioner's assistants, having selected a suitable place for the ceremony, procure a block of wood about a foot square. The slave is then placed on this, in a sitting posture; his legs are stretched out straight in front of him; the body is strapped to a stake reaching up the back to the shoulders. On each side stakes are placed under the armpits as props, to which the arms are firmly bound; other lashings are made to posts driven into the ground near the ankles and knees.

A pole is now planted about ten feet in front of the victim, from the top of which is suspended, by a number of strings a bamboo ring. The pole is bent over like a fishing-rod, and the ring fastened round the slave's neck, which is kept rigid and stiff by the tension. During this preparation the dances are resumed, now rendered savage and brutal in the extreme by the drunken condition of the people. One group of dancers surround the victim and indulge in drunken mimicry of the contortions of face which the pain caused by this cruel torture forces him to show. But he has no sympathy to expect from this merciless horde.

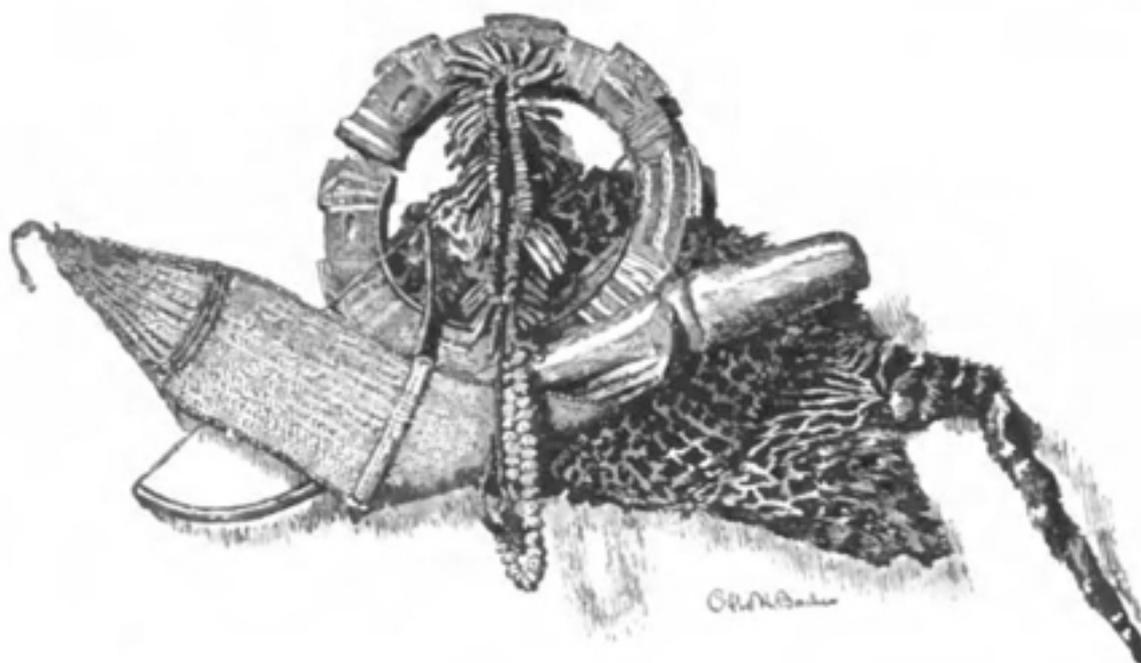
Presently in the distance approaches a company of two lines of young people, each holding a stem of the palm tree, so that an arch is formed between them, under which the executioner is escorted. The whole procession moves with a slow but dancing gait. Upon arriving near the doomed slave all dancing, singing, and drumming cease, and the drunken mob take their places to witness the last act of the drama.



LOINCLOTH AND EXECUTIONER'S KNIFE AND HAT.

An unearthly silence succeeds. The executioner wears a cap composed of black cocks' feathers; his face and neck are blackened with charcoal, except the eyes, the lids of which are painted with white chalk. The hands and arms to the elbow, and feet and legs to the knee, are also blackened. His legs are adorned profusely with broad metal

anklets, and around his waist are strung wild-cat skins. As he performs a wild dance around his victim, every now and then making a feint with his knife, a murmur of admiration arises from the assembled crowd. He then approaches and makes a thin chalk mark on the neck of the fated man. After two or three passes of his knife to get the right swing, he delivers the fatal blow, and with one stroke of his keen-edged weapon severs the head from the body.



NATIVE WEARING APPAREL.

The sight of blood brings to a climax the frenzy of the natives: some of them savagely puncture the quivering trunk with their spears, others hack at it with their knives, while the remainder engage in a ghastly struggle for the possession of the head, which has been jerked into the air by the released tension of the sapling. As each man obtains the trophy, and is pursued by the drunken rabble, the hideous tumult becomes deafening; they smear one another's faces with blood, and fights always spring up as a result, when knives and spears are freely used. The reason for their anxiety to possess the head is this: the man who can retain that head against all comers until sundown will receive a present for his bravery from the head man of the village. It is by

such means that they test the brave of the village, and they will say with admiration, speaking of a local hero,

*“He is a brave man; he has retained two heads until sundown.”*

When the taste for blood has been to a certain extent satisfied, they again resume their singing and dancing while another victim is prepared, when the same ghastly exhibition is repeated. Sometimes as many as twenty slaves will be slaughtered in one day. The dancing and general drunken uproar is continued until midnight, when once more absolute silence ensues, in utter contrast to the hideous tumult of the day.

I had frequently heard the natives boast of the skill of their executioners, but I doubted their ability to decapitate a man with one blow of the soft metal knives they use. I imagined they would be compelled to hack the head from the body. When I witnessed this sickening spectacle I was alone, unarmed, and absolutely powerless to interfere. But the mute agony of this poor black martyr, who was to die for no crime, but simply because he was a slave, — whose every piteous movement was mocked by frenzied savages, and whose very death throes gave the signal for the unrestrained outburst of a hideous carnival of drunken savagery, — appealed so strongly to my sense of duty that I decided upon preventing by force any repetition of this scene. I made my resolution known to an assembly of the principal chiefs, and although several attempts were made, no actual executions took place during the remainder of my stay in this district.

## **THE VILLAGE CHIEFS**

A few words are necessary to define the position of the village chiefs as the most important factors in African savage life; especially as in

one way or another they are intimately connected with the worst features of the slave system, and are responsible for nearly all the atrocities practiced on the slave.

The so-called chiefs are the head men of a village, and they rank according to the number of their warriors. The title of chieftain is not hereditary, but is gained by one member of a tribe proving his superiority to his fellows. The most influential chief in a village has necessarily the greatest number of fighting men, and these are principally slaves, as the allegiance of a free man can never be depended upon. A chief's idea of wealth is — slaves. Any kinds of money he may have he will convert into slaves upon the first opportunity. Polygamy is general throughout Central Africa, and a chief buys as many female slaves as he can afford, and will also marry free women — which is, after all, only another form of purchase.

## **MODES OF TORTURE**

All tribes I have known have an idea of immortality. They believe that death leads but to another life, to be continued under the same conditions as the life they are now leading; and a chief thinks that if when he enters into this new existence that if he is accompanied by a sufficient following of slaves he will be entitled to the same rank in the next world as he holds in this. From this belief emanates one of their most barbarous customs — the ceremony of human sacrifices upon the death of any one of importance. Upon the decease of a chief, a certain number of his slaves are selected to be sacrificed, that their spirits may accompany him to the next world. Should this chief possess thirty men and twenty women, seven or eight of the former and six or seven of the latter will suffer death. The men are decapitated, and the women are strangled. When a woman is to be sacrificed she is adorned with bright metal bangles, her toilet is

carefully attended to, her hair is neatly plaited, and bright-colored cloths are wrapped around her. Her hands are then pinioned behind, and her neck is passed through a noose of cord; the long end of the cord is led over the branch of the nearest tree, and is drawn taut at a given signal; and while the body is swinging in mid-air its convulsive movements are imitated with savage gusto by the spectators. It often happens that a little child also becomes a victim to this horrible ceremony, by being placed in the grave alive, as a pillow for the dead chief. These executions are still perpetrated in all the villages of the Upper Congo.



NGOMBÉ SHIELD.

But the life of the slave is not only forfeited at the death of the chief of the tribe in which fate has cast his lot. Let us suppose that the tribe he is owned by has been maintaining an internecine warfare with another tribe in the same district. For some reason it is deemed politic by the chief to bring the feud to an end, and a meeting is arranged with his rival. At the conclusion of the interview, in order that the treaty of peace may be solemnly ratified, blood must be spilled.



LOLO MAN.

A slave is therefore selected, and the mode of torture preceding his death will vary in different districts. In the Ubangi River district the slave is suspended head downwards from the branch of a tree, and there left to die. But even more horrible is the fate of such a one at Chumbiri, Bolobo, or the large villages around Irebu, where the expiatory victim is actually buried alive with only the head left above the ground. All his bones have first been crushed or broken, and in speechless agony he waits for death. He is usually thus buried at the junction of two highways, or by the side of some well-trodden pathway leading from the village; and of all the numerous villagers who pass to and fro, not one, even if he felt a momentary pang of pity, would dare either to alleviate or to end his misery, for this is forbidden under the severest penalties.

## HOW THE NATIVES ARE ENSLAVED

The varying fortunes of tribal warfare furnish the markets with slaves whose cicatrization marks show them to be members of widely differing families and distant villages. But there are some tribes, and these the most inoffensive and the most peaceful, whose weakness places them at all times at the mercy of their more powerful neighbors. Without exception the most persecuted race in the dominions of the Congo Free State are the Balolo tribes, inhabiting the country through which the Malinga, Lupuri, Lulungu, and Ikelemba rivers flow. I may here mention the the prefix “*Ba*” in the language of these people implies the plural; for instance, Lolo would mean one Lolo — Ba-lolo signifying Lolo people. These people are naturally mild and inoffensive. Their small, unprotected villages are constantly attacked by the powerful roving tribes of the Lufembé and Ngombé. These two tribes are voracious cannibals. They surround the Lolo villages at night, and at the first signs of dawn pounce down upon the unsuspecting Balolo, killing all the men who resist and catching all the rest. They then select the stronger portion of their captives, and shackle them hand and foot to prevent their escape. The remainder they kill, distributing the flesh among themselves.

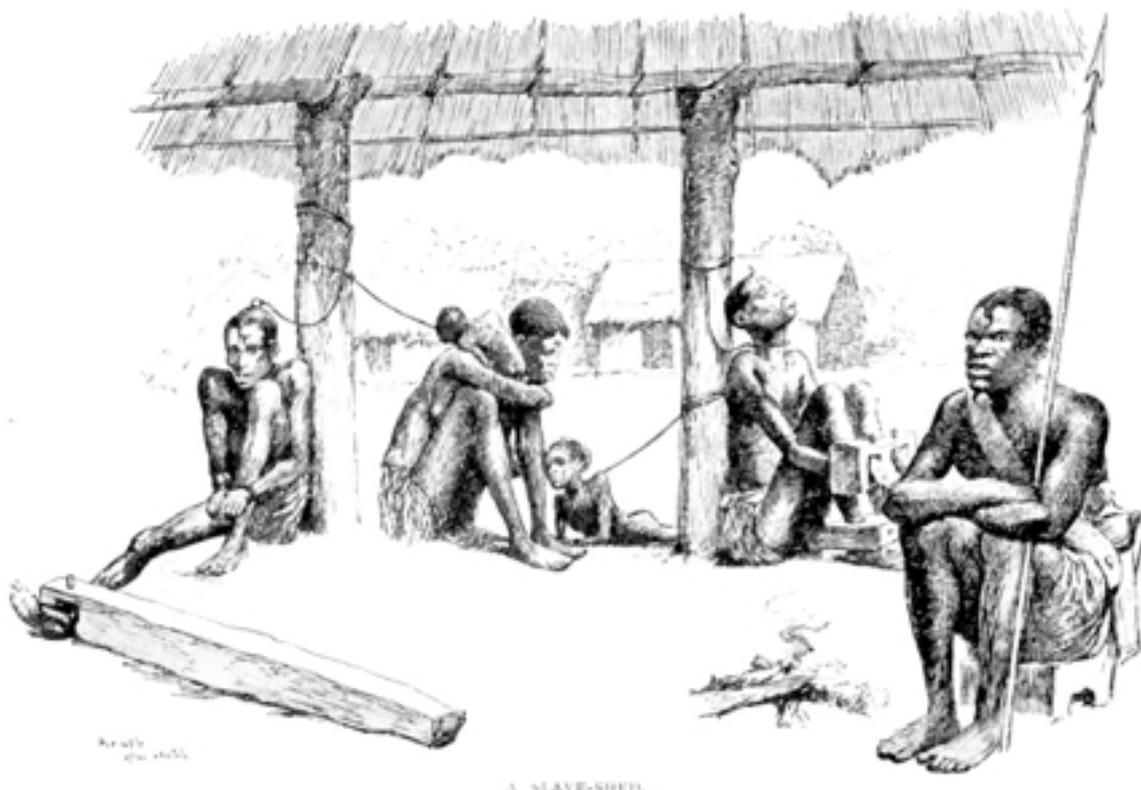


LOLO WOMAN.

As a rule, after such a raid they form a small encampment; they light their fires, seize all the bananas in the village, and gorge upon the human flesh. They then march over to one of the numerous slave-markets on the river, where they exchange the captives with the slave-traders of the Lulungu River for beads, cloth, brass wire, and other trinkets. The slave-traders pack the slaves into their canoes and take them down to the villages on the Lulungu River where the more important markets are held. Masankusu, situated at the junction of the Lupuri and Malinga tributaries, is by far the most important slave-trading center. The people of Masankusu buy their slaves from the Lufembé and Ngombé raiders, and sell them to the Lulungu natives and traders from down river. The slaves are exhibited for sale at Masankusu in long sheds, or rather under simple grass roofs supported

on bare poles. It is heartrending to see the inmates of one of these slave-sheds. They are huddled together like so many animals.

## IN THE SLAVE SHED



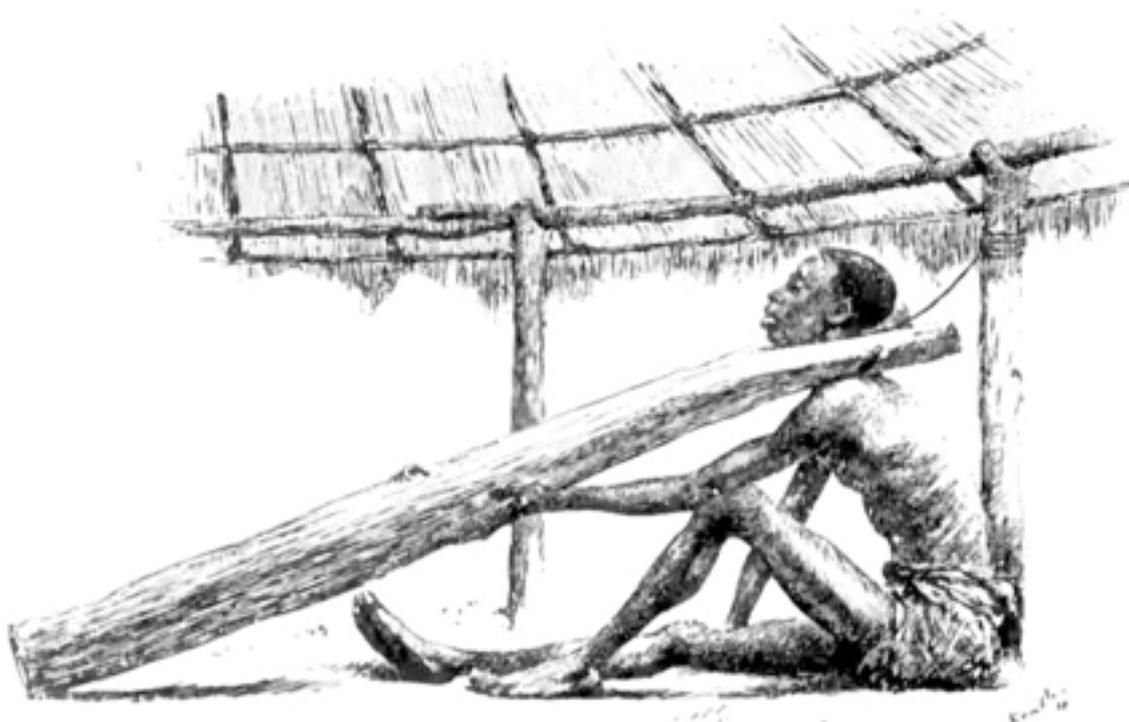
The accompanying pictures, from sketches which I took at Masankusu, will give some idea of the suffering which is endured by captives in numberless slave-markets. (Note: These illustrations are reproduced in Kurt Saxon's book *ROOT ROT*. See details at the end of this article.) They are hobbled with roughly hewn logs which chafe their limbs to open sores; sometimes a whole tree presses its weight on their bodies while their necks are penned into the natural prong formed by its branching limbs. Others sit from day to day with their legs and arms maintained in a fixed position by rudely constructed stocks, and each slave is secured to the roof-posts by a cord knotted to a cane ring which either encircles his neck or is intertwined with his

woolly hair. Many die of pure starvation, as the owners give them barely enough food to exist upon, and even that they grudge them. These hungry creatures form indeed a truly pitiable sight. After suffering this captivity for a short time they become mere skeletons. All ages, of both sexes, are to be seen: mothers with their babes; young men and women; boys and girls; and even babies who cannot yet walk, and whose mothers have died of starvation, or perhaps been killed by the Lufembé. One seldom sees either old men or old women; they are all killed in the raids: their marketable value being very small, no trouble is taken with them.

Witnessing groups of these poor, helpless wretches, with their emaciated forms and sunken eyes, their faces a very picture of sadness, it is not difficult to perceive the intense grief that they are inwardly suffering; but they know too well it is of no use to appeal for sympathy to their merciless masters, who have been accustomed from childhood to witness acts of cruelty and brutality, so that to satisfy their insatiable greed they will commit themselves, or permit to be committed, any atrocity, however great. Even the pitiable sight of one of these slave-sheds does not half represent the misery caused by this traffic — homes broken up, mothers separated from their babies, husbands from wives, and brothers from sisters. When last at Masankusu I saw a slave woman who had with her one child, whose starved little body she was clutching to her shrunken breast. I was attracted by her sad face, which betokened great suffering. I asked her the cause of it, and she told me in a low, sobbing voice the following tale:

*“I was living with my husband and three children in an inland village, a few miles from here. My husband was a hunter. Ten days ago the Lufembé attacked our settlement; my husband defended himself, but was overpowered and speared to death with several of the other villagers. I was brought here with my three children, two of whom have already been purchased by the traders. I shall*

*never see them any more. Perhaps they will kill them on the death of some chief, or perhaps kill them for food. My remaining child, you see, is ill, dying from starvation; they give us nothing to eat. I expect even this one will be taken from me today, as the chief, fearing lest it should die and become a total loss, has offered it for a very small price. As for myself,"* said she, *"they will sell me to one of the neighboring tribes, to toil in the plantations, and when I become old and unfit for work I shall be killed."*



A CAPTIVE.

There were certainly five hundred slaves exposed for sale in this one village alone. Large canoes were constantly arriving from down river, with merchandise of all kinds with which they purchased these slaves. A large trade is carried on between the Ubangi and Lulungu rivers. The people inhabiting the mouth of the Ubangi buy the Balolo slaves at Masankusu and the other markets. They then take them up the Ubangi River and exchange them with the natives there for ivory. These natives buy their slaves solely for food. Having purchased slaves they feed them on ripe bananas, fish, and oil, and when they get them into good condition, they kill them. Hundreds of the Balolo

slaves are taken into the river and disposed of in this way each month. A great many other slaves are sold to the large villages on the Congo, to supply victims for the execution ceremonies.



A LUFEMÉ SLAVE-HUNTER.

Much life is lost in the capturing of slaves, and during their captivity many succumb to starvation. Of the remainder, numbers are sold to

become victims to cannibalism and human sacrifice ceremonies. There are few indeed who are allowed to live and prosper.

## CANNIBALISM

Cannibalism exists among all the peoples on the Upper Congo east of 16 E. longitude, and is prevalent to an even greater extent among the people inhabiting the banks of the numerous affluents. During a two months' voyage on the Ubangi River I was constantly brought into contact with cannibalism. The natives there pride themselves upon the number of skulls they possess, denoting the number of victims they have been able to obtain. I saw one native hut, around which was built a raised platform of clay a foot wide, on which were placed rows of human skulls, forming a ghastly picture, but one of which the chief was very proud, as he signified by the admiring way he drew my attention to the sight. Bunches of twenty and thirty skulls were hung about in prominent positions in the village. I asked one young chief, who was certainly not more than twenty-five years old, how many men he had eaten in his village, and he answered me thirty. He was greatly astonished at the horror I expressed at his answer. In one village again, as I had bought a tusk of ivory, the natives thought perhaps I might buy skulls, and several armfuls were brought down to my boat within a few minutes.

I found trading somewhat difficult on this river, as the standard of value on the Ubangi was human life — human flesh. I have been asked on several occasions to barter a man for a tusk of ivory, and I remember that at one village the natives urged me to leave one of my boat's crew in exchange for a goat. "*Meat for meat,*" they said. I was repeatedly invited, too, to help them fight some of the neighboring tribes. They said,

*"You can take the ivory, and we will take the meat"*

— meaning, of course, the human beings who might be killed in the fight. The more unfriendly of them would frequently threaten that they would eat us, and I have no doubt they would have done so had we not been strong enough to take care of ourselves.

During my first visit to the upper waters of the Malinga River cannibalism was brought to my notice in a ghastly manner. One night I heard a woman's piercing shriek, followed by a stifled, gurgling moan; then boisterous laughter, when all again became silent. In the morning I was horrified to see a native offering for sale to my men a piece of human flesh, the skin of which bore the tribal tattoo mark of the Balolo. I afterwards learned that the cry we had heard at night was from a female slave whose throat had been cut. I was absent from this village of Malinga for ten days. On my return I inquired if any further bloodshed had taken place, and was informed that five other women had been killed.

While in the Ruki River at the beginning of this year, I was furnished with another proof of the horrible fate of the slaves. At Esengé, a village near which I stopped to cut wood for my steamer, I heard ominous beating of drums and outbreaks of excited mirth. I was informed by one of the natives from the village that an execution was taking place. To my inquiry whether they were in the habit of eating human flesh, he replied,

*“We eat the body entirely.”*

I further asked what they did with the head.

*“Eat it,”* he replied; *“but first we put it in the fire to singe the hair off.”*

There is a small river situated between the Ruki and the Lulungu, called the Ikelemba. At its mouth it is not more than 140 yards wide.

Its waters are navigable for 140 miles, and it flows through the land of the Balolo. In proportion to its size it supplies more slaves than any other river. By looking on the map it will be seen that the Ikelemba, Ruki, and Lulungu run parallel to one another. The large slave-raiding tribes inhabit the land between these rivers, and bring their slaves to the nearest market, whether on the Ikelemba, Ruki, or Lulungu.

## **LOCAL SLAVE-MARKETS**

There are clearings at intervals all along the banks of the Ikelemba, where on certain days are held small local markets for the exchange of slaves. As one travels up stream small settlements are passed more and more frequently, and fifty miles from the mouth all the country on the left side of the river is thickly populated. It is noticeable that the villages are all on the left side of the river, the opposite side being infested by marauding and roving tribes who would raid any settlement made on their banks. All the slaves from this river are Balolo, a tribe which is easily recognizable by the exaggerated tattoo marked on the forehead, side of the temples, and chin.

During my ten-days' visit to this river I met dozens of canoes belonging to the country at the mouth of the Ruki River and the Bakuté district, whose owners had come up and bought slaves, and were returning with their purchases. When traveling from place to place on the river the slaves are, for convenience, relieved of the weight of the heavy shackles. The traders always carry, hanging from the sheaths of their knives, light handcuffs, formed of cord and cane.

The slave when purchased is packed on the floor of the canoe in a crouching posture with his hands bound in front of him by means of these handcuffs. During the voyage he is carefully guarded by the crew of standing paddlers; and when the canoe is tied to the bank at

night the further precaution is taken of changing the position in which the hands are bound and pinioning them behind his back, to prevent him from endeavoring to free himself by gnawing through the strands. To make any attempt at escape quite impossible, his wrist is bound to that of one of his sleeping masters, who would be aroused at his slightest movement.

In one canoe which I noticed particularly there were five traders, and their freight of miserable humanity consisted of thirteen emaciated Balolo slaves, men, women, and little children, all showing unmistakably by their sunken eyes and meager bodies the starvation and the cruelty to which they had been subjected. These slaves are taken down to the large villages at the mouth of the Ruki, where they are sold in exchange for ivory to the people in the Ruki or the Ubangi district, the men to be used as warriors, and the women as wives; but compared with the numbers who suffer from the persecution of the slave-raiders, few indeed ever live to attain a secure position of even the humblest kind in a village.

The wretched state of these Balolo has always saddened me, as intellectually they are a grade higher than the tribes surrounding them; and it is really owing to the gentler fiber of their natures, and their peaceful, trusting disposition, that they easily fall a prey to the degraded and savage hordes in their district. They have artistic taste and mechanical ingenuity, and make exquisitely woven shields and curiously shaped and decorated spears and knives. They are exceedingly intelligent, faithful, and, when properly officered, brave.

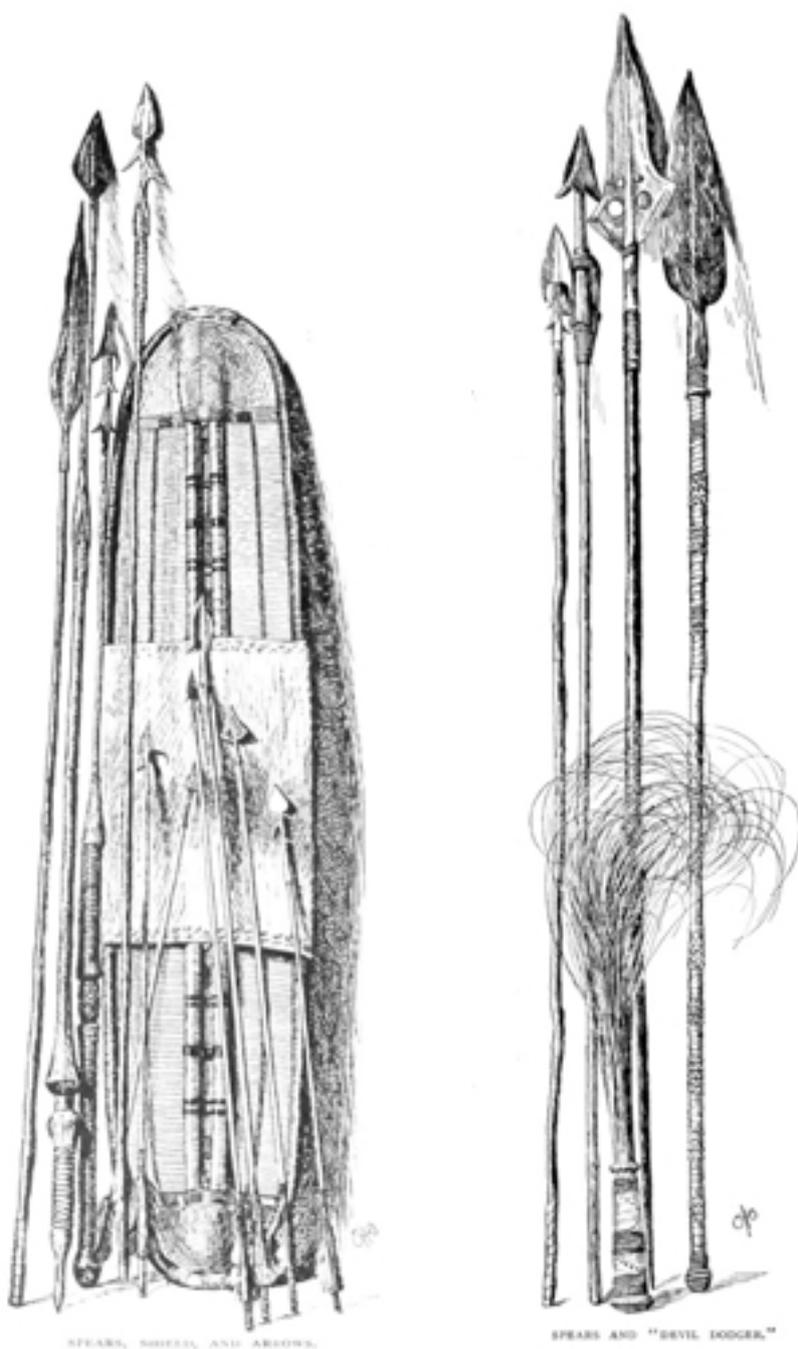
## **IN THE FAR INTERIOR**

For many months I traveled on the Upper Congo and its affluents and had on several occasions to defend myself against the hostility of the natives. My crew consisted of fifteen men, the greater part of whom were Balolo, and I was never deceived by them. When first I engaged them they came into my hands in the rough. They were savages, some of them cannibals; but they are of a very malleable nature, and with a policy of firmness and fair play I was able to convert them into devoted and faithful servants.



As evidence of what can be done by gaining the confidence of the natives, through a policy of firmness and fairness, I think I may safely quote my experience at the Equator Station. I remained there for nearly a year, with only one Zanzibari soldier; all the rest of my people were natives I had engaged from the neighboring villages. I was surrounded on all sides by powerful people, who, had they wished, could easily have overcome me and pillaged my post. But not

the slightest act of hostility or of an unfriendly nature was ever attempted, and I felt just as secure among them as I do in the city of London or New York. It is true the natives had nothing to gain by molesting me, and they were intelligent enough to perceive that fact. In reality, my presence was, to a great extent, beneficial to their interests. I had cloth, beads, looking-glasses, spoons, cups, and trinkets, and these I exchanged with them; every now and then I would organize a little hunt after elephants or hippopotami; and as my part in the consumption of either of these animals was a very small one, most of the meat I gave away to the natives.



SPEARS, SHIELD, AND ARROWS.

SPEARS AND "DEVIL DODGER."

My life during my stay at the Equator Station was a pleasant one. The people were of a happy and gay disposition; all were friendly and talkative. They would sit for hours and listen most attentively to my tales of Europe, and their intelligent questions proved them to be possessed of keen understanding. There is no more attentive audience in the whole world than a group of African savages, if you can speak their language and make yourself understood. When I was tired of talking to them, I would ask them questions concerning their manners, customs, and traditions. As I was much impressed by their cruelty, I always made a point of expressing my abhorrence of it, and have even told them that one day I should strike a blow for the slave. My audience on such occasions consisted principally of slaves, and these poor wretches were always much gratified to hear my friendly opinions towards themselves. My arguments, I could see, often appealed strongly to the chiefs themselves, as I asked them:

*“Why do you kill these people? Do you think they have no feeling because they are slaves? How would you like to see your own child torn away from you and sold into slavery, to satisfy the cravings of cannibalism, or to be executed?”*

They even said, some of them, at the time, that they would not hold any more executions. These executions did take place, but in a secret manner, and all news of them was kept from my ears until some time afterwards, when I learned of them from my own men. But I would have been unable to prevent the carrying out of such a ceremony with the force I had at my disposal in a single Zanzibari soldier!

## **SOME BARBAROUS CUSTOMS**

I remember one execution which took place, the details of which I learned afterwards. It was to celebrate the death of a chief who had been drowned while on a trading expedition. As soon as the news of his death was brought to the village, several of his slaves were tied hand and foot and lashed down into the bottom of a canoe. The canoe was then towed out to the middle of the river at night; holes were bored in it, and it was allowed to sink with its human freight. When we are able to prohibit the terrible loss of life which the children of today are compelled constantly to witness, more humane feelings may develop themselves, and surrounded by healthy influences they will, unspoiled by at least open exhibitions of cruelty, grow into a far nobler generation.

Natives suffering at the hands of the slave traders have repeatedly asked me to help them. At Malinga, where human flesh was offered me for sale, the assembled chiefs voted me several tusks of ivory if I would live among them and defend them against the Lufembé, and enable them to resist the persecutions they were exposed to from the neighboring tribes, who were continually making raids into their districts, capturing their people. They said:

*“We are being starved to death. We can make no plantations, because when our women visit them they are caught, killed, and eaten by the crafty Lufembé, who are constantly prowling around and taking away any stragglers they may see.”*

One old chief, Isekiaka, told me that already from time to time twelve of his women had been stolen from him, and several of his children. Indeed, so wretched is the condition of the people on the upper reaches of the Malinga that numbers of them have been driven by the Lufembé from their plantations on the mainland, and are actually compelled to live on the river in miserable huts, the floors of which are supported on piles. From these dwellings they suspend their nets, and as the river is full of fish, they subsist almost entirely on the produce of their hauls. This has given rise to a curious state of things;

for, as the Lufembé grow only manioc, and have more roots than are sufficient for the tribe, they are only too glad to exchange these for fish caught by their victims. And so when a market is held an armed truce is declared, and Lufembé and Malinga mingle together and barter, with their products held in one hand and a drawn knife ready in the other.

It can be readily imagined that the incessant persecution which the natives are suffering renders them cruel and remorseless. Throughout the regions of the Malinga they become so brutalized by hunger that they eat their own dead, and the appearance of one of their villages always denotes abject misery and starvation. I have repeatedly seen young children eating the root of the banana tree, vainly endeavoring to obtain some kind of nourishment from its succulence. That they are able to exist at all is a mystery. Every living object they are able to obtain is accepted as food; different kinds of flies, caterpillars, and crickets are all eaten by these people.

When one has lived for some time in Central Africa, one comes to understand the little impression that acts of the most atrocious and wanton cruelty make on the savage mind. Surrounded from childhood by scenes of bloodshed and torture, their holidays and great ceremonies marked by massacres of slaves, the mildest and most sensitive nature becomes brutalized and callous; and if this is so with the free, what must be the effect upon the slave, torn when a child from its mother, perhaps at the age of two years, and even in its infancy compelled to suffer privation. If indeed the child runs the gauntlet of cannibalism and execution ceremonies, it can hardly be expected that he will sympathize with any suffering.

The people on the lower part of the Upper Congo seldom practice slave-raiding. It is only when we come to the Bakuté district that we are brought much in contact with it. The large villages around Stanley Pool, — Chumbiri, Bolobo, Lukolela, Butunu, Ngombé, Busindi, Irebu, — Lake Mantumba, and the Ubangi River all rely principally

upon the Balolo tribes for their slaves. All these villages except Stanley Pool are daily making human sacrifices, either in connection with the death of some chief or for some other ceremonial reason. Any kind of commerce transacted in this part of Africa only increases the bloodshed, because the native's ambition is to get as many slaves as possible around him; and when he sells a tusk of ivory or any other article he devotes nearly all of the cloth, brass wire, and beads which he obtains in exchange to the purchase of fresh slaves. So that he is surrounded by numerous women and warriors during his lifetime, and has his importance signalized at his death by the execution of about half the number of his people.



TWO OF MY CREW.

## SUPPRESSION OF SLAVERY

I frequently talked with these people, and explained to them the iniquity of slavery; but they argued:

*“We have a great deal of hard work in our trading expeditions to obtain these slaves; why should we leave them all behind us for others who have not worked? We have bought them, they are our slaves, and we have a right to do what we like with them.”*

The ceremony of execution, with its attendant brutality, ought to be, and can be, stopped. The bloodshed is even greater today than when Stanley first saw these people in 1877; the reason being, as I have before mentioned, that contact with white men has made them richer, and has enabled them to obtain more slaves. The great powers of the civilized world are not discussing the antislavery movement, and if such discussions should result in some united action directed towards the suppression of the trade in the interior, there are a few peculiar features which might be turned to advantage.

**First**, and most important, this traffic is not complicated by religious fanaticism of any kind.

**Second**. These people are disunited; every village of fifty or sixty houses is independent of its neighbor, and small family wars are continually taking place.

**Third**. There is nothing so convincing to the African savage as physical superiority.

Now all these points are in favor of the antislavery movement.

The absence of religious fanaticism, the disunited condition of the natives, and their acknowledgment of physical superiority ought to be taken advantage of, and always borne in mind when plans for the suppression of the slave-trade and its attendant barbarism are projected. In my opinion, it will be some years before the slave-trade carried on by the Arabs can be successfully grappled with, but there is no reason why any delay should occur in striking a blow at the intertribal trade.

The Congo Free State has moved a step in the right direction by establishing near Stanley Falls an entrenched camp, with the object of forming a barrier to keep the Arabs, with their Manyema banditti, east of that position. Every country in the world should support the State to effect this object, as it will play a most important part in the history of Central Africa. When Stanley left Wadelai the Mahdists were already there. If these hordes join with those at Stanley Falls, it will require most strenuous efforts to save the whole Congo Basin from their devastations. While we are still able to keep the Arabs east of the Falls, no time should be lost in eradicating the existing bloodshed west of that point. It is a big work, but it is a duty which the civilized world owes to the helpless slave. Although black, and a savage, still he is a human being. It should always be remembered that the suppression of slavery in Africa does not mean merely striking the fetters from the limbs of the slave; its end is not only the substitution of paid for forced labor, but also the relief of enslaved humanity throughout all these regions from a life of unspeakable horror, from tortures that only the savage African can invent, and from a certain and violent death.

From Banana Point to Stanley Pool slavery does exist, but of such a mild character that when operations are actually begun Stanley Pool should be the starting point. If half a dozen fast boats were placed on the river at Stanley Pool, each armed with twenty black soldiers,

officered by two or three Europeans who had proved by their past services that they were capable of dealing with the question, and if such a force had the recognition of the civilized powers and was allowed to strike a blow at the evil, thousands of human lives would be saved.

These boats would be continually moving about the river, and those in command would begin by making a careful study of local politics. They would have to convince the natives of their determination to stop these diabolical ceremonies of bloodshed. The natives should be warned that any villages which in the future were guilty of carrying out such ceremonies would be most severely punished. Some of the better disposed native chiefs would have to be brought over to the side of the white man. Spies should be engaged all over the district, so that a boat on arriving would immediately hear of any execution that was about to take place or that had taken place; and I would suggest that any village which still continued these acts of cruelty, after having been fairly and fully warned, should be attacked, and a severe example made of the principal offenders. A few such punishments would soon have a most salutary effect. These operations I should recommend to be carried on between Stanley Pool and the Falls. Posts should also be established in commanding positions to control the mouths of the slave-raiding rivers. Each point should be supplied with a boat such as I have recommended for the lower river. Other stations should be established in the center of the slave-raiding district. Slaves at the time in the markets might be redeemed and placed in some settlement, where they could be trained as soldiers or learn some useful craft. I have, whenever it was possible, purchased the redemption of slaves, and on the completion of such purchase have always taken the precaution to place in the freedman's hand a paper to the effect that he had been redeemed by me from slavery, and that the expedition I represented would make a specified payment per month while he remained in its service.

## EFFECT OF LIBERATION

It was curious to observe the different effects that the announcement of such a redemption had on slaves freed so unexpectedly. As a rule, the bewildered man would go from one to another of my boat's crew, asking all sorts of questions as to the meaning of the ceremony. What was to be his fate? Was he to be exchanged for ivory? or was he to be eaten? And it would take some time and patience to explain to him, after his first surprise was over, the full import of the paper I had placed in his possession. Others, more intelligent, would immediately understand the good fortune that had befallen them; and it was strange to see the startling change in the expression of their countenances, which a moment before betokened nothing but unresisting acquiescence in their miserable destiny, and to note their inert and weary bodies, which seemed at once to become erect and vigorous when released from the degrading fetters.

After having bought all the slaves which were exposed for sale, warning should be given that any attempt to purchase human beings for slavery would be the signal for war, and that the purchasers would be severely punished.

The most important part of the movement is to convince the slaves of our earnestness and sincerity. I feel confident that should operations be carried on in the way thus suggested most satisfactory results would ensue.

The reason for the native villages being disunited is, that there seldom exists a chief strong enough to form a combination. This weakness should be taken advantage of, and capable white men might, through their personal influence, unite the tribes under their leadership. Sooner or later the Arabs at Stanley Falls will have to be battled with. At present they remain there, not because the white men will not allow

them to come lower down, but because they are in the center of such a rich field, and they know that by coming down the river they must rely entirely on their canoes, as roads in the interior are few and far between, owing to the swampy nature of the land. They would also have the populous and warlike districts of Upoto, Mobeka, and Bangala to fight against, which would not be so easily overcome as the small scattered hamlets around Stanley Falls, which at present they are continually persecuting.



COPPER ANKLET.

All the natives on the Upper Congo, quite up to the limits at present reached by the Arabs, should be controlled as much as possible by Europeans. They should be combined together under Europeans, so that when the time arrives that the Arabs decide to move west they would be met at their frontiers by a barrier of well-armed and resolute natives.

The slave-trade of today is almost entirely confined to Africa. The slaves are caught and disposed of in that continent, and the number of

those who are shipped to Turkey and other parts are indeed few compared with the enormous traffic carried on in the interior. We have the authority of Stanley and Livingstone and other explorers concerning the iniquity existing in the eastern portion of Equatorial Africa.

In India we have an example of what determination and resolution can accomplish; as the inhuman ceremonies of the suttee, car of Juggernaut, infanticide, and the secret society of the Thugs have all been suppressed by the British Government. The opportunities for reaching the center of Africa are yearly improving. Since Stanley first exposed to the world's gaze, in 1877, the blood-stained history of the Dark Continent, rapid strides have been made in opening up that country. The work for Africa's welfare so determinedly pursued by Livingstone has been most nobly carried on by Stanley, and the rapid progress which is at present taking place is due entirely to Stanley's efforts. A great obstacle has always existed between the outside world and Central Africa, in the stretch of unnavigable water between Matadi and Stanley Pool. The railway now being constructed will overcome this difficulty.

*E. J. Glave.*

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# Version History & Notes

Version 1: Published Feb 29, 2015

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## Notes

\* Cover image of Morton Stanley with native boy not in the original magazine article.

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*Knowledge is Power in Our Struggle for Racial Survival*

*(Information that should be shared with as many of our people as possible — do your part to counter Jewish control of the mainstream media — pass it on and spread the word) ... Val Koinen at [KOINEN'S CORNER](#)*

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