

PART I

ON THE ROAD TO THE RUINS

CHAPTER I

THE JOURNEY UP BY THE KALAHARI DESERT ROUTE



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IN a volume devoted to the ruined cities of Mashonaland I am loth to introduce remarks in narrative form relating how we got to them and how we got away. Still, however, the incidents of our journeyings to and fro offer certain features which may be interesting from an anthropological point of view. The study of the natives and their customs occupied our leisure moments when

not digging at Zimbabwe or travelling too fast, and a record of what we saw amongst them, comes legitimately, I think, within the scope of our expedition.

For the absence of narrative of sport in these pages I feel it hardly necessary to apologise. So much has been done in this line by the colossal Nimrods who have visited South Africa that any trifling experiences we may have had in this direction are not worth the telling. My narrative is, therefore, entirely confined to the ruins and the people; on other South African subjects I do not pretend to speak with any authority whatsoever.

Three societies subscribed liberally to our expedition—namely, the Royal Geographical Society, the British Chartered Company of South Africa, and the British Association for the Advancement of Science—without which aid I could never have undertaken a journey of such proportions; and to the officers of the Chartered Company, with whom we naturally came much in contact, I cannot tender thanks commensurate with their kindness; to their assistance, especially in the latter part of our journey, when we had parted company with our waggons and our comforts, we owe the fact that we were able to penetrate into unexplored parts of the country without let or hindrance, and without more discomforts than naturally arise from incidents of travel.

Serious doubts as to the advisability of a lady undertaking such a journey were frequently brought before us at the outset; fortified, however, by previous experience in Persia, Asia Minor, and the Greek Islands, we hardly gave these doubts more than a passing thought, and the event proved that they were

wholly unnecessary. My wife was the only one of our party who escaped fever, never having a day's illness during the whole year that we were away from home. She was able to take a good many photographs under circumstances of exceptional difficulty, and instead of being, as was prophesied, a burden to the expedition, she furthered its interests and contributed to its ultimate success in more ways than one.

Mr. Robert McNair Wilson Swan accompanied us in the capacity of cartographer; to him I owe not only the plans which illustrate this volume, but also much kindly assistance in all times of difficulty.

We three left England at the end of January 1891, and returned to it again at the end of January 1892, having accomplished a record rare in African travel, and of which we are justly proud—namely, that no root of bitterness sprang up amongst us.

We bought two waggons, thirty-six oxen, and heaps of tinned provisions at Kimberley. These we conveyed by train to Vryberg, in Bechuanaland, which place we left on March 6. An uninteresting and uneventful 'trek' of a week brought us to Mafeking, where we had to wait some time, owing to a deluge of rain, and from this point I propose to commence the narrative of my observations.

Bechuanaland is about as big as France, and a country which has been gradually coming under the sphere of British influence since Sir Charles Warren's campaign, and which in a very few years must of

necessity be absorbed into the embryo empire which Mr. Cecil Rhodes hopes to build up from the Lakes to Cape Town. At present there are three degrees of intensity of British influence in Bechuanaland in proportion to the proximity to headquarters—firstly, the Crown colony to the south, with its railway, its well-to-do settlements at Taungs, Vryberg, and Mafeking, and with its native chiefs confined within certain limits; secondly, the British protectorate to the north of this over such chiefs as Batuen, Pilan, Linchwe, and Sechele, extending vaguely to the west into the Kalahari Desert, and bounded by the Limpopo River and the Dutchmen on the east; thirdly, the independent dominions of the native chief Khama, who rules over a vast territory to the north, and whose interests are entirely British, for with their assistance only can he hope to resist the attacks of his inveterate foe King Lobengula of Matabeleland.

Two roads through Bechuanaland to Mashonaland were open to us from Mafeking: the shorter one is by the river, which, after the rains, is muddy and fever-stricken; the other is longer and less frequented; it passes through a corner of the Kalahari Desert, and had the additional attraction of taking us through the capitals of all the principal chiefs: consequently, we unhesitatingly chose it, and it is this which I now propose to describe.

We may dismiss the Crown colony of Bechuanaland with a few words. It differs little from any

other such colony in South Africa, and the natives and their chiefs have little or no identity left to them. Even the once famous Montsoia, chief of the Ba-rolongs of Mafeking, has sunk into the lowest depths of servile submission; he receives a monthly pension of 25*l.*, which said sum he always puts under his pillow and sleeps upon; he is avaricious in his old age, and dropsical, and surrounded by women who delight to wrap their swarthy frames in gaudy garments from Europe. He is nominally a Christian, and has been made an F.O.S., or Friend of Ally Sloper, and, as the latter title is more in accordance with his tastes, he points with pride to the diploma which hangs on the walls of his hut.

From Mafeking to Kanya, the capital of Batuen, chief of the Ba-Ngwatetse tribe, is about eighty miles. At first the road is treeless, until the area is reached where terminates the cutting down of timber for the support of the diamond mines at Kimberley, a process which has denuded all southern Bechuanaland of trees, and is gradually creeping north. The rains were not over when we started, and we found the road saturated with moisture; and in two days, near the Ramatlabama River, our progress was just one mile, in which distance our waggons had to be unloaded and dug out six times. But Bechuanaland dries quickly, and in a fortnight after this we had nothing to drink but concentrated mud, which made our tea and coffee so similar that it was impossible to tell the difference.

On one occasion during our midday halt we had all our oxen inoculated with the virus of the lung sickness, for this fatal malady was then raging in Khama's country. Our waggons were placed side by side, and with an ingenious contrivance of thongs our conductor and driver managed to fasten the plunging animals by the horns, whilst a string steeped in the virus was passed with a needle through their tails. Sometimes after this process the tails swell and fall off; and up country a tailless ox has a value peculiarly his own. It is always rather a sickly time for the poor beasts, but as we only lost two out of thirty-six from this disease we voted inoculation successful.

I think Kanya is the first place where one realises that one is in savage Africa. Though it is under British protection it is only nominally so, to prevent the Boers from appropriating it. Batuen, the chief, is still supreme, and, like his father, Gasetrive, he is greatly under missionary influence. He has stuck up a notice on the roadside at the entrance to the town in Sechuana, the language of the country, Dutch, and English, which runs as follows: I, Batuen, chief of Ba-Ngwatetse, hereby give notice to my people, and all other people, that no waggons shall enter or leave Kanya on Sunday. Signed, September 28th, 1889.' If any one transgresses this law Batuen takes an ox from each span, a transaction in which piety and profit go conveniently hand in hand.

Kanya is pleasantly situated amongst low hills

well clad with trees. It is a collection of huts divided into circular kraals hedged in with palisades, four to ten huts being contained in each enclosure. These are again contained in larger enclosures, forming separate communities, each governed by its hereditary sub-chief, with its *kotla* or parliament circle in its midst. On the summit of the hill many acres are covered with these huts, and there are also many in the valley below. Certain roughly-constructed walls run round the hill, erected when the Boers threatened an invasion; but now these little difficulties are past, and Batuen limits his warlike tendencies to quarrelling with his neighbours on the question of a border line, a subject which never entered their heads before the British influence came upon them.

All ordinary matters of government and justice are discussed in the large *kotla* before the chief's own hut; but big questions, such as the border question, are discussed at large tribal gatherings in the open *veldt*. There was to be one of these gatherings of Batuen's tribe near Kanya on the following Monday, and we regretted not being able to stop and witness so interesting a ceremony.

The town is quite one of the largest in Bechuana-land, and presents a curious appearance on the summit of the hill. The *kotla* is about 200 feet in diameter, with shady trees in it, beneath which the monarch sits to dispense justice. We passed an idle afternoon therein, watching with interest the women

of Batuen's household, naked save for a skin loosely thrown around them, lying on rugs before the palace, and teaching the children to dance to the sound of their weird music, and making the air ring with their merry laughter. In one corner Batuen's slaves were busy filling his granaries with maize just harvested. His soldiers paraded in front of his house, and kept their suspicious eyes upon us as we sat; many of them were quaintly dressed in red coats, which once had been worn by British troops, and soft hats with ostrich feathers in them, whilst their black legs were bare.

Ma-Batuen, the chief's mother, received us somewhat coldly when we penetrated into her hut; she is the chief widow of old Gasetrive, Batuen's father, a noted warrior in his day. The Sechuana tribes have very funny ideas about death, and never, if possible, let a man die inside his hut; if he does accidentally behave so indiscreetly they pull down the wall at the back to take the corpse out, as it must never go out by the ordinary door, and the hut is usually abandoned. Gasetrive died in his own house, so the wall had to be pulled down, and it has never been repaired, and is abandoned. Batuen built himself a new palace, with a hut for his chief wife on his right, and a hut for his mother on the left. His father's funeral was a grand affair; all the tribe assembled to lament the loss of their warrior chief, and he was laid to rest in a lead coffin in the midst of his *kotla*. The superstitious of the tribe did not approve of the coffin,

and imagine that the soul may still be there making frantic efforts to escape.

All the Ba-Ngwatetse are soldiers, and belong to certain regiments or years. When a lot of the youths are initiated together into the tribal mysteries generally the son of a chief is amongst them, and he takes the command of the regiment. In the old ostrich-feather days Kanya was an important trading station, but now there is none of this, and inasmuch as it is off the main road north, it is not a place of much importance from a white man's point of view, and boasts only of one storekeeper and one missionary, both men of great importance in the place.

After Kanya the character of the scenery alters, and you enter an undulating country thickly wooded, and studded here and there with red granite *kopjes*, or gigantic boulders set in rich green vegetation, looking for all the world like pre-Raphaelite Italian pictures. Beneath a long *kopje*, sixteen miles from Kanya, nestles Masoupa, the capital of a young chief, the son of Pilan, who was an important man in his day, and broke off from his own chief Linchwé, bringing his followers with him to settle in the Ba-Ngwatetse country as a sort of sub-chief with nominal independence; it is a conglomeration of bee-hive huts, many of them overgrown with gourds, difficult to distinguish from the mass of boulders around them. When we arrived at Masoupa a dance was going on—a native Sechuana dance—in consequence of the full moon and the rejoicings incident on an abundant

harvest. In the *kotla* some forty or more men had formed a circle, and were jumping round and round to the sound of music. Evidently it was an old war dance degenerated; the sugar-cane took the place of the assegai, many black legs were clothed in trousers, and many black shoulders now wore coats; but there are still left as relics of the past the ostrich feather in the hat, the fly whisk of horse, jackal, or other tail, the iron skin-scraper round the neck, which represents the pocket-handkerchief amongst the Kaffirs with which to remove perspiration; the flute with one or two holes, out of which each man seems to produce a different sound; and around the group of dancing men old women still circulate, as of yore, clapping their withered hands and encouraging festivity. It was a sight of considerable picturesqueness amid the bee-hive huts and tall overhanging rocks.

Masoupa was once the residence of a missionary, but the church is now abandoned and falling into ruins, because when asked to repair the edifice at their own expense the men of Masoupa waxed wroth, and replied irreverently that God might repair His own house; and one old man who received a blanket for his reward for attending divine service is reported to have remarked, when the dole was stopped, 'No more blanket, no more hallelujah.' I fear me the men of Masoupa are wedded to heathendom.

The accession of Pilan to the chiefdom of Masoupa is a curious instance of the Sechuana marriage laws.

A former chief's heir was affianced young; he died at the age of eight, before succeeding his father, and, according to custom, the next brother, Moshulilla, married the woman; their son was Pilan, who, on coming of age, turned out his own father, being, as he said, the rightful heir of the boy of eight, for whom he, Moshulilla, the younger brother, had been instrumental in raising up seed. There is a distinct touch of Hebraic, probably Semitic, law in this, as there is in many another Sechuana custom.

The so-called purchase of a wife is curious enough in Bechuanaland. The intending husband brings with him the number of bullocks he thinks the girl is worth; wisely, he does not offer all his stock at once, leaving two or more, as the case may be, at a little distance, for he knows the father will haggle and ask for an equivalent for the girl's keep during childhood, whereupon he will send for another bullock; then the mother will come forward and demand something for lactation and other maternal offices, and another bullock will have to be produced before the contract can be ratified. In reality this apparent purchase of the wife is not so barefaced a thing as it seems, for she is not a negotiable article and cannot again be sold; in case of divorce her value has to be paid back, and her children, if the purchase is not made, belong to her own family. Hence a woman who is not properly bought is in the condition of a slave, whereas her purchased sister has rights which assure her a social standing.

From Pilan's the northward road becomes hideous again, and may henceforward be said to be in the desert region of the Kalahari. This desert is not the waste of sand and rock we are accustomed to imagine a desert should be, but a vast undulating expanse of country covered with timber—the *mimosa*, or camel thorn, the *mapani* bush, and others which reach the water with their roots, though there are no ostensible water sources above ground.

The Kalahari is inhabited sparsely by a wild tribe known as the Ba-kalahari, of kindred origin to the bushmen, whom the Dutch term *Vaal-pens*, or 'Fallow-paunches,' to distinguish them from the darker races. Their great skill is in finding water, and in dry seasons they obtain it by suction through a reed inserted into the ground, the results being spat into a gourd and handed to the thirsty traveller to drink. Khama, Sechele, and Batuen divide this vast desert between them; how far west it goes is unknown; wild animals rapidly becoming extinct elsewhere abound therein. It is a vast limbo of uncertainty, which will necessarily become British property when Bechuana-land is definitely annexed; possibly with a system of artesian wells the water supply may be found adequate, and it may yet have a future before it when the rest of the world is filled to overflowing.

We saw a few of these children of the desert in our progress northwards; they are timid and diffident in the extreme, always avoiding the haunts of the white man, and always wandering hither and

thither where rain and water may be found. On their shoulders they carry a bark quiver filled with poisoned arrows to kill their game. They produce fire by dexterously rubbing two sticks together to make a spark. At nightfall they cut grass and branches to make a shelter from the wind; they eat snakes, tortoises, and roots which they dig up with sharp bits of wood, and the contents of their food bags is revolting to behold. They pay tribute in kind to the above-mentioned chiefs—skins, feathers, tusks, or the *mahatla* berries used for making beer—and if these things are not forthcoming they take a fine-grown boy and present him to the chief as his slave.

Sechele is the chief of the Ba-quaina, or children of the *quaina*, or crocodile. Their *siboko*, or tribal object of veneration, is the crocodile, which animal they will not kill or touch under any provocation whatsoever. The Ba-quaina are one of the most powerful of the Bechuanaland feud tribes, and it often occurred to me, Can the name Bechuanaland, for which nobody can give a satisfactory derivation, and of which the natives themselves are entirely ignorant, be a corruption of this name? There have been worse corruptions perpetrated by Dutch and English pioneers in savage lands, and Ba-quainaland would have a derivation, whereas Bechuanaland has none.

Sechele's capital is on the hills above the river Molopolole, quite a flourishing place, or rather group of places, on a high hill, with a curious valley or

kloof beneath it, where the missionary settlement is by the river banks. Many villages of daub huts are scattered over the hills amongst the red boulders and green vegetation. In the largest, in quite a European-looking house, Sechele lives. Once this house was fitted up for him in European style; it contained a glass chandelier, a sideboard, a gazogene, and a table. In those days Sechele was a good man, and was led by his wife to church; but, alas! this good lady died, and her place was supplied by a rank heathen, who would have none of her predecessor's innovations. Now Sechele is very old and very crippled, and he lies amid the wreck of all his European grandeur; chandelier, sideboard, gazogene, are all in ruins like himself, and he is as big a heathen and as big a sinner as ever wore a crown. So much for the influence of women over their husbands, even when they are black.

Sebele, the heir apparent, does all the executive work of the country now, and the old man is left at home to chew his sugar-cane and smoke his pipe. Around the villages and in the hollow below the native gardens or fields are very fertile; maize, kaffir corn, sugar-cane, grow here in abundance, and out of the tall reeds black women came running to look at us as we passed by, whose daily duty it is at this season of the year to act as scarecrows, and save their crops from the birds. Beneath the corn and mealies they grow gourds and beans, and thereby thoroughly exhaust the soil, which, after a season or

two, is left fallow for a while; and if the ground becomes too bad around a town they think nothing of moving their abodes elsewhere, a town being rarely established in one place for more than fifty years.

From Sechele's town to Khama's old capital, Shoshong, is a weary journey of over a hundred and thirty miles through the Kalahari Desert, and through that everlasting bush of mimosa thorn, which rose like impenetrable walls on either side of us. Along this road there is hardly any rising ground; hence it is impossible to see anything for more than a few yards around one, unless one is willing to brave the dangers of penetrating the bush, returning to the camp with tattered garments and ruffled temper, if return you can, for when only a few yards from camp it is quite possible to become hopelessly lost, and many are the stories of deaths and disappearances in this way, and of days of misery spent by travellers in this bush without food or shelter, unable to retrace their steps. The impenetrableness of this jungle in some places is almost unbelievable: the bushes of 'wait-a-bit' thorn are absolutely impossible to get through; every tree of every description about here seems armed by nature with its own defence, and lurking in the grass is the 'grapple plant,' the *Harpagophytum procumbens*, whose crablike claws tear the skin in a most painfully subtle way. The mimosas of many different species which form the bulk of the trees in this bush are also terribly thorny; the Dutch call them camel thorns, because the giraffes, or, as they call them, the

camel leopards, feed thereon. Why the Dutch should be so perverse in the naming of animals I never can discover; to them the hyæna is the wolf, the leopard is the tiger, the kori-bustard is the peacock, and many similar anomalies occur.

The botanist or the naturalist might here enjoy every hour of his day. The flowers are lovely, and animal life is here seen in many unaccustomed forms; there are the quaint, spire-like ant-hills tapering to pinnacles of fifteen feet in height; the clustered nests of the 'family bird,' where hundreds live together in a sort of exaggerated honeycomb; the huge yellow and black spiders, which weave their webs from tree to tree of material like the fresh silk of the silkworm, which, with the dew and the morning sun upon it, looks like a gauze curtain suspended in the air. There are, too, the deadly puff adders, the night adders, and things creeping innumerable, the green tree snake stealthily moving like a coil of fresh-cut grass; and wherever there is a rocky *kopje* you are sure to hear at nightfall the hideous screams of the baboons, coupled with the laugh of the jackal. But if you are not a naturalist these things pall upon you after the sensation has been oft repeated, and this was the case with us.

The monotony of the journey would now and again be relieved by a cattle station, where the servants of Sechele or Khama rear cattle for their chiefs; and these always occur in the proximity of water, which we hailed with delight, even if it was

only a muddy *vley*, or pond, trampled by the hoofs of many oxen. These cattle stations are generally large circular enclosures surrounded by a palisade, with a tree in the middle, beneath which the inha-



MAKING THONGS OF OX-HIDE

bitants sit stitching at their carosses, or skin rugs, in splendid nudity. All manner of skins hang around; hunks of meat in process of drying; hide thongs are fastened from branch to branch like spiders' webs, which they stretch on the branches to make 'reims'

for waggon harness ; consequently the air is not too fragrant, and the flies an insupportable nuisance.

One evening we reached one of these kraals after dark, and a weird and picturesque sight it was. Having penetrated through the outer hedge, where the cattle were housed for the night, we reached inner enclosures occupied by the families and their huts. They sat crouching over their fires, eating their evening meal of porridge, thrusting long sticks into the pot, and transferring the stiff paste to their mouths. In spite of the chilliness of the evening, they were naked, save for a loin-cloth and their charms and amulets. A man stood near, playing on an instrument like a bow with one string, with a gourd attached to bring out the sound. He played it with a bit of wood, and the strains were plaintive, if not sweet.

Another night we reached a pond called Selynia, famed all the country round, and a great point of rendezvous for hunters who are about to penetrate the desert. In this pond we intended to do great things in the washing line, and tarry a whole day for this purpose ; but it was another disappointment to add to the many we had experienced on this road, for it was nothing but a muddy puddle trampled by oxen, from which we had difficulty in extracting enough liquid to fill our barrels. Needless to say, we did not stay for our proposed washing day, but hurried on.

It was a great relief to reach the hills of Shoshong, the larger trees, the cactus-like euphorbia, and the richer vegetation, after the long flat stretch of

waterless bush-covered desert, and we were just now within the tropic of Capricorn. The group of hills is considerable, reaching an elevation of about 800 feet, and with interesting views from the summits. In a deep ravine amongst these hills lie the ruins of the town of Shoshong, the quondam capital of the chief Khama and the Ba-mangwato tribe. It is an interesting illustration of the migratory spirit of the race. The question of moving had long been discussed by Khama and his head men, but the European traders and missionaries at Shoshong thought it would never take place. They built themselves houses and stores, and lived contentedly.

Suddenly, one day, now three years ago, without any prefatory warning, Khama gave orders for the move, and the exodus commenced on the following morning. The rich were exhorted to lend their waggons and their beasts of burden to the poor. Each man helped his neighbour, and, in two months, 15,000 individuals were located in their new home at Palapwe, about sixty miles away, where water is plentiful and the soil exceedingly rich. Thus was Shoshong abandoned. Scarcity of water was the immediate cause of the migration, for there was only one slender stream to water the whole community, and whole rows of women with their jars would stand for hours awaiting their turn to fill them from the source up the valley, which in the dry season barely trickled.

Everything was arranged by Khama in the most beautiful manner. He and his head men had been

over at Palapwe for some time, and had arranged the allotments, so that every one on his arrival went straight to the spot appointed, built his hut, and surrounded it with a palisade. Not a murmur or a dispute arose amongst them. In reality it was the knowledge of British support which enabled Khama to carry out this plan. Shoshong, in its rocky ravine, is admirably situated for protection from the Matabele raids. When a rumour of the enemy's approach was received, the women and children were hurried off with provisions to the caves above the town, whilst Khama and his soldiers protected the entrance to the ravine. Palapwe, on the contrary, is open and indefensible, and would be at once exposed to the raids of Lobengula were it not for the camp of the Bechuanaland Border Police at Macloutsie, and the openly avowed support of Great Britain.

The desolate aspect of the ruined town, as seen to-day, is exceedingly odd. The compounds or enclosures are all thickly overgrown with the castor-oil plant. The huts have, in most cases, tumbled in; some show only walls, with the chequered and diaper patterns still on them so beloved by the inhabitants of Bechuanaland; others are mere skeleton huts, with only the framework left. The poles which shut in the cattle kraals have, in many instances, sprouted, and present the appearance of curious circular groves dedicated to some deity. The brick houses of European origin are the most lasting, the old stores and abodes of traders, but even these can now hardly be approached

by reason of the thick thorn bushes which, in so short a space of time, have grown up around them. Far up the ravine is the missionary's house, itself a ruin overlooking the ruined town. Baboons, and owls, and vicious wasps now inhabit the rooms where Moffat lived and Livingstone stayed. There is not a vestige of human life now to be seen within miles of Shoshong, which was, three years ago, the capital of one of the most enlightened chiefs of South Africa.

I must say I looked forward with great interest to seeing a man with so wide a reputation for integrity and enlightenment as Khama has in South Africa. Somehow, one's spirit of scepticism is on the alert on such occasions, especially when a negro is the case in point; and I candidly admit that I advanced towards Palapwe fully prepared to find the chief of the Ba-mangwato a rascal and a hypocrite, and that I left his capital, after a week's stay there, one of his most fervent admirers.

Not only has Khama himself established his reputation for honesty, but he is supposed to have inoculated all his people with the same virtue. No one is supposed to steal in Khama's country. He regulates the price of the goat you buy; and the milk vendor dare not ask more than the regulation price, nor can you get it for less. One evening, on our journey from Shoshong to Palapwe, we passed a loaded waggon by the roadside with no one to guard it save a dog; and surely, we thought, such confidence as this im-

plies a security for property rare enough in South Africa.

The aspect of Palapwe is very pleasant. Fine timber covers the hill slopes. A large grassy square, shaded by trees, and with a stream running through it, has been devoted to the outspanning of the many waggons which pass through here. There are as yet but few of those detestable corrugated-iron houses, for the Europeans have wisely elected to dwell in daub huts, like the natives. Scattered far and wide are the clusters of huts in their own enclosures, governed by their respective *indunas*.

High up on the hillside Khama has allotted the choicest spot of all to his spiritual and political adviser, Mr. Hepburn, the missionary. From here a lovely view extends over mountain and plain, over granite *kopje* and the meandering river-bed, far away into the blue distance and the Kalahari. Behind the mission house is a deep ravine, thick set with tropical vegetation, through which a stream runs, called Foto-foto, which at the head of the gorge leaps over steep rocks, and forms a lovely cascade of well-nigh a hundred feet; behind the ravine, on the rocky heights, baboons and other wild animals still linger, perturbed in mind, no doubt, at this recent occupation of their paradise.

Everything in Khama's town is conducted with the rigour—one might almost say bigotry—of religious enthusiasm. The chief conducts in person native services, twice every Sunday, in his large round

kotla, at which he expects a large attendance. He stands beneath the traditional tree of justice, and the canopy of heaven, quite in a patriarchal style. He has a system of espionage by which he learns the names of those who do not keep Sunday properly, and he punishes them accordingly. He has already collected 3,000*l.* for a church which is to be built at Palapwe.

The two acts, however, which more than anything else display the power of the man, and perhaps his intolerance, are these. Firstly, he forbids all his subjects to make or drink beer. Any one who knows the love of a Kaffir for his porridge-like beer, and his occasional orgies, will realise what a power one man must have to stop this in a whole tribe. Even the missionaries have remonstrated with him on this point, representing the measure as too strong; but he replies, 'Beer is the source of all quarrels and disputes. I will stop it.' Secondly, he has put a stop altogether to the existence of witch doctors and their craft throughout all the Ba-mangwato—another instance of his force of will, when one considers that the national religion of the Sechuana is merely a belief in the existence of good and bad spirits which haunt them and act on their lives. All members of other neighbouring tribes are uncomfortable if they are not charmed by their witch doctor every two or three days.

Like the other Bechuana tribes, the Ba-mangwato have a *totem* which they once revered. Theirs is the

duyker, a sort of roebuck; and Khama's father, old Sikkome, would not so much as step on a *duyker*-skin. Khama will now publicly eat a steak of that animal to encourage his men to shake off their belief. In manner the chief is essentially a gentleman, courteous and dignified. He rides a good deal, and prides himself on his stud. On one occasion he did what I doubt if every English gentleman would do. He sold a horse for a high price, which died a few days afterwards, whereupon Khama returned the purchase money, considering that the illness had been acquired previous to the purchase taking place. On his waggons he has painted in English, 'Khama, Chief of the Bamangwato.' They say he understands a great deal of our tongue, but he never trusts himself to speak it, always using an interpreter.

An instance of Khama's system of discipline came under our notice during our stay at Palapwe. Attracted by the sound of bugles, I repaired very early one morning to the *kotla*, and there saw men in all sorts of quaint dresses, with arms, and spades, and picks, mustering to the number of about 200. On enquiry, I was told that it was a regiment which had misbehaved and displeased the chief in some way. The punishment he inflicted on them was this: that for a given period they were to assemble every day and go and work in the fields, opening out new land for the people. There is something Teutonic in Khama's imperial discipline, but the Bechuana are made of different stuff to the Germans. They are by

nature peaceful and mild, a race with strong pastoral habits, who have lived for years in dread of Matabele raids; consequently their respect for a chief like Khama—who has actually on one occasion repulsed the foe, and who has established peace, prosperity, and justice in all his borders—is unbounded, and his word is law.

Khama pervades everything in his town. He is always on horseback, visiting the fields, the stores, and the outlying kraals. He has a word for every one; he calls every woman 'my daughter,' and every man 'my son;' he pats the little children on the head. He is a veritable father of his people, a curious and unaccountable outcrop of mental power and integrity amongst a degraded and powerless race. His early history and struggles with his father and brothers are thrilling in the extreme, and his later development extraordinary. Perhaps he may be said to be the only negro living whose biography would repay the writing.

The blending of two sets of ideas, the advance of the new and the remains of the old, are curiously conspicuous at Palapwe, and perhaps the women illustrate this better than the men. On your evening walk you may meet the leading black ladies of the place, parasol in hand, with hideous dresses of gaudy cottons, hats with flowers and feathers, and displaying as they walk the airs and graces of self-consciousness. A little further on you meet the women of the lower orders returning from the fields, with baskets

on their heads filled with green pumpkins, bright yellow mealy pods, and rods of sugar cane. A skin caross is thrown over their shoulders, and the rest of their mahogany-coloured bodies is nude, save for a leopard-skin loin-cloth, and armllets and necklaces of bright blue beads. Why is it that civilisation is permitted to destroy all that is picturesque? Surely we, of the nineteenth century, have much to answer for in this respect, and the missionaries who teach races, accustomed to nudity by heredity, that it is a good and proper thing to wear clothes are responsible for three evils—firstly, the appearance of lung diseases amongst them; secondly, the spread of vermin amongst them; and thirdly, the disappearance from amongst them of inherent and natural modesty.

It had been arranged that on our departure from Palapwe we should take twenty-five of Khama's men to act as excavators at the ruins of Zimbabwe. One morning, at sunrise, when we were just rising from our waggons, and indulging in our matutinal yawns, Khama's arrival was announced. The chief walked in front, dignified and smart, dressed in well-made boots, trousers with a correct seam down each side, an irreproachable coat, a billycock hat, and gloves. If Khama has a vice it is that of dress, and, curiously enough, this vice has developed more markedly in his son and heir, who is to all intents and purposes a black masher and nothing else. Khama is a neatly-made, active man of sixty, who might easily pass for twenty years younger; his face sparkles with intelli-

gence ; he is, moreover, shrewd, and looks carefully after the interests of his people, who in days scarcely yet gone by have been wretchedly cheated by unscrupulous traders. Behind him, in a long line, walked the twenty-five men that he proposed to place at our disposal, strangely enough dressed in what might be termed the 'transition style.' Ostrich feathers adorned all their hats. One wore a short cutaway coat, which came down to the small of his back, and nothing else. Another considered himself sufficiently garbed with a waistcoat and a fly whisk. They formed a curious collection of humanity, and all twenty-five sat down in a row at a respectful distance, whilst we parleyed with the chief. Luckily for us our negotiations fell through owing to the difficulties of transport ; and, on inspection, I must say I felt doubtful as to their capabilities. Away from the influence of their chief, and in a strange country, I feel sure they would have given us endless trouble.

We left Khama and his town with regret on our journey northwards. A few miles below Palapwe we crossed the Lotsani River, a series of semi-stagnant pools, even after the rainy season, many of which pools were gay just then with the lotus or blue water lily (*Nymphaea stellata*). The water percolates through the sand, which has almost silted it up, and a little further on we came across what they call a 'sand river.' Not a trace of water is to be seen in the sandy bed, but, on digging down a few feet, you come across it.

The future colonisation and development of this part of Bechuanaland is dependent on the question of water, pure and simple. If artesian wells can be sunk, if water can be stored in reservoirs, something may be done ; but, at present, even the few inhabitants of Khama's country are continually plunged in misery from drought.

North of Palapwe we met but few inhabitants, and, after passing the camp of the Bechuanaland Border Police at Macloutsie, we entered what is known as the 'debatable country,' between the territories of Khama and Lobengula, and claimed by both. It is, at present, uninhabited and unproductive, flat and uninteresting, and continues as far as Fort Tuli, on the Shashi River, after crossing which we entered the country which comes under the direct influence of Lobengula, the vaguely defined territory which under the name of Mashonaland is now governed by the Chartered Company.

CHAPTER II

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF MASHONALAND

WE left Fort Tuli on May 9, 1891, and for the ensuing six months we sojourned in what is now called Mashonaland; of our doings therein and of our wanderings this volume purports to be the narrative. Besides our excavations and examinations into the ruins of a past civilisation, the treatment of which is necessarily dry and special, and, for the benefit of those who care not about such things, has been, as far as possible, confined within the limits of Part II., we had ample time for studying the race which now inhabits the country, inasmuch as we employed over fifty of them during our excavations at Zimbabwe, and during our subsequent wanderings we had them as bearers, and we were brought into intimate relationship with most of their chiefs. The Chartered Company throughout the whole of this period kept us supplied with interpreters of more or less intelligence, who greatly facilitated our intercourse with the natives, and as time went by a certain portion of the language found its way into

our own brains, which was an assistance to us in guiding conversations and checking romance.

All the people and tribes around Zimbabwe, down to the Sabi River and north to Fort Charter—and this is the most populous part of the whole country—call themselves by one name, though they are divided into many tribes, and that name is Makalanga. In answer to questions as to nationality they invariably call themselves Makalangas, in contradistinction to the Shangans, who inhabit the east side of the Sabi River. ‘You will find many Makalangas there,’ ‘A Makalanga is buried there,’ and so on. The race is exceedingly numerous, and certain British and Dutch pioneers have given them various names, such as Banyai and Makalaka, which latter they imagine to be a Zulu term of reproach for a limited number of people who act as slaves and herdsmen for the Matabele down by the Shashi and Lundi Rivers. I contend that all these people call themselves Makalángas, and that their land should by right be called Makalangaland.

In this theory, formed on the spot from intercourse with the natives, I was glad to find afterwards that I am ably supported by the Portuguese writer Father dos Santos, to whom frequent allusion will be made in these pages. He says, ‘The Monomatapa and all his vassals are Mocarangas, a name which they have because they live in the land of Mocaranga, and talk the language called Mocaranga, which is the best

and most polished of all Kaffir languages which I have seen in this Ethiopia.' Couto, another Portuguese writer, bears testimony to the same point, and every one knows the tendency of the Portuguese to substitute *r* for *l*. Umtali is called by the Portuguese Umtare;¹ 'blanco' is 'branco' in Portuguese, and numerous similar instances could be adduced; hence with this small Portuguese variant the names are identical. Father Torrend, in his late work on this part of the country, states, 'The Karanga certainly have been for centuries the paramount tribe of the vast empire of Monomatapa,' and the best derivation that suggests itself is the initial Ma or Ba, 'children,' ka, 'of,' langa, 'the sun.' They are an Abantu race, akin to the Zulus, only a weaker branch whose day is over. Several tribes of Bakalanga came into Natal in 1720, forced down by the powerful Zulu hordes, with traditions of having once formed a part of a powerful tribe further north. Three centuries and a half ago, when the Portuguese first visited the country, they were then all-powerful in this country, and were ruled over by a chief with the dynastic name of Monomatapa, which community split up, like all Kaffir combinations do after a generation or so, into a hopeless state of disintegration.²

¹ M', which looks so mysterious in all African books, is supposed to express that the first syllable may be pronounced either *um* or *mu*; there are four correct ways of pronouncing the name in question, Umtali or Mutare, Umtare or Mutali. The English have adopted the first and the Portuguese the second.

² *Vide* Chap. VII.

Each petty chief still has his high-sounding dynastic name, like the Monomatapa or the Pharaoh of his day. Chibi, M'tegeza, M'toko, and countless lesser names are as hereditary as the chiefdoms themselves, and each chief, as he succeeds, drops his own identity and takes the tribal appellative. Such, briefly, is the political aspect of the country we are about to enter.

This is a strange, weird country to look upon, and after the flat monotony of Bechuanaland a perfect paradise. The granite hills are so oddly fantastic in their forms; the deep river-beds so richly luxuriant in their wealth of tropical vegetation; the great baobab trees, the elephants of the vegetable world, so antediluvian in their aspect. Here one would never be surprised to come across the roc's egg of Sindbad or the golden valley of Rasselas; the dreams of the old Arabian story-tellers here seem to have a reality.

Our first real intercourse with the natives was at a lovely spot called Inyamanda, where we 'outspanned' on a small plain surrounded by domed granite *kopjes*, near the summit of one of which is a cluster of villages.

Here we unpacked our beads and our cloth, and commenced African trading in real earnest; what money we had we put away in our boxes, and never wanted it again during our stay in the country. The naked natives swarmed around us like flies, with grain, flour, sour milk, and honey, which commodities can be acquired for a few beads; but for a sheep

they wanted a blanket, for meat is scarce enough and valuable amongst this much-raided people. We lost an ox here by one of the many sicknesses fatal to cattle in this region, and the natives hovered round him like vultures till the breath was out of his body; they then fell on him and tore him limb from limb, and commenced their detestable orgy. As one watched them eat, one could imagine that it is not so many generations since they emerged from a state of cannibalism.

We found it a tough climb to the villages through the luxuriant verdure of cactus-like euphorbia, india-rubber tree, the castor-oil, and acacia with lovely red flowers. At an elevation of five hundred feet above our waggons were the mud huts of the people, and up here every night they drive their cattle into extraordinary rock stables for safety. Perched on the rocks are countless circular granaries, constructed of bright red mud and thatched with grass. One would think that a good storm of wind would blow them all away, so frail do they seem.

Rounding a corner of the hill we came across a second village, nestling amongst stupendous boulders, and ascending again a little higher we reached a third by means of a natural tunnel in the rock, fortified, despite its inaccessible position, with palisades.

The natives were somewhat shy of us, and fled to rocky eyries from whence to contemplate us, seated in rows in all sorts of uncomfortable angles, for all

the world like monkeys. They are utterly unaccustomed to postures of comfort, reclining at night-time on a grass mat on the hard ground, with their necks resting on a wooden pillow, curiously carved; they are accustomed to decorate their hair so fantastically with tufts ornamentally arranged and tied up

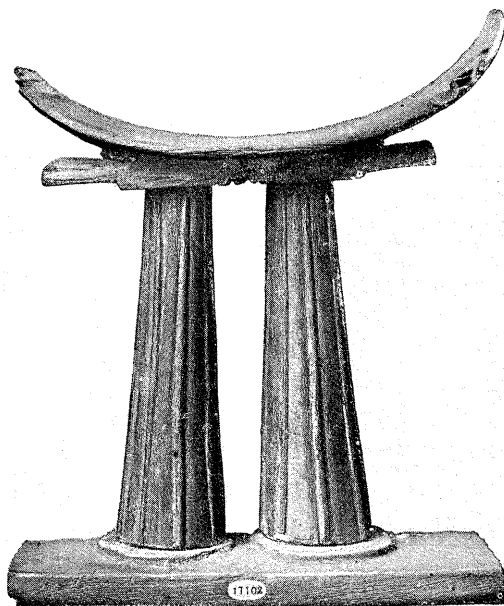


WOODEN PILLOW

with beads that they are afraid of destroying the effect, and hence these pillows.

These pillows are many of them pretty objects, and decorated with curious patterns, the favourite one being the female breast, and resting on legs which had evidently been evolved out of the human form.

They bear a close and curious resemblance to the wooden head-rests used by the Egyptians in their tombs to support the head of the deceased, specimens of which are seen in the British Museum. They are common all over Africa, and elsewhere amongst savage



ANCIENT EGYPTIAN PILLOW IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

tribes where special attention is paid to the decoration of the hair.

A Makalanga is by nature vain, and particular about the appearance of his nudity; the ladies have fashions in beads and cloths, like our ladies at home,

and before visiting a fresh kraal our men used to love to polish themselves like mahogany, by chewing the monkey-nut and rubbing their skins with it, good-naturedly doing each other's backs and inaccessible corners. Somehow they know what becomes them too, twisting tin ornaments, made from our meat tins, into their black hair. Just now they will



WOODEN DOLLASSES OR DIVINING TABLETS

have nothing but red beads with white eyes, which they thread into necklaces and various ornaments, and which look uncommonly well on their dark skins; and though it seems somewhat paradoxical to say so of naked savages, yet I consider no one has better taste in dress than they have until a hybrid civilisation is introduced amongst them.

From many of the huts at Inyamanda were hang-

ing their *dollasses*—wooden charms, on which are drawn strange figures. Each family possesses a set of four tied together by a string. Of these four one always has a curious conventional form of a lizard carved on it; others have battle axes, diamond patterns, and so forth, invariably repeating themselves, and the purport of which I was never able to ascertain. They are common amongst all the Abantu races, and closely bound up with their occult belief in witchcraft; they are chiefly made of wood, but sometimes neat



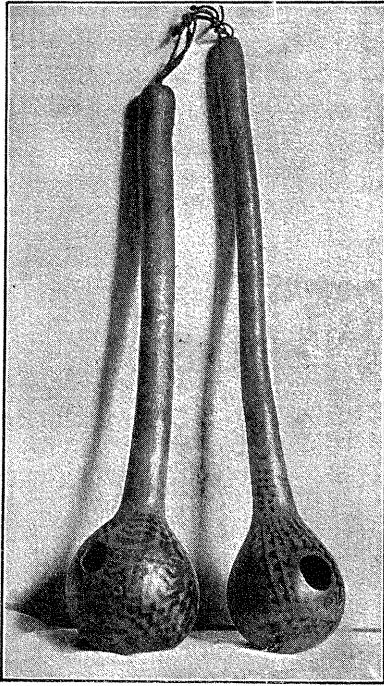
BONE DOLLASSES

little ones of bone are found, a set of which I afterwards obtained.

On the evening of the new moon they will seat themselves in a circle, and the village witch doctor will go round, tossing each man's set of dollasses in the air, and by the way they turn up he will divine the fortune of the individual for the month that is to come.

There are many odds and ends of interest scattered about a Makalanga village; there is the drum, from two to four feet in height, covered with zebra or other skin, platted baskets for straining beer, and

long-handled gourds, with queer diagonal patterns in black done upon them, which serve as ladles. Most of their domestic implements are made of wood—wooden pestles and wooden mortars for crushing

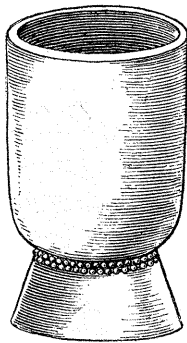


GOURDS FOR BALING WATER

grain, wooden spoons and wooden platters often decorated with pretty zigzag patterns. Natural objects, too, are largely used for personal ornaments. Anklets and necklaces are made out of mimosa pods; necklaces, really quite pretty to look upon, are con-

structed out of chicken bones ; birds' claws and beaks, and the seeds of various plants, are constantly employed for the same purpose. Grass is neatly woven into chaplets, and a Makalanga is never satisfied unless he has a strange bird's feather stuck jauntily in his woolly locks.

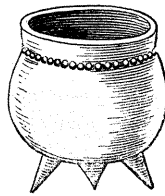
Never shall I forget the view from the summit of Inyamanda Rock over the country ruled over by the



WOODEN MORTAR



WOODEN BOWL



WOODEN PORRIDGE BOWL

chief Matipi ; the horizon is cut by countless odd-peaked *kopjes*, some like spires, some like domes, grey and weird, rising out of rich vegetation, getting bluer and bluer in the far distance, and there is always something indescribably rich about the blueness of an African distance. As we descended we passed a wide-spreading tree hung with rich yellow maize pods drying in the sun. Here, too, the bright coral red flowers of the *Erythrina kaffra* were

just coming out. Richness of colour seemed to pervade everything.

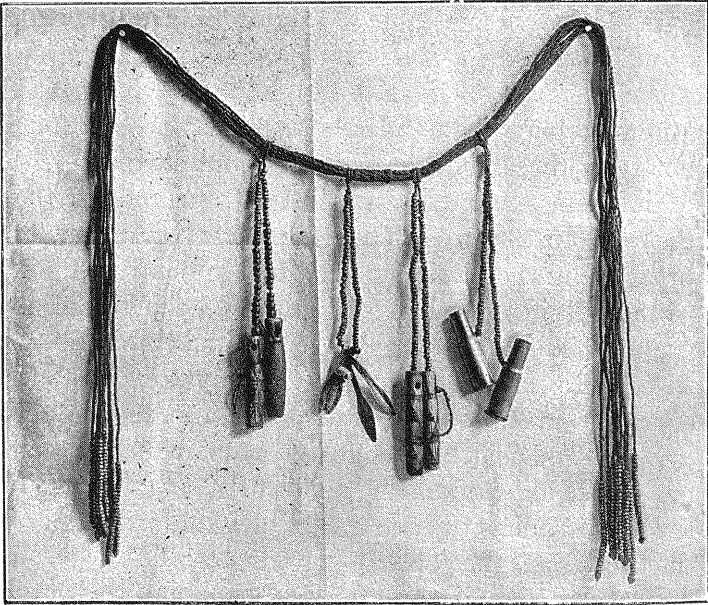
It was immediately on crossing the Lundi River, the threshold of the country as it were, that we were introduced to the first of the long series of ancient ruins which formed the object of our quest. By diligent search amongst the gigantic remains at Zimbabwe we were able to repeople this country with a race highly civilised in far distant ages, a race far advanced in the art of building and decorating, a gold-seeking race who occupied it like a garrison in the midst of an enemy's country. Surely Africa is a mysterious and awe-inspiring continent, and now in the very heart of it has been found work for the archæologist, almost the very last person who a short time ago would have thought of penetrating its vast interior. *Quid novi ex Africa?* will not be an obsolete phrase for many generations yet to come.

The Lundi River was the only one of the great rivers which flow through this portion of the country which gave us any real trouble. Our waggons had to be unloaded and our effects carried across in a boat, and the waggons dragged through the rushing stream by both teams of oxen; it was an exciting scene, and the place was crowded with people in the same condition as ourselves. On reaching the left bank we halted in a shady spot, and encamped for two days, in order to give our oxen rest and to study the ruin. It was a very charming spot, with fine rocky *kopjes* here and there, rich vegetation, and the dull

roar of the fine stream about fifty feet below us. From one of the *kopjes* we got a lovely view up the river, over the thickly wooded flats on either side and the Bufwa range of mountains beyond.

The country beyond the Lundi is thickly populated, with native villages perched on rocky heights, many of which we saw as we wended our slow way through the Naka pass. One hill is inhabited by a tribe of human beings, the next by a tribe of baboons, and I must say these aborigines of the country on the face of it seem more closely allied to one another than they are to the race of white men, who are now appropriating the territory of both. The natives, living as they do in their hill-set villages on the top of the granite *kopjes*, are nimble as goats, cowardly yet friendly to the white stranger. They are constantly engaged in intertribal wars, stealing each other's women and cattle when opportunity occurs, and never dreaming of uniting against the common enemy, the Zulu, during whose periodical raids they perch themselves on the top of their inaccessible rocks, and look down complacently on the burning of their huts, the pillaging of their granaries, and the appropriation of their cattle. Under the thick jungle of trees by the roadside as we passed along we saw many acres under cultivation for the produce of sweet potatoes, beans, and the ground or monkey nut (*Arachis*). They make long neat furrows with their hoes beneath the trees, the shade of which is necessary for their crops. They are an essentially industrious race, far more so

than the Kaffirs of our South African colonies. Here the men work in the fields, leaving the women to make pots, build granaries, and carry water. In the Colony women are the chief agriculturists.

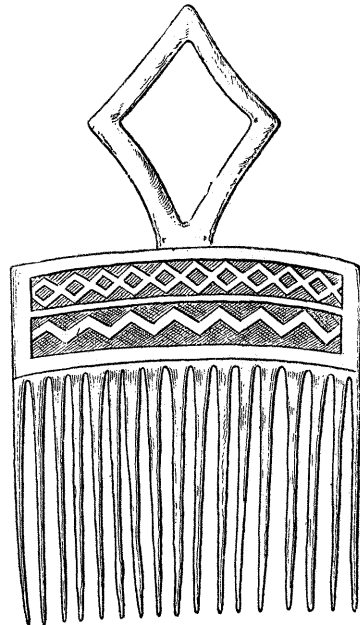


WOMAN'S GIRDLER, WITH CARTRIDGE CASES, SKIN-SCRAPERS, AND
MEDICINE PHIALS ATTACHED

We spent a long and pleasant day within a few yards of another village called M'lala in Chibi's country, also perched on a rocky eminence, where many objects of interest came before our notice.

Here for the first time we saw the iron furnaces in

which the natives smelt the iron ore they obtain from the neighbouring mountains. This is a time-honoured industry in Mashonaland. Dos Santos alludes to it in his description, and so do Arab writers of the ninth and tenth centuries, as practised by the savages of their day.¹ In Chibi's country iron-smelting is a great industry. Here whole villages devote all their time and energies to it, tilling no land and keeping no cattle, but exchanging their iron-headed assegais, barbed arrow-heads, and field tools for grain and such domestic commodities as they may require. I am told also of villages which, after the same fashion,



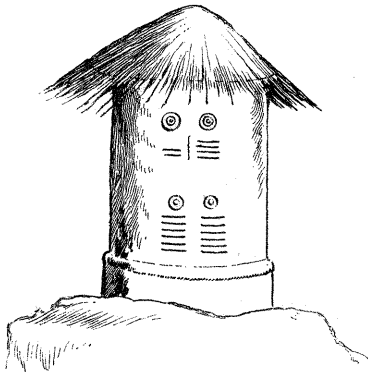
WOODEN HAIR COMB, CHIBI'S COUNTRY

have a monopoly of pot-making. This industry is mostly carried on by the women, who deftly build up with clay, on round stands made for the purpose, large pots for domestic use, which they scrape smooth with large shells kept for this object, and then they give them a sort of black glaze with plumbago. In

¹ Chap. VII.

exchange for one of these pots they get as much grain as it will hold.

The native iron furnace is a curious object to look upon. It is made of clay, and is another instance of the design being taken from the human form, for it is made to represent a seated woman; the head is the chimney, decorated in some cases with eyes, nose, and mouth, resting on shoulders; the legs are stretched out and form the sides of the furnace, and to complete



GRANARY DECORATED WITH BREAST
AND FURROW PATTERN

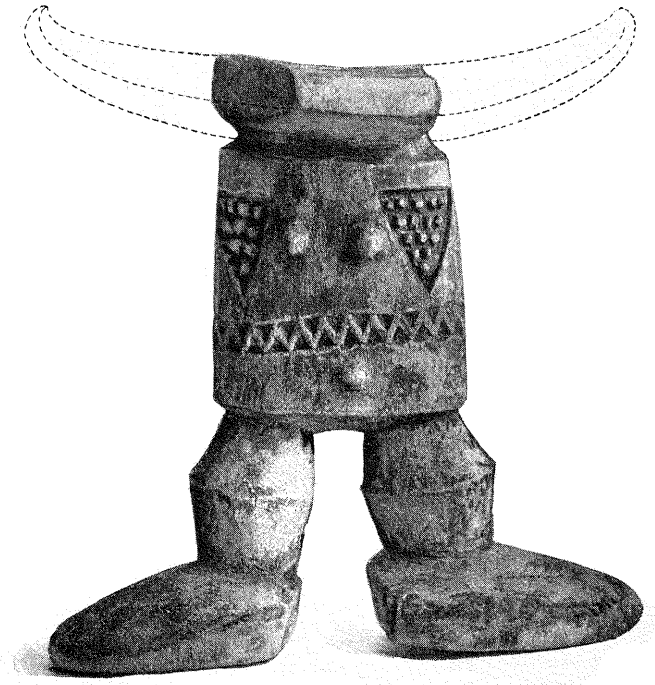
the picture they decorate the front with breasts and the tattoo decorations usually found on female stomachs.¹ They heat the charcoal in the furnace by means of air pumped out of goat-skin bellows through clay blow-pipes fixed into the embers. It is a quaint sight to see them at work with all their com-

modities—pillows, knives, and assegais, fixed on to the reed walls which shut off the forge from the outer world.

At M'lala too we were first introduced to the women who have their stomachs decorated with many long lines, or cicatrices. Between thirty and forty of these lines ran across their stomachs, executed with

¹ *Vide* illustration, ch. x.

surprising regularity, and resembling the furrows on a ploughed field. In vain we tried to photograph and count them. On one occasion I succeeded in counting sixteen furrows, when the bashful female ran away, and

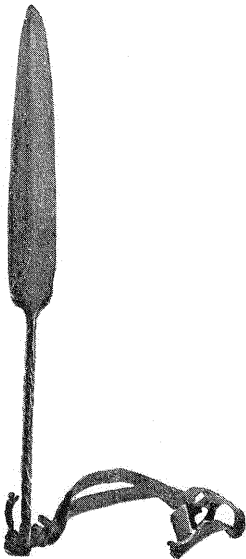


WOODEN PILLOW REPRESENTING HUMAN FORM

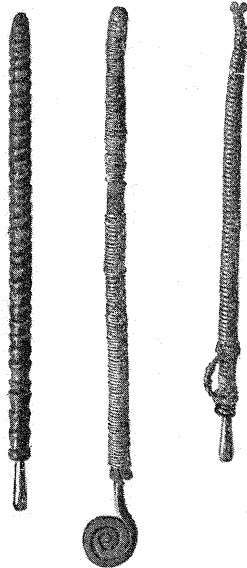
I think I had done about half. This is the favourite pattern in Chibi's country and with the neighbouring dependent tribes for female decoration, and they admire it so much that they put it also on their drums, on their granaries, and on their pillows, and,

as I have said, on their forges. 'The breast and furrow' pattern, one might technically term it, and I fancy it has to do with an occult idea of fertility.

One of these oddly marked ladies was busily engaged in building a granary on a rock. She first lays a circular foundation of mud, into which she puts



IRON SKIN-SCRAPER



NEEDLES IN CASES

sticks. On to these she plasters mud until the funnel-shaped thing is about three feet high. A hole is left near the top for inserting and extracting the grain, and it is then thatched with grass; and it effectually keeps out the many rats and mice which swarm in these parts. The costume of these natives is ex-

tremely limited. A man is content with two cat-skins, one in front and one behind, though the latter is not always *de rigueur*. The women wear leathern aprons and girdles, tied so tightly as almost to cut them in two, and made of several long strips of leather, like boot-laces fastened together. On to these they hang all the necessaries of their primitive life. At present old cartridge cases are the fashion for holding snuff, or decorated reeds, or wooden cases. Then they have a few decorated bone ornaments, evidently of a mystic character; a skin-scraper or two with which to perform their toilette, which articles are of the form and shape of the strigil known to us from classical times, and the ends of the boot-laces are elegantly finished off with brass or copper beads. The needle, too, is a feature seldom absent from the man's neck and girdle, being a sharp-pointed bit of iron or brass with which they pierce the skins and fasten them together with threads of bark; these needles are fitted into a wooden case, which the more fanciful decorate with bands of brass wire.

At M'lala too we saw the blind witch-doctor of the village, dressed in all his savage toggery. Small gourds with seeds inside to rattle were tied to his calves. These are the fruit of the *Oncoba spinosa*. A buck's horn with a chain was hung round his neck, with which he made a hideous noise. Odd chains of beads decorated his neck, made out of the pods of the *Acacia litakunensis*, and his arms and legs were a mass of brass bracelets and anklets; and