

THE KING OF ASHANTI.

A Monarch Who Is Unique In Many Particulars.

HIS SAVAGE SWAY IS ABSOLUTE.

He Defies Great Britain and Could Give King Solomon Pointers on Matrimony. A Plug Hat Is His Crown, an Umbrella His Royal Scepter.

Solomon in all his glory was not in it, either as a married man or a puissant potentate, with the king of Ashanti. Of all the astonishing kings of Africa or the south sea islands this dusky monarch stands pre-eminent. He has not only defied fate by marrying 3,338 wives, but he has defied the British government and hurled back her ultimatum in her face. He is now awaiting the approach of the English army and will try conclusions with John Bull, as did his predecessor, King Kofi Kalkira, in 1874. The result, of course, must be the same as it was in that memorable conflict, but the Ashantes are fierce fighters, well armed, and it is no light task that Lord Salisbury has undertaken.

Prembi, the king of Ashanti, is the absolute monarch of about 3,000,000 subjects. They live in the heart of the African forest, a few hundred miles back from the Gold Coast. The king wears a girde of dried grass around his hips and a "plug" hat. He owns no crown, but in some way has become possessed of a silk hat, which now does duty as an emblem of sovereignty.

Another remarkable fact about this barbarous king is that he has no throne. He has, however, a solid gold stool, which does service as a throne. It takes four able-bodied slaves to tug this heavy stool around.

But the greatest official emblem of royal authority is an umbrella. This curiosity has a big bamboo handle and spokes of embossed gold. On the end of each spoke is a human skull. Nobody, not even the king himself, knows the significance of this strange scepter of majesty, but it has descended to him from a long line of ancestry.

King Prembi, among other things, has exactly 3,333 wives allowed him by law. Why this liberal figure was decided upon his majesty does not know. Like the umbrella they came to him by inheritance. These helpmeet the king keeps in a vast harem which is guarded by several hundred eunuchs. A large proportion of his



KING PREMBI OF ASHANTI.

wives serve in menial capacities about the palace. The women folk of the common people, however, are surrounded by no such restrictions.

If any man looks at one of Prembi's 3,333 wives, that man's name is Dennis. Some of these numerous wives of the king of Ashanti are not worth looking at, it is true, but the owner of any profane eyes that even by accident happened to rest upon them would be conducted to a shady grove in the neighborhood of the town and fall to return.

His majesty lives in a big stone and native brick palace, the only structure of the kind in the kingdom. His royal highness sleeps on the floor.

The king is several times a millionaire, and it is believed that he has several barrels of gold dust and nuggets. Ashanti is rich in gold.

Prembi is a bloodthirsty monarch, and he is in the habit of making human sacrifices on a wholesale scale. Whenever it pleases him to do so, he orders a few hundred subjects to be beheaded. Besides this, during certain religious ceremonies it is customary to kill subjects. It is this practice which England wants the king to stop. And it is to put an end to these human sacrifices that the British troops will make war on the king.

When one king dies, 2,000 people are killed as a guard of honor to accompany him to the other world. As many as 10,000 are reported to have been killed on one occasion in a single day.

Upon every national festival it is also the custom for the king of Ashanti to offer human sacrifices. People are believed to be killed almost every day at Kumassi, the capital, and this kind of official murder is a regular thing.

The one thing which has always excited the horror and amazement of travelers who have penetrated this country is the Grove of Skulls, where in countless numbers the bones of victims of the king lie upon the ground with the festering remains of those who have recently been dispatched.

Here, where vultures gorged with human flesh perch upon the trees waiting for the new victims which many years have taught them to look for with certainty, is a spectacle presented the like of which is to be seen nowhere else upon earth.

This spot, where executions have taken place from time immemorial, is in a small grove back of the large market place at Kumassi. The victims are brought to this place with their hands securely tied, and they are made dumb by two knives thrust crosswise through their cheeks.

The poor wretches are for a time tortured by being pinched, pricked with swords and fired upon at short range with blank cartridges. The powder from these cartridges enters the flesh, causing excruciating agony.

Then the executioners, who are fantastically dressed, seize their huge swords, and flourishing them in the air lop off the heads of the victims one after another. Then they retire from the scene drenched with blood from head to foot and leaving the bodies lying where they fall.

As soon as the executioners retire the vultures swoop down from the trees above, and the ground is soon black with them. At night the panthers come and slink away satiated before the dawn. The pathway leading to this grove has been worn broad and deep through years of use, and it is always slippery with blood.

A MODERN HEROINE.

A Literal Portraiture From the Description in a Popular Novel.

As many readers of fiction have had cause to complain, authors and artists often work at cross purposes, and the novelist's eloquent conception of the heroine's personal attributes is but faintly shadowed forth in the artist's lines. To show how a heroine of romantic fiction actually looks our esteemed contemporary, The Pathfinder, handed to a realistic artist a chapter from a popular novel with instructions to make a literal portrait of the heroine.

Here are the eloquent words of the author from which the faithful portrait was drawn:

"Belinda was the fairest of earth's daughters. Her shapely head was molded in the form of a perfect oval, poised gracefully on a swanlike neck. Her delicate, shell-like ears looked fragile as the thin-



A MODERN HEROINE.

nest porcelain. Over her alabaster forehead rested an aureole of golden locks that fell in a shower all adown her temples. Her brows were perfect arches and underneath them, like windows to her soul, shone eyes the brightest love e'er looked upon, a pair of stars gleaming forth resplendent. Her nose was her only commonplace feature—slightly retrouse, but redeemed a hundred times by the roses of her cheeks. Her chin was a dimpled perch; her lips, like twin cherries, opened to reveal a row of teeth that had the semblance of a string of milk white pearls. What wonder then that, with all these varied charms of face, she should have had the easy, confident gait of one that knew the irresistible power of her own beauty?"

If artists generally were more literal, perhaps authors would be less free in their use of fanciful metaphors.

A QUEER CAREER.

Dave English Has Seen Many Vicissitudes as Horse Thief, Evangelist and Burglar.

Dave English, who was recently sent to the penitentiary at Chester, Ills., for a term of two years, has had a remarkable career as horse thief, evangelist and burglar. His first offense had a tinge of romance in it, a girl, a horse and an irate father figuring in it. In Missouri, about 1879, Dave fell in love with a country maiden, and the affection was reciprocated. He was a good looking, a dashing sort of fellow, but a cruel parent objected and



DAVE ENGLISH.

forbade the marriage, and the would be groom was not permitted to come on the premises. But one night Dave hid himself to the home of his affianced, and, in addition to carrying off the girl, a horse belonging to the old gentleman was saddled, and, riding double, the pair proceeded to a neighboring town and were made man and wife. Their flight was discovered but in place of following them up and giving them his blessing and the horse the father got out a warrant for Dave for horse stealing, and he was arrested and landed him in the Jefferson City penitentiary for a term of two years, his wife scouring a divorce at the next term of court.

Dave English was next heard of in Jersey county, Ills., in April, 1883, where he broke into a house to get some salt and

matenec with which to prepare a feast from a chicken which he had purloined. He spent 11 months and one day in the penitentiary as an atonement for this offense. After leaving the prison he enlisted in the regular army, but it is said that he did not finish his term of enlistment. The story goes that when he went east with his regiment his record became known, and that, combined with general cussedness, caused him to be drummed out—dishonorably discharged.

English returned to Illinois and married again, settling on Macoupin island, in Greene county, where he spent a short time in the county jail for stealing a hog. From Greene county he again drifted into Jersey county, where, in the winter of 1889, he burglarized the house of his aunt—net proceeds of the robbery, 50 cents—and was sentenced to the penitentiary for five years. He was discharged on Christmas day, 1893.

During his last term of penal servitude Dave English professed religion and showed signs of reformation. On his return to Jersey county he began to preach, and as an evangelist his work was phenomenal. With a gifted flow of language, earnest and forcible, he drew crowds in Jersey, Greene, Pike, Calhoun—everywhere he went he drew crowds by the thousands and made converts by the hundreds, and he was a recognized rival in Christian work to Sam Jones. But he went wrong—he fell from grace. He fell in love with another man's wife. She forgot her marriage vows, he forgot his duty. They fell and eloped together in a skiff down the Mississippi.

Dave next turned up at Alton last winter, seeking a night's shelter at the police station—broke, dirty and forlorn, claiming to have been robbed of skiff, clothing, woman and everything. Having laid down Bible and hymn book, he went to burglarizing again. Aided by pals, he went through the postoffices at Grafton, Rosedale and Newbern. His arrest resulted, he peached on his pals and was let off with a light sentence of two years. He is now employed in the foundry at the prison, with leisure between his working hours to review his past and again repent of the error of his ways.

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