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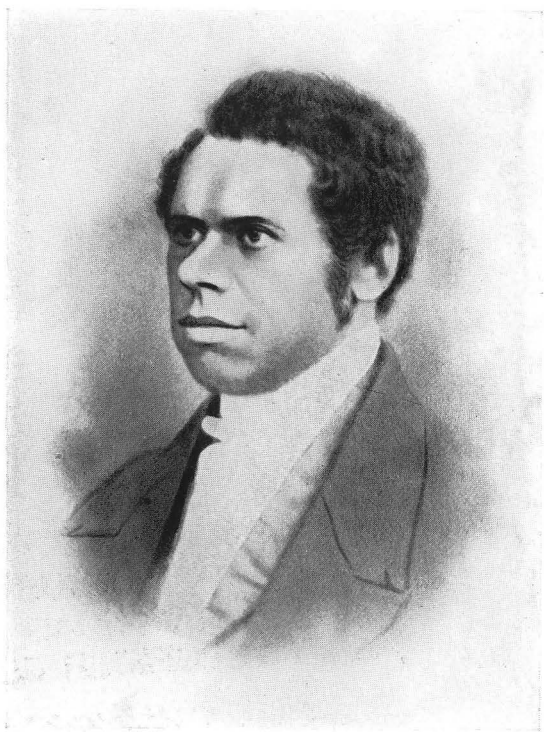


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THOMAS BIRCH FREEMAN

THOMAS BIRCH FREEMAN

THE SON OF AN AFRICAN

By

F. DEAVILLE WALKER

EDITOR OF *The Foreign Field*

AUTHOR OF *Africa and Her Peoples*

The Story of the Ivory Coast

William Carey, etc.

LONDON
STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT
32 RUSSELL SQUARE, W.C.1

TO
THE AFRICAN MINISTERS
MEMBERS AND SCHOLARS
OF THE
GOLD COAST WESLEYAN CHURCHES
(ESPECIALLY AT CAPE COAST
SALT POND, ACCRA, AND SEKONDI)

§ Dedicate

THIS BOOK
IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE
OF HAPPY DAYS SPENT
AMONG THEM

EDITORIAL NOTE

THIS volume is the eighth of a uniform series of new missionary biographies, in the production of which a group of unusually able writers are collaborating.

While these volumes contain valuable new material, this is not their main objective. The aim rather is to give to the world of to-day a fresh interpretation and a richer understanding of the life and work of great missionaries.

The enterprise is being undertaken by the United Council for Missionary Education, for whom the series is published by the Student Christian Movement.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THOMAS BIRCH FREEMAN was the greatest pioneer missionary West Africa has ever known, and his period of service on the Coast was longer than that of any other—exceeding sixty-two years. In days when colleagues were dying around him one after another, he was the outstanding pioneer of missionary work on the Gold Coast. He was the first missionary to reach Kumasi (then known as “the City of Blood”), the first to visit the terrible King of Dahomey, the first to reach Abeokuta; and he planted the Wesleyan missions in Badagry, Whyda, and Lagos—then the chief strongholds of the slave traffic. The son of an African father and a white mother, he lived where others died, and at the close of his long life he preached the Jubilee sermons in the church he himself had built at Cape Coast.

It is little short of tragic that such a man should be almost unknown to the home Churches, though his memory is still fragrant in West Africa. To re-introduce him to the Christian public at home is the object of this book, and it is hoped that the retelling of the story may prove an inspiration and a call to service to not a few young men and women—Africans as well as English—who are setting out on life's adventure.

Hardly anything about Freeman is available for the general public. The *Journal* of his great

journeys was published in abbreviated form in 1844; *Missionary Notices*, the monthly magazine of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, had frequent articles about his work from 1839 to 1857. These have long been out of print and are practically unobtainable by the public. A little eighteen-penny *Life*, by the Rev. John Milum, was published nearly forty years ago, and that also is now difficult to obtain.

Fortunately the real sources of information have been preserved in manuscript, chiefly in the archives of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. They consist of some hundreds of original letters, journals, and reports to the committee, some of which run to fifty and even seventy quarto or foolscap sheets. I have carefully read through them, and also numerous letters from his fellow-missionaries; and I have made full use of the manuscript of a book which Freeman wrote in the 'sixties but did not publish. Very special thanks are due to Mr Thomas B. Freeman of Accra (Freeman's eldest son) for the loan of valuable MSS. and personal details about his father's life; and also to the venerable "Father" Brown of Cape Coast, who for many years was closely associated with Freeman and frequently travelled with him. I have had the opportunity of visiting most of the important places connected with Freeman's life—Cape Coast, Anamabu, Accra, Christiansborg, Kumasi, Abomey, Whyda, Porto Novo, Lagos, and Abeokuta—and gained much information on the spot; and I gladly acknowledge my indebtedness to all the missionaries and African ministers who most generously helped me in my quest. Nor must I forget Mr John Sharah,

an aged Ashanti, who was once an attendant upon the Ashanti kings, and remembered the old Kumasi before it was destroyed by Wolseley ; he conducted me round the town and helped me mentally to reconstruct it as Freeman saw it. My thanks, too, are due to several missionary veterans who knew Freeman in his old age—the Revs. W. Terry Coppin, Dennis Kemp, George Dyer, Michael J. Elliott, and Thomas J. Price (in whose house Freeman died) ; all these, and also the Rev. Oliver J. Griffin, have helped by reading the MS. and by useful suggestions. To Mr Griffin and also to Mr Vivian Simpson I am indebted for useful documents from the archives of the Lagos District.

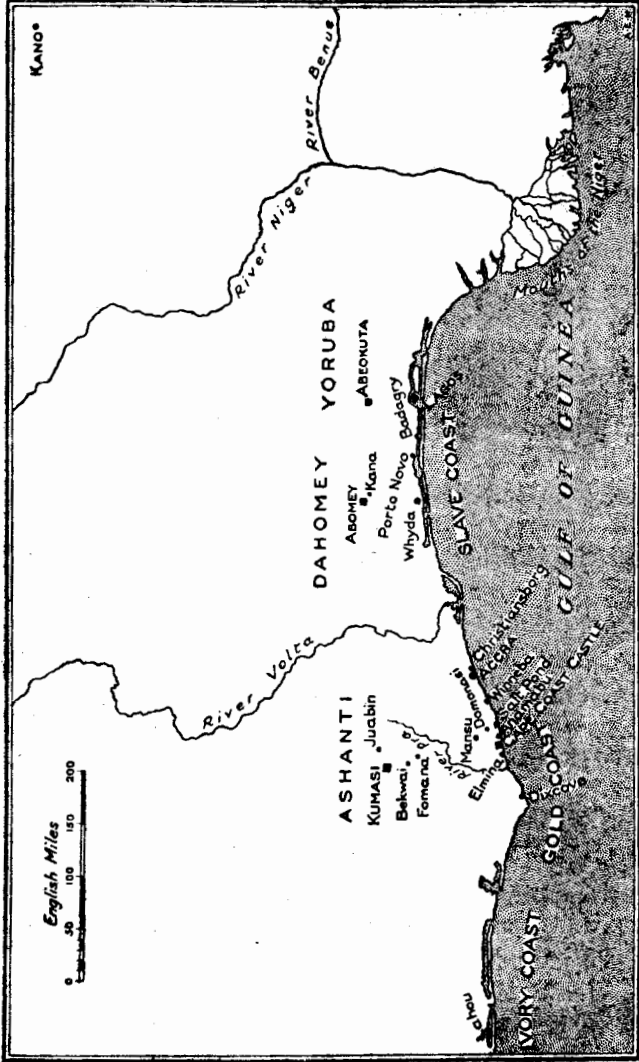
The book makes no pretence to be a complete story of Freeman's long and eventful life—that would be impossible in the space allotted ; but I have striven to present the essential features. It is a life-story of a man, not the history of a mission, and I have tried to make it a portrait true to life. I take this opportunity of saying that my fairly exhaustive researches have shown Freeman to be an even greater man than I had previously supposed. I regard him as one of the outstanding pioneers of modern missionary enterprise.

F. D. W.

SIDCUP, KENT
May 1929

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WEST AFRICA IN FREEMAN'S DAY

CHAPTER I

THE SON OF AN AFRICAN

1809-1837. Age 1 to 28.

ONE bleak January morning in the year of grace 1810, a woman, Amy Birch by name, stood before the font of the parish church in the quaint village of Twyford, near Winchester. In her arms lay a baby boy a month old,¹ brought for holy Baptism, and to him was given the name of Thomas. Amy Birch was a middle-aged English village woman of humble station, but the father of the boy was a swarthy son of Africa—a pure-blooded Negro.

Concerning the circumstances that brought these two together—an Englishwoman and an African—nothing is known. It has been surmised that they were fellow-servants to some country gentleman in Twyford. Nothing whatever is known about the father beyond the undoubted fact that he was a Negro and that his name was Thomas; his surname is uncertain.² How he came to England is a matter of conjecture. In the eighteenth century planters from the colonies came to England bringing with them a personal servant—a slave. But in 1772 Lord Chief Justice Mansfield gave his famous legal decision

¹ The parish register gives the date of Freeman's birth as December 6th, 1809.

² It may have been Freeman, but that name may have been adopted by his son, the subject of this sketch.

that "as soon as a slave sets his foot on English ground he becomes free," and those noble words marked the beginning of a new era in the relation of English people with Africans. Immediately a number of slaves who were in this country claimed their freedom. Some of them obtained employment, often as gardeners or house servants.

Such were the general conditions at the beginning of the nineteenth century. What light do they throw upon the father of Amy Birch's child? Certainly he could not have been a slave when the boy was born. Had he ever been a slave? We do not know. If he had never been a slave, it is difficult to account for his presence in England—unless, indeed, he was the free-born son of a slave, which is quite possible.

We are equally in the dark as to the early years of little Thomas. The parish registers tell us that his parents were poor, and we know that when Thomas was six years old his father died. The mother was left to fend for herself and four boys—Thomas being the youngest; the other three were the children of Amy Birch and her first husband, John Birch, and were pure-blooded English boys, Thomas alone being of mixed parentage. He was every inch a boy—impulsive, full of life and mischief, and not easily turned from any purpose upon which his mind was set. He knew nothing of fear. While still a small child he used to frighten his mother by reckless efforts to climb a big tree in the cottage garden. So great were the risks of breaking his neck in these attempts that his father felt it necessary to check the boy's climbing ambitions by felling the tree.

As he grew older, Thomas became a recognized leader of the village boys and foremost in all their

pranks. Doubtless he was usually found in the twilight at the corner of the old bridge that crosses the Itchen beside the village, plotting some new boyish mischief with his companions. Not content with the ordinary outlets for their energies, they sought some new sport—and found one. In a thatched cottage near the centre of the village there dwelt a shoemaker, a man of deep piety and withal a Methodist. His humble dwelling was the regular meeting-place of a little group of fellow-Methodists, and there, by the dim rush-light, they held their services. What better sport could a set of mischievous boys desire than to torment such pious folk? By the aid of a convenient wall it was an easy matter to climb on the roof. To tie a brick to a string and draw it up and down the wide old-style chimney, sending showers of soot into the log fire below, was a novel way of distracting the devotions of the despised Methodists. But the worshippers took little notice of such practical jokes.

Those boyish tricks had an unexpected result. One Sunday evening Thomas reached the cottage before his companions, and to pass the time away he stole softly to the door and did a little eavesdropping. As he stood there in the darkness, his ear pressed against the spacious keyhole, he heard words that arrested his attention and sank deeply into his heart. The young tormentor, in the current phrase of the period, "became serious"—*very* serious—and his companions found him poor company that night. He sought the counsel of the good shoemaker, and ere long cast in his lot with the Methodists he had hitherto tried to annoy.

We know nothing as to the boy's education. His

mother, twice left a widow, was poor and probably had a struggle to maintain herself and her younger boys. It may have been at some "dame school" in the village that Thomas struggled with his "three R's." But he must have had more education than that—much more, for we know him from a very voluminous correspondence to have been an educated man. Probably some kind benefactor took him in hand and made it possible for him to have an education that would otherwise have been beyond his reach. At that very time there was in Twyford an excellent grammar school, immortalized as the starting-point of *Tom Brown's School-Days*; it may be that young Thomas drank from that same well of knowledge. Scarce three miles across the fertile meadows was Winchester, whose great school was famous throughout the land, and there were other less renowned schools in the town. It is not impossible that Thomas, as a young boy, trudged daily along the green path beside the placid river to some school in Winchester to pursue his studies.

Certain it is that he made good use of the formative years of youth, for when we next catch sight of him he has reached mature manhood—a man of high character and no little ability. At the age of twenty-eight he evidences such signs of scholarship that it is difficult to believe that it was self-acquired. Moreover, he possessed a gentlemanly bearing and culture that could hardly have come from so humble a home as his.

Hereditary influences guided him in the choice of a career. His father had been a gardener, and his own love of botany led in that direction. For this work he received a thorough training, and there are reasons

for believing that he took a course of study in botany and horticulture at Kew Gardens. Soon we find him employed as "botanist and head gardener" to Sir Robert Harland, at Orwell Park, near Ipswich. Apparently his position was that of managing gardener, with a number of working gardeners under him. His knowledge of botany was considerable, and all through life his letters and journals are literally packed with botanical references. He knew the Latin name for almost every flower and tree he came across in West Africa, and in later years we find him corresponding with Sir William Hooker and collecting information for Kew Gardens about the flora of the tropics. He was a well-read man, and at Orwell Park had a library of his own.

All through the unrecorded years Thomas Birch Freeman remained true to "the people called Methodists," with whom, in boyhood, he had courageously taken his stand. Sir Robert and Lady Harland took great interest in him, and afforded him every facility for pursuing his studies, but they had no sympathy with his religious convictions. There came a day when something occurred to cause Sir Robert annoyance on this ground. Freeman had been spending his leisure hours in visiting the sick and poor, and he had become a local preacher. Perhaps it was this that roused the vicar of the parish and led him to complain to Lady Harland, and spur her on to take Freeman to task. At last Sir Robert himself took up the matter, and in a fit of anger gave Freeman a month to decide whether he would drop his Methodism or lose his situation. Freeman was equal to the emergency. He stood the test. Perhaps, even then, an unsuspected Providence was directing his steps.

CHAPTER II

THE CALL OF AFRICA

WHILE Freeman was growing to manhood, the long-slumbering conscience of Britain was slowly awakening to the enormities of slavery; and hand in hand with that awakening there came a growing interest in the people of Africa.

A few years before Freeman was born, when the slave trade was at its height, it is estimated that not less than seventy-four thousand slaves were carried annually across the Atlantic by European slave vessels, to be sold in the Americas. But forces were at work that ultimately proved stronger than the vested interests of the slave traders. The Evangelical Revival had purified the religious life of England, and men were beginning to look at the slave trade from a new point of view. Under the influence of such leaders as Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson, and William Wilberforce, the fight raged fiercely, until on March 23rd, 1807—two and a half years before Thomas Birch Freeman was born—Parliament passed a Bill making it illegal for British subjects to capture, transport, or sell slaves.

But that Act dealt only with the trade; in the colonies slaves remained the property of their masters. The first round of the battle for freedom had been won; and after rejoicing over their victory, the friends of the Negro race girded themselves for

the next stage of the conflict—the emancipation of all slaves in British possessions. This fight was even more bitter than the former. The mantle of Wilberforce had fallen upon Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, and under his wise and strong leadership the Act of Emancipation was at last passed by both Houses of Parliament. On August 1st, 1834, some eight hundred thousand slaves in British colonies were set free—an act of humanity that cost twenty million pounds, paid to the slave owners by way of compensation.

That titanic struggle must have stirred the soul of young Freeman—himself the son of a Negro. All through his youth and early manhood, the subject of emancipation would be to him of enthralling interest. Wilberforce, Clarkson, and Buxton would be his heroes, and we may be sure that he followed every stage of the campaign with closest attention. Moreover, Freeman was a Methodist; and the Methodists to a man were pledged heart and soul to the Abolition Movement. It is more than likely that Freeman, like other Methodists, worked strenuously to influence public opinion on the subject.

Other factors were at that time working in the minds of Englishmen—and doubtless in Freeman's mind also. Mungo Park had discovered the upper waters of the Niger, and the brothers Lander had found the mouths of that mighty waterway. Clapperton and Denham had crossed the sandy wastes of the Sahara, and others had plunged into the vast forest regions behind the dreaded West Coast. In those days British cruisers were patrolling the coast, chasing slave ships, taking them to Freetown, setting their wretched human

cargoes at liberty, and burning the hateful vessels in "Destruction Bay." But the explorers revealed the fact that up-country slave raiding was still rampant. African kings and chiefs were constantly making war upon their neighbours, and usually one of the objects of those wars was to secure slaves. The inhuman Kings of Dahomey were capturing slaves faster than England was liberating them, and numerous smaller chiefs were doing the same. The explorers brought home to England strange stories of darkness and cruelty. Freeman, keen, alert, following closely the events of his day, would read the books they wrote and be deeply moved by them—for he could not forget that his own father was an African.

Still other influences were at work. English merchants, ever eagerly faring forth in the interests of trade, had, in spite of the deadly climate, settled in numerous places along the West Coast, and plans were on foot for still more adventurous enterprises. A Scottish merchant-prince, Macgregor Laird, was organizing trading expeditions up the mighty Niger with a view to establishing outposts in the interior of Africa. On the Gold Coast, with Cape Coast Castle as their base and stronghold, English traders had long maintained their position—and that in the very teeth of tremendous difficulties.

It may be that Freeman was not deeply interested in these commercial enterprises; but as a youth he must have listened with breathless interest to the stories of raids made by the terrible armies sent forth by the Ashanti kings against the Fanti tribes of the Gold Coast. He must have heard how those fierce warriors marched nearly two hundred miles through

forest paths to the coast, and hurled themselves fearlessly against the strong ramparts of British forts. He must have heard how, in 1826, Governor M'Carthy, leading a small force against them, had been surrounded in the forest, defeated and slain, and his head carried in triumph to Kumasi, the Ashanti capital, there to be kept as a trophy in the mausoleum of the Ashanti kings.

Doubtless, like all other Methodists of that period, Freeman took keen interest in the missions of his Church in Sierra Leone and on the Gambia. Deeply religious man that he was, he must have felt that missions to West Africa were missions to his father's people. In those days, missionaries going to "the Coast" literally took their lives in their hands. In Freeman's youth and early manhood, of thirty-five Methodist missionaries and wives sent to Sierra Leone and the Gambia, eighteen died on the field and others were invalided home. In those days a valediction of missionaries going to West Africa was much more moving than those we are accustomed to nowadays, for every man who went out knew that the chances were even that he would not again see his native land. Too often, in a few months there came news of his death, and it was flashed through the home churches. It cost something to be a missionary in those days.

Throughout the years 1830-1836 British Methodism was absolutely tingling with interest in the Negro race. The mighty struggle for emancipation passed through its last critical stages to its triumphant close, and Methodists shared in the joy as they had shared in the conflict. Simultaneously there came to them a remarkable call to commence a new mission among

the Fanti peoples of the Gold Coast—nearly a thousand miles beyond the existing stations in Sierra Leone. The call came in such a way that the missionary society felt compelled to respond to it, and in 1834, a month before the great Day of Emancipation, Joseph Dunwell was ordained, and appointed to go out to begin work in the new field. On New Year's Day, 1835, he landed at Cape Coast Castle. In six months he was dead!

A year later two more missionaries were sent out—Mr and Mrs George O. Wrigley. Four months later they were joined at Cape Coast Castle by Mr and Mrs Peter Harrop. Three weeks after their arrival, Mrs Harrop passed away. Three days later Mrs Wrigley died; and within an hour Harrop also breathed his last. Wrigley himself, only just recovering from a serious illness, reeled under the blow; he lost consciousness and was carried from the death chamber to the house of a friendly European merchant. Other hands had to attend to the last sacred duties for his young wife and his colleague; he was too ill to attend the funeral, which took place the same afternoon.

The letter telling of these tragic events reached London on June 19th, 1837, the eve of the accession of Queen Victoria. The sad news was at once broadcast by such means as were available, together with a call from Wrigley for volunteers to take the place of the missionaries who had fallen. In that appeal Thomas Birch Freeman read the call of God, and he did not hesitate to respond. "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel," he wrote; "and woe unto me if I am not prepared to forsake home, and friends, and all that I hold dear to me, to preach that Gospel

to the heathen. . . . If I hesitate to go to a sickly clime at the command of the Lord of Hosts, because in so doing I may risk the shortening of my days in this life, cannot He who bids me go strike me here, while surrounded with all the advantages of this sea-girt isle ? . . . The noble pagan who, when about to embark on an expedition of danger, answered to the remonstrances of friends, 'It is necessary for me to go ; but it may not be necessary for me to live,' has left us a fine example of heroic determination to follow the clearly defined path of duty at any and all hazards."

In a few days his offer of service was on its way to the missionary society, and in reply he was requested to come immediately to London for an interview. The secretaries and a specially summoned committee were evidently impressed by the quiet earnestness of the young volunteer. His tall straight figure and perfect manners were irresistible. The testimonials from his minister in Ipswich and others who knew him were entirely satisfactory, and the African blood in his veins induced the hope that he might stand the trying climate of the Gold Coast better than missionaries of purely English extraction. It was arranged that he should, that very evening, preach a trial sermon at a service in Spitalfields Chapel, in order that his gifts in that direction might be ascertained. A senior member of the committee was appointed to hear him, and Freeman himself tells how much he was cheered in the somewhat trying ordeal by the good man's helpful sympathy : "His countenance beamed on me with an affection which made me feel greatly at ease in his presence and entirely at home."

The reason for all this haste lay in the fact that on July 26th the annual Methodist Conference was to meet in Leeds, and it was necessary for the missionary committee to present Freeman as a candidate for the ministry, or a delay of a whole year would have been inevitable. It was most urgent that a colleague should be sent to Wrigley with all possible speed ; so the usual preliminaries were dispensed with. During the Conference meetings at Leeds, Freeman had one very trying experience for a young man at such a juncture. He was appointed to preach another "trial sermon" on the Sunday evening in one of the Leeds chapels. Just as he was about to enter the pulpit he discovered that Dr Newton, one of the distinguished preachers of the time, had that very morning preached in that same chapel from the identical text that he himself had chosen! Apparently Freeman acquitted himself satisfactorily, for he was accepted as a "minister on trial," and duly appointed to Cape Coast Castle.

CHAPTER III

OUTWARD BOUND

1837-1838. Age 28.

OF necessity there was some little delay before Freeman could sail. We know very little of his preparation; but we do know that he was not sent to any college or other institution to be trained for the task before him.

The conditions of life in Africa were only partially understood, but the authorities at home did the best they could to learn from the bitter experiences of their first efforts on the Gold Coast. Both Freeman and the secretaries at the mission house carefully studied Wrigley's letters and took note of his advice to intending missionaries. Some of this advice dealt with such mundane matters as equipment and outfit, the desirability of taking a supply of drugs and necessary articles of furniture. Wrigley especially stressed the importance of the outgoing missionary taking with him a wife. He wrote of the need for companionship and such loving help as only a wife could give; and, moreover, he insisted that Christian women were absolutely necessary for work among their African sisters. Wrigley's own wife, before her home-call, had opened a school for girls, and in a few days had thirty scholars. "*I offer it as my opinion,*" he added, "*that no missionary ought to come into these parts without a wife.*"

A wife! Dr Beecham, the secretary in charge of West Africa, spoke to Freeman on the subject. And Freeman thought of a young woman whom he believed to have the qualifications to share his life and work. Posting back to Ipswich, he opened his heart and mind to Elizabeth Boot, "the lady housekeeper" to Sir Robert and Lady Harland. He could hardly have made a better choice. Miss Boot was a refined, educated Englishwoman, a devoted Christian, and full of good works. Like Freeman, she had taken great interest in all efforts to uplift the peoples of Africa. How far Freeman himself had sown these thoughts in her heart, or at what stage the romance began, we do not know. Be that as it may, she agreed to embark with him on the double adventure, and they were married.

Of Freeman's ordination and valedictory we know nothing. But early in November he and his bride embarked at Gravesend in the brig *Osborne*. Only one solitary note has been preserved:—

November 5, 1837.—Mr and Mrs Freeman were in the downs, and expecting a fair wind down the Channel.

Fortunately we have some notes about the voyage from Freeman's own pen. Though written in the third person, they are almost certainly autobiographical. Here is one describing an evening near the Canary Islands.

It was a lovely evening out on the deep, deep sea. A stately vessel was progressing southwards before a soft and gentle breeze. On board all was quiet; and the coiled cordage, the clean-swept decks, and the soft hum of here and there a seaman's voice, told of the time of evening rest, which on Saturday is generally followed, at

a later hour, by the joyous laugh and the merry song among the sailors in the fore-castle. Two of the grandest objects of nature were in full view. One was the proud regent of day, about to sink into the horizon in the golden west; the other, the lofty peak of the island of Teneriffe, seen in beautiful clearness above a wreath of clouds, with its bold dark outline, a sublime exhibition in the vast surrounding space of impurpled sky. . . . The undulating bosom of the ocean has a share in the splendour of the scene, presenting a surface of molten gold; and there stands the peak of Teneriffe, one of the everlasting pyramids of nature, proclaiming aloud the power of that Almighty Hand that poised it in the midst of the vast world of waters. Thoughtfully pacing the quarter-deck was a young man, directing his eyes first to one of these striking objects and then to the other . . . and that young man was on his voyage to the torrid regions of Africa. . . . At length he seated himself, and taking his journal, he wrote: "Oh, my soul, let these splendid scenes lead thee, in contemplation, from nature to nature's God. . . . It is at such times as these that faith climbs the ladder of Jacob."

These passages are thoroughly characteristic. They reveal the artistic temperament and the devout spirit of the man. Freeman was always a great lover of nature, and all through his life, in his letters, journals, and books, he revelled in her beauties. These extracts also give us an insight into his education and culture; they are not the words of a rough, self-educated gardener.

The latter part of the voyage became tedious, and there were periods about which even Freeman could not be enthusiastic, as, for example, when they were becalmed off the African coast "for thirty days under the oppressive heat of the tropical sun." The brig was a very small one, and the heat in their cabin became intolerable, so the Freemans slept on deck on

rugs laid on a pile of old canvas. At other times, in the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone, tornadoes swept over the ship, and so heavy was the rain that it got into the cabins and soaked the bedding.

Day by day, through sunshine, calm, and tempest, we find Freeman noting the latitude and longitude, the weather, and the ever changing light and shade on sea and sky. We find him, too, pursuing his Biblical and other studies, and quietly thinking out the great message he was carrying to the peoples of Africa. He thought of Wrigley, labouring alone at Cape Coast Castle, in spite of his bereavement, and looked forward eagerly to the day when they would work together as colleagues. One thing is very noticeable: the vastness and grandeur of the ocean, and the wonderful Atlantic sunsets gave him new and loftier thoughts of God than he had in the quiet Suffolk countryside. His horizon widened; his mind expanded; limitations of space fell from him like fetters; and when at last he set foot on the golden sands of Africa, it was to do no restricted work in the circumscribed limits of a single town or district, but to work out, on a scale hitherto undreamed of, plans for the extension of God's Kingdom.

Christmas was spent at sea. The New Year found them still coasting slowly along that low, sandy shore with its unending line of palm-trees. But the long voyage was drawing to its close. Soon the palms gave place to the bare, undulating hills of the Gold Coast, and castle-crowned rocks rising from the surf gave new interest to the scene, until in the early morning of 3rd January, 1838 (nearly nine weeks after leaving Gravesend) the *Osborne* cast anchor off

Cape Coast Castle. The water there is very shallow, and ships are compelled to lie out a mile or more from the surf-beaten shore.

As the vessel swung at her moorings that hot January morning, Freeman and his bride stood on the decks gazing across the blue water to the place that for six eventful months had scarcely been out of their thoughts. The scene before them, though not grand or beautiful, had an impressiveness not easy to analyse. Encircled by low, rocky hills, the town of flat-roofed houses, built mainly of red mud, seemed to nestle as near as possible to the water's edge, as though seeking the cool breeze from the sea. Curious, Martello-like forts on the top of two of the surrounding hills spoke of the fear of attack by the terrible warriors of Ashanti;¹ while on its great granite rock, lashed by the dazzling white surf, stood the huge castle from which the town took its European name. The old stronghold,² with its mighty ramparts bristling with guns, had become the centre of British commerce and seat of British government.

As Freeman stood watching the lumbering surf-boats battling with the surf as they came out from the shore to fetch them, he thought of Wrigley, and wondered if by any chance he had seen the ship as she hove to before the town. He knew that Wrigley had no advance news of their coming; but the lonely missionary was aware that the committee in far-distant London were doing their best to send him a colleague, and, in eager expectancy, he might come

¹ They were built in 1820 and 1821, when it was rumoured that the Ashantis were planning to attack the town.

² The date of its foundation is uncertain, but it fell into the hands of the British about 1662.

down to the shore on the off-chance of one arriving by this vessel.

As he continued to gaze at the town, Freeman thought of Dunwell lying in the little God's Acre, somewhere among that labyrinth of red mud dwellings . . . and Harrop and his wife, lying beside him . . . and Mrs Wrigley. We know Freeman well enough to be sure that no fear entered his heart for himself. But as he glanced tenderly down upon the dear one at his side—did he fear for her? Already two missionaries' wives—the only two who had come out—lay in that little graveyard. It is well that a kindly Providence veils the future from our eyes.

As the lusty Fanti boatmen paddled the big canoe skilfully through the boiling surf, Freeman's eyes scanned the beach in the hope of seeing Wrigley. He was not there. They landed, inquired for him—and were told that he had died eight weeks before.

Then, for the first time, Freeman fully realized the seriousness of his position—and his wife's. That was what it meant to come as missionaries to West Africa! They were face to face with grim reality.

CHAPTER IV

THE GOLD COAST WHEN FREEMAN LANDED

TEN years before Columbus discovered the new world, Portuguese merchant-mariners built the magnificent castle at Elmina—the first permanent foothold gained by Europeans on what had come to be known as the Gold Coast. It was a mighty undertaking. There was no stone available on the spot, so the intrepid pioneers took out from Portugal in their galleons all the stone and other material required for building the fortress ! That was in 1482.

Pope Nicholas V had granted to Portugal the whole of Africa south of the Sahara, and for a time the Portuguese were free to carry on their trade without fear of rivals. But with the Reformation there came a change ; England and Holland paid little heed to Papal Bulls and formed merchant companies to open up trade with West Africa. Then the French followed suit, and later still Denmark entered the list. The newcomers, following the example of the Portuguese, built themselves castles along the Coast. For many years these castles were substantial pawns on a huge chess-board, by which the competing powers contended for the mastery. Many of them still remain more or less intact ; they are a unique feature of the Gold Coast.

In spite of difficulties, the English merchants at Cape Coast Castle managed to hold their own, and

from their stronghold carried on trade with the Fanti tribes around. Only nine miles to the west, their powerful Dutch rivals were in possession of Elmina—the strongest castle of all—while five miles to the east the Dutch had a fort of less importance at Mori. At other places the English maintained a more uncertain existence. There were times when the home government seemed inclined to support them; at others it was not.

The Fanti people—the most important nation of the Gold Coast—were divided into sub-tribes, each under the rule of its own paramount chief. They were a peace-loving people, more interested in trade than in war. The coming of the Europeans gave them trading opportunities hitherto unknown, and the tendency was for each tribe to attach itself to the Europeans of the fort and trading centre nearest to them. Thus the Elminas came to rely upon the Dutch, the Cape Coast people on the British; the Accras were divided between the two, and the tribes around Christiansborg looked upon the Danes as their clients. These divided trade-interests tended to accentuate the tribal jealousies already existing.

Behind the Gold Coast, a hundred miles and more in the interior, in the very heart of the vast forest belt, dwelt the powerful, warlike Ashantis. A mighty race are the Ashantis—strongly built, alert, independent-spirited, resourceful, and determined in pursuit of their ambitions. They too lived in tribes under their own paramount chiefs, but they had that unity and cohesion which the Fantis lacked. Though self-governing, their tribes and chieftains recognized the overlordship of a king elected by their council of

chiefs. For two centuries, that line of kings ruled from Kumasi, their sacred capital, and were able to put into the field great armies of powerful warriors, under leaders trained from boyhood in the arts and strategy of war. The very name of Ashanti brought terror to the peace-loving Fantis.

The main source of trouble between these two great African nations was that the Ashantis wanted to share the advantages of trade with the Europeans, and were determined to have access to the sea. This the Fantis, naturally enough, resisted, and the result was constant warfare between them. For a long time the British tried to keep out of these quarrels, merely defending their own trading posts and interests when forced to do so. But the time came when they found themselves obliged to take part in the struggle.

In 1807 an Ashanti army flung itself against the strong walls of the fort at Anamabu—then held by the British. All through one terrible day the little garrison of five Englishmen and a score of Africans fought for very life under the burning tropical sun. The contest seemed hopeless, but under cover of night the baffled Ashantis drew off their forces. In 1816 Ashanti armies surrounded Cape Coast, occupying points a few miles on either side. The town was thrown into panic, and the castle made the best possible preparations to resist the attack. But for some unknown reason the enemy drew off without pressing the conflict to an issue. The Fantis of the neighbouring country by this time had begun to look upon the British as their protectors, and submitted to certain conditions that were imposed for their mutual advantage and safety.

But above all things the British wanted peace, and made an effort to come to terms with the Ashantis. In 1817 an embassy of four Englishmen was dispatched to Kumasi, to negotiate with the king. As a result, a treaty was signed by which British and Ashantis agreed to respect each other's rights to live at peace, and to protect one another's subjects. One very curious thing is that the British acknowledged the right of the Ashanti king to receive rent for the castles at Cape Coast and Anamabu! Soon afterwards, not satisfied with what had been conceded to him, the Ashanti monarch tried to persuade the British government to acknowledge him as the overlord of the whole Coast! This could not be agreed to, and trouble broke out afresh.

In 1822 the British Parliament passed a bill transferring all authority on the Gold Coast from the merchants to the Crown, and Sir Charles M'Carthy, Governor of Sierra Leone, became responsible for the Gold Coast also. In the following year the Ashantis again invaded the Gold Coast, and when Governor M'Carthy, underrating their strength, advanced to meet them, he was killed and his forces utterly defeated, and the Ashantis again advanced to the very outskirts of Cape Coast. They encamped on the hills around, but disease broke out in their ranks and they retired. Again in 1826 another army, led by the Ashanti king in person, came south to attack Accra, but was decisively defeated by a united force of Fantis, Ga's, British, Dutch, and Danes.

By this time the patience of the British government was at an end, and it resolved to withdraw altogether from the Gold Coast. Plans were made

to bring away all the English merchants and blow up the forts. But this was too drastic for the merchants. They had no wish to leave so profitable a field to their commercial rivals. Ultimately it was arranged that the British government should leave the merchants to manage their own affairs. So a Council of Merchants was formed in London, and they appointed as their "President" and representative at Cape Coast Castle one who proved to be the man for the hour—Captain George Maclean.

From 1880 to 1844 this truly great man governed the British settlements on the Gold Coast. One of his first steps was to make peace with Ashanti. A new king had come to the throne, and Maclean made with him a treaty that opened a new era. It was signed by President Maclean, half a dozen Fanti chiefs, and representatives of the Ashanti king. The king undertook to drop the claim to the overlordship of the Coast tribes, and to deposit at Cape Coast Castle, for a period of six years, a quantity of gold as a pledge of good faith. Furthermore, he handed over two young princes of the royal house to be educated. The trade routes between Ashanti and the sea were to be kept open by both parties, and traders were to be allowed to journey to and fro without molestation.

Among the Fantis, too, President Maclean exerted his influence, and by his high character and firmness won their respect and confidence. With the slenderest means of enforcing his authority, he prohibited human sacrifices, the selling of slaves out of the country, and other cruel customs. With absolute fearlessness, Maclean did not hesitate to punish offenders, whatever their rank. Under his firm, wise

rule, the Gold Coast entered upon an era of peace and prosperity.

It was during this period of calm that the call came to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society to send missionaries to the Fanti peoples, which led in due course to Freeman's going out.

CHAPTER V

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

January to February 1838. Age 28.

FROM the moment they were carried through the foaming surf to the beach, Freeman and his wife found themselves among friends. Crowds of smiling Fantis hailed their coming; the English traders received them with sympathy and strove to cheer and advise them in their shock at the news of Wrigley's death; President Maclean was in England, but the Acting-President, William Topp, welcomed them and did all in his power to make their way easy.

But nothing could dispel the sadness that filled their hearts. They were taken to the desolate mission house. A few days later, in writing to the committee, Freeman described that trying moment.

I cannot find words to express our feelings on entering the rooms where four of your missionaries breathed their last. Blessed be God, we are resigned to His Will, and should He speedily call us away also, we hope to die in His embraces. Not that we *expect* to be suddenly removed; not that we have any fear. We hope long to be useful in this part of the world. While we feel the deep necessity of walking with our lives in our hands, yet we humbly trust that we shall not die, but live to declare the works of our God.

Though undaunted, Freeman could not close his eyes to the fact that every one of his predecessors had fallen within a few months of landing. He learned

that, only a short time before, five Danish missionaries had landed at Accra, ninety miles farther along the coast, and all of them had died.

But the disappointment and anxieties of the situation were not allowed to delay the beginning of the work Freeman and his wife had come to do. Within a few hours of landing he met the band of Christian Africans won from heathenism by the brief labours of Dunwell and Wrigley. There were at that time more than two hundred church members. Freeman describes them as "sheep left without a shepherd"; but they had kept together, and had carried on regular worship as best they could. On the evening of the day that Freeman landed, they gathered around him for a service of thanksgiving. Being Wednesday, and because he was the fourth missionary sent to them, they gave him the African name of KWAKU ANAN (Kwaku, a son born on Wednesday; Anan, the fourth son).

On the Sunday Freeman conducted services in the open air, there being no building large enough to hold the congregation. People gathered in a huge crowd, and with a responsiveness that amazed the newcomers. In that crowded congregation Freeman saw the promise of the future. Wrigley had written home of such scenes, and of eager people surrounding his meeting-room long before the time for service, in the hope of gaining admittance—many of them to be disappointed and obliged to listen through the windows as best they could. Now Freeman saw for himself that there had been no exaggeration. Wrigley had begun to build a chapel, but he did not live to see its completion. In the little God's Acre behind it, he and his companions were laid to rest.

Freeman lost no time in visiting the half-built church and the sacred spot just behind. The mud walls, two feet thick, were nearly twenty feet high ; but one of them had collapsed. He gathered the people around him, discussed plans, and finding them eager for work at once made arrangements. Within a fortnight of his landing, the work of rebuilding began. Freeman was not a builder, but he was a practical man ; he examined the foundations, and fearing that the walls would not bear the weight of the roof, he strengthened them with buttresses and made central pillars to carry part of the strain. The people worked right nobly—were they not building a house for their God ? They brought over four thousand stones for a distance of over a mile, and carried four thousand bundles of a special kind of grass, from a place six miles away, to thatch the roof. Even the women and children helped to carry the material.

In all this, Freeman had the advice of the Acting-President. By his courtesy and bearing, as well as by his robust manliness and practical common-sense, he had speedily won Mr Topp's confidence. The missionary was a man of education and culture : he could never be anything less than a polished gentleman, and he invariably commanded the esteem of those with whom he came in contact. It did not take him long to win his way with the authorities at Cape Coast Castle.

Strong, intelligent man that he was, Freeman felt the necessity of studying the laws of health in relation to West African conditions, that he might, if possible, safeguard his wife's health and his own. People told him about "seasoning fever," bad smells, "miasma,"

“effluvia,” exposure to the sun and moon, and “noxious vapour” believed to rise from the ground at night. No one mentioned mosquitoes or typhoid germs; no one cautioned him about drinking only boiled water. These things, so essential to health in the tropics, were not then understood; the knowledge of them had yet to be bought at a bitter, bitter price.

One thing was urged upon Freeman by every one: the house Wrigley had leased was unsuitable for Europeans, a veritable death-trap. To remove to another house was to incur the heavy expense of getting rid of the lease. Already Freeman was troubled to find that in Cape Coast Castle the cost of living was fully a hundred per cent higher than in England, and he felt that he ought not to incur the expense of taking another, and more costly, house without the express sanction of the committee in London. So within a week of landing he wrote home for instructions, stating fully the risks of living in the house in which already four missionaries had lost their lives. Then he began to realize that the time lost in waiting for a reply from far-off England might cost them their lives. A suitable house was found, and for the first time Freeman took the law into his own hands; he made the best financial arrangements he could and removed into it. At once he began to feel a measure of security, and both he and his wife settled down to steady work.

From the first, Freeman was greatly attracted by the Fantis. “I find them a loving and an enterprising people,” he wrote. And again: “I could live and die among them. The only question is, ‘How shall I serve them most effectually?’” The country,

too, charmed him. Listen to the story of his first impressions :

I had never before been in a tropical clime, and I was so thoroughly enchanted by the wild beauties around that the first month of my sojourn seemed a perpetual holiday—everything was so fresh and novel, and I wandered about amidst the wild and beautiful brushwood around Cape Coast with a freshness and buoyancy of spirits, and in such good humour with everything around me, as far as the aspect of the country was concerned, that I wondered how so many deaths could have occurred among Europeans and how such a terrible outcry could have been got up against the climate.

But on that question a terrible lesson was in store for him. Like his predecessors, he underrated the power of the tropical sun, and on his rambles exposed himself unwisely. Perhaps he overtaxed himself in the work of rebuilding the church. Certainly he took no precautions to guard against the terrible little mosquito. The "seasoning fever," as it was then called, came upon him with great violence. He wrote :

It attacked me on the thirtieth day after my arrival and soon brought me to the brink of the grave. Although I had repeatedly read and heard of the dangers, and knew that many had found an early grave, such was the deceptive nature of the climate, that when I was taken ill I was taken by surprise.

Mrs Freeman, who was herself far from well, nursed her husband through this particularly violent attack. For a few days he was reduced to utter helplessness, and during the climax he became temporarily blind. Death seemed certain, but, he says, "By the providence of God, I was able to shake off the monster

Death when he seemed to have me fairly within his grasp."

A few hours after he had passed the crisis a heavier blow fell upon him. As he lay prostrate in one room, his beloved wife, taken suddenly ill, lay in another. The doctor, after seeing her, went to the castle for medicine, but before he could return she had passed away. Freeman tells of "that never-to-be-forgotten moment" when the doctor went into his bedroom and broke the news to him.

The Acting-President hastened to Freeman's bedside to comfort him, and he was followed by nearly all the white merchants in the town, as well as by a number of Fanti Christians. As a mark of esteem, it was arranged for Mrs Freeman to be laid to rest in the courtyard of the castle. She had only been in Africa six weeks.

Freeman himself was in far too serious a condition to be at his wife's funeral—which took place six hours after her death—and some days passed before the doctor would allow him to be moved. Then an English merchant had him carried to his own house, and for some weeks nursed him back to health.

CHAPTER VI

ESTABLISHING THE GOLD COAST MISSION

1838. *Age 28.*

"I STAND in the deadly breach with humble confidence that God will long spare my life." So wrote Freeman just after the death of his wife.

The African Christians were fearful lest he also might die among them, and that the missionary society, alarmed at losing so many workers, might abandon the mission. In their anxiety, they wrote to London asking that Freeman should be allowed to return to England to escape the most dangerous season of the year, and then return to them restored to health. But Freeman did not feel that it would be right for him to do so. The little flock of Fanti Christians had already been twice left without a shepherd; and there was the half-built church to think of; if the rains were to come before it was finished, there might be another collapse and all the labour would be wasted. He could not leave his post.

As soon as he was convalescent, Freeman threw himself, with what little strength he had, into the task before him. But his heart was lonely. He was thousands of miles from home and kindred—and alone. Peering into the future, he saw himself toiling at a lonely furrow through many a dark, cloudy day. Again and again there arose in his mind the

word "ALONE." Then faith asserted itself and he was able to say, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me." One day he felt that, like Bunyan's pilgrim, he was treading the Valley of the Shadow of Death; the next, he emerged triumphant. Here is his own account of the victory:

Onward then. Onward, lonely messenger of mercy! When thy hands hang down and thy spirit droops, *Remember Calvary!* Panting under the burning heat of noon, *Remember Calvary!* Should thy life ebb out a solitary wanderer in a pagan land, *Remember Calvary.* Be this thy banner, thy watchword, thy rallying-point—yea, be this thy life, to *Remember Calvary*: Calvary with its dying love; Calvary with its world-crucifying power: Calvary with its glorious hopes. . . . *Remember Calvary.*

The work of building the church proceeded steadily. The Fanti Christians needed Freeman's practical guidance, for the building was much larger than any they had been accustomed to erect. They were constantly finding difficulties that were too big for their limited experience, and it was fortunate that Freeman was able to turn his hand to anything. So, encouraging and guiding, he took the lead: ever on the spot, and always taking personal charge of the work; always working against time, and spurred on by the fear of the rains beginning before the building was finished. The effort cost him much, for he was still unacclimatized.

It did not take Freeman long to discover that church-building was a means of grace to his Fanti Christians. The old fetich worship had cost them a good deal in sacrifices, gifts to the priests, and in other ways. On transferring their allegiance to Christ, they were prepared generously to support

their new faith. They did not want a religion that cost them nothing, and gave readily both of labour and substance. Freeman soon found that much good was resulting from the building activities. The very fact of working so hard for their new religion was strengthening their attachment to it.

The committee had in Freeman a servant who knew his own mind and did not hesitate to ask for what he wanted; and though his requests for grants were always made with the utmost courtesy and deference, they were urged with force and persistence. He quickly proved himself a strong man, able to take a decision and act on his own initiative when there was need for it. Such qualities were often needed in those days, for there were no cables, and letter-communications were slow. It was desirable for the man on the spot to decide and act promptly, and Freeman did so. Very decisive were the steps he took to secure a suitable mission house for himself and those who should join him or succeed him. To the committee he wrote :

When I offered myself as a missionary, and left my native land for the shores of Africa, I had laid aside every idea of enjoying earthly comforts. I had fully counted the cost during hours and days of calm reflection. Mrs Freeman and myself were prepared to contend with dangers and hardships. Therefore the cold ground for a resting-place, the canopy of heaven for a covering, and a little rice, milk, or water to satisfy the cravings of hunger would have found us satisfied. You would have heard nothing from me under this head if the climate would allow of my taking liberties with my constitution. But instead of liberties, the greatest care must be taken. The sun which cheers and warms in England destroys at Cape Coast, and the dew which refreshes us at home has a contrary effect here.

The dreams of "what missionary life ought to be" had vanished before the stern realities of the West African climate, and Freeman realized that the safeguarding of his health must be a primary consideration. He noticed that the death-rate among merchants on the Coast was not so heavy as among missionaries, and after careful observation he wrote :

The merchants live here for many years, and I think the reason is this : they do everything they can to make their houses cool and healthy. They live upstairs and go down into their cool store-rooms below, attending to their affairs during the great part of the heat of the day ; in the evening they walk out and enjoy the fresh breezes or lounge in their cool halls and balconies.

The missionaries had to go about town and country in the heat, often amid unwholesome smells. It was of first importance that they should have cool, well-built, and well-situated houses to live in. The house into which Freeman had moved soon after arrival was more healthy than the one the Wrigleys had occupied ; but a year later he secured a still better one. Its situation was excellent, on a little hill near to the shore. Standing high, it caught the breezes that are a delightful feature of Cape Coast. It was built of stone, and was so cheerful that Freeman believed that "newly arrived missionaries, who are landed under the impression that they are in the region of death, will find everything calculated to relieve their minds." Very wisely the committee confirmed Freeman's purchase, and his successors, right down to the present day, have cause to acknowledge his foresight.

In the brief time allotted to Dunwell and Wrigley, they had begun work at several places along the

coast and in the country. Freeman soon found it necessary to visit these outposts, and when it was possible to leave for a few days the work of church-building, he took the opportunity to do so.

Travelling was not easy in those days. Like the rest of tropical Africa, the Gold Coast was a land of footpaths—narrow tracks through the bush from village to village, twisting and winding through the vegetation. The mode of travelling was to be carried in a long, narrow basket, the shape of a coffin, made of palm-leaf matting over a framework of cane. To be carried in this curious contrivance, poised on the heads of two tall Africans, some six feet from the ground, was anything but comfortable. There was always the possibility of one of the carriers stumbling, and Freeman soon learned from painful experience that to be thrown from such a height was a serious matter. On one occasion he had a very dangerous fall.

One of the outposts was at Anamabu, a large village twelve miles along the coast. It was a British trading centre, with a grim old fort.¹ Dunwell had baptized a dozen converts there, and under Wrigley's guidance they had begun to build themselves a "swish" church. But the rains had utterly destroyed the unfinished walls. One of Freeman's earliest journeys, therefore, was to this place. The Anamabu Christians eagerly welcomed him, and begged his help in rebuilding their chapel. From other villages came similar appeals, so he felt it would be wise to visit all the outposts before committing himself.

With this aim in view he journeyed by basket to Domonasi, nearly thirty miles up country. It was

¹ See p. 31.

his first experience of the forest scenery, and he was delighted beyond measure. He wrote :

It was my first opportunity of beholding the grandeur of the vegetation of the interior. I shall never forget how my eyes feasted on these beauties. As we proceeded on our devious path through wood and glen, the forest trees towered in majesty. Here and there a wild glade opened to view, with the monster *Leguminosæ* above, and the rich and beautiful plantain-trees, the bananas and the palms, combining to exhibit a scene of indescribable beauty. I found numerous villages along the path, generally surrounded with plantations that gave them a beautifully picturesque aspect. . . . Along some parts of the narrow path we passed through copses of guava-trees, growing to a height of twenty or thirty feet, and dropping their golden fruit on the path in such abundance as to scent the surrounding air with their rich aroma, and to render necessary a careful picking of the footsteps to avoid crushing them underfoot.

Emerging from the forest on the crest of a small hill, I looked over the valley which lay before me, and at a distance of a few hundred yards beheld a tree of wondrous beauty. It was about thirty feet high, and covered with flowers as large as tulips, and equally rich and gaudy. My feelings while gazing on this floral wonder were akin to those of Linnæus when he knelt in rapture to gaze on the little furze-bush in full blossom. I had never in my life seen such a combination of floral and foliaceous beauty ; even the horse-chestnut, the glory of Mount Pindus, was here outvied. As I approached for closer examination I found that it was a magnificent variety of *Bignoniaceæ*. The full-blown flowers were as large as a tulip, but of trumpet form, the colour a bright scarlet bordered with a deep orange fringe. . . . I felt no hesitation in pronouncing this tree, above all that I had ever seen, the triumph of Flora.

On reaching Domonasi, Freeman met the chief and the villagers, a few of whom had already become Christians, and they begged the missionary to help

them to build a house for God. Next day, under the shade of a large tree in the centre of the village, Freeman baptized over fifty converts who for some time had been under instruction. One of them was the youthful chief, whose conversion so angered the older men that they attempted to depose him from his "stool."¹

Another visit was to the inland town of Abakrampa, the seat of a powerful chief named Otu. He received Freeman with full ceremony, resplendent in his state robes of silk damask and velvet. Nearly six feet in height, and of commanding presence, he impressed the missionary as a man born to command. A few people in one of the villages of Otu's chiefdom had become Christians, and Otu, instigated by his fetich priests, had encouraged a persecution of them. It was to secure relief for these persecuted converts that Freeman visited him. Tactful, and always courteous—assets that carry a man a long way in Africa—Freeman aimed at impressing this man and winning his friendship. In a very short time he prevailed upon Otu to promise that there should be no further persecution in his chiefdom. He even persuaded the chief to give him one of his young sons to be educated at Cape Coast. Having thus secured the goodwill of Otu, Freeman visited him again, and ere long secured his consent to establish a school in Abakrampa.

At another place that Freeman visited, the up-country town of Abuadzi, the chief became a Christian. Almost immediately after his conversion, he resolved to cut down the sacred fetich tree before which he had constantly performed his heathen

¹ The West African equivalent for throne.

worship and laid his offerings to the ancestral spirits. It was a magnificent silk-cotton tree, a hundred and fifty feet high, standing near the entrance to the village. Surrounded by his people—many of whom cringed with fear lest the mighty spirit in the tree should take vengeance upon them—the chief calmly watched the progress of the axe; and as the monster tree began to sway, and at last fell with a crash that reverberated through the surrounding forest, he exclaimed, “Ah! many a fat sheep and many an *ackie* of gold-dust have you cost me!” The chief at once proceeded to erect, at his own expense, a chapel for the new worship. It soon became too small, and he erected a much larger one.

Freeman soon gained an almost magic influence over African chiefs. His sound judgment, his tactful manner of approach, and his never-failing courtesy almost invariably triumphed, and he soon became known as “the great white¹ prophet.” Quickly learning the customs of the country, he adopted such as would serve his purpose. Thus, when going to visit a chief, he would send on before him (as a chief would do) a messenger with an official “stick” to announce his approach. Attention to such little courtesies and points of African etiquette greatly pleased the chiefs and opened the way for his great message. “He knows our customs,” they said, as they prepared to receive him.

While the roof of the Cape Coast church was being

¹ The Africans, not knowing that Freeman's father was a Negro, always regarded him as a white man. And such he felt himself to be. England was his native land; he was English by education, training, and culture. Nothing about him suggested African parentage. In his early manhood his complexion was so light that he was invariably taken for a European.

thatched, Freeman felt he could leave his workmen and take a longer reconnaissance along the coast to the important trading centre of Accra, ninety miles to the east. He was in very poor health, so did most of the journey by sea to avoid the discomforts of the basket.

At that time, and for years afterwards, Accra was under the control of three European powers. First there was Jamestown, in the hands of the British, who, in 1673, had built Fort James on a low cliff above the seashore. Adjoining British Accra on the east was a Dutch settlement, and two miles farther east was the Danish settlement of Christiansborg with a fine castle overlooking the sea. In British and Dutch Accra, Freeman found no Christian work of any kind among the African people. For more than a decade workers of the German Basle Mission had been labouring at Christiansborg; but death had carried off one after another, and only one man remained to welcome Freeman—and he left shortly afterwards.

Freeman was very kindly received by the European merchants. The British Commandant agreed to the establishment of a school, and the Danish Governor of Christiansborg was quite friendly. Feeling confident that Accra was a strategic position, Freeman resolved to station there the first man the committee should send to his aid.¹ In reporting this tour of investigation, he wrote :

I know that you will pardon me if I err in stating that, according to what I have heard or read of other

¹ His foresight will be appreciated when we remember that a few years later the English bought out first the Danes and then the Dutch, and to-day Accra is the capital of the Gold Coast Government.

mission stations, I verily believe that you have not one station in the world to which more importance attaches itself, from every point of view, than that of Cape Coast and its dependencies. For hundreds of miles along the shores of Guinea an open door is set before us, as well as into the interior of the country.

The experiences of ninety years have proved that he was right.

By the beginning of June—just six months after he landed—the building of the church at Cape Coast was completed. It was large enough to seat seven hundred people, and Freeman had provided for the erection of galleries to hold four hundred more if they should become necessary. Such a building was no mean achievement for an amateur architect, aided by unskilled Fanti workmen.

As soon as the church was ready for use, Freeman took the opportunity to visit the English residents to ask for their practical sympathy. In every case they gave a contribution towards the cost of the building, and several promised to take sittings as soon as the pews were installed—a striking evidence of the absence of colour prejudice in Cape Coast at that time.

Sunday, 10th June 1838, was a joyful day for the missionary and his people. With prayer and rejoicing the first Christian sanctuary at Cape Coast was consecrated to the worship of God. The church was full to overflowing, and the doors and windows were crowded with masses of black faces. It was estimated that not less than twelve hundred people were present, including the Acting-President and several other Europeans. Freeman tells us of the thrill of gladness with which he preached to that great con-

gregation. "Throughout the day," he wrote, "the spirit of the King was in the midst of us; and while the people retired to their homes deeply impressed, I repaired to the mission house, humbled in the reflection that the Lord had been pleased to make me the principal instrument in building and opening the first Wesleyan chapel in Guinea."

The first stage of his task accomplished, Freeman turned his attention to the building of chapels at the out-stations. Within a month of the opening of Cape Coast church he laid the foundation-stone at Winneba, and six weeks later at Anamabu. At both places the African Christians were prepared to bear the cost of building and to give freely of their labour; but Freeman, accustomed to the more strenuous ways of a cooler climate, found the African workman very slow. At Anamabu especially he found it advisable, day after day, to remain on the spot from morning till evening, having his food brought to him. By this method he found he could get "three or four times as much work" out of his hired workmen and thus save expense. "I am persuaded that much of this slackness arises from the exhausting nature of the climate," he wrote; "even the natives suffer therefrom."

Then the little band of converts at Domonasi wanted to begin building a chapel, and Freeman gladly undertook to give them such time as he could spare from other places. All this chapel-building was not accomplished without strenuous opposition from the fetich priests; but in most cases their efforts to stop the work overshot the mark and tended to the furtherance of the Gospel.

A born pioneer and evangelist, Freeman was

equally effective as a pastor and leader. He organized regular services at the church—week-days as well as Sundays—and instead of the fetich worship they had formerly practised at the beginning of each day, the Christians began regularly to assemble in God's house for prayer at five o'clock in the morning. Every Sunday morning, public worship began at 6 a.m., and the reverence and decorum of the worshippers is described as "equal, or even superior, to that witnessed in any congregation in England." It was part of his policy to get his people "doing something"; he impressed upon them that they were (in our modern phrase) "saved to serve." He encouraged them to tell others of the Gospel message they had themselves received—a means of grace that has always been one of the outstanding characteristics of the Fanti Christians.

Freeman was anxious that from the very beginning his people should have the true missionary spirit, and with this end in view he held, three months after the opening of the Cape Coast chapel, a great missionary meeting—"the first ever held in Guinea." President Maclean, who had recently returned from his furlough, was in the chair, and he was supported by several of the English merchants. The chapel was crowded to excess, and it is recorded that "a spirit of holy enterprise pervaded the meeting"—as is strikingly shown by the fact that the collection amounted to fifty-four pounds, the President himself contributing twenty-five pounds. That missionary meeting became an annual event in the Cape Coast church; large sums have been realized, and great has been its influence all through the years to the present time.

When Freeman had been on the Coast seven months he addressed to the committee a carefully prepared document of no less than sixty-five sheets to inform them fully as to the position and prospects of their work on the Gold Coast. It deals with the building and purchasing of properties; the problems of organizing the Fanti churches; the policy to be pursued with regard to schools; and the need for raising up an African ministry. One wonders if the committee ever received another such document from a missionary of only seven months' experience. It shows how quickly Freeman grasped the main factors of the situation, and how, in spite of his personal sorrow and ill-health, he was getting things moving. In it he outlines a policy for boarding-schools for both girls and boys, and the provision of teachers for them. Then he shows how, since life for European missionaries is so uncertain, there must be trained Africans capable of carrying on the work in any emergency caused by death or breakdown. He tells the committee that already he has taken to live with him, for special training and experience, two Fanti youths—William De Graft and John Martin—who had received their education at a school in the castle under the supervision of President Maclean.¹ We shall hear more of them as our story unfolds. Freeman's plan was to give them two years of intensive training.

¹ It was founded many years before by chaplains sent out by the S.P.G. Unfortunately the men broke down and the mission had to be abandoned. But the failure was only apparent; the school was continued by government and bore unexpected fruit. The boys became so interested in reading the Bible that they asked for supplies from England, and this led to the beginning of the Wesleyan Mission on the Coast. All the early teachers for W.M.M.S. schools came from the castle school.

In the autumn of 1838 Freeman's health was again in a very poor state. He was overtaxing himself, and during a journey to a village up-country was utterly exhausted and "found the heat almost unsupportable." He reached the village "sick and weary," and was obliged to lie in his hammock. For several days malaria held him in its grip. The chief and his councillors were exceedingly kind and did everything they could for him, bringing him gifts of a sheep, a goat, and many yams. About that time he began to find it better to travel in the heat of the day rather than in the cooler hours of morning and evening. He wrote :

Although the heat of the sun is trying, the damps early in the morning and late in the evening are much more dangerous ; so, by travelling during the heat, I choose the lesser evil of the two.

He was wiser than he knew. By avoiding the hours of dawn and dusk he was to some extent avoiding the deadly mosquito !

When his journeys took him along the coast, he found it best to travel along the seashore, if the tide was out, because the breeze near the surf was refreshing. He soon found, too, the benefit of walking whenever possible. Even when he was obliged to use the basket on long journeys, or in later years a hammock, he still walked a good deal for the sake of exercise. He always walked uphill to relieve the carriers. Once he saw an African being carried up a long hill before him ; at the next village he came up with him and gave him a sharp reprimand.

CHAPTER VII

THROUGH THE FOREST TO KUMASI

January to March 1839. Age 29.

HAVING established the work at his base, Freeman began seriously to turn his thoughts to a great new enterprise—the planting of a mission in Ashanti. He was a born pioneer, and from the very beginning of his missionary service he resolved to do all in his power to carry the message of the Cross to that stronghold of heathenism.

The times were propitious for such an enterprise. President Maclean's wise policy had established friendly relations between the Ashantis and the British authorities. For a decade there had been no Ashanti invasion of Fanti land, and the Ashanti king, Osai Okotu, seemed eager to fulfil the treaty¹ he had entered into. Six hundred ounces of gold that he had deposited at Cape Coast Castle as a guarantee of good faith had been duly returned to him at the expiration of the stipulated period, and all promised well for the future. The Fantis—keen traders that they are—began to trade with their old enemies, and in the pursuit of their business some travelled to and fro between Kumasi and the Coast, the king guaranteeing their safety.

When the treaty was signed, two young Ashanti princes of royal blood—one a son and the other a

¹ See p. 33.

nephew of Osai Okotu—were handed over to President Maclean as hostages and placed in the government school in Cape Coast Castle. While there, they came under the influence of Joseph Dunwell, and from him received Christian instruction, and when, a little later, they came to England for further education, they received Christian baptism from an Anglican clergyman. In these events Dunwell saw an open door to the Ashanti people, and wrote to the committee (January 1835):

I scarcely dare say more, as it looks too visionary, but this I can say—that there is no obstacle in our way of preaching the Gospel in the capital of Ashanti.

A year later, Wrigley (Dunwell's successor) wrote :

I have just seen one of our Fanti members who has resided in Coomassie¹ for some time past. He states that in the house where he dwelt he has several times had the King of Ashanti's son to prayers, and on Christmas Day the king requested his attendance at the palace, where in conjunction with one or two others he had singing and prayers in the presence of his majesty. I think that the committee will conclude with me that the Lord is opening a wide and effectual door for the preaching of the Gospel.

With facts like these before him, Freeman resolved to go himself to Ashanti to make fuller investigations as to the possibilities.

A new king had recently come to the Royal Stool of Ashanti—Kwaku Dua I., a nephew of his predecessor (by a curious Ashanti custom a king or chief is succeeded by the son of his eldest sister), and President Maclean at once did all in his power to cultivate friendly relations with him. He listened

¹ The usual spelling in those days.

with interest to Freeman's proposal to visit the new king and gave him every facility. The president, so far from fearing missionary influence, felt convinced that nothing but good could come through the visit to Kumasi of such a man as Freeman. He therefore sent to the Ashanti monarch a cordial letter of introduction, and promised Freeman a native sergeant and a private to accompany him as escort.

A journey of nearly two hundred miles through dense forests was no light undertaking, and there was a little uncertainty as to how he would be received. The Fanti Christians feared lest the journey might prove too much for Freeman's strength and for a time they opposed his project; but at last, realizing that his heart was set upon the venture, they undertook to help him and even contributed nearly sixty pounds towards the cost. They promised to maintain regular worship in the church while he was absent, and accepted William De Graft as their leader till Freeman's return. It speaks volumes for the sincerity of those Fanti Christians that out of their slender means they contributed so generously, of their own free will, towards an effort to carry the Gospel to the relentless foes of their race.

Freeman now began to make preparations for the journey. Supplies were made up into "head-loads," and eighteen carriers were engaged. For so long a journey he devised a new method of conveyance instead of a basket—a travelling chair carried on a shaft or pole. During the thirteen months he had been on the Coast he had become well acquainted with African conditions, so that he was well fitted

for the task before him. His greatest drawback was his lack of knowledge of the Fanti or Twi languages. Soon after landing in Africa he had begun to learn Fanti, but grief, ill-health, and incessant work had prevented his making much headway. It was therefore necessary for him to engage an interpreter to accompany him to Kumasi.

Just after daybreak on January 30th, 1839, Freeman set out on his first great adventure into the interior of Africa, and the prayer in his heart was this: "Oh that God may spare my life to stand in that City of Blood and unfurl the banner of the Cross!" The first stages were over ground already familiar to him. On the second day out he developed a slight fever, the result of the strain and anxiety of preparations for the journey, and he was obliged to rest for twenty-four hours. Then on again into such forests as he had never before seen. In after years he wrote of that first great journey:

I well remember with what deep interest I watched the increasing depth, vastness, and grandeur of that forest, as we proceeded mile after mile along the devious path. And what a deep sense of human impotence I felt as I gazed upon the monster silk-cotton trees towering a hundred and fifty to two hundred feet above my head! Occasionally we found one of these gigantic trees lying across our path and had either to climb over it or make our way through the thick underwood to pass round it. . . . I mounted on the trunk of one of them, and from base to the lower branches I measured nearly eighty paces.

Only those who have travelled through such a forest can understand its impressive grandeur. The giant trees, with their mighty buttress-like roots, dominate everything, rising majestically from the

almost impenetrable undergrowth, and from the branches hang festoons of creepers. Here and there bright rays of sunlight break in upon the deep shadows, throwing into strong relief the vivid colours of the tropical foliage. And through it all the narrow path winds and twists like a writhing serpent—yet leading onward with unerring certainty from village to village. The whole journey to Kumasi is through this vast belt of forest. Frequently the path crosses streams or rivers, which sometimes broaden out into beautiful pools in the glades and valleys; and sometimes in the gloomy depths of the forest patches of swamp are encountered—the haunt of the python or the alligator. The forest teems with life; there are monkeys by the hundred swinging among the creepers, and leopards, though seldom seen by the traveller, are concealed in the undergrowth. In the heat of midday there is a weird, uncanny silence; but as the sun sinks the night noises begin—the unceasing chirping of myriads of insects, the croaking of countless frogs, and the chattering of monkeys and parrots. A solemn, unearthly place is the West African forest; but for those who love nature it never loses its fascination.

Naturalist as he was, Freeman was anxious to make the most of the opportunities of this journey, and he carried with him a telescope that he might the better observe the festoons of orchids and other botanical wonders that hung high above him. Sometimes he persuaded one of his carriers to climb a tree and bring down a specimen of special interest. He made extensive notes, and his journals abound with botanical references. But Freeman was more than a mere naturalist; his whole being responded to the

marvels of nature, and to his devout soul they were nothing less than God's handiwork.

Villages lay in clearings in the forest, and every one had a small river or a stream near at hand. Most of them consisted of one main street with dwellings on either side. The houses were of wattle-work covered with clay and thatched with thick layers of grass or palm-leaves; most had a small courtyard in the middle. But simple though they appeared at first sight, Freeman's keen eye detected unmistakable evidence of skill and taste in construction, and as he advanced farther into the interior he noticed that the style became gradually more elaborate and pleasing. Fowls, goats, and sheep abounded in the street and compounds, and near to each village he found plantations where the people raised grain, vegetables, and fruit to supply their needs. He found the people courteous and ready to help him in any way they could. The head-men brought him "dashes" (presents) of yams, fruit, palm-wine or chickens, and were ever ready to lend a house or two for the accommodation of the party. Before he left a village, Freeman always made some suitable return for whatever kindnesses were shown to him. He met courtesy with courtesy and kindness with kindness. He was appreciative of all that was done for him; even trivial acts were not overlooked, and this undoubtedly helped to give him a unique influence wherever he went.

While journeying from village to village, Freeman was constantly reminded of the dark days, when these seemingly peaceful habitations were constantly ravaged and destroyed by the cruel Ashanti armies that so often had traversed these very paths on

their way to attack the coast towns. Those days had passed away, Freeman hoped for ever, and with his whole heart he believed that the establishment of missionary influence in Ashanti was the surest way of maintaining a permanent peace. So long as Kumasi was "the City of Blood" and the Ashanti armies lusted to attack the surrounding tribes, there could be no guarantee that those forest villages would be delivered from all fear of further attack. To proclaim the message of Christ in Kumasi was now the dominating idea of Freeman's life.

But although Kumasi was his objective, he believed that he had also a message for the villages en route. He hoped at no very distant date to be able to station a missionary in the Ashanti capital, and a chain of churches all the way through the forest would help to keep the road open. To this end he made the most of every opportunity. African etiquette required that, on reaching a village, his very first duty was to go immediately to the compound of the chief or head-man and salute him. He was invariably asked about his destination and the object of his journey. Was he a soldier? Had he come to trade? Was he the speaker (ambassador) of the great white chief at Cape Coast Castle? This at once opened the way for him to explain that he was the messenger of the great God who had made them. Again and again we get glimpses of him standing before some chief and his councillors, and a great crowd of village folk, telling them that the God of heaven had sent him to make known to them His will.

A week's journey through the forest brought Freeman to the River Pra, which marks the boundary

of the Ashanti kingdom. At that point it is nearly a hundred yards wide, and his interpreter told him that its depth, when in flood, was from thirty to forty feet. Though the water was low, it was the largest African river he had seen, and he experienced a thrill of delight as he crossed it in a heavy dug-out canoe. On the farther shore he trod for the first time upon Ashanti soil, and he gave thanks to God that he was permitted to be the first missionary of Jesus Christ to enter that powerful kingdom.

Freeman's first day in Ashanti was not a pleasant one. The harmattan was blowing—a strong wind from the north-west that at this time of the year beats down upon the whole of West Africa laden with fine sand from the Sahara. It dries the skin, parches the lips, and affects the eyes. Freeman described the sensations as being like those of a violent cold in the head, and his eyes were inflamed. He spent the first night in a small hut made of thin strips of bamboo tied loosely together. It was poor protection against the harmattan, and although Freeman did the best he could to line the inside by hanging up a sheet and a blanket, he felt the cold severely. When day broke, he discovered that during the night a rat had gnawed the strings of his sleeping-hammock so as to render it almost unfit for further use.

Next day, a journey of ten hours through the forest and over the steep Adansi Hills brought the little expedition to Kwisa, the first large village in the Ashanti dominions, and here Freeman's troubles began. The chief was courteous, but told the visitor quite plainly that he could not permit him to advance

without permission from the paramount chief of that section of Ashanti. This was disappointing, but it was a relief to learn that this paramount chief, whose name was Korinchi, lived at Fomana, only a mile away, and could be communicated with the next day. The sun was getting low, and the shadows in the forest were already deepening, so Freeman asked the Chief of Kwisa to appoint him a lodging-place for the night. Imagine his delight on finding, in that far-away village in the Ashanti forest, several Fanti Christians, members of his own flock in Cape Coast, who had gone there to trade! They came immediately and welcomed him as their leader and friend, and he was the more delighted to discover that, in their simple way, they were witnessing for Christ to the Ashantis around them.

Early next morning, the Chief of Kwisa was summoned to Fomana to report to the paramount chief all he knew about the white visitor; and during the morning a chief's messenger, golden staff in hand, arrived to request Freeman himself to go for a palaver. His year in Africa had already taught Freeman the importance of acting with due dignity and ceremony in his dealings with important chiefs, in whose very nature love of ceremony and etiquette is deeply ingrained, and he proceeded to make such arrangements as he deemed advisable. Sending before him a messenger with his own stick to announce his approach, and taking with him his personal attendants, the interpreter, and the two native soldiers, he made the short journey to Fomana in his travelling chair, and on arrival was conducted to the dwelling of the paramount chief.

Korinchi was sitting in state in the open space

before his house. His elaborate garments completely hid the carved stool he sat upon; and his arms, neck, and feet were decorated with massive ornaments of solid gold. A slave held over him an enormous umbrella of flaming red silk, heavily fringed, and surmounted with a golden emblem of his rank. His councillors were seated about him, each in strict order of priority, and a large crowd of people stood around. After the preliminary greetings and compliments, the chief asked Freeman his object in wishing to go to Kumasi.

I told him [writes Freeman] I had nothing to do with trade or palavers, but was come into the country to promote the best interests of the King of Ashanti and his people, by directing them in the way of peace and happiness through the preaching of the Gospel.

This by no means satisfied Korinchi. He was keeper of the road to the capital, and the king would hold him responsible if he permitted any undesirable visitor to proceed. He must have fuller information as to Freeman's intentions. What was this "Gospel" he talked of? Was it a new fetich? He bade the visitor explain.

Picking up a fallen leaf from a tree beneath whose shade he was standing, Freeman asked if any one present could make one like it. A mystified smile and a shaking of heads greeted the question. "Do you think it possible for all the wisdom and power in the land to make such a leaf?" Again they answered "No."

Freeman then spoke to them of the God who made the world and all things therein. He told the chief of the almighty power and mercy of God, and

declared that this was the message he wished to carry to Kumasi. Like the Saxon King of Kent, Korinchi might have answered, "Your words are fair, but they are new and of doubtful meaning." The teaching sounded reasonable, but it needed thinking about. It was clear that Freeman was a white fetich-man; and who could tell what magic powers he possessed? Desiring to discuss the matter with his council, the chief asked the missionary to come again the following day to tell them more about the great God he served. To this Freeman readily agreed, but before he left the chief's presence he explained that he was the minister of Christ and could not make them the presents usual on such an occasion, "it being beneath the dignity of Christianity, so truly excellent in itself that it requires no recommendation except a conviction of its value."

"We do not desire the customary dash from you," answered the chief's linguist (*i.e.* official spokesman). "We rather wish to become acquainted with the Gospel."

Freeman was delighted at this apparent eagerness to hear his message and have it explained; but when he pressed for permission to continue his journey to Kumasi, Korinchi said that they would talk about that on the morrow.

As soon as Freeman's back was turned, the paramount chief and his councillors proceeded eagerly to discuss the strange visitor and his mysterious words. "A minister of Christ"—what could *that* mean? Surely a new fetich-man! He had spoken of "almighty power"—was that some terrible magic he would make use of to do them harm or to injure the king? All the latent fear and suspicion of their

nature was aroused, and probably every man among them resolved that he would wear all the charms he possessed while the white stranger was about.

But Freeman was unconscious of the uneasiness he had created. He saw only people whom he desired to win for Christ asking, with apparent sincerity, to have the Gospel explained to them, and he rejoiced at the opportunity.

The next day was Sunday, and in the afternoon Freeman again stood before the paramount chief and his court. He estimated that at least six hundred persons were gathered before him. The little company of Fanti Christians stood with their leader under the shade of the tree, and Freeman explained to Korinchi that, as it was the Christian's sacred day, he proposed to conduct Christian worship. Amid a silence and attention that were half interest and half fear, the chief and his people listened while the Christians sang a hymn and prayed. Freeman held up his pocket Bible and spoke to them of God's Book, from which we know about God and His holy Will. It was evident that they were impressed by his words, and they frequently expressed agreement with what he told them. "It is good palaver," said the chief, when he had finished, adding that they would like to hear more, especially about what the Christian God liked and disliked.

Freeman was eager to press forward to Kumasi without loss of time. But Korinchi had sent a special messenger to report to the king and get instructions from him, and he refused to allow the missionary to proceed until the royal permission came. The days passed slowly, and Freeman chafed

at the delay. He felt the cold at night, for the harmattan was still blowing, and in the early morning his thermometer registered as low as sixty-six degrees Fahrenheit. At last a king's messenger came from the capital; he brought a complimentary message from the king, and a present of nine *ackies* of gold dust;¹ but Freeman was requested to remain where he was for a few days until the king should send for him. The messenger had orders to stay with Freeman "to look after him"—really to spy upon him and report anything strange about his doings.

Time after time the paramount chief sent for the missionary to stand before him and tell him more about Christianity, until the fetich priests began to get alarmed and organized special sacrifices to appease the angry spirits who—according to the priests—were seeking to destroy the town by fire. But amid all the readiness to listen, Freeman found among these Ashantis little or no inclination to respond; and as the days passed into weeks, he got a deeper insight into the depths of paganism than had hitherto been possible. For the first time he was brought face to face with human sacrifice.

One night a sister of Korinchi died. Muskets were fired, "mourners" went about the streets, and much palm-wine was drunk. To his dismay Freeman soon found that it was the Ashanti custom, on such an occasion, to sacrifice several slaves that they might accompany the spirit of the deceased and wait upon it in the world of shadows. Next morning, as he walked down the street, he was horrified to find the body of a woman lying just

¹ Worth at that time about forty-five shillings.

where she had been beheaded during the orgies of the night! Groups of villagers were standing or sitting around, smoking and gossiping with absolute indifference, and several children were playing near at hand. As the day passed, he saw companies of people dancing wildly round the corpse. He was told that this was the only victim offered up, because the paramount chief did not wish the white man to see more sacrifices. While hoping that his presence in the town would be the means of saving other lives, Freeman had a haunting fear that other victims might be secretly put to death the following night. For five days the funeral ceremonies continued, amid loud beating of the drums.

Such sights stirred Freeman to the depths of his soul. Here in truth was need for the Gospel message. What else could deliver the people from their superstition? With new passion, born of the terrible new facts of human degradation and need, he determined to do all in his power to reach Kumasi, and, if possible, strike at the very heart of heathenism in that city.

Sunday came round again—the third Freeman had spent in Fomana. After the debauchery of the week he felt it would be useless to hold a public service; most of the people had been up carousing all through the night and were under the influence of drink, so that he and his Fanti Christians worshipped in private. Later on, going into the forest for quiet meditation, he was driven back by the revolting smell of decomposing flesh—and knew it to be human flesh!

During the following week, as the people got back to their normal condition, Freeman could not do

other than reason with them on the wickedness and folly of the things he had seen. It gave him opportunity, moreover, to speak of death, the future life, the punishment of sin, and the Christian hope of immortality. Even Korinchi acknowledged that the old customs were evil, and declared that he would be glad to abolish them were it not that he feared the wrath of the king; he talked, too, of their sorrow at the death of relatives and said that they merely tried to drown their grief in drunkenness and debauchery. Freeman was not the man to miss such a chance for a faithful heart-to-heart talk, and that evening the chief sent him a present of a sheep and a supply of yams and bananas. Two days later there was another human sacrifice! Freeman saw the decapitated body lying unburied, with several large turkey-buzzards feasting upon it.

The following Sunday Freeman, by this time thoroughly roused, preached sternly before Korinchi and his whole court from the words, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments." He rehearsed to them the Ten Commandments, and from time to time they interrupted him with such questions as, "Is human sacrifice murder?" A religion that teaches such things must have sounded strange in the ears of those Ashanti chiefs and people. To them religion was a matter of ceremonies and sacrifices and taboos; a creed that dealt with moral practices was novel indeed.

Time was flying. Freeman had now been detained, on one pretext after another, for over six weeks, and he began to realize that they were trying to prevent his going to Kumasi, not by direct refusal, but by endless delays. They were afraid of him,

and gradually he began to see that their fears were the outcome of their superstitions. He wrote :

That anyone should have come all that distance, and undergone such privations as they knew I was suffering, for the sole purpose of benefiting them, they could not at first believe . . . and their minds worked incessantly to find out what they could consider as the true cause of my visit. The prevailing idea was that I was a powerful English fetichman, sent out expressly to inflict upon them some deep national injury, by way of avenging the death of Sir Charles M'Carthy.¹ My every movement was closely observed, and the wildest reasons were given for the simplest acts—interest in a beautiful flower was attributed to a superior knowledge of its qualities, as possessing some subtle poison or charm involving danger to the life of the king. Even the simple act of pointing a fowling-piece and shooting a sparrow-hawk on the wing as it sailed over the houses, was attributed to some supernatural art, and my gun obtained the name of *sunsum itterd*, or spirit-gun. The prestige of President Maclean's introduction to the king which I bore with me, and the fear of the political consequences of denying me an entrance into the capital, on the one hand, and the ill-defined alarm at my supposed powers for either good or evil, on the other, were doubtless the counter-acting causes of my long detention.

From time to time the king sent secret messengers from Kumasi to spy upon Freeman's movements and to make inquiries as to what kind of person he was. Some of them were lads of fifteen or sixteen years of age. They stood by while Freeman was with the chief and listened to all he said ; every gesture was noted and his conversation remembered with marvellous precision. They watched all his movements and his habits of life, the food he ate, the clothes he wore. Then with the utmost speed

¹ See p. 19.

they returned to Kumasi—travelling night and day at express speed—to report to the king. One messenger was questioned in this way :

The King. Have you seen this white fetich-man ?

Messenger. Yes.

The King. Has he many drums with him ?

Messenger. I saw no drums.

The King. Why, he is a fetich-man : he must have drums !

Messenger. I saw no drums. He has plenty of boxes ; but I cannot say what they contain.

The King. Why did you not endeavour to learn whether the boxes contained drums or not ?

Freeman afterwards learned that the king was angry with that messenger for not bringing fuller information, and while he continued to puzzle and perplex himself over the mysterious visitor, he asked his councillors, "What *can* he want ? Never before has such a man visited Ashanti !"

Freeman was growing still more impatient, for he knew that if he were detained much longer he would have the rainy season upon him and that would make it impossible for him to get back to Cape Coast. At last he resolved to bring matters to a head. Going into the presence of Korinchi and his councillors, he spoke plainly and pressed for an immediate decision, saying that if he could not go on to Kumasi he must go back to the coast. Korinchi declared that he was expecting a messenger from the king on the following Tuesday, and begged the missionary to wait till then. Finding that the chief did not take seriously his threat to return to the coast, he began to pack his boxes and prepare to leave. This rather startled the wily chief, for he

dared not allow Freeman to depart. With his two linguists and some of his councillors he came down to the house and begged for further delay; and Freeman, willing to seize any opportunity, instantly agreed to remain on condition that Korinchi should immediately provide a messenger to accompany the Fanti sergeant to the king with a personal letter from Freeman himself. The chief tried by all sorts of devices and arguments to prevent this step, but Freeman was resolute. "*Either my sergeant goes with my letter to the king, or I go back to Cape Coast to-morrow!*" Korinchi yielded—and then spent half the next day in trying to back out of the arrangement.

Freeman was now thoroughly roused. After a stormy interview at the chief's house, he ordered his men to take up their head-loads and begin the return journey. He was in no mood to be played with, and the march began. As the little expedition passed through Kwisa, the village chief entreated him to stay a day or two at his place; as this was obviously a ruse, Freeman refused to do so and continued his march through the forest. But as they climbed the steep narrow path up the Adansi Hills, one of Korinchi's linguists came running in hot haste with a message from his master promising to send a messenger by torchlight that very night to Kumasi—if only the missionary would return to Fomana! Again Freeman firmly refused, and continued on his way.

By this time Korinchi was thoroughly alarmed, for he knew that the king would hold him responsible for any consequences that might ensue—and he had no wish to forfeit his head. He now persuaded one

of the Fanti Christian traders to go after Freeman and use his influence with him. But Freeman still turned a deaf ear, and took up his lodgings for the night in a small village nine or ten miles from Fomana. During the evening other messengers arrived to plead with him to return to Korinchi, who now acknowledged his fault and begged for forgiveness. Just as they arrived a tornado burst over the forest with tropical fury. Freeman, with his interpreter and the chief's messengers, huddled into a hut barely six feet square, and while the tempest raged and the rain poured down in torrents, the Ashanti emissaries once more urged their plea. Night had closed in, and every vivid flash of lightning lit up the darkness of the forest and revealed on the faces of the messengers a fear even greater than that awakened by the storm. Their own lives would be forfeited, they said, if they did not succeed in getting Freeman to return. Feeling that Korinchi had learned a much-needed lesson, and that he would now be permitted to go to Kumasi, Freeman at last agreed to return to Fomana at daybreak, but he made it a condition that the messengers should provide carriers to relieve Freeman's own people. Greatly pleased, the messengers readily consented to help to carry the luggage themselves! Early next morning Freeman and his men retraced their steps to Fomana.

Things now began to move. Within half an hour of their reaching Fomana a despatch arrived from the king, inviting Freeman to proceed at once to the capital. Shortly after daybreak next morning he set out on the last stage of the journey, and for three days travelled through exceptionally beautiful forest.

The country he was now passing through had obviously a large population, for villages and small towns were increasingly numerous. The people turned out to see him pass through their streets—so unaccustomed were they to seeing a white man. They gathered in small crowds to watch him eat, but when they saw him engage in acts of worship they fled in sheer terror. Yet they were kind, and frequently brought him gifts of palm-wine and fruit.

Once or twice he was met by messengers sent by the king to conduct him to Kumasi. He saw troops of Ashanti warriors passing up to the capital from different parts of the country, and there were many signs that at last he was approaching his goal. The fourth day out from Fomana was Sunday, and Freeman spent the day in rest and worship. Early in the morning he conducted divine service for himself and his followers. Then came another of those terrific tornadoes that herald the approach of the rainy season. In the evening another messenger arrived from the king to request him to enter Kumasi next day.

Freeman was up betimes that Monday morning, full of excitement at the prospects of achieving his purpose; and by four o'clock he set out on the last stage of the march. It was still dark and very damp. Daybreak revealed a thick white mist hanging over the forest, against which the great trees stood out in bold relief, their lofty crowns lost in the thicker mist above. By eight o'clock he was within a mile and a half of Kumasi—at a small village named Fran Fraham—and here he was told to wait for another invitation from the king. It was characteristic of the man that he spent this time of waiting in prayer

that God would guide and strengthen him for the ordeal before him. He wrote in his journal that morning these words :

For several days I have felt an indescribable sensation, best known to those whose awful employment it is to bear the Standard of the Cross. . . . "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end."

CHAPTER VIII

RECEIVED BY THE ASHANTI KING

April 1st, 1839. Age 29.

At two o'clock that afternoon the expected messenger came to conduct Freeman into Kumasi. While dressing himself in readiness for the great ceremony that he knew was before him, three more king's messengers arrived, each bearing a gold sword as a sign that he was on king's business and charged to carry out the king's behests. With them came a company of armed warriors to escort Freeman. Instead of going right into Kumasi by the shortest route, however, he soon perceived that he was being led in a circuit round the east side of the city. An Ashanti prophet had declared that enemies from the coast would one day enter the capital; so the king had closed the natural southern approach, and Freeman was led round so that he might enter from the north-east!

With a thrill of emotion and a quickening pulse, Freeman now saw before him the mysterious forest-girt capital of the Ashanti kings. It lay in full view on a long ridge with small rivers on each side. Around were swamps, the breeding place of the mosquito, the lurking-place of pythons, and dreaded by the people who believed them to be haunted by hosts of evil spirits. At this spot, with Kumasi basking in the sunlight before him, Freeman's escort paused,

and the king's messengers explained that they must await a royal summons to enter the city. As he rested under the cool shade of a large shea-butter tree, he soon caught sight of a strange procession coming down the hill to meet him. It was Apoko, the king's head linguist, carried in a palanquin and shaded by an immense red silk umbrella. He was surrounded by a crowd of drummers and attendants, and messengers bearing long canes covered with gold, and carriers to take charge of Freeman's luggage. There were cordial salutations, and Apoko, in his master's name, invited Freeman to enter Kumasi. While the carriers were arranging the loads, yet another king's messenger arrived with troops firing muskets, and drummers, and more umbrella-bearers, to conduct the visitor to the city.

All was now in readiness, and the escort moved rapidly up the hill, the musicians leading the way. Freeman was carried in his travelling chair, shaded by swaying umbrellas and accompanied by his interpreter and personal attendants. It was not a procession in the western meaning of the term; for an orderly procession, marching in ranks, is unknown in West Africa. It was a crowd of royal messengers, troops, carriers, and hangers-on—all surging noisily up the hill, with drums beating, and flamingo-coloured umbrellas swaying like banners.

As they entered the city, Freeman noticed two newly made mounds of red earth, one on either side of the broad roadway. He did not then know that two men had just been buried alive there, as human sacrifices, to ward off any evil influences he might

bring with him. Without his knowing it, he was made to pass between these fearful offerings; they were to "cleanse his feet," and throw a shield around the life of the despotic king amid the mysterious dangers that threatened him through this new and wonderful event in the history of his country. Nor was Freeman aware that behind a great fetich tree that he had passed lay the still warm bodies of several other human victims who had just been sacrificed. He had come with a message of life, but his arrival had spelt death to those unfortunate victims of Ashanti superstition.

By this time messengers were dashing to and fro between the procession and the king to report every stage of the progress. Ever and anon one of them would rush to Freeman with the shout, "The king says 'Come!'" With ceremony and noise of drums the messenger of Christ was carried through dense crowds of people to the great market-place at the top of the hill. There a remarkable sight presented itself. A glance showed Freeman that practically the whole population of the town had turned out to see the unusual sight of a white man visiting the king. He estimated the size of that multitude at not less than forty thousand. They gazed upon him with intense interest and not a little fear—the terrible white fetich-man had come at last! What evil would his presence bring? Yet the crowd was orderly, and opened a passage for the advancing procession until it paused in the very presence of the monarch.

There, on his chair of state, under magnificent silk umbrellas, sat the King of all the Ashantis, the overlord of many paramount chiefs and supreme

ruler of a country half the size of England. To right and left of the king sat his great chiefs on huge arm-chairs studded with brass nails—all of them shaded by umbrellas, as big as tents, that swayed to and fro in the sunlight. Behind each great chief stood a group of wives, and before him, sitting on the ground, were two rows of men and boys in attendance, holding elephants' tails and gold-handled swords. In every case the two rows faced inwards so as to form an avenue of approach to each respective chief. The human pathway before the king was twenty yards long. All the swords were held with handle uppermost, so that the gold on them gleamed in the sunlight.

Stretching far away, right and left of the central group, in two long wings, were the officers of the king's household and other chiefs and their subordinates, with their respective umbrellas, soldiers, and attendants. They formed a continuous curved line, with the royal group as its centre. Freeman estimated that there were at least seventy or eighty of the huge ceremonial umbrellas of many colours, and every one of them was surmounted by a golden emblem, the cognizance of the chief to whom it belonged. Many of the chiefs were loaded with massive gold chains, armlets, finger and toe rings, and other ornaments. Freeman's quick eye noted also the elaborate garments of the king and the great chiefs, many of which were of gaily coloured silk. He felt that this sight of African regal splendour, buried away in the wilds of the primeval forest, more than rewarded him for the toils of the journey. He wrote: "That man must be strangely unimpressionable who could emerge from a vast

forest and gaze suddenly upon such a spectacle, and see tens of thousands of human eyes directed upon him, without feeling strangely impressed and excited."

And now Freeman was in the presence of the king himself. He bade his carriers put down his travelling chair. Stepping out of it, he advanced on foot and saluted the proud monarch. But he was not allowed to approach near enough to shake hands. The king was apprehensive of the white man's magic.

But King Kwaku Dua was evidently pleased with the first sight of his guest. Scanning the missionary with his penetrating gaze, he was struck with his manly carriage and dignified bearing. For a moment they looked into each other's eyes, and the king inclined his head by way of greeting.

Then came the second part of the ceremony. Several royal officers and their attendants led Freeman through the crowd to a seat prepared for him at the other side of the market-place. It took him half an hour to walk slowly through that immense assembly, touching his hat, waving his hand with friendly gesture, and greëting numerous petty chiefs and people. When at last he was seated, his own people grouped themselves around him, and they were joined by several Fanti traders who were in the town. A present from the king was brought to him—a pot of fresh palm-wine and some fruit for his refreshment, a gift he found very welcome amidst the heat and excitement.

The great multitude now began to move. The minor chiefs passed slowly before Freeman and saluted him—each one attended by his drummers,

his wives, and his retainers. One by one they filed past, each chief being followed by a greater chief, and every one with numerous attendants. The approach of each of the more important chiefs was heralded by a messenger who, with excited gestures, announced that a very great event was pending, namely, the approach of *his* master, the great chief of such and such a place. After the messenger came the bearers of the chief's insignia, his gold-handled swords, his ornamented canes and elephant tails, his richly ornamented tobacco-pipes—all carefully held by their bearers so as to display them to best advantage. Then came priests carrying carved wooden stools, black with the blood of sacrifices¹; and these were followed by numerous other attendants who danced, gesticulated, and violently pushed bystanders out of the way to give ample room for their master to display his fine figure and rich dress. Then came the chief himself, dignified and truly princely in his bearing, to salute Freeman, his umbrellas swaying, and sometimes being twirled round and round by the men who carried them. As each chief passed on he was followed by his drums, large and small, some carried on men's heads and beaten by drummers walking behind, not a few of them being decorated with human skulls and jaw bones.² Then came the horn-blowers, blowing the "strong names" of the chief and hurling

¹ Freeman at first took them to be execution stools, black with *human* blood; but afterwards he found that they were the family stools of the chief's ancestors, in which the ancestral spirits were believed to dwell. They are blackened with soot mixed with the yolk of eggs, Captain Rattray tells us. The blood upon them is that of sacrificial sheep.

² The writer has seen and photographed such drums.

defiance at his enemies—and some of the horns were hung with ghastly trophies. Thus chief after chief went past, some of them so heavily laden with gold ornaments that they had an attendant on each side to support their arms.¹ A few of these great chiefs, despite their dignity, actually danced for a few moments before the visitor!

At long last came the royal procession—first the retainers, runners, pages, and then the officers of the king's household. Prominent among these was the royal treasurer, a very imposing figure literally loaded with gold and other jewellery—"boys walked by his side on whose shoulders he rested his hands to relieve his wrists of the weight of the masses of precious metal." As the insignia of his high office, he carried a huge bunch of golden keys. After him came the king's own runners, messengers, and drummers, on a scale truly royal. And then—the king! "With dignified and stately step, he looked truly noble and imperial. He is a man quite six feet high, strongly built, and of complexion lighter than many of his people." His dress was of native cotton interwoven with foreign silk, and he was "emblazoned with bright gold from the coronet round his forehead to the jewelled sandals on his feet." Over him, his servants held three splendid umbrellas made of silk velvet of different colours. Yet he, too, paused for a moment, and, under his umbrellas, danced before his guest! He was followed by his ancestral stools,² some of which were

¹ The author has witnessed a similar sight.

² It is possible that one of these may have been the famous "Golden Stool"—the royal throne of Ashanti. It was believed to contain the soul of the nation, and was so sacred that it was never sat upon.

covered with cloths. Then came the royal executioners, with the death drums, which would be beaten to announce to the king that a victim's head had been cut off. These, too, were decorated with human skulls and "literally covered with dried clots of blood"—a sight that thrilled the missionary with horror.

Next came some of the principal ladies of the royal household. Chief among them was the "Queen Mother," his consort on the throne. According to the Ashanti custom, this great lady was not the king's wife but his eldest sister; and her son—the king's nephew—was the heir-apparent. Lastly, the main body of soldiers passed before Freeman—men who had made their name terrible to all the surrounding tribes. As he watched them march past, Freeman must have thought of the days, not far distant, when they had attacked the frowning walls of the castles along the sea-shore, and of the fatal battle in which they had overpowered Governor M'Carthy and carried his head as a trophy to Kumasi.

That wonderful procession took an hour and a half to pass. Freeman watched it with amazement.

The sun was sinking behind the trees as the ceremony ended. The golden emblems on the retreating umbrellas caught its last gleams and stood out in vivid relief against the dark green foliage and the glowing sky. Silently he watched the crowd diminish, and felt that he had witnessed a display of African pomp such as he might never see again. He felt, too, the greatness of the task before him. He was in Kumasi at last—the first Christian

missionary to reach "the City of Blood"—and he was alone save for the certainty that his God was with him. How could he make known the message of Christ to those multitudes? How could he break down the suspicion and fear with which they regarded him? How could he lead those proud chiefs to abandon their fetichism and cruel customs? Could he hope ever to persuade that despotic king to listen to the message of another King—the King meek and lowly of heart? To quote his own words, Freeman felt "the solemnity of his situation as a servant of God, a herald of Salvation, a standard-bearer of the Cross."

In the rapidly failing light the royal officers conducted Freeman to the house of Apoko, the linguist, where he was to lodge. It was across the marketplace and at some distance from the palace. He was exhausted with the strain of the experience through which he had passed, and was glad to rest. The excitement of the day had subsided, and with a thankful heart he spread a cloth and lay down on the hard floor of his room, "caring nothing for mattress or conveniences, but craving a long, sound sleep." Yet as he lay there, he could not sleep. He thought he heard the people of Ashanti crying to the Christians of Britain, "Come, pray come, and look upon our unhappy country!" Fancy carried him back to England, and he thought himself at a great meeting in London; the audience was listening to an appeal for Africa and of the needs of its uncounted millions. . . . And he seemed to hear a resolution put to that meeting and carried. It was a resolution to do much more for Africa and to do it immediately. Was he—the son of an African—

to be God's instrument for the fulfilment of that vision? He was oppressed with a load of anxiety and responsibility. Then there came to him a thought that brought relief and assurance: "Courage: *Remember Calvary!*"

CHAPTER IX

IN THE CITY OF BLOOD

April 1839. Age 29.

INURED as he was to hardship, Freeman arose from his hard bed next morning quite fresh and eager to see the city. But patience was necessary; he soon learned that he had Ashanti custom to reckon with. The members of the royal household appointed to attend him were provokingly officious, and insisted that he was tired and must have a day's rest. Whenever he suggested going out—even for a short stroll—Apoko begged him not to do so. At last he learned that etiquette required that his first visit should be to the king, and that great initiatory act was not possible that day because, for some mysterious reason, the king could not see him.

So Freeman set to work to unpack his belongings and make himself as comfortable as he could in the small space at his disposal. The portion of Apoko's house allotted to him and his attendants consisted of ten small shed-like chambers, each about six or seven feet square and open in front, grouped round several small courtyards.

From early dawn he found that he was being closely watched. Indeed, they had even spied upon him during the night; peering through an opening in the wall of his little room, they had seen him kneel and whisper mysteriously, and then they heard him

speaking aloud—apparently to no one—and he moved his hands as though he were working charms ! What could be more sinister ? All day the king's spies were about him observing every action—and misunderstanding most of them. It is safe to assume that all these things were related to the king, and that the monarch discussed them with his councillors and fetich priests. It may be that more sacrifices were offered—Freeman himself seems afterwards to have concluded that it was so.

Next day, on asking Apoko at what time he could see the king, Freeman was told that, Wednesday being the royal fetich day, it was not possible for his majesty to receive visitors. It was the day of the Adae ceremony—the worship of the ancestral spirits in the “black stools”—and the king would carry out the customary rites.¹ Again Freeman was compelled to possess his soul in patience. The delay was the more trying because he well knew that he dare not spend many days in Kumasi or the rains would prevent his return to the coast, the rivers being uncrossable ; and his seven hundred people at Cape Coast needed him.

On the following day the king sent several of his linguists to question the missionary about the object of his visit. Freeman tried to explain, but found it very difficult to make them understand. Probably the fears and superstitions of their own hearts made it almost impossible for them to grasp his real motive ; evidently they still suspected some sinister purpose behind the fair words that were so incomprehensible. Born diplomatists, and accustomed to

¹ This Adae ceremony is observed twice in every forty-three days—once on a Wednesday and once on a Sunday (Rattray).

intrigue, their minds would dwell on every reason but the right one—their old quarrels with the Europeans and the Fantis, the death of M'Carthy and the white man's natural desire for revenge. They would wonder, too, what was behind President Maclean's letter—could he be in some way seeking to pick a new quarrel, or to wring from them some new terms of peace and trade? The interview did not seem to satisfy the royal linguists, and it certainly did not satisfy Freeman. It was doubly disappointing, after his great reception, to be held up this way. He could only wait—and hope for better things next day. It looked as though some one was trying to frighten the king and prevent Freeman seeing him.

Friday dawned. Impatiently he waited for a suitable hour, and then sent to the palace to inquire. Apoko, the head linguist, came down with the message, "You cannot see the king to-day, for he is making custom." Freeman pressed for permission to stroll through the town, but the answer was, "No! not to-day; you would see bad things."

"What bad things?"

Apoko fenced with the question. But Freeman's own interpreter spoke out: "They are making human sacrifice." He had been for a stroll and had seen the bodies of four victims lying in the streets. Indeed, Freeman himself had suspected it, for he had noted a large number of vultures and turkey-buzzards hovering over a certain spot. The king had lost one of his relatives by death. It was a day of sorrow and of horror. From time to time Freeman heard the sound of the death-drums, and his interpreter and other attendants (who were not under restriction) went into the town at intervals and

brought in news as to the number of victims : one, two, three, four, five ; then, some time later, six, seven, eight, nine, ten—all gone ! And ever and anon the horrible drum was thumping out its dreadful message, “ *O King, I have killed him !* ” All this was accompanied by much firing of muskets. No wonder the king sent a message begging the missionary not to go out, for he knew that Europeans did not like to see human sacrifices ; he added that he was now fully satisfied that Freeman’s object in coming to Kumasi was to do good, and he would see him when the “ custom ” was over. Freeman was only too glad to remain within the narrow limits of the place allotted to him. In the evening he was told that about twenty-five victims had been put to death.

Next day the “ custom ” continued, and Freeman was informed that fifteen more human beings had been sacrificed to accompany the king’s relative into the shadows of the spirit world—forty in two days. And when the missionary recalled the extensive family connections of the Ashanti monarch, it was easy to see that the annual number of sacrifices must be very large indeed.

On Sunday Freeman conducted services for his people and the few Fanti traders in the town ; a good many Ashantis also were present—some of them probably the king’s spies. The afternoon service was interrupted by a violent tornado. Next morning the king sent him a handsome present, consisting of a cow, a sheep, a pig, quantities of coconuts, yams, and plantains, and an ounce and four *ackies* of gold dust (worth about £5). There were also three *ackies* of gold dust for the interpreter, and five *ackies* more to be divided among the other

attendants. The gold was brought in a golden vessel.

In accepting this royal "dash," Freeman took the opportunity to ask the king's permission to see the town (it still being impossible to visit him) and to his great joy this request was granted. A week's confinement, under tropical conditions, was affecting his health. At last he was free to see Kumasi.

The Ashanti capital impressed Freeman as by far the finest native town he had seen in West Africa.¹ Its situation and natural surroundings at once appealed to him. The mantle of forest that encircled it seemed to him to be of exceptional loveliness, and the town itself was better built, better laid out, and cleaner than any other of his acquaintance. The streets were broad and well kept, and shaded with spreading banyan trees. The houses were well-made and quite different from those of the Gold Coast. Built of wood and swish, and thatched with palm-leaves, they had open porticoes facing the street, with doorways leading to inner courtyards. The street fronts were ornamented with relief designs, beautifully polished with red ochre and white clay. The market was a large oblong space, about three-quarters of a mile round. Among the merchandise laid out on the ground were not merely articles of African produce and manufacture, but also Manchester cotton goods and silks, muslins and cutlery brought up from the coast. On one side of the market was a deep dell shaded by large trees and long elephant-grass, into which the bodies of the human victims were thrown and left to decompose.

¹ Twenty years later, when he had travelled far and wide and seen many other important towns, he still put Kumasi easily first.

Freeman tells of "the intolerable stench that proceeded from it" after the "customs" of the previous week. He noted in different parts of the town, in the centre of streets and other conspicuous positions, circular platforms of clay, hardened by the sun and polished with red ochre, on which the king's state umbrellas were planted, and under which he was wont to sit for occasional levees and customs and drink palm-wine. These platforms were six or eight feet high, and at the top some ten feet in diameter. They had broad steps running all round and rising one above another. When the king took up his position on one of these platforms, the officers of his household and their retainers sat upon the steps, thus forming a group of upwards of a hundred persons—all very picturesque with their coloured garments and gleaming gold ornaments, the royal umbrella high above all.

But amid things impressive and beautiful, the dark side of the picture was constantly in evidence. There were the fetich trees, at the foot of which human sacrifices were offered, and the places where offenders were put to death. The inhabitants of Kumasi were quite accustomed to see some poor wretch dragged through the streets by the executioners to the place of death—a dagger driven through each cheek, their blades crossing over his tongue, and the handles sticking out from each side.¹

At last, at the foot of a sacred tree, they halt. The executioner dances before his victim and brandishes his fatal knife. . . . His head has the appearance of a mop, and the death-drum is decorated with skulls and

¹ This was always done immediately on condemnation in order to prevent the victim cursing the king.

besmeared with human blood. . . . At last he rushes upon his victim and his head rolls in the dust.¹

Such was the Kumasi of those days. No wonder Freeman's mind dwelt on the strange and awful contrasts that presented themselves—"the natural loveliness of the country and the moral desolation of its inhabitants. Both are in extremes; the one enchants, the other horrifies." On inquiry, he learned that the victims of the human sacrifices were usually either criminals or foreign slaves captured in the wars, though on rare occasions free Ashantis were sacrificed. The sacrifice of young children was by no means unusual—often at the instigation of the fetich priests.

As he wandered about the town, Freeman was struck with its size. It extended along the ridge of rock for about two and a half miles, and it was fully a mile wide. He found it took him forty minutes to walk briskly the full length of its main street. He was told that the population of the capital varied considerably at different seasons of the year. When the great paramount chiefs of the provinces came up with their retainers it might swell to as much as seventy thousand; but at other times it would sink to as low as half that number. Freeman, careful investigator that he was, warns us that these figures are largely conjectural, for he found it difficult to form even a rough estimate.

By the king's special permission, Freeman was allowed to visit the sacred suburb of Bantama, where the royal mausoleum of the Ashanti kings then

¹ An old Ashanti, once an attendant upon the kings, who conducted the writer through modern Kumasi, paused at certain spots and told how he had there witnessed just such scenes as Freeman described.

stood. The building was quite small, and of the usual style, situated in a little courtyard. Freeman was not allowed to enter the sacred enclosure—much less the actual chamber where the royal skeletons lay. Any one daring to go into the mausoleum, except the priests and custodians, and the king and his attendants when he came to offer the sacrifices, would have been put to death. Within, the royal skeletons lay in open brass coffins, each one in a sort of cubicle. The king made periodical visits to this ghastly chamber, and too often those visits were marked by the shedding of human blood. On such occasions it was not safe for people to venture too near, for the king was supposed to be in a frenzy of grief for his deceased ancestors, and, not knowing what he did, would suddenly order some bystander to be put to death. "Oh, if that little building had a tongue, what scenes of blood could it tell!" wrote Freeman. Probably he knew that Sir Charles M'Carthy's head lay inside.

As Freeman came away from Bantama, his botanical instinct very nearly got him into serious trouble. As he passed under some magnificent banyan trees he gazed intently at them, and his interpreter (being carried under them in a palanquin) stretched out his hand to protect his face from a hanging branch. The ever-watchful servants of a chief noticed this and thought that they were plucking leaves to make medicine to poison the king. Freeman had some difficulty in making people understand that he was interested in plants and trees and flowers. At last he showed Apoko the plates in botanical books he had with him, and this seemed to allay their suspicions.

Next day Freeman had the long-deferred interview with the king. Accompanied by his interpreter, the Fanti soldiers, and his carriers, he went to the palace. It was a vast, rambling place, covering several acres of ground, with courtyards and numerous buildings—nearly all of the type Freeman had already become familiar with in the town. Its huge outer wall was pierced with a gateway with large, folding gates. Although he had come by the king's invitation, Freeman had no little difficulty in gaining access to the royal presence, for at each successive gateway he was held up by officious underlings, who requested him to be seated and wait awhile. According to custom, Freeman had taken a chair with him—carried on the head of an attendant—and from time to time he needed it, for at some of the gateways to the successive courtyards he was detained as much as fifteen or twenty minutes. When at last a door opened to admit him into the next court, his carriers had great difficulty in fighting their way through with him, and often had quite a vigorous struggle with the door-keepers. Freeman knew how to be patient and courteous; but he also knew how to maintain his dignity. At last he was ushered into the presence of the monarch.

Kwaku Dua was sitting in a small inner court, surrounded by some of his large household. This time the missionary was allowed to shake the royal hand. Then, taking his seat on the chair his carriers had placed for him, he thanked the king for his present, entered into conversation as to the object of his visit, and referred to his letter of introduction from President Maclean. The conversation was carried on in that curious manner common in

West Africa, through an intermediary. The visitor addresses himself, not to the king, but to the linguist, and the linguist repeats the remarks to the king. Then the monarch replies, and the linguist repeats his master's words—he is the king's ear and mouth-piece. Unfortunately no record of that first interview has been preserved, and probably it was of very short duration. Freeman did, however, record that the king's manner was "pleasing and agreeable."

As a messenger of God, he had declined to give a "dash" to the Chief of Fomana, but his instinct led him to see that it would be discreet to comply with the custom in his dealings with the king. So on his return to his lodgings he dispatched messengers with a suitable present. To have done otherwise would have been to demean himself in the eyes of Kwaku Dua and the whole court, and Freeman felt that this expression of good-will would further the great object of his visit.

Next day Freeman had a long and serious conversation with Apoko, and explained to him, as the king's head linguist, that he desired to open schools and place a missionary in Kumasi, asking him to lay his petition before the king. The linguist replied that he would acquaint the king of this matter and get a speedy answer, adding, "The king believes that you wish to do him and his people good. We hope you will visit Kumasi again, for we shall always be glad to see you."

With past experience to guide him, Freeman knew better than to take this at face value. He was beginning to realize that another visit would be necessary before he could accomplish his purpose. Already the rains were beginning; there had been

frequent showers, the thermometer had fallen to seventy-five degrees Fahrenheit, and he had caught a violent cold. He comforted himself with the thought that, even if his present visit failed, it would serve as an introduction, and a second visit in a year's time would probably achieve its purpose. His peaceful stay in Kumasi would dispel the fears and suspicions that had possessed every heart; henceforth they would be more inclined to regard him as a friend.

Next morning, as the weather was even more threatening, Freeman again spoke to Apoko and desired him to go at once to the king and ask for an answer, as he purposed to start for the coast without delay. Apoko went to the palace, but returned with the answer that the king was busy and could not see the missionary that day. Freeman saw that it was hopeless to expect any promise; much patience and perseverance would be required before such a suspicious, jealous nature could be won over.

The next day was Sunday—Freeman's second in Kumasi—and again he conducted Christian worship for all his people, both morning and evening. That day he had the greatest joy he experienced while in Kumasi. He found that one of the Fanti traders living in the city had brought an Ashanti to the point of decision for Christ. Freeman examined the man most carefully, and, on being satisfied as to his sincerity, publicly baptized him in the presence of a number of Ashantis.

There was still no message from Kwaku Dua. Instead, in the early evening, there came such a torrential downpour of rain that in a short time the little yard of Freeman's quarters was flooded to a

depth of twelve to fifteen inches, and the thatch of his sleeping shed let in the rain almost in a stream upon his bed. Chilled with the cold and damp, he would have been glad of a cup of hot tea, but supplies were giving out ; he was entirely dependent on native food. Several of his carriers were unwell, and he resolved to leave Kumasi next day.

Early next morning he began to pack, and ordered his men to prepare themselves for the journey. Apoko, true to his promise, went again to the king, and in a couple of hours returned, accompanied by a host of attendants, linguists and messengers, with a farewell "dash" of gold dust (worth £9) and a slave ! There was also another "dash" for the attendants—and a message from the king. "His majesty knows that you cannot stay longer on account of the rains ; and as the thing you have mentioned to him requires much consideration, he cannot answer you in so short a time : but if you will come again, or send a messenger, after the rains, he will be prepared to answer you." Freeman bade the royal messengers say that he would certainly do as the king suggested. A little while after the messengers had departed, he went himself to the palace to take leave of the king. He was received with such courtesy as he had hardly expected, was invited to come again, and requested to convey the royal compliments to President Maclean.

Immediately on leaving the palace, Freeman got into his travelling chair, and began the long march to the coast, an escort of Ashanti troops accompanying him, until he plunged into the forest. When they had left him, he called the slave the king had given him and set him free. The poor fellow was dumb-

founded and bowed down with gratitude which he did not know how to express. During the "customs" of the previous week, he had been selected for slaughter, but for some reason had not been killed (probably because the king had chosen to give him to Freeman); and that very morning when he was brought out and sent to the missionary he felt sure that his end had come. On being liberated, he accompanied Freeman to the coast.

The return journey was unpleasant. Frequent heavy showers, and occasional tornadoes, made travelling difficult. The forest paths were wet and muddy, and the streams were swollen and dangerous. The carriers frequently slipped under their loads, and twice the chair-bearers fell. One man became so ill that he had to be carried. But the chiefs and people of the villages were most friendly; even the once troublesome Korinchi overwhelmed the missionary with kindness and promised to help him to the limit of his power when he came again, and the chief of Mansu said he would like to have a missionary in his town. Fortunately there were no delays, and the whole journey was accomplished in nine days. Several hours after nightfall on April 23rd, Freeman reached Cape Coast, and from the verandah of his mission house gazed out upon the sea shimmering in the silvery moonlight.

CHAPTER X

A YEAR OF HARD WORK

April 1839 to April 1840. Age 29-30.

ON his return from his first great journey into the interior Freeman had a few days' illness, but he soon recovered and immediately threw himself into numerous pressing duties. With his usual energy he superintended the finishing of the chapel at Anamabu, and a month later opened it for the worship of God. It was intended to seat between four and five hundred, but for the opening service it was estimated that at least a thousand were present, many of whom listened through the windows.

And then to Winneba. In less than a month that chapel also was completed. Then, "in the worst of weather," he went on to Accra, to see how matters stood, and was delighted to find that his young African teacher, John Martin, had got together a little band of Christians, and that the boys' school had over sixty pupils, and a newly opened girls' school had twenty. Then he journeyed to Domonasi, and dedicated the little sanctuary that had been built there. News that the rains were damaging the church at Cape Coast caused him to hurry back to make things secure.

Then there were signs of response in the village of Salt Pond, along the coast between Anamabu and Winneba. A little company of converts in this

place now asked Freeman to help them to build a chapel; they undertook to do all the work if he would show them how to do it. So as soon as the rains were over he obtained a piece of land from the chief and helped them to lay the foundations. But the fetich priests took alarm, and one morning when Freeman and his workmen went to continue excavating for the foundations, they found that the priests had placed in the hole a fetich-image in the hope that no one would dare to touch or remove it. Freeman appealed to the chief, but at first he declined to interfere. After a good deal of persuasion, however, he yielded; the image was removed and the work continued. When at last the church was finished, it was too small to hold the crowds that sought to enter for the opening service. A school was begun shortly afterwards.

Still the work spread. Chapels were built at Kommenda and Abasa, and schools were opened at Anamabu and at Mansu on the road to the Pra—a stepping-stone to Ashanti. Openings for evangelistic work also occurred at Dixcove and at Dunqua. The trading habits of the Fanti people were soon found to be a most important factor in the spread of the Gospel, for the Christians took the message of Christ with them and constantly opened up new places. Freeman was only too eager to follow up each opportunity they created.

Amid all these manifold labours, Freeman found time to think out more clearly the results of his visit to the Ashanti king. And the more he considered, the more sure he became that something had been achieved. Messages that from time to time reached him from Kumasi assured him that his

visit had done nothing but good ; suspicion had been dispelled—for no evils had befallen the town as a result of it ! Ashantis he had met in Kumasi now visited him in Cape Coast, and they told him that the king was eager to see him again. So he resolved to send occasional messages to the king, and thus keep the door open.

The full report of his expedition was forwarded to London, with an earnest prayer that it might awaken the response he so much desired. Before dispatching it he showed it to President Maclean, who was greatly impressed and added to it this striking note :

I hope that the missionary committee will be satisfied that there is such an opening as will justify them in pushing the advantage gained by your indefatigable zeal. I would almost go so far as to say that, if they have the means, a serious responsibility will rest upon them and on Christian England, if so glorious an opening into the interior of Africa—if so rich a harvest—be neglected. But I hope better things. And I do not despair of yet witnessing the peaceful triumph of the Cross, even in that stronghold of Satan, Kumasi.

So deep was the impression the report made upon the committee that they immediately had it published in full—a whole double number of the Society's monthly magazine being devoted to it—and an additional number of copies were printed for free distribution.

Monday, January 13th, 1840, was a red-letter day for Freeman. He was at the castle, discussing matters with President Maclean, when visitors were announced—people who had just landed from a ship lying at anchor. To Freeman's great joy he found that they were his long-looked-for reinforce-

ments, the Rev. Robert Brooking and the Rev. and Mrs Josiah Mycock. For two years he had laboured alone "in the deadly breach." All that time he had been planning the work with the hope of help being sent to him, and now his hopes were fulfilled.

The newly arrived workers brought to Freeman a letter from the committee urging him immediately to return to England for a short visit, to recuperate his health. He replied that for a few months it was quite out of the question. How could he leave his new colleagues, he asked, until they had had their "seasoning fever"? His first care must be to initiate them into conditions of life on the Gold Coast and pass on to them some of the experience that had cost him so much to acquire. Just then the Anamabu chapel was destroyed by fire and had to be restored, and chapels were in course of erection at Kommenda and Abasang, as well as the one at Salt Pond, all of which Freeman was anxious to finish before the next rainy season began. The newly purchased mission house at Cape Coast, too, needed immediate attention and a measure of alteration and reconstruction to fit it for the enlarged staff and the girls' school. Fortunately all these undertakings progressed without hindrance, and in three months the way seemed clear for Freeman to leave for England. He stationed Brooking at Accra, and the Mycocks at Cape Coast. Then, at the beginning of April 1840, he embarked for England, taking De Graft with him by the special permission of the committee.

Freeman had spent two years and three months in West Africa—a period longer than that of all his five predecessors together. In that time he had

superintended the erection of seven chapels, baptized over five hundred converts, raised several hundreds of pounds from the English residents for his work, gathered two hundred and twenty-five boys and girls into schools, organized Christian communities in a number of villages, and had opened the road to Ashanti. There was, however, one notable omission—he had made no progress toward acquiring the Fanti language, though he had always intended to do so. With such a burden of work upon his shoulders, can we blame him? It would not be easy, in all the annals of missionary enterprise, to find a young missionary who had more to show for his first two and a quarter years of service.

CHAPTER XI

FIVE MONTHS IN ENGLAND

June to December 1840. Age 30-31.

EARLY in June 1840, Freeman reached England. The voyage had done him good and he was in fine form. He had not the slightest intention of "resting." His heart was too full for that. On the way home he had had time to think out plans for the extension of his mission, and within a week of landing he startled the missionary secretaries by an appeal for six new missionaries—four for Ashanti and two for the Coast—to go back with him in the autumn. To his great joy he found fullest sympathy with his project. His Ashanti "Journal," published in the magazine of the society, had done its work and prepared the ground for him; and the committee resolved to respond to the call. Freeman found himself the lion of the hour. Everyone wanted to see the man who had stood before the terrible Ashanti king, and to hear from his own lips the story he had come home to tell.

The chief difficulty was that of finance. The Society had a depleted exchequer and heavy commitments in other parts of the world. It was therefore resolved to appeal for five thousand pounds as a special fund for the Gold Coast and Ashanti Mission. This appeal was powerfully reinforced by a message from President Maclean that arrived by the

next ship from the Coast. In it that distinguished administrator wrote :

The experience of every succeeding year convinces me more and more that, even from a political point of view, the establishment of a mission and schools in Ashanti would be of infinite value, for these would eventually form our truest and best safeguard against a revival of those quarrels and wars betwixt the Ashanti and Fanti tribes—which, as matters at present stand, a very small spark might rekindle. Although our relations with Ashanti have certainly been, for the last nine years, on a better footing than during any former period . . . yet they have been a constant subject of anxiety to me, knowing as I do the people with whom I have to deal. I only hope that, as neither Mr Freeman nor myself has ever attempted to understate the difficulties which must be encountered in carrying Christianity and education into the interior, the Wesleyan Missionary Committee will not allow their zeal to be quenched, or their endeavours to slacken, when these obstacles come to be felt and fought against.

Freeman immediately threw himself into a campaign to arouse the home Church. The appeal, enforced by his enthusiasm and impressive personality, secured immediate and ready response. With De Graft he visited some of the principal towns of England and Ireland; money flowed in, and in a few months the necessary sum had been raised. Sir Robert and Lady Harland received their erstwhile "botanist and head gardener" as an honoured guest at Orwell Park, and Lady Harland had a special conservatory built for a valuable collection of tropical plants he had brought for her. Knowing as he did the strength of the "dash" system in West Africa, and understanding that a gift is regarded, not as a tip or bribe, but as an expression of goodwill,

Freeman advised the committee to send a suitable present for the King of Ashanti, and at his suggestion they had a phaeton specially made for him. The carriage-builder submitted this carriage to the inspection of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort, who interested themselves in this unusual project.

The appeal for men, too, fell upon responsive ears. Freeman did not minimize the risks involved; indeed, the home Church was well aware that all who went to West Africa took their lives in their hands. Notwithstanding the perils, there was a noble response. There were many offers, and five men who seemed suitable were chosen. Freeman's experience had convinced him of the importance of having women missionaries for work among women, and he saw to it that two of his recruits were married men,¹ and he himself married, on November 25th, Lucinda Cowan, daughter of a minister then living in Bedminster.

Six days later the whole party "farewelled" at the Great Queen Street Chapel in London. It was a deeply impressive gathering, for every one present knew that in all human probability some, if not most, of those nine missionaries would never return to their native land. Next day they received final instructions from the committee. One point insisted upon was that, as soon as possible after landing, they should seriously devote themselves to learning the vernacular. They were cautioned, too, on the point of economy, for five thousand pounds would not last long, and the committee could not undertake to support the

¹ They were the Rev. and Mrs Thompson Hesk, the Rev. and Mrs Samuel A. Shipman, and the Revs. William Thackwray, Charles Walden, and John Watson.

mission when that money was gone. On December 10th they embarked at Gravesend. "Never was a missionary party dismissed from the shores of England with a more intense feeling of interest and sympathy," said the official notice in the Society's magazine. "Thousands of prayers have been offered in behalf of these missionaries and their undertaking."

Their vessel was the *Osborne*—the very brig that had carried Freeman out three years before. What memories that well-remembered ship would awaken in his mind !

CHAPTER XII

NEW HOPES, NEW SORROWS

1841. Age 31.

IN the dim light of dawn, on February 1st, 1841, Freeman and his little band of recruits stood on the deck of the *Osborne* to catch a first glimpse of Cape Coast Castle. As the sun rose in the eastern sky, the vessel drew near enough for them to descry the mission house on the little hill near the shore. Great was Freeman's joy at being able to bring this band of new missionaries to the land he loved. He stood on the deck, strong in the assurance of his call to the work, his mind full of plans for its development. But he could not banish the remembrance of that day, little more than three years before, when he had stood on that self-same deck and gazed for the first time on Cape Coast. Then, as now, a bride had stood by his side—and he glanced at the grim old castle, in the courtyard of which his first wife lay. He looked down upon his bride, the courageous little woman who, knowing full well the risks she was undertaking, had dared to unite her life with his. But Freeman was not afraid: there was a healthy house for them to live in; he knew the dangers to avoid and the safeguards to adopt. The future was as radiant with hope as the morning sky with sunshine.

There was a tremendous welcome when they

stepped ashore. Amid "amazing expressions of popular and most vehement congratulations" they were led straight from the beach to the castle, through the lower gateway to the courtyard, the soldiers presenting arms and having no little difficulty in keeping back the eager crowds.

A few days later, the Fanti Christians organized a great demonstration of affectionate welcome for Freeman and his recruits. Large numbers came in from the adjacent out-stations, and a great procession invaded the mission compound. The new missionaries, hearing the sound of singing, ran out on to the verandah to see what could be the matter, and were amazed at the sight before them, as the procession, two abreast, slowly filed into the wide space behind the house. It seemed as though that procession would never end. The people continued to pour in until the available space was absolutely crowded with black faces thrown into relief against brightly coloured garments. There was an address of welcome, and the inevitable present—sheep, goats, pigs, fruit, and all sorts of oddments. "It has been a day I shall hold in everlasting remembrance!" wrote one of the new missionaries. "It was too much for Mr Freeman's kind and tender heart; he was obliged to retire, for he could not bear it."

One of Freeman's first tasks was to station his new workers. He took Mr and Mrs Hesk to Anamabu. Mr and Mrs Shipman went to Accra; Walden was stationed at Cape Coast, and Thackwray, when opportunity offered, went up country to Domonasi, with a view to beginning a model farm; Brooking moved up to Mansu as a first step towards Kumasi.

De Graft (who had been appointed an "assistant-missionary") took up his old work at Winneba, and Watson was to develop the work at Dixcove (seventy miles west of Cape Coast), Kommenda, and the outposts in that direction. The Mycocks were to remain at headquarters, and when the rains were over Freeman intended taking Brooking and Walden to Ashanti in the confident hope of being allowed to station them there.

But unforeseen difficulties arose. Mrs Mycock was in very poor health, and the doctor—an African practitioner—urged that she should be sent home before the rains came on. So she and her husband returned to England. Soon the "seasoning fevers" began; every member of the party went down, and one or two were in grave danger. Hesk became a constant source of anxiety; he seems to have been suffering from a touch of sun. Freeman packed him off for a month's voyage along the coast, and strove to teach all his workers the duty of caution in all matters likely to affect health; Mrs Freeman wrote out a lengthy statement of what to do in case of fever, and a copy of it was given to each missionary.

Amid crowding duties Freeman wrote, "My life has been an incessant whirl." In those busy, anxious weeks he found his devoted wife a tower of strength; she was his counsellor and constant companion, and often she accompanied him as he travelled from station to station. There seemed to be every reason to hope that she would stand the climate splendidly; indeed her health appeared to be better than in England, and the government surgeon at the castle pronounced her "one of the best subjects for a tropical climate that he had ever

known." She took the people to her heart, and soon they gave her a Fanti name meaning "The Negroes' Friend."

Then came news that Thackwray was ill at Domonasi, and Freeman immediately set off through the bush to see him. Thoughtless exposure to the sun, and a tendency to run most serious risks, had brought on a bad attack of malaria; he was brought to the coast, and on June 4th passed away.

Mrs Freeman now began to show signs of failing health. Reduced by her "seasoning fever," and her strength undermined by constant labour and nursing others, she was feeling the strain. Thackwray's death was a great shock to her, and brought on a "nervous fever." The doctor advised that she should be sent to England to recuperate her strength for the ordeal of motherhood that was before her.

Just then came news that Walden was seriously ill. In spite of incessant warnings, he had persisted in exposing himself to the midday sun without protection. He had a slight sunstroke; yet even this warning was ignored, and two days later he took a journey by basket at high noon—again without any protection. A serious sunstroke resulted, and he reached his destination in an unconscious condition. He was carried back to Cape Coast a dying man; blackwater fever developed, and on July 29th he passed away.

When the dying Walden was carried into the mission house at Cape Coast, Freeman, alarmed for his wife's safety, was afraid to let her know of his condition, lest the new anxiety should be too much for her. Watson, too, was lying in another room, with a fever that caused severe sickness. A ship

chanced to be about to sail for Accra ; so, explaining that the doctor thought that the short voyage would do her good, Freeman had his wife carried on board in a travelling basket—leaving Brooking to watch over Walden and Watson. Freeman himself was far from well, having had ague and a touch of malaria.

For a time the change of air in Accra seemed to do Mrs Freeman good, but when she at last heard of Walden's death, she began to fail. Just then Freeman had another attack of fever, and his wife, feeling stronger for a few days, felt rather uncertain about going to England. It was the last fitful flame of a dying fire ; and in spite of all that it was possible to do for her, she passed away on August 25th—less than seven months after landing—and the bereaved husband was left to face a great sorrow where he had looked for great joy. That same day her body was laid to rest in the courtyard of Fort James.

Three days later Mrs Hesk died at Anamabu. It soon became evident that Mr Hesk would have to go home. His "debility and distressing nervous excitement" were increased by the death of his wife, and on September 17th he sailed for England.

Of the twelve missionaries, only five were left. In seven tragic months Freeman had faced one disappointment after another, until that heaviest blow of all. His plans were foiled, his purposes frustrated, his hopes dashed to the ground. But, broken-hearted as he was, his faith in God never faltered. He wrote, "My soul is borne above the water-floods, and my strength is equal to my day. The Son of God is with me in the fire and keeps my mind in perfect peace."

Freeman's greatest anxiety was lest the death of so many missionaries should deter others from coming out. He was afraid that the losses would "all be attributed to the climate," whereas, in reality, several of them were due to personal carelessness. President Maclean wrote to the committee of the missionary society in support of Freeman's contention. He urged the committee not to be cast down by their losses, and concluded by suggesting that, as a rule, it would be best to send out younger men, "whose habits and opinions on the subject of health had not become fixed," and would listen to the advice of those with more experience. Both Freeman and the President had grasped the essential fact that the climate of West Africa is trying to a degree, and that only those who scrupulously observe the necessary precautions can hope to survive, but that, with due care, there is no reason why many persons of normal health should not live for many years and do useful work.

CHAPTER XIII

CLEARING A PATH THROUGH THE PRIMEVAL FOREST

November to December 1841. Age 32.

FREEMAN'S mind now began to turn once more to Ashanti. He had received a very friendly letter from the king, and he was anxious to station Brook- ing in Kumasi before the rainy season came on. An unexpected opportunity presented itself. In the autumn of 1841 there landed at Cape Coast the two Ashanti princes who had been handed over to President Maclean as hostages for his treaty with Ashanti.¹ We have already seen how these young men had been sent to England for education, and had become Christians. Now, after more than ten years' absence, they were to return to Ashanti. It occurred to Maclean that it would be an excellent thing to send these men to Kumasi under the care of Freeman, and by so doing further the objects both of government and the missionary society. Freeman instantly closed with the governor's suggestion, for he saw that it would greatly increase his chances of planting a mission in the Ashanti capital.

The expedition would be a large and important one, and would need a great deal of transport. The king sent down a body of a hundred and sixty Ashanti carriers, that the young princes might be

¹ See pp. 33 and 55-6.

suitably attended on their return home. They had a great deal of luggage, including presents for the king from Queen Victoria and the British Government. Freeman also needed a good many carriers, for he had to see that Brooking was supplied with all necessary equipment and with goods for barter when he settled in Kumasi. Then there was the phaeton—the gift of the committee to Kwaku Dua ; it would be no light task to convey such a thing along the narrow footpaths of the forest, for almost the whole way the dense undergrowth would have to be cut back to make room for it. Freeman had his interpreter and cook-boy, and the governor gave him an escort of a sergeant and half a dozen African soldiers. When the expedition set out from Cape Coast, on November 6th, Freeman found himself in command of over three hundred men.

Early that morning the whole company mustered in the courtyard of the castle. In the presence of the missionaries and other Europeans, President Maclean read to the two princes—William Kwantamisa and John Ansa—a “letter of instructions” that he had drawn up for their guidance. In this remarkable document he reminded them of the change that education and Christianity had made in their own lives, and *inter alia* urged that :

. . . by your example and influence your countrymen may be induced to look with a favourable eye upon the introduction among them of Christianity and Civilization. . . . From what you have seen and learned, you are fully competent to explain to your uncle,¹ the King of Ashanti, the innumerable blessings which will surely attend the introduction of *practical* Christianity

¹ It is difficult to understand how this could be. They appear to have been first cousins, not nephews, of Kwaku Dua.

into your country . . . and it will be your duty to use every favourable opportunity of enforcing these great truths. But, above all, you must prove by the purity and correctness of your conduct that Christianity is not a mere empty profession. . . .

It is a source of much satisfaction to me to know that, in returning to your own country, you are to be accompanied by two Christian missionaries—the Rev. Messrs Freeman and Brooking, who are about to attempt, by permission of the king, the establishment of a Christian Mission at Coomassie. To these gentlemen I desire that you will pay the greatest deference, and when you reach Ashanti, you will pay the greatest attention to their personal comforts and use every exertion to forward their views. . . .

You must, under the direction of Messrs Freeman and Brooking, continue your studies, and never allow a day to pass without devoting a portion of it, first to your religious duties, and next to the perusal of those books with which you have been provided. . . . Exert yourselves in the noble cause of Christianity and civilization, and prove that you are not unworthy of the trouble, care and expense that have been lavished upon you.

The president handed a copy of this letter to each of the princes, and advised them to make a habit of reading it frequently to refresh their minds with its contents.

Before the expedition had gone many miles, Freeman began to encounter the difficulties inevitable in taking a carriage on such a journey. The paths were so narrow that it was necessary for a party of men, armed with hatchets and cutlasses, to go in advance to widen it. The carriers, unaccustomed to pulling or pushing, insisted on carrying the phaeton on their heads; so the wheels, shafts, and other detachable parts were removed, and the whole thing carried in the manner so characteristic

of Africa. Two days of that sort of thing were, however, more than enough; the wheels were replaced, and with infinite patience Freeman persuaded the men to draw and push the carriage along. This method proved scarcely less difficult than the other, for the newly widened path was rough and full of snags that might easily damage the frail vehicle beyond repair. But Freeman was not the man to be beaten in a task he had undertaken; he sent his chair-carriers on, and told his companions to go ahead at a comfortable pace, while he himself walked slowly beside the carriage, guiding, helping, and encouraging his men—and, incidentally, doing his best to preserve it from being scratched or otherwise damaged by the undergrowth of the forest. A tornado on the fourth day increased the difficulty by making the path slippery.

Then the chief of Yankumasi came to the rescue. In full state he received the tired travellers to his town, and on finding how difficult a task Freeman had on hand, voluntarily sent a large party of men in advance to clear the path and remove fallen trees and other obstacles, or to cut a way round such as were immovable. When the expedition started again the chief himself escorted Freeman, to direct operations and do all in his power to facilitate progress through his territory; he took his musicians with him to enliven the tedium of the march. Freeman wrote :

The appearance of so large a body of men, laden with packages, shouting as they wound their way among the gigantic forest trees, over hill and vale—the sound of the chief's rustic band, with its drums which were played nearly the whole day—and the well-known sound of the

axe and bill-hook clearing some of the smaller trees out of the path, combined to form a scene of a very romantic and exciting description.

So slow was the progress that Mansu was not reached until noon on the sixth day. Freeman was delighted with the work Brooking had done during the few months he had been stationed there. Until Freeman passed through the town in 1839 no missionary had ever visited it; now he was greeted by school children singing Christian hymns. Gabri, chief of Mansu, escorted Freeman for a few miles, as the chief of Yankumasi had done, and sent forward a company of his men to clear the next stage of the road for the carriage. But the way was rugged and difficult, and led "over steep banks and rocks, down ravines and over rivers." There was incessant rain; Freeman was wet through every day, and suffered from violent attacks of neuralgia. It took a fortnight to reach the Pra, and of the seventy miles he had not ridden more than ten—he had walked with his men day after day.

The phaeton was ferried across the river on two canoes lashed together, and with no little difficulty was landed on the Ashanti shore. There a messenger was waiting with a letter of welcome from the king. Soon the expedition was met by another royal messenger with fifty men to help to clear the way. They were a very welcome help in crossing the steep and rugged Adansi Hills; and with toil and difficulty the carriage was carried safely between the lofty forest trees and through dense undergrowth, surrounded by nearly two hundred Fantis and Ashantis, the forest ringing with their shouts of joy as one obstacle after another was surmounted without

mishap. Freeman's heart thrilled at the sight of Fantis and Ashantis—so long implacable foes—working together at a common task.

A warm welcome awaited Freeman at Fomana, where he had been so long detained on his first visit. Korinchi was no longer there; the king had deposed him for some turbulent conduct in the royal presence. Fear and suspicion had given place to confidence. In every village the people turned out to welcome the two young princes and to gaze in wonder on that strange present for their king that the carriers were pushing through the forest. Scarcely one of them had ever before seen such things as wheels,¹ and great was their astonishment to see them revolve!

But amid the toil and excitement Freeman had his hours of loneliness and sorrow. "Memory seems over-officious," we find him writing. At night, in his hammock, he could not forget the wife and comrades he had so recently lost. He was feeling weary with the journey and the responsibilities upon his shoulders. What would people in England say if his journey failed?

Harmattan was blowing; there were repeated showers; Brooking was ill for some days; Freeman himself was suffering from fatigue and worry. But he was in the very prime of his manhood, and his indomitable will overcame all obstacles. On this journey he slept under mosquito curtains and felt the relief from those vicious little pests, though he had no suspicion that their bite was the one and only cause of malaria. Sometimes he had to pause for a day or two to rest the men, and he utilized

¹ Wheels were absolutely unknown in pagan Africa until they were introduced by white men.

the time in preaching, and in naturalist researches—chasing butterflies and insects, and collecting botanical specimens. His task was now becoming easier, for the king had set large numbers of men to make a broad road for the carriage, and rough bridges had been thrown across the rivers and numerous streams—the first attempt at real bridge-making that Freeman had ever seen in the interior of Africa. “Who knows to what this may lead?” he wrote. “Our bringing the carriage is the cause of a better road being made than has ever been seen before. Good roads greatly promote civilization, and are a universal indication of national improvement.” King’s messengers were constantly arriving with messages or presents, and at last Freeman and his fellow-travellers drew near their destination. Kwaku Dua appointed December 13th as the day of their entry into Kumasi. It was evident that he was planning another great reception.

CHAPTER XIV

PLANTING THE CHURCH IN KUMASI

December 1841 to February 1842. Age 32.

KUMASI thrilled with excitement as Apoko and companies of royal messengers led Freeman and the princes through the crowded streets, followed by the strangest conveyance the town had ever seen. In the great market-place there was the same ceremony as before, but on an even larger scale. Freeman counted no less than a hundred and twenty-five state umbrellas—nearly double the number he had seen on his first visit. The return of the young princes to the city of their fathers increased the importance of the occasion. They stood one on either side of Freeman as the great procession of chiefs and retainers swept slowly past; and when the king himself drew near, he paused for several minutes and surveyed them from head to foot but did not speak to them. Freeman wrote :

He was under the influence of considerable emotion. It was indeed a noble scene. Yes; the King of Ashanti is capable of feeling those sensations which delight the heart on a happy and auspicious meeting after long separation !

In those moments the messenger of Christ realized that behind that proud, dark bosom there was a human heart, and that even in blood-stained Kumasi men were not strangers to human emotions.

On the following day Freeman and his companions visited the palace to present the numerous gifts they had brought. Freeman, in the name of President Maclean, formally introduced to Kwaku Dua the two princes¹ and Mr Brooking. Then the carriage was drawn into the courtyard and presented to the monarch, who eyed it with curiosity, while its uses were explained. Freeman told him that Her Most Gracious Majesty, the Queen of England, had seen it, and Kwaku Dua exclaimed with delight: "The Queen of England is Queen of Queens of the White people, and I am King of Kings of the Black people: now we have carriages alike! It is very good!" Freeman explained to him that it was sent by the missionary society in England as a token of friendship and goodwill towards himself and his people, in the hope that he would use it, and that it would lead him to improve his country by making good roads—for that would be one of the greatest means of promoting civilization and national advancement. With true African dignity, but with obvious delight, the king accepted that extraordinary gift, and expressed his thanks. He also desired Freeman to convey his thanks to Queen Victoria and to President Maclean for all the kindness they had shown to the princes during the ten years they had been held as hostages. Their safe return, he said, satisfied both king and people of the good intentions of the British government, and gave a death-blow to whatever suspicions may have lingered in their minds. Freeman, as he looked on that remarkable scene, "felt

¹ The two princes were lodged with Freeman, not in the palace or with their relations. They remained with him during his stay in Kumasi.

amply rewarded for the long journey on foot, and for all the care and anxiety" he had undergone. He hoped that, by the blessing of God, his toil might mark the beginning of better roads through that forest-mantled kingdom, and he prayed that they might prove highways for the Gospel.

Next day the presents from Queen Victoria and other people in England were laid before the king,¹ and he and his courtiers gazed upon them with delight. First there were the queen's own gifts—a fine portrait of herself and a picture of Windsor Castle, both framed. Then followed presents from certain English Methodists—cutlery from Sheffield, boots from Macclesfield, an insect-proof deed-box from Mr Chubb (founder of the great firm of safe-makers), glass-ware, cloths, silks, caps, and even some ready-made ladies' dresses for the queen-mother and the royal wives.

As Freeman came to understand the Ashantis better, he yearned the more to win them for Christ. He knew what Christ could do for those fine, tall, self-reliant people—so strong, so virile, so capable of high things. The cruelties he witnessed almost daily made him the more earnest to win them from the dark beliefs that lay behind the human sacrifices and other wrongs. Time after time, on the death of some chief or person of importance, sacrifices were offered in the public streets close to his lodgings. He had a talk with one of the executioners—a youth of sixteen or eighteen years of age—and learned that he had put to death no less than eighty men and

¹ The queen's gifts should have been presented before the phaeton but there was unavoidable delay in getting them unpacked, and the king was in a hurry to see the carriage.

women. Freeman shuddered at the thought of a youth taking so many human lives. He felt that Christianity and civilized government were the only cure for such evils. Yes—he coupled the two; and in spite of certain critics who protested against his connection with government, he believed that, for the enlightenment of Africa, missions and government must work hand in hand.

Freeman's own mind was expanding; his methods of presenting his message were developing. We find that, during this second visit to Kumasi, in the Sunday services he adopted a new method of preaching. "The discourse was conversational," he writes, "and many interesting and vital questions were answered by the people." He sought to draw his congregations by asking them questions and developing a general conversation about the things of God; and so successful was this method that he used it constantly.

One evening, ten days after his arrival, Freeman received a message that the king wished to speak with him. Accompanied by Brooking and the princes, he went at once to the palace and was shown into an inner courtyard where the king was sitting alone, save for his linguists and messengers. None of the chiefs or palace officials were permitted to be present, for Kwaku Dua desired this interview to be private. There, in the yellow light of torches, dipped from time to time in palm-oil, the messenger of Christ sat for two hours with the great Ashanti monarch, and they conversed with the utmost freedom.

As they sat together in that stronghold of heathenism, Freeman explained to the king the motives

that had led President Maclean and the British government to send the two princes to England for education. He spoke of the kindly feelings the people of England cherished towards the king and his people, and of their anxiety to evangelize and civilize the Ashanti nation. He spoke of England's wealth and power and greatness, and the young princes broke in, eagerly telling of the things they themselves had seen, and of the wonders of the arts and sciences, and of the rapid travel by trains and steam-packets. Then Freeman again took up the conversation and, like a true Victorian, "placed Christianity in its proper position" as the true source of national prosperity. He explained the antipathy Englishmen felt towards slavery, and their efforts to suppress the traffic in human beings. Kwaku Dua listened in amazement to the story of the emancipation of slaves in British colonies and of the English people paying twenty million pounds to their owners to set them free. "No man can be a slave in England. He is free the moment his feet tread British soil"—such words sounded strange in the ears of the Ashanti king, almost too strange to be true. Freeman drove home his message, and spoke of "the magnificent sacrifices and exertions England had made, and was still making, against slavery and the slave trade."

The king was deeply moved by such a story of voluntary renunciation, and he began to excuse his own conduct. "I never allow my people to sell *Ashantis* into foreign slavery," he said. "The small tribes of the interior fight with each other, take prisoners, and sell them for slaves: and as I know nothing about them, I allow my people to buy and

sell them as they please—they are of no use for anything else but slaves ; they are stupid and little better than beasts.”

Like a rapier-thrust came Freeman's reply : “ You sell them to the Dutch at Elmina, and they train them and make them valuable ! That is proof that you could train and use them in Ashanti, and that would be more beneficial to your country than selling them out of it.” Freeman—the son of an African—was pleading for the down-trodden people of his father's race. Slavery always stirred him to the depths.

The torches were still flaming and smoking : the king was getting more and more interested in this strange visitor with his strange views of life, and Freeman saw that the time had come to raise the subject nearest to his heart—the planting of a mission in Kumasi. He reminded the king of the request he had made on his former visit—for permission to open a school—and explained that he had brought Brooking for that purpose. The two young princes joined in the conversation, and reminded the king what schools had done for them. With force and conviction Freeman urged his plea ; he begged for land, and for the king's permission to build a mission house and a school. At first Kwaku Dua was silent and hesitated to take such a step ; but at last he spoke. “ I will protect you,” he said, “ and I will give you land on which to build a house.”

It was nearly midnight when that audience ended, and Freeman returned to his quarters to pour out his thanks to God. He felt that something had been accomplished.

Two days after this interview was Christmas Day, and Freeman felt that by observing it in the traditional English manner he could explain its true meaning and set all Kumasi talking about it. So a feast was prepared, and the little band of a dozen Christians sat down to a dinner of roast beef, and the cook-boy even contrived to provide a plum-pudding. Hearing of the unusual event, the king sent two sheep and some palm-wine, and a number of chiefs and other Ashantis gathered round to see the "white men's feast." Among them was a fine, handsome young man, who was the second in possible succession to the throne; surrounded by his retainers, he sat quietly by to watch and listen. Of course there was a service, and Freeman gave Brooking the pleasure of telling the wondrous story of the Incarnation. So great was the interest aroused that on the following day (Sunday) a very large congregation gathered to hear more, one of the king's sons and several chiefs and members of the royal household being present. Freeman again adopted the conversational method of discourse, and was delighted at the attention with which it was followed. "Even those who may at some future day fill the throne came to hear of the salvation of God," he wrote. "My most sanguine expectations never presented to my mind scenes like this when I was in Kumasi in 1839. God be praised for these tokens of His presence."

During the days following Christmas two incidents occurred that showed clearly the high honour and regard in which the king held Freeman. The first was an invitation to a royal banquet at the palace. Probably from the two young princes, Kwaku Dua

got to know how a great feast is conducted in England, and he made arrangements accordingly, even borrowing the missionaries' cook to prepare the necessary dishes. The banquet was held under the shade of umbrellas in one of the sunlit courts of the palace. Before the food was served, Freeman, alert to every opportunity for presenting the Christian message, explained to the king that, as food and all good things are the gift of God, it is meet to ask His blessing on the use of them; and then, with the king's consent, the interpreter said grace in the Twi language.

The royal servants placed on the tables successive courses of soup, fish, roast mutton, chickens, boiled yams and plantains and beans, all very well served. The king himself carved a sheep roasted whole and served in a huge dish of polished brass. Meanwhile, a band of Ashanti musicians, with flutes, drums, triangles, cymbals, clarinets, and a French horn, added music to the festal scene.

After the feast, as a very special sign of favour, the guests were conducted to a building within the palace known as the "Stone House" or "The Fort" in which the king's treasures were kept. There on tables lay thirty-one gold-handled swords, calabashes overlaid with gold, and all kinds of gold ornaments, large pieces of rock-gold—weighing several ounces each—and a great number of gold chains. There were boxes of native workmanship, covered with velvet and studded with large, round-headed tacks of gold or silver. In addition to these evidences of Ashanti skill, there were such European things as timepieces with glass shades, wine-glasses, cut-glass tumblers, and many other articles that in

one way or another had found their way to Kumasi. The king even showed them a well-stocked medicine-chest which Freeman felt sure had formerly belonged to the ill-fated M'Carthy—though he did not remind his host of that unhappy incident.

While thus displaying his treasures, Kwaku Dua spoke of the pleasure it gave him to welcome Freeman.

In days that are past, I could hardly believe that the English would take so much trouble in teaching the people of Africa [he said]. When you were here before, I could hardly feel satisfied about it. But I have no fears now. Since your last visit you have been to England and have returned to Kumasi to see me again, bringing my two nephews with you. I thank you for your kindness; I am fully satisfied that your object in coming here is to do good.

When the ceremonies ended the king sent his band to conduct the missionaries through the town to their lodgings. There in the quiet of his own room Freeman sat down, and in his mind reviewed the extraordinary scene he had witnessed. He wrote in his diary :

The more I thought on it, the more did my astonishment increase. I had seen the proud sanguinary monarch of Ashanti, whose smile is life and whose frown is death . . . surrounded by his warlike chieftains, sitting at table, and eating with Christian missionaries. . . . The finishing stroke was given to the splendid picture by the presence of two native princes, enjoying all the advantages of a liberal and religious education, and under the influence of feelings favourable to the introduction of Christianity into their country.

Freeman was to receive an even more surprising token of the king's friendship. One afternoon early

in the New Year he was informed that Kwaku Dua desired to see him, and shortly afterwards royal messengers came to conduct him and his companions to the palace. In an inner courtyard he found the monarch sitting in one of the alcoves, surrounded by the queen-mother, several princesses, and several of his wives. One side of the court was occupied by a large number of royal wives, with their children; on the opposite side sat the chief eunuch, with little boys in attendance upon him. Freeman instantly perceived that the occasion was a great one, for all, from the king downwards, were wearing their richest garments. Even the king's sandals were heavily laden with gold and silver.

On entering, Freeman, Brooking, and the princes were conducted to seats opposite the king, and attended by a score of pages, each bearing a gold-handled sword. With the exception of the two princes, no adult males of the royal family were present. Not even Osai Kujo, the heir-apparent, was permitted to witness the scene. Apoko and the other linguists were excluded because of the presence of the king's wives, no male Ashanti being permitted to look at them.¹

All now being seated, the king rose and walked over to Freeman and his companions. Greeting them "in a very cordial and affectionate manner," he told them that no Ashanti chief or captain was ever allowed to be present on occasions like this; he never allowed them the honour of meeting him in the company of his wives. He was giving Free-

¹ When they went out into the town, every man was obliged to turn away or retire into a house until they had passed. The ringing of a bell always gave notice of their approach.

man and Brooking this honour as the best means he knew of testifying his satisfaction at the safe and happy return of the princes, and the kindness which had been shown both to them and to himself.

Several of the king's wives and young women of the royal family, "laden with gold ornaments," danced round the court "in rapid but graceful succession." Then Kwaku Dua himself began to dance, explaining as he did so that it was not usual for a King of Ashanti to dance before his wives in the presence of strangers; he now did so in honour of the Queen of England. Then the queen-mother joined with others in dancing, at the same time singing war-songs in honour of the king and his ancestors, and proclaiming his "strong names." Again the king danced, this time joining with his wives and princesses; then, taking a splendid gold-handled sword, he stepped up to Freeman and shook hands very warmly with him, while the women sang in chorus:

*The Englishman lives in Sebu Seki.
To-day he has come to visit the king.
The king has danced before him
In the presence of his wives,
And has done what he has never done
To any European before. He has walked up
And shaken hands with him!*

This amazing exhibition of African goodwill and friendship continued until after sunset, and then in the splendid tropical twilight, the missionaries retired, utterly bewildered by their reception.

Freeman now felt that the time had come to press for a definite grant of land as a site for a mission house and school, and on the following day,

at his request, the king granted him an interview. Those two clear-headed and able men, representing two widely different types of civilization and thought, sat together and with the utmost freedom talked out the subject at issue. The king himself seemed willing to receive a missionary; but it soon became evident that some chiefs had raised objections to a school, and, thoughtful man that he was, Kwaku Dua wanted to discuss various points. One objection was that education would make people rebellious and would therefore be a danger to the state. Even Apoko, friendly as he was to Freeman, had grave doubts on this point. Freeman freely admitted that education, like all other good things, might be wrongly used, and that there probably would be a few who would abuse it; but he contended that the general tendency would be to make the people more dutiful. The king seemed satisfied, and replied that he would again consult the chiefs.

Freeman was beginning to discover that the Ashanti king was not the absolute despot that Europeans commonly believed, and that he was obliged to consult his great chiefs on subjects that affected them all. The kingdom, in fact, was a confederacy of a dozen small kingdoms, each ruled by its own hereditary "Omanhene" or paramount chief, but federated for mutual advantage. Each omanhene was more or less independent in his own domain. Usually they were—and are to-day—men of no mean power and ability, having numerous chiefs under them. Their position was very similar to that of the great Saxon earls in the days of Edward the Confessor. The king was primarily the omanhene of the Kumasi chiefdom, but he was also recognized

as overlord of the whole nation. Freeman had already made the acquaintance of one of these paramount chiefs—Korinchi, the omanhene of Adansi. He was now to have close contact with another—the paramount chief of Juabin, who at that time chanced to be a woman.

One day Freeman received a message from Kwaku Dua that his kinswoman, Seiwa, the paramount chief of Juabin, was ill, and it was thought that the white man's medicines might heal her. So, at the king's request, and accompanied by royal messengers and carriers, he set off on the thirty-mile journey through the forest to Juabin. The old lady's malady was of long standing and was vaguely described as a "severe nervous affection . . . with intense pain"; she had lost the use of her left arm, probably through a stroke. Freeman had received no medical training; but he had a chest of medicines, and had acquired some measure of skill in using them. For a week he stayed in Juabin, and appears to have had success in relieving Seiwa's pain. What was perhaps of greater importance, he won her confidence, and she begged him to visit her every time he came to Ashanti. When he left Juabin, Seiwa, with her daughter and several chiefs and attendants, escorted him to the entrance of the town to bid him farewell. As a sidelight on Freeman's physical strength and powers of endurance, it is interesting to note that he walked the whole way back to Kumasi and accomplished the journey in nine hours without feeling very weary at the end.

Freeman's fame as a healer at once spread, and sick people began to ask his help, including one of the greatest chiefs in the town who was stricken

with "a bilious fever." When Freeman first went to visit this man, he was impressed by the attitude of the slaves in the courtyards through which he passed. "I shall never forget their countenances," he wrote; "they watched my features with most intense interest to ascertain, if possible, whether I thought their master would recover; and when I told them I had great hopes, their joy was very great." They knew that if their master died, a number of them would be sacrificed to accompany him into the world of spirits. Under such circumstances Freeman spared no pains; he felt that he was playing for the lives of these defenceless slaves, and he was rewarded by the recovery of his patient.

At several interviews with the king, Freeman had already spoken to him very earnestly about the cruel wrong of human sacrifice: he had told him most emphatically that the practice was hateful in the eyes of Europeans, and, above all, displeasing to the great God. Kwaku Dua sought to excuse it on the ground that many of the victims were criminals, put to death for their offences against the law: "If I were to abolish human sacrifice," he said, "I should deprive myself of one of the most effectual means of keeping the people in subjection." Freeman frankly conceded that even in England criminals were publicly executed, but urged, from facts that had come under his notice, that there was a vast difference between punishing evil-doers and putting to death numbers of innocent people every year to accompany dead chiefs or their relations into the spirit world. The saving of the slaves by the timely healing of the sick chief was a case

in point.¹ Freeman was beginning to understand the whole subject of human sacrifice better than he had done before. He saw that it arose, not from sheer love of cruelty and bloodshed, but from an intense belief in the immortality of the soul. To the Ashantis, the spirit world was as real, as unquestionably real, as the present existence on earth. Wives and courtiers did not hesitate to accompany the deceased husband or chief into the unknown—indeed they hardly regarded it as unknown, it was so real and near to them. They looked upon it as stepping out of one courtyard into another, rather than as a dreaded leap into the dark. The knowledge of these things made Freeman the more eager to make known to them the Christian view of the sacredness of life, and the nature of the life hereafter.

At last Freeman gained one of the points for which he had come to Kumasi. It was January 20th—more than five weeks after his arrival—that the king himself, in full state, came to the house where the missionaries were staying, and formally gave them land on which to build a mission house for Brooking. They lost no time in getting to work: indeed, with his usual foresight, Freeman had taken with him from the coast all the necessary fittings and several trained Fanti carpenters to do the wood-work and make the furniture.

But there was still hesitation about a school; two days after permission was given to build the mission house, Apoko was sent by the king to discuss the subject further and to ask more questions

¹ That very month there were three instances of human sacrifice: Jan. 6. King's sister died, 3 sacrifices; Jan. 13. Oldest chief in Kumasi died, 12 sacrifices; Jan. 30. A man of consequence died, 12 sacrifices.

about it. He said that several chiefs had raised a new difficulty: namely, that, as neither the king nor they themselves could read or write, it was not fitting that their children should be educated. They feared that if the boys were educated, they would despise the chiefs on account of their ignorance. Freeman was aware that the very same objection had been raised in England not long before, and that the fears were not entirely groundless. In all lands and all ages a little knowledge has proved a dangerous thing, and boys are ever prone to suffer from the pride of attainment. While admitting, therefore, the dangers, Freeman sought to show the substantial advantages to be gained by the opening of a school. But the conversation was cut short in a most unexpected way.

Suddenly a messenger rushed in to say that the town was on fire. Springing to their feet, the missionaries and Apoko hastened out to investigate. Several acres of tall dry grass had caught fire, and, owing to a strong harmattan wind, the flames had already spread to the houses. All was confusion; people were fleeing in terror, while others were trying to save their belongings. The roofs being entirely of thatch, the flames spread rapidly as the sparks were blown by the wind. The king came from his palace, and with no little courage and presence of mind summoned his captains and organized efforts to overcome the fire. Freeman and his companions were speedily exerting all their strength. Then news came that fire had broken out in another quarter. Twice the premises the missionaries occupied were in imminent danger. Then the fire spread towards the palace, and Freeman set off to lend

what help he could. In their excitement, the people were tearing the thatch off roofs and throwing it carelessly aside, thus imperilling other buildings. This was happening at one side of the palace while the king and his attendants were occupied at the other. Seeing the danger, Freeman and his helpers set themselves to remove these masses of dry thatch to a safe distance. They were only just in time; part of it had already ignited, and by quenching the flames the missionaries played no small part in saving the palace. Meanwhile, three fetich women stood before the palace gates using their incantations, until the people, busily working to save the building, told them to get out of the way! For several hours the fire raged, and it was not finally arrested until a considerable section of the town had been destroyed. Some lives were lost, and a large number of people were homeless. Such fires are all too frequent in the villages and towns of West Africa.

For a while Freeman had some fear lest the disaster should be attributed to his presence—either to the anger of the spirits or to his own black art. On his first visit such would certainly have been the case, but now the people trusted him, and apparently no one thought of connecting him with it. Indeed, people openly said: "God preserved you Christians and your property from the fire." They had noticed the missionaries' efforts to extinguish the flames, and the king himself sent them his cordial thanks for their exertions. West Africans are not easily daunted by such an accident, and soon men, women, and children were at work repairing the damage and rebuilding their ruined homes.

Two days later another fire broke out and several houses were destroyed. Two days later still there was another. Both proved to be the work of an incendiary—probably with the idea of arousing suspicions of Freeman. A day or two later a fetich woman was seized with a spirit of divination and prophesied that the whole row of houses where the missionaries were living would be burned down during the night. The king heard of it and promptly put the woman in safe keeping—which prevented the fulfilment of her prophecy.

On the following Sunday the congregation was larger than ever, and very attentive. Three Ashanti chiefs and the head-man of the Muslim community were present and listened eagerly to the message. By this time regular Sunday worship was quite an established thing; and although Freeman did not feel it wise to begin open-air preaching in the city, he had certainly succeeded in gaining a foothold. In the two Ashanti princes and the little company of Fanti Christians there was the nucleus of a church. He had been granted a site for a house and permission for Brooking to settle there, and he felt that for the time it would be unwise to press for a school. He therefore began to make arrangements to return to the coast.

His farewells were highly gratifying, and on all hands he received expressions of friendship. He was the first Englishman to have paid a second visit to Kumasi, and he left it with invitations to come again. On the morning of his departure, the king sent Apoko and some messengers to commit to his care a gold pipe to present to Queen Victoria, and a silver one for the missionary committee. There

was the inevitable personal present for Freeman himself, including another slave. On January 31st he started on the long journey through the forest.

Of that journey over ground now familiar—and easier than hitherto because of the widened path—only two things are worth recording. The day after leaving Kumasi he met a messenger bringing him letters from Cape Coast, one of which contained the joyful tidings that a married missionary, the Rev. William Allen, had landed. This was indeed good news; but better was to follow. A week later he received a message that two more colleagues had arrived—T. Rowland and H. J. Wyatt. Once more Freeman had men for the urgent work in hand, and he reached Cape Coast jubilant. “It exceeds all my expectations,” he wrote.

CHAPTER XV

PROGRESS AND TRIALS

1842. Age 32.

FREEMAN'S joy in welcoming four new missionaries was tempered by a measure of disappointment at happenings in the coast churches during his absence. Watson's health had been very uncertain, and it was becoming clear that he had not the making of a good missionary. There was serious trouble in the infant church at Domonasi, left too long without pastoral oversight. The young chief had been led astray by the persuasions and threats of the headmen and was persecuting the Christians. Freeman went there immediately, and before long put matters right.

At Cape Coast there was a problem much more difficult to deal with—that of introducing Christian marriage into the church. Already nearly a hundred couples had had their marriage vows solemnized in the House of God, but many others found that course beset with difficulty. There were Christian women whose husbands were still heathen and who not unnaturally refused Christian marriage; such men had claims upon their wives, for they were married according to the laws and customs of their race. Freeman and his colleagues, with their strict views of the importance of marriage, were perplexed, yet they felt they "dare not expel these poor women

from the Church" over a point they were powerless to change. In other cases both husbands and wives were Christians and willing to enter into the Christian marriage covenant, but they were slaves and their owners refused to allow it. Polygamy was yet another phase of the problem. Freeman found it very difficult to adjust the rules of the Church to the conditions he had to face. Another problem, too, caused him anxiety: a certain Dr Madden, sent out by the home government to inquire into conditions in the Colony, had, by very indiscreet conduct, stirred up a good deal of feeling between the domestic slaves and their owners. This had led some owners, in their annoyance, to show harshness to their slaves, some of whom were members of the Church. How far was it right, how far was it possible, for the missionaries to interfere in such cases? In Freeman's very blood was a deep abhorrence of slavery; yet he knew from experience that the domestic slavery and "pawn" system of the Gold Coast was of a very mild type and totally different from that so recently abolished in the West Indies. He felt that he must have a foundation principle to guide him, and he wrote to Dr Beecham, "If I understand the committee, they wish us to prove ourselves at all times the determined opposers of slavery in all its detestable forms, but at the same time carefully to avoid mixing ourselves up with political broils."

Through all this, half of Freeman's heart was in Kumasi with the brave-hearted young missionary he had left there. Freeman was very much impressed with Brooking, and he wrote, "I have never met a man with greater moral courage combined with patience, prudence, and sterling piety." He was a

Devon man, born and bred on the edge of Dartmoor, and he could turn his hand to anything. He was just the man for Ashanti. Freeman had been careful to supply him with tools—including a lathe and good saws. Thus equipped, Brooking set to work to build a mission house that should be an object lesson to all Kumasi. With his Fanti carpenters, he made a saw-pit and prepared the boards for floors, and frames for doors and windows. Then the turning-lathe was put into working order. Half Kumasi came to watch these novel methods—even the king and his chiefs came from time to time and sat there as deeply interested spectators. The building was to do duty as mission house and chapel combined, and it was hoped, before long, as a school also. So the greater part of the ground floor was occupied by a large hall for public worship, and above were the living rooms. A spacious verandah surrounded the whole.

Freeman rejoiced to have such a man in Kumasi, but he knew how lonely he must be. He feared, too, for his health, for there was no doctor nearer than the coast, and sickness is apt to be tragically swift in West Africa. To keep in constant touch with him, Freeman organized a service of messengers who were required to do the journey in ten days, on pain of fines deducted from their pay. Freeman was thus kept informed of all that was happening and could send advice, and Brooking was kept supplied with all necessaries for his work and well-being. Freeman resolved, at the earliest possible moment, to send Brooking a colleague, for he needed help, and it was not good for any man to be alone in such a place as Kumasi.

The new missionaries passed safely through the critical experience of their "seasoning fever," and plans were made for stationing them. Then the first blow fell: Wyatt had a seizure and died the same day—two months after landing. Rowland was the only man available for Kumasi, and fortunately he was eager to go. Freeman could ill spare the time to take him, yet could not let a raw recruit make such a journey alone. So he resolved to go half-way, and sent word to Brooking to meet them at the Pra. They held a three days' council by the river, and then Brooking returned to Kumasi with Rowland, while Freeman returned to the coast. One day in July, while Freeman was in the bush, a messenger brought to him mails forwarded from Cape Coast. One letter was in Brooking's handwriting and it had a mourning border painted in black ink round the cover. He tore it open and hastily scanned its contents: Rowland had died of dysentery in Kumasi. He had been in Africa five months. The Ashanti capital was henceforth sealed for God in a new sense. But to the much-tried leader it was another serious blow.

Amid so much anxiety and labour, it is scarcely fair to blame Freeman for his one outstanding failure—his failure to learn the Fanti language. He always meant to do it, but pressure of crowding duties prevented it. Unfortunately as the years passed he made the mistake of thinking it unnecessary and so set a bad example for those who followed him. How much greater Freeman might have been had he known a vernacular!

The problem of finance was beginning to worry him. The five thousand pound special fund was

dwindling. Thirteen missionaries (including himself) had been sent out with it, and unavoidable expenses, such as the building of houses and constant travelling, were mounting up. The committee were warning him that they could not allow the Gold Coast and Ashanti Mission to come on the ordinary funds of the Society—which just then were thirty thousand pounds in arrears. The news of such debt at home troubled Freeman, and when he heard that there was to be a big bazaar to reduce it, he and his colleagues set themselves to collect all sorts of African curios, skins, and ivory, and sent them home to be sold. He himself sent his collection of butterflies and insects, the value of which was estimated at eighty pounds.

Surrounded as he was by heathen darkness and the opportunity for Christian work, with doors standing wide open on every hand, Freeman was troubled about the conditions at the home base. The weakness, the limitations, were *there*; and he wrote to Dr Beecham this stirring appeal :

England is doing scarcely anything in comparison with what she ought to do. Oh that God would raise up another Peter the Hermit to call Christian England to engage more effectively in a grand spiritual warfare, not to save a lifeless sepulchre from the hands of heretics, but to save Africa's millions from the grasp of Satan. . . . I trust the day is not far distant when some mighty movement will take place, and when England will do something worthy of her knowledge, her piety, and her greatness. Her energies are inexhaustible, and she is at present doing comparatively nothing.

CHAPTER XVI

TO THE SLAVE COAST AND ABEOKUTA

September to December 1842. Age 33.

STRANGE events were now sounding a new call and pointing to an unexpected advance.

East of the Gold Coast lay a long line of surf-washed shore known as the "Slave Coast," from the fact that it was the seat of the infamous traffic in human beings. Lagos, Badagry, Whydah, Grand Popo, and other places of less importance were the ports from which slaves were exported for America. England, Denmark, France, and the United States had passed laws forbidding their subjects to engage in carrying slaves across the Atlantic. But Brazil and Cuba still demanded slaves, and there were Southern planters in the U.S.A. who were not averse to the secret landing of living cargoes in the Carolina creeks. There were a number of European slave-merchants in the Slave Coast ports—most of them Spanish, Portuguese, or Brazilian. British men-of-war patrolled the coast searching for slavers; but in spite of their vigilance, swift-sailing cruisers lay concealed among the numerous creeks of the Niger delta, and when the coast was clear spread their sails, swiftly took up cargoes at one or other of the slave ports, and made for America. Numbers of them were overhauled by British frigates and taken to Sierra Leone, where the slaves were liberated,

and the vessels destroyed. Thus there were thousands of liberated men and women from the Slave Coast dwelling in Freetown, and it was the privilege of the Wesleyan Missionary Society and the Church Missionary Society to lead numbers of them into the Christian Church.

In 1838—the year when Freeman began his work at Cape Coast—some of these freed slaves, employed on a trading ship plying along the coast, put into Lagos lagoon and recognized it as the place from which they had been shipped as slaves. This made them eager to find the way to their homeland—the large Egba town of Abeokuta. They succeeded in doing so, and found their relations from whom they had so long been separated.

This incident led many of the freed slaves in Sierra Leone to desire to return to Abeokuta, and a great “homeward movement” began. One ex-slave who had amassed some wealth bought a captured slave vessel, engaged an English captain to navigate her, and began to carry his fellow-countrymen home. With such money and other possessions as they had acquired, many took passage on this or other ships, some to Lagos and others to Badagry. But unexpected trials lay before them. The chief and people of Lagos, deeply implicated in the smuggling of slaves, laid violent hands on the emigrants,¹ robbed them of all they possessed, telling them that they should think themselves lucky to be allowed to proceed on their journey. It was only the fact that they had become British subjects that protected them from being again enslaved. Of two hundred

¹ The word is not a happy one, but it was the one in use at the time, and it is convenient to use it here.

and sixty-five emigrants who landed from three vessels, not one escaped with anything beyond the clothes he stood in ; and in this distressed condition, and without food, they had to make the three days' journey to Abeokuta as best they could. When they arrived they were absolutely dependent upon charity. Those who landed at Badagry fared better.

All were alike welcomed to their native city, and the great Egba chief, Shodeke, received them with kindness and honour. He encouraged them to continue to wear European clothes and live in the new way they had acquired. He even exempted them from prostrating themselves when they came into his presence, and listened with interest when they told of their new religion. Within three years, more than five hundred of these emigrants returned to Abeokuta, most of whom were at least nominally Christian, and did their best to spread the message of Christ. In their eagerness they wrote to their old missionary friends in Sierra Leone, begging their help. "Come over and help us! Send us Bibles! Send us missionaries!" was the burden of their messages. One man wrote :

I humble beseech you, by the name of Jehovah, to send one of the messengers of God to teach us more about the way of Salvation, because I am now in a place of darkness where no light is. I know that I was once under light, but now I am in darkness. It is to bring our fellow-citizens into the way which is right, and to tell them of the goodness of Jehovah, what He has done for us.

Another was still more urgent :

For Christ's sake, come quick. Let nothing but sickness prevent you. . . . Do not stop to change your

clothes, to eat or drink, or sleep. Do, do, for God's sake, start this moment; do not neglect me with all this burden; it is more than I can bear!

The Sierra Leone missionaries naturally felt a responsibility for these emigrants—their own converts; they felt the importance of following them to Abeokuta to shepherd them amid the temptation of the surrounding heathenism. Moreover, it seemed as though through them God was about to open a new door for the Gospel in Abeokuta and Egba-land. But there were at that time only two Wesleyan missionaries in Freetown; neither of them could be spared, and Abeokuta was fifteen hundred miles away. So the appeals were sent to England to be dealt with by the committee. At first very little notice was taken of them; but almost every mail brought more, until the matter compelled attention. It was Dr Beecham who found the solution: Freeman was barely four hundred miles from Abeokuta, and he was the man best fitted to deal with such a situation. It seemed to the committee that the soundest policy would be to establish a mission station, not at Abeokuta itself, but at Badagry, which, being practically on the coast, was more accessible from Cape Coast. A missionary there could welcome emigrants as they arrived and speed them on their journey up country; he could keep the route open, and from time to time visit Abeokuta to superintend the evangelistic and pastoral work there. So the committee asked Freeman to visit Badagry and Abeokuta at the earliest opportunity and open a mission station at the former.

Though his hands were more than full with his

Gold Coast and Ashanti Mission, Freeman threw himself heart and soul into the new venture, and on September 24th, 1842, he landed at Badagry with Mr and Mrs De Graft, whom he proposed to station there. The town does not lie upon the surf-beaten shore, but on a lagoon behind, part of a system of lagoons that runs almost the entire length of the Slave Coast. This lagoon is separated from the open sea by a line of sandbanks, usually a mile or more in width.

Notwithstanding the kindness shown to the returning emigrants, Badagry was a place of evil repute. A dozen years before, the great traveller Lander had written a terrible story of the gross heathenism he found there. He told of annual sacrifices around a fetich tree; he had seen "its enormous branches literally covered with fragments of human bodies, and its majestic trunk surrounded by irregular heaps of hideous skulls. Vultures were hovering round their disgusting food, and now and then pouncing upon a half-devoured arm or leg." For long years Badagry had been a mart for the sale and deportation of slaves, and Lander declared that the great sacrifices were deliberately organized as a way of disposing of surplus stocks. Fortunately Freeman's visit did not synchronize with the annual "customs," and when he and his party landed, there was nothing to suggest such things. They tramped across the mile-wide sandbank—there covered with a thin sward of grass—to the river-like lagoon, which they crossed in a canoe to the town. Chief and people were friendly, but there was difficulty in getting quarters; the De Grafts were at last housed in a bamboo store, while Freeman used a little

travelling tent until a temporary bamboo structure could be thrown together.

The plan being to settle the De Grafts in the place, the first thing was to build a suitable house for them to live in. No stone was available, so it was resolved to erect a wooden-frame house on piles. Without delay they purchased a large canoe and made numerous expeditions up the lagoon to cut timber in the forest, and transported it to the town. Twenty-two piles—each fourteen feet in length and three-quarters of a ton in weight, cut from the trunk of a palm-tree—were driven four feet into the ground, and upon them the first European dwelling in Badagry was built. By hard work it was finished and roofed within six weeks—no mean achievement, especially as Freeman was far from well most of the time—and a little bamboo chapel was built simultaneously.

During those weeks of hard work there were sundry exciting diversions: an English trading schooner blew up in the roads, a company of a hundred and fifty Sierra Leone emigrants landed and went forward to Abeokuta, and H.M.S. *Victoria* put in with the captain and crew of a captured slave ship. Of more importance to our narrative was the arrival of several messengers sent by the great King of Dahomey, by far the mightiest monarch in that part of Africa. "They say they are glad to see us here, but I doubt their sincerity," wrote Freeman. He was right; the men had been sent to spy upon his movements.

Meanwhile, arrangements were in hand for the visit to Abeokuta, the famous capital and stronghold of the Egba people. Freeman had already

sent a message to the chief, and in reply had received the following letter of welcome :

To the Englishman at Badagry.

I thank you for your kind promise that you will visit us in this country. I shall be glad to receive you ; and by the blessing of God nothing shall harm you.

I remain,

Yours truly,

SHODEKE,
*Chief of Abeokuta.*¹

ABEOKUTA, *October* 1842.

Early in December, when the house and chapel were practically finished, a band of fourteen men arrived from Shodeke to conduct Freeman on the journey to Abeokuta. The chief also sent him a good pony, with saddle and bridle of red leather-work.

Travelling on horseback was a new experience for Freeman, for horses cannot live in the tsetse-fly-infested areas of the Gold Coast. The journey, too, was totally different. Instead of dense forest, they crossed stretches of open undulating country interspersed with small patches of woodland and extensive swamps that had to be negotiated in dug-out canoes. The land was desolate ; only a few small groups of huts remained amid the ruins of villages devastated by the cruel hand of inter-tribal war. The Egba guides were ever alert, and during the nights kept a sharp look-out. On the second day

¹ The very English form and expression of this letter points to the chief having directed one of the Sierra Leone emigrants to write it for him.

they were met by a troop of Shodeke's horsemen, sent to protect them, for the way was exposed to the attacks of a hostile tribe who occupied the land to the south-east and were in league with the slavers of Lagos. These evil men lost no opportunity of waylaying small parties of Egbas and others who came within their reach, and, if able to do so, they kidnapped and sold them as slaves to their Lagos allies. To frustrate their purpose, Shodeke had established a military encampment along the path under command of his brother, a famous war-captain. Freeman and his party were received at this fortified post with every mark of honour. It was surrounded with a mud rampart and moat. Almost within musket range were the outworks of the wily foe, and even while Freeman was there, there was continual sniping between the pickets. While walking round to view the place, he unwittingly got too near to the enemy, and several shots were fired into his party—fortunately without hitting any one.

For several days the company passed through open country, covered with shrubs and long grass, dry and yellow at that time of the year. Freeman got vistas that were new to him—panoramas of hills and villages, with plantations of yams, Indian corn, cotton, and bananas. As they approached Abeokuta, he found the country broken with masses of rock such as he had not seen before. The more numerous villages, and the ever-increasing number of people on the road and on the farms, evidenced a large population, and here and there well-mounted horsemen stopped to salute. At one place it came as a pleasant shock to Freeman to be greeted by several women with the joyous shout: "Ah!

Daddy! You go Abeokuta?" They were Sierra Leonians. To hear so unexpectedly his mother tongue made the traveller's heart leap with gladness.

On the seventh day from Badagry the party reached the river Ogun, and beheld on the opposite hills the famous city, its houses clustering around the great boulders of granite piled up in enormous masses as though by giant hands. The river was so low that it was easy to cross its granite bed on horseback, escorted by yet another company of horsemen sent by Shodeke to lead them into his capital. As they advanced, the streets were lined with multitudes of dusky Egbas, excited, and eager to welcome Freeman to their town. He was the first representative of European civilization to enter Abeokuta, and the welcome was one of boisterous delight. As he rode through the narrow, irregular streets he was everywhere received with loud shouts of "Aku!"¹ As they passed on, the shouts swelled to a full chorus of salutation—"Welcome, white man! Welcome! Blessing and long life to you, white man! Welcome!"

In these scenes of excitement the Sierra Leonians were naturally to the fore. Their faces beamed with joy as they seized Freeman's hand and cried, "We always told the chief that the English loved us and that missionaries would follow us to Abeokuta; but he could hardly believe that anyone would come so far to do us good. Now our words have come to pass. O Master! You are welcome, welcome, welcome!"

Slowly the little procession moved on to the chief's palace in the centre of the town, and Freeman and

¹ An exclamation of greeting.

his companions rode into the outer courtyard. It was a very simple place as compared with the palace at Kumasi; the thatched roofs of the buildings around the court projected far beyond their walls to form verandahs and sloped down to within a yard of the ground. On a grass mat, under a larger verandah, sat Shodeke, the supreme chief of the Egba nation, leaning against a leather cushion and surrounded by his chiefs and retainers. He was clothed in a handsome damask cloth, thrown lightly around his shoulders, and wore a cap of scarlet cloth with a big tassel. Dismounting, Freeman and De Graft paid their respects to him. He was overjoyed to see them, and before all his people clasped Freeman in his arms. "My people told me their friends in England would not neglect them," he said; "but I feared you would not venture so far. Now I see you, and my heart rejoices. I hope the English will never leave us."

The delight of that meeting was mutual. "I gazed upon Shodeke with very deep interest," writes the missionary; "but that interest would have been still greater had I then been aware of the thrilling historical facts concerning this brave chieftain." Shodeke was no ordinary man. He was the creator of the Egba nation. Twenty years earlier he had led the broken remnants of the Egba tribes out of the power of their vengeful foes, and they had found refuge under those great piles of boulders Freeman gazed upon. Those mighty stones became their stronghold, and to the city that grew up around they gave the name of Abeokuta—"Under the stone." There the Egbas defended themselves against all assaults of their enemies.

It was a veritable city of refuge. Shodeke was a nation-builder. In a few years, under his wise, strong rule, Abeokuta had become a large city, the population of which Freeman estimated to be at least forty-five thousand and probably more.¹

After his first interview with Shodeke, Freeman was conducted to the rooms which the chief had prepared for his reception, and found them decorated with velvet hangings, and velvet was spread as a carpet on the mud floor. Close at hand was a house that Shodeke, a few years before, had built for the great God—a very unusual thing in that part of Africa. “He has heard my prayer and sent you to teach me and my people,” said the chief as he told Freeman about it.

When Freeman came to walk about the town, and look down upon it from some of the hilltops, he was greatly impressed by its beauty and romantic situation among those huge piles of granite that rose so impressively on every hand. He saw at once that it was larger than Kumasi; but it lacked the orderliness of the Ashanti capital. The practice was for a man to build his house wherever there was a vacant plot, and the street had to find its way round it as best it could. In consequence, the streets were irregular, and the dwellings were without beauty or uniformity. Every street seemed to be a market, and it was often difficult to wend one’s way between the goods laid out for sale. All was so different from the fine wide tree-shaded streets of Kumasi, with their decorated houses; but Freeman felt that a town so beautifully situated as Abeokuta was capable of great improvement. Notwithstanding

¹ A few years later it was estimated at 100,000.

its romantic beauty and eventful story, and in spite of Shodeke's intuitive wisdom and greatness of soul, Abeokuta, like other African towns, was held in the grip of heathen superstition. In the caves of the great Olumo rock, pagan priests performed their mysterious rites, and from time to time human sacrifices were offered to the spirit of the rock. Ifa, the god of secrets, and the gods of iron, and war, and thunder were propitiated with regular offerings, and the broad river Ogun was held to be indwelt by a mighty god. Egba beliefs were widely different from those of the Fanti and Ashanti peoples, but underlying them was the same typically African belief in spirits, once human, and gods that were superhuman, with a powerful sky God above all.

In Abeokuta, as in Ashanti, Freeman found a fully organized system of government and law. The town was divided into several wards, each representing a separate tribe and having its own council of ogboni (elders), who held courts and administered justice. Shodeke had his own ogboni and war captains who constituted the great council of the nation. Though the power of the supreme chief was very great, it was so regulated as to allow for something resembling democratic influence as represented in the ogboni, and by the calling together of emergency councils of representatives of the people in times of crisis. Freeman was not a little surprised at the law code he found in Abeokuta—unwritten but very definite, and transmitted by memory from one generation to another. There was industry too—as indeed was inevitable with so large a population to maintain—and for miles around the town were the farms upon which the population depended for food. Cotton

was extensively cultivated to provide clothing, and indigo for dyeing the yarn for the looms of the weavers. The blacksmiths provided tools for the agriculturists and weapons for the warriors and hunters. One thing greatly surprised Freeman—the presence of large numbers of horses kept by the well-to-do citizens and chiefs. He found that there were at least six hundred in the town, many of them being very beautiful animals. It was the only place from Sierra Leone to the Niger where the horse could be naturalized and really healthy.

During the ten days Freeman remained in Abeokuta he had frequent opportunities of conversation with Shodeke and was greatly impressed with his sincerity. His open, manly face convinced the missionary that the welcome he had received was much more than mere African politeness. The chief was eager to get into touch with the white man and to hear about the white man's God. On several occasions Freeman conducted Christian worship in the courtyard of the palace, with Shodeke sitting beside him listening intently and with the simplicity of a child. One day the chief summoned a great palaver, and ordered the Mohammedans and the priests of Ifa to expound the religious beliefs they represented, and they spoke at great length. Then Freeman was called upon to tell of the great God who had sent him to Abeokuta. At the close, Shodeke dismissed the Mohammedan and pagan priests, saying, "This white man's religion is true, and both myself and you will have to follow it!" But Freeman was no "revivalist" looking for immediate results. He understood his Africans well enough to know that their minds react slowly towards

new ideas. He felt that, for the moment, it was enough to have established contact with the Egbas and to have them regard him as a friend. He would in time visit them again and make sure of the foothold he had secured. Meanwhile the Sierra Leonians would keep the door open, and De Graft at Badagry would be the connecting link with Cape Coast.

Fain would Shodeke have detained Freeman and De Graft, for he would gladly have had them settle in his town. But Freeman was convinced that the plan previously decided upon was the right one, and on December 20th they started on the return journey to the coast. At a farewell interview, Shodeke asked Freeman to tell him what present he could send to Queen Victoria in token of his gratitude for her servants having rescued his people from slavery and restored them to him. Freeman answered that the queen desired nothing from him, but if Shodeke would accept something which he had brought with him, she would be satisfied. Putting his hand to his pocket, Freeman drew out a Bible and placed it in Shodeke's hand, saying that it was by means of that book that the queen's country was made good and great. The chief received the Bible with reverence and respect.

Their departure from Abeokuta was almost as striking as their welcome. The chief himself, in a hammock, accompanied Freeman and De Graft down to the river. The streets were so crowded with people to bid them farewell that it seemed as though the entire population had turned out. "Good-bye! Come again soon!" they cried as they waved their hands.

By travelling quickly they reached Badagry on

Christmas Eve. There, to his surprise and delight, Freeman found the Rev. H. Townsend of the Church Missionary Society, who had landed a few days before ; he was on his way to Abeokuta to visit such of the Sierra Leonians as belonged to the Church of England. The C.M.S. had felt the need of following its people to Abeokuta just as the W.M.M.S. had done. Christmas Day was a time of rejoicing and of united worship. Freeman and Townsend jointly conducted the services. It was the first link in the bond of fellowship that has always united the workers of the two societies in Nigeria.

CHAPTER XVII

WITH THE KING OF DAHOMEY

January to April 1843. Age 34.

WHILE in Badagry, an entirely new problem confronted Freeman. He observed that the chief and people stood in constant fear of the mighty King of Dahomey, by whose predecessor, nearly sixty years before, they had been conquered. Even though Badagry had regained its independence, the people hardly dared venture unarmed across the lagoon before their town, lest they should be kidnapped by wandering bands of Dahomians. They were in no little fear of another Dahomian attack. Moreover, Freeman learned that the King of Dahomey was viewing with jealous eye the rising power of Abeokuta: it was whispered that some day he might fling his ferocious armies against its ramparts.

Freeman was at once on the *qui vive*. A Dahomian attack on Badagry would imperil the mission station he was planting there. Nor was he less anxious for Abeokuta: for what could the Egbas do against the disciplined fury of the terrible Amazons of the mighty King Gezo, greatest of all the Dahomian conquerors? Freeman grew suspicious of the Dahomian messengers who had been to see him. Instinctively he felt that they were sent to spy upon his movements, and his surmise was correct. Already they had reported that he was building an English

fort in Badagry, and that he had taken two pieces of artillery to Abeokuta! Man of action that he was, he resolved to go immediately and beard the Dahomian lion in his den. He determined to speak with Gezo face to face, win his confidence and friendship, and if possible secure his favour and protection for the Badagry-Abeokuta mission.

On New Year's Day 1843, through unusually heavy surf, Freeman landed on the sandbank opposite Whyda, the chief port of Dahomey. One canoe, caught by a mighty swell, was dashed to pieces on the beach. With some difficulty he transported his party and baggage across the lagoon, and then through a swamp covered with thick, rank vegetation, wading nearly knee-deep along the water-covered pathway, for the town was two miles inland. On arrival he at once visited the chief—a viceroy appointed by the king¹—and briefly stated the object of his visit. Two days later he sought another interview and explained more fully that he was establishing a mission at Badagry to help and benefit the people of Africa, and to this end he requested leave to journey up country to the capital to see the king and gain his approval. The viceroy was polite, but suspicious. “The king was away at war,” he said: Freeman would have to wait some time before he could see him. This was provoking, but his business was of such importance that he resolved to wait. See the king he must!

Whyda struck Freeman as one of the most pleasing coast towns he had seen. But he found

¹ Whyda, formerly an independent kingdom, had been conquered by one of the earlier kings of Dahomey.

it a veritable nest of slave-dealers, who were in league with the king on the one hand and the slave ships on the other. At that very time they were almost daily fearing the arrival of the British commodore, who had threatened to land a force of marines and destroy the barracoons. One day while Freeman was there a report spread that the cruisers were approaching : but it was a false alarm. In such a place it was inevitable that the arrival of a missionary should be regarded with disfavour. Most of the slave-dealers regarded him as an emissary of the British government, sent to spy upon them. There were political jealousies, too, and the news of the imaginary fort at Badagry had reached their ears. These men used all their influence with the viceroy to prevent Freeman going up country to see the king. One obstacle after another was thrown in his way. But he was not to be deterred, and the opposition only served to convince him of the necessity of seeing the king and winning his favour. But they managed to hold him up for nine long weeks. He was even warned to be on his guard against poison, and for a time lived largely on tinned foods.

Outwardly, the slave-dealers were suave and apparently friendly, but sometimes their hostility came to the surface. On one occasion Freeman found that they were detaining a number of Fanti canoe-men, an indenture was being changed into forced labour, and as the men appealed to him, he took up their case with characteristic vigour. As Gold Coast men they were under British protection, and he insisted on their being set at liberty. Long and stormy was his interview with the viceroy (who

was acting as cat's-paw for the slavers). "He was haughty, and I grew haughty too and gave him measure for measure," wrote Freeman. He was thoroughly roused, and was not a man to be played with. The viceroy was between two fires—but Freeman would take no refusal, and gained his point.

One day a Portuguese slave-trader arrived in Whyda. He had travelled along the lagoons from Lagos. While passing through Badagry, one of his slave women had escaped and found refuge at the mission house. De Graft had absolutely refused to give her up without written authority from Freeman: so the enraged trader now came to demand the immediate return of his property. He was bombastic and insolent, flung his arms and hat about, and made serious threats. Freeman well knew how to treat such a fellow, and sent him away crestfallen. But although not to be badgered, Freeman knew that the case was a difficult one, and might bring very serious consequences upon the mission. Nothing could induce him to hand back the poor woman who had sought protection, for he knew the punishment that would surely follow. When the dealer became quiet and apologized, Freeman (through a friend) agreed to redeem the woman for forty-eight dollars, and the matter was settled amicably.

Another day the slave-dealers sent to Freeman peremptory orders forbidding him to go down to the beach to communicate with an English vessel lying at anchor. But such bluff did not work with Thomas Birch Freeman! Ordering one of his men to carry a Union Jack before him, he leisurely walked

through the town and down to the sea under the very eyes of the slave-merchants.

But there was one slave-merchant different from the rest—Don Antonio Da Souza. Report had it that he was an exiled Brazilian nobleman. In early life he had settled in Whyda, almost penniless, and had become the greatest slave-dealer on the coast. King Gezo regarded him as a personal friend and gave him official position as head-man of the Europeans in Whyda.

A few days after landing, Freeman found it advisable to call on Da Souza, and to his surprise found him exceedingly polite and kind, and prepared to help by any means in his power. Even when Da Souza understood that his guest was a Christian missionary and a determined enemy of the slave trade, it made no difference. Throughout Freeman's long stay in Whyda, as well as on subsequent occasions, Da Souza treated him with unfailing kindness and courtesy. From first to last he proved to be "a straightforward, open-dealing man," generous and large-hearted. Freeman soon came to have a very high opinion of his personal character and found that he was universally trusted and esteemed by all who knew him. Da Souza even suggested that he himself should take Freeman to the capital and introduce him to the king. Freeman naturally declined such a proposal, but he was convinced of the sincerity of the man's motives. Feeling so strongly about slavery, he frequently spoke to Da Souza on the subject. Approaching the problem from totally different points of view, they could find no common agreement. But Freeman was no blind zealot, and he was able to see another man's point of

view, even though he could not share it. He perceived that Da Souza only stood where large numbers of English gentlemen (calling themselves good Christians!) had stood not many years before. He remembered how hard the merchants of Liverpool and Bristol had fought for their right to continue to engage in this traffic in human flesh, and he felt that it was hardly to be wondered at that this man, with his antecedents and having lived for thirty years in such a place as Whyda, should be a few years behind the advanced Christian thought of enlightened England. The friendship thus begun continued until Da Souza's death six years later, and Freeman never found cause to modify his opinion of him.

During the tedious weeks of delay, Freeman had opportunity of seeing Whyda and observing the habits of her people. It impressed him as a sort of African "garden-city," for the streets and open spaces were adorned with trees, and many of the European merchants had beautiful gardens where vines, figs, and many tropical flowers were trained and nursed. He had seen nothing like it in all West Africa. The markets, too, were the finest he had come across in any coast town. There were three "forts"—English, French, and Portuguese: really they were trading centres with some little means of defence, such as high walls and a few guns mounted on bastions. For some years the English "fort" had been left in the charge of a mulatto agent, and all the commercial and political influence had passed to other nationalities. Freeman felt that this had been a grave mistake, for the naval blockade of the coast could not be entirely effective

until there was a strengthening of British influence on land. His trained eye noted the fertility of the country, and he saw that one of the surest ways of stopping the supply of slaves would be to convince the king and his chiefs that the trade in palm-oil would pay them better.

Slavery was not the only shadow resting on Whyda. Never in all his travels had Freeman seen a place so dominated by fetichism of the darkest type. Snake-worship was the chief feature of the religious life of the town. There in the centre of Whyda stood a snake temple. Though an unpretentious round mud hut with a simple grass roof, it was the most venerated spot in the town. There Freeman saw the sacred snakes coiled round the rafters or peeping down from the roof, while others were asleep on the floor or in holes in the wall. Some of the repulsive creatures would glide sluggishly across the floor towards the priest-in-charge, who seemed to be on very intimate terms with them. They were chiefly of the python class, non-poisonous, and seemed perfectly harmless.

At that time it was death to kill a snake in Whyda. Even Europeans dared not run the risk. Some years before, an English captain and a few of his crew were set upon and murdered for the offence. One night while Freeman was staying at the English fort, the agent had to sit up all night to protect a puppy from a six-foot snake which he dared not kill or even injure. The sight of human beings offering worship to snakes stirred Freeman's spirit within him. He did not know that the snakes themselves were not actually worshipped, but rather the ancestral spirits that were believed to dwell in

them. Apparently, also, the snake was, and still is, the totem of the Whyda people.

At last permission came for Freeman to go up country to see the king, and on March 6th he started out on horseback accompanied by the mulatto agent from the fort as his travelling companion and chief interpreter. Dahomian etiquette necessitated taking a second interpreter and also a viceroy's messenger and guide. At first there was great trouble with the carriers, who persisted in lagging behind and putting down their loads; so Freeman found it advisable to keep them all well on in front, himself bringing up the rear.

After his experiences in the dense forests of Ashanti, Freeman was amazed to find how much of the land in Dahomey was under cultivation. The soil was wonderfully productive, and the system of agriculture far superior to anything he had seen elsewhere. There were fields of millet, yams, cassada, and sweet potatoes, and groves of bananas, oranges, guava, and mangoes—all "protected" by fetiches. Instead of farms—or allotments, as we should call them—at a distance from the village, cultivation was carried almost to the doors of the huts. To prevent damage to the crops, all the domestic animals were tethered. By the laws of Dahomey it was a serious offence to allow an animal to wander on a neighbour's land, and the four-legged trespasser was forfeited. With his knowledge of horticulture, Freeman was intensely interested in all he saw, the more so in that it appeared to be so entirely out of harmony with the warlike spirit of the people. The country was exceedingly beautiful, and studded with great fan-palms, and

here and there noble groups of forest trees. He found many botanical specimens that were new to him, and he revelled in the delights around: though ever and anon he was saddened by the abounding heathenism. Dahomey is the stronghold of fetichism.

After crossing three small kingdoms that had been conquered by the Dahomians in their advance on Whyda in 1727, the party reached the great Agremi swamp, some seven or eight miles across. Fortunately it was the dry season, and the path was deep in fine dry sand. It is very different in the rains, when it resembles Bunyan's "Slough of Despond," and may take a whole day to cross. At such times it was usual for the visitor, on reaching the capital, to be greeted with the words, "The king thanks you for the swamp" (*i.e.* "for the trouble you have taken in crossing the swamp to come to see him").

On the morning of the fifth day, the party reached Kana, where the king was then in residence. Almost the first sight to greet them was the headless body of a man, suspended by the feet from a gibbet twenty feet high. The turkey-buzzards were feeding around.

Then came the formal entrance, with all the ceremony so dear to the African heart. A chief, accompanied by a number of soldiers, came to meet the visitor, danced before him, and then conducted him into the town amid salutes of muskets. The streets were lined with companies of troops, each party having its own flags, ensigns, and umbrellas. Spanish, Portuguese, English, French, Brazilian flags were displayed, together with the banners of

Dahomey, which bore strange devices and a human skull on the top of each flag-staff. Under the shade of banyan trees, before the gate of the palace, Freeman received the salutations of the high officers of state, and he and his party were made to process in a circle nine times. The king's messengers and the two interpreters were required to throw dust upon their heads, and prostrate themselves on the ground. Then Freeman was introduced to the mewo (the hereditary prime minister), who was appointed by the king to look after him, and was described as his "father." A lady of the royal household was brought forward to be his "mother"; and another man (with whom he was to lodge) was introduced as his "house master." Then, amid musket volleys, Freeman was led to the place where he was to live, for custom dictated that a stranger should not see the king on the day of arrival.

Two days later came the summons to interview the despot whose very name brought terror to the hearts of thousands. With great ceremony Freeman was conducted to a spacious court where, under a thatched verandah, sat Gezo, surrounded by a large number of the ladies of his household and his chief ministers of state. But even more striking were the serried ranks of the famous Amazons who formed the royal bodyguard. Several hundreds of these renowned women warriors were drawn up with military precision, armed with muskets and cutlasses, with their women officers, their standards, and their hideous trophies of war. Everything about the ceremony suggested the military power of this strange kingdom. The Dahomians loved war for its own sake, and revelled in the very pleasure of it.

Let us rush on war, and die sooner than return vanquished.

*War is the pastime of the Dahomian :
If we don't conquer, let us die !*

So ran a chorus that often rang out from those fierce warriors! Of all his forces, it was the Amazons of whom Gezo was most proud. More than once they had dashed on to victory and ferocious slaughter when the male troops were in flight. "We are no longer women: we are men!" they cried, as year by year they begged the king to "give them" some new foe to conquer. They usually came back from the annual war with many prisoners and numerous heads as trophies of their valour.

Freeman advanced between prostrate messengers and courtiers, for even the highest ministers of state had to render this degrading salutation. Amid a salute of twenty-one guns in honour of Britain's Queen, and nine more for Freeman himself, Gezo rose to greet his guest. The messenger of Christ stood face to face with the greatest slave-raider in West Africa—for Gezo's wars were essentially slave raids, and a very large part of his revenue was derived from selling slaves to the merchants in Whyda. For a quarter of a century he had ruled with hand of iron.¹ Freeman's quick eye took in the significance of the scene, and mentally he contrasted it with his reception in Kumasi. Instead of the dazzling exhibition of gold, there was this display of military despotism. Kwaku Dua had been surrounded by a brilliant assembly of powerful tributary chiefs, each the ruler of a semi-independent chiefdom

¹ This was in 1843. His total reign was forty years.

—men who bowed respectfully to their liege lord but did not debase themselves before him. Gezo, on the contrary, was surrounded by servile courtiers and soldiers, who were literally kissing the dust before him—or even before his royal staff in the hands of a messenger! But though an absolute despot, Gezo was an able ruler. He had instituted not a few reforms that showed his wisdom. Though egotistic, he was just. He was severe and haughty, but less cruel than his predecessors; and he does not seem to have loved bloodshed for the mere pleasure of it. On occasion he could be merciful and even generous, and his frown did not always mean death. He was a born ruler, and knew how to maintain his authority: but, judged by African standards, to his own people he was by no means a tyrant.

Freeman had sought from God the help he needed for what he knew must be a momentous interview, and he now conversed freely with Gezo as to the object of his visit. Sitting on a camp-stool, he told the king the reasons for his going to Badagry and Abeokuta, contradicted the false report of his building a fort, and explained that the one object of the missionary society was to benefit the peoples of Africa. He enlarged upon the mission he had planted in Badagry, and told the king that he had now come to secure his friendship and promise of protection. Gezo broke in with the unexpected question, "Can you not do something for Whyda too?"

Taken aback by this interjection, Freeman explained that his present business concerned Badagry, but added that, if the king wished it, he would do his best to place a missionary at Whyda also. He

told of the work on the Gold Coast and in Ashanti, of the churches for the worship of the great God, and of the schools where boys and girls were learning to read. Moreover, he explained that Queen Victoria and many of her people were asking, "What can we do for the good of Africa?"

"I wish the queen would send a governor for the English fort in Whyda," the king said. He had always liked the British, and wanted to be friends with the Queen of England and to trade with her servants. He asked Freeman to help towards this end, and even dictated a message to Queen Victoria.

That first interview was a long one, but Freeman was far too conversant with the ways of Africa to press for an immediate answer to his petition. As he left, the king showed his favour by walking with him across two wide courts to the palace gate, outside which several hundreds of Amazons were drawn up; at Gezo's command they fired another salute. Two days later Freeman had a second interview with the king, this time in private.

Gezo now suggested that his visitor would like to visit Abomey, the royal capital, and see the most important of his palaces. Accordingly, he gave instructions, and soon after daybreak one morning the mewo, with two or three hundred attendants, came to conduct Freeman to the famous city. The eight-mile journey was enlivened by the continuous noise of drums and musical instruments, while banners and great ceremonial umbrellas swayed in the sunshine as the crowd moved forward. The approach to the city was "guarded" by more than sixty fetich houses to ward off evil influences. Then the city walls came into full view—mighty ramparts

of great height and thickness, with a dry moat filled with prickly acacia in front of them. These walls were eight miles in circumference, but Freeman noticed that they were in a very bad state of repair. King and people knew that the city was safe : where, for hundreds of miles around, were the people who would dare to attack the dread capital of Dahomey ? Conscious of absolute security, even the gates were undefended. They were not gateways in a true sense, but mere apertures in the wall, with neither gates, doors, nor covering arches. There were six of these entrances, each having two apertures—one reserved for the use of the king and the other for his subjects—each with two human skulls fixed into the mud walls. Within, there was a pile of skulls, some human, some animal. Abomey was a veritable Golgotha.

The people turned out in crowds to see the great “English fetich-man, the King of Dahomey’s friend.” Freeman found the city larger than the Ashanti capital, and estimated its population at more than forty thousand. But it had neither the dignity of Kumasi nor the beauty of Abeokuta. There were large tracts of land unoccupied, some of it covered with long grass and forest trees. Every house was surrounded with high walls or fences, so that the dwelling itself was hidden from view. For this reason the streets were less interesting than those of Kumasi, but the magnificent trees delighted Freeman, and he was soon busy jotting down lists of botanical names.

The great palace in the centre of the city was an amazing sight. For size, impressiveness, and skilful building, there was nothing like it in all West Africa.

Its huge red walls were splendid specimens of what mud architects could accomplish—lofty, straight, and wonderfully “true.” But Freeman must have shuddered as he saw those walls decorated with thousands of human skulls. They were the tragic mementoes of a celebrated Dahomian conquest nearly seventy years before. A former king had made war upon Badagry and had suffered a humiliating defeat. There were no Amazons in those days to retrieve it. In his mortification, the great monarch “watered his mother’s grave” with human sacrifices, and then, with a larger army, marched once more to Badagry to avenge the former disaster. Badagry was overthrown, and the victorious army returned with six thousand heads and many prisoners. These skulls were forthwith used to decorate the palace walls of the conqueror. But when the work was nearing completion it was found there were not quite enough skulls: one hundred and twenty-seven more were required. So that number of Badagry prisoners were brought out and told that their skulls were needed to complete the decoration of the palace!

Within that vast square enclosure Freeman found a number of courts, each several acres in extent. In smaller inner courts, which he was not allowed to see, were the tombs of former kings. At the annual “customs” these graves were “watered” with human blood. The mud walls of the royal apartments were decorated with bas-relief panels showing the mighty deeds of the Amazons, who are represented as chasing, capturing, carrying, and slaying their conquered foes.¹ In a sacred enclosure were

¹ The palace is now largely in ruins, among which the writer has seen many of these bas-reliefs.

the royal stools of the successive kings—among them the stool of Gezo himself, a very beautiful piece of wood-carving, apparently resting on four human skulls, those of four kings conquered and slain by Gezo!¹ It was the sacred throne of Dahomey, though probably only for ceremonial use and never actually sat upon.

Everywhere Freeman's eyes fell upon human skulls. They formed borders around the palace doorways; flag-staffs were decorated with them; they were tied to the girdles of the king's dancers and fetich-men; and they were heaped up before the shrines. Within these grim walls the Amazons guarded huge quantities of these horrible trophies, and on special occasions trays and baskets of them were presented to the king. The skulls of conquered kings, chiefs, generals, and men or women of distinction were all known by name and proudly exhibited from time to time. Even in Kumasi Freeman had seen nothing so terrible. But he was spared the worst. He was not there at the time of the annual "customs," when it is known that at least thirty or forty victims were sacrificed; a "grand custom" might involve as many as fifteen hundred sacrifices. But Freeman noticed that in Dahomey deeds of blood were carried out in private and not openly as in Ashanti. For this reason he felt it was utterly impossible for a visitor even to estimate the annual loss of life. He did not know, for instance, that it was usual for the king to report by special messenger to his ancestors in the spirit world all events of importance—the royal actions, the making of a new drum, the visit of an illustrious

¹ The author has photographed that identical stool.

stranger. The message was given to a slave, the sword flashed, and the poor fellow was sent to report to the spirits. Sometimes a second messenger was sent after him with a postscript! Probably one such messenger had carried to the ancestral spirits a report of Freeman's own arrival. Yet there is evidence that Gezo was less of a monster than his predecessors. Sacrifices were fewer than formerly, and the victims were well treated until the hour of death.

Freeman was glad to return to Kana, but he could not forget the sights he had witnessed in Abomey. It had been a veritable peep into hell.

During the remainder of his stay, the king often sent for him, usually at night. At such times only a few special persons were present—two or three favourite wives, the Prince Badahoong (who ultimately succeeded to the throne), and the mewo, who seemed to be the king's other self and from whom Freeman learned much about the customs of the country. At these private interviews Gezo never seemed to tire of conversation or of asking questions about England. Reclining on a couch, with head resting on one hand, he listened with amazement to what Freeman told him of such recent inventions as railways, and the wonders of science and art. Strange to his ears were the stories of missionary enterprise and of England's efforts to abolish slavery.

In the yellow flare of torches, he told Freeman of his own troubles, of the insolence of Badagry, and of the wrongs he considered he was suffering from the rising power of Abeokuta. His eyes flashed, and he grew strangely excited as he spoke of these things.

Freeman felt that he had been divinely guided in his decision to visit such a man, and did all in his power to advise Gezo not to pick a quarrel with the Egbas—even suggesting that he might ask the advice of Her Majesty's government before going to war, and see if the quarrel could not be settled in some other way. Freeman strove, too, to show him the ultimate folly of his policy of raiding and selling slaves. With his wars, he was devastating countries and destroying tribes that, if spared, might pay him tribute: by slave-trading he was selling out of his kingdom his most precious asset—*people* who by their labour might bring him wealth. Human sacrifice and war were reducing the potential possibilities of the nation; and the Amazons he was so proud of were so many thousands of healthy women failing to fulfil the duty of motherhood. Dahomey was bleeding to death.

As Freeman began to know Gezo better, he grew to have respect for him. He was a strange anomaly—so kind, courteous, considerate, just, and wise: yet on occasion so vengeful and tyrannical. Extremes seemed to meet in him: he was a compound of virtues and vices—a delightful, kind-hearted monster. As with Da Souza, Freeman saw his good qualities and appreciated them; and while horrified at the evils around him, he remembered that, not so very long before, the gates of London had been surmounted with traitors' heads, and at Tyburn crowds of civilized and nominally Christian English folk had watched men being hanged, drawn, and quartered—a punishment so ghastly that it is hardly possible to describe it in detail. Freeman was a man of prayer, and most earnestly, day by day, he prayed that he

might be used to influence this African despot for good.

The last day of his visit drew near. The king gave Freeman two little slave girls as a present for Queen Victoria, another for President Maclean, and another for himself. Gezo also entrusted to him two boys and two girls from his own household to take to Cape Coast for education. Here indeed was a token of confidence.

Early next morning, amid the firing of salutes and the banging of drums, the king gave Christ's messenger a right royal send-off and a cordial invitation to come again. As he retraced his steps to the coast, Freeman felt that his visit had not been in vain. While he had not secured a promise of security for Abeokuta, he believed there would be no more interference with Badagry. He had received a definite invitation to station a missionary in Whyda, and in those eight little children he saw possibilities beyond estimation. When he reached Whyda he found the attitude of the slave-merchants towards himself completely changed; hearing of the way he had been received by Gezo, they became strangely polite and even tried to be friendly. Da Souza seemed genuinely pleased, and helped Freeman in every way till he left for the Gold Coast.

Freeman had been more successful than he knew. He had achieved something almost incredible. Three years later Captain Duncan, a distinguished explorer, visited Dahomey, and was amazed to find how great an influence the missionary had exerted over the king. As a direct result of Freeman's visit, Gezo had taken from his provincial chiefs the right to offer human sacrifice, and also the power of

executing criminals, who were henceforth to have the right of appeal to the king himself. This is confirmed by another traveller—Cruikshank. If these statements are true—and there is no reason for doubting them—Freeman must have been the means of saving countless lives in dark Dahomey.

CHAPTER XVIII

FOURTEEN BUSY YEARS

1843-1857. Aged 34 to 48.

WHEN Freeman returned to Cape Coast Castle after his journey to Abeokuta and Dahomey, his heart and mind were full of the new opportunities. He was stirred by the new insight he had gained as to the slave trade, and he determined to play his part in the efforts for its suppression. But these great projects had to wait while he dealt with matters on the Gold Coast for which he was more immediately responsible.

During his absence, three new missionaries had arrived. One of them died of dysentery five weeks after landing. Shipman, too, had died of the same malady. Mrs Shipman's health gave rise to great anxiety, and she at once returned to England.

The loss of these colleagues was a great blow to Freeman, and there were all kinds of problems, both financial and pastoral, clamouring for his attention. "My life is one continual scene of physical and material toil," he wrote; "but I am ready to spend and be spent for God."

Amid the pressure of duties, he found time to follow up his new interests on the Slave Coast. He reported his experiences to President Maclean, and those two clear brains thought out the next steps to be taken against the iniquitous traffic that was

draining the very life blood of Africa. Freeman urged the advisability of increasing British influence at Badagry and a treaty with Abeokuta, thus strengthening the Egba people in their resistance to slave-raiders. Shodeke and his Egbas would be valuable auxiliaries for any move against the slave-traders of Lagos. Maclean at once sent an African sergeant to hoist a British flag at Badagry, and to help protect by his presence the mission and the Sierra Leonians who passed through or settled in the town. The flag thus hoisted represented England's first foothold in what is to-day the great colony and protectorate of Nigeria.

Freeman also urged that no stone should be left unturned to secure a treaty with Dahomey. Gezo was the greatest slave-hunter in West Africa, and if he could be persuaded to abandon the hateful business, the failure of supplies of slaves would mean the collapse of the merchants in the ports. But Freeman realized that no mere motives of humanity would move the Dahomian despot or curb the blood-lust of his Amazons ; it would be necessary to show the king something more profitable in the shape of legitimate trade. With this in view, Freeman, while at Kana, had persuaded the king to send a letter to Queen Victoria, affirming a desire for friendship and goodwill, and begging her majesty to send an envoy to discuss matters with him, and also to appoint a "governor" to reopen the "English fort" in Whyda.¹ The original letter Freeman gave to Maclean to forward to London, and he sent a copy of it to Captain Foote, commander of the British

¹ At Gezo's request, and at his dictation, Freeman wrote the letter, and the king put his mark to it.

squadron on the Coast. Both Maclean and Foote saw that it gave them an opportunity to open negotiations with the king, and Captain Foote at once took steps to follow it up. He sent to the king a letter of appreciation and friendship, and, acting on his own responsibility, submitted to Gezo a draft treaty dealing with the following points :

(1) The suppression of the sale and transportation of slaves from Dahomian dominions.

(2) The expulsion of European slave-dealers from Dahomian ports.

(3) The closing of Dahomian ports against slave-ships.

On behalf of Great Britain, Captain Foote undertook to compensate the king for loss of revenue to the tune of seven hundred pounds per year (in saleable goods) for a period of seven years, by which time it was hoped that trade in palm-oil and other products would more than make up for the loss of profits on slave-trading.

Freeman was well aware that in moving against the slavers, he was putting his head into a nest of hornets. Already the Lagos people were threatening to avenge themselves for his interference by destroying the mission premises at Badagry. He told Captain Foote of this, and begged him to take steps to prevent it by an occasional call of his ships at Badagry, and by a message of warning to Lagos to the effect that both Badagry and Abeokuta, and the Sierra Leonians, were under the protection of Her Majesty's government, and must not be touched. "As a man of peace," wrote Freeman to Foote, "it is my duty to try to promote peace, and I feel convinced that the most effective way to accomplish

this end is that of humbly begging you to acquaint the Lagos people that your eyes are upon them." Captain Foote at once took Badagry under his special protection, and from that time the cruisers occasionally called there, and their officers visited the mission by way of giving it their approval and support.

After fine service in Kumasi Brooking was due for furlough, and greatly he needed it. When he broached the subject to the king, Kwaku Dua reluctantly allowed him to depart on promise that another should take his place.

In fulfilment of this undertaking, Freeman started in August 1843 for Kumasi, taking with him George Chapman, one of the new missionaries, to introduce him to the king. The ground was now familiar, and everywhere they were welcomed. Kwaku Dua received them both with the accustomed ceremony, and early one morning drove in the carriage to the mission house that Freeman might see him in it. But owing to its being the time of the Yam Festival, which lasted ten days, Freeman had less opportunity than usual of interviews with the king, and he felt he must not delay. By the end of October, he was back at Cape Coast. Chapman proved an excellent missionary, and in a few months was conducting regular services in Bantama, Juabin, and Bekwai, as well as at the Kumasi preaching hall.

In December three new missionaries (one married) arrived on the coast. Dr Beecham and the committee were doing their best for the Gold Coast Mission. But in a few weeks Watkins, who had been out a year, died, and one of the new men lived only seven months. Every blow reopened the wound in Free-

man's own heart, and these disappointments told heavily upon him.

Important changes were now taking place in the government. After fourteen years of magnificent service George Maclean was superseded by Commander Hill, for the British government once more took over the responsibility for the Gold Coast.

Most unwisely the new governor neglected to inform the King of Ashanti of the political changes and of his own assumption of office. News reached Kumasi of the arrival at Cape Coast of troops from Sierra Leone, and instantly the Ashanti chiefs' fears were aroused. In President Maclean they had implicit confidence, but they could not understand why the new governor had brought troops from across the sea unless he intended to make war upon them. At his lonely station in Kumasi Chapman at once became aware of a change of attitude on the part of certain chiefs and people. A few months later a serious incident occurred. An Ashanti woman, belonging to a party of Ashantis returning from the coast to their own country, was set upon and murdered by some Fantis of the Assin tribe. Governor Hill took no notice of this event, and the Ashantis, already suspicious of his intentions, construed it as a deliberate infraction of the treaty of 1831. After waiting a reasonable time for the governor to take action, Kwaku Dua called a Council of Chiefs. The king showed his confidence in Freeman and his staff by inviting Chapman to be present at this council. Some of the chiefs clamoured for war, but they were overruled by the king, who appealed to Chapman to lay their case before the governor, promising his chiefs, however, that unless

they had redress, he would himself lead his army to battle with the Assins. Chapman immediately went down to Cape Coast, and so impressed Hill (who at first ridiculed the idea of an Ashanti invasion, and talked glibly about defeating it with a handful of native troops) with the seriousness of the situation, that he had the murderer publicly executed on the scene of the outrage. The Ashantis were satisfied. A missionary had averted war.

In the spring of 1844 we find Freeman again visiting Badagry in order to station a new missionary and his wife—Samuel and Mrs Annear, who were shortly to proceed to Abeokuta. The work in Badagry was not as successful as was expected. The people were degraded and lawless. Under cover of darkness, victims were kidnapped in the streets, and sold to Lagos. Sierra Leonians were afraid to settle there, and the Badagry people were not responsive to the Gospel. Hearing that Freeman was at Badagry and was to call at Whyda, the King of Dahomey sent a special messenger, carrying his own stick, to intercept him and beg him to revisit Dahomey. Much as Freeman would liked to have done so, he felt it was impossible to spare the time; he therefore returned a kindly greeting and an explanation to Gezo. This was the third message Gezo had sent to Freeman within a few months.

By this time Freeman was extremely troubled about the increasing cost of the ever-growing work of his five-hundred-mile-wide District. "Our expenses are very heavy, and we cannot help it," he wrote early in 1844. Four months later, in trying to explain the expenditure to Dr Beecham, he

wrote, "Such movements as we have in Kumasi, Badagry, Abeokuta, and Whyda, cannot take place without heavy expense." The cost of erecting or purchasing houses at all the stations for the missionaries had been very heavy. Medical expenses of various kinds—including short sea-trips—were a serious item, for all the workers were frequently ill. Several industrial schemes were costing a good deal of money. At Domonasi, Allen was steadily cutting down virgin forest and planting coffee in accordance with the plan laid down several years before. A few miles from Cape Coast Castle, Freeman had purchased from an English planter an estate called Napoleon, where he soon had twenty thousand healthy coffee plants growing. There was another plantation called Beulah. Such schemes seemed to promise great things for the future, but they were running away with money. The cost of constant travel, also, was mounting up. The committee at home was becoming alarmed, for the Gold Coast Mission was now several thousands of pounds in debt, and they insisted on economy. But they were not up against the problems and urgent calls of the work in the way Freeman was, and he felt that they did not understand the situation. Tragic experience had taught him that in West Africa it is not true economy to attempt to run a mission "on the cheap." His own two wives and nine of his fellow-workers had fallen at his side, and he conceived it to be his plain duty to spare no reasonable expense to make the life of his comrades as safe and comfortable as the conditions of the Coast permitted—what they thought of him may be seen from the frequent references in their home

letters to "our beloved superintendent," "our much beloved leader," and the "incomparable Mr Freeman."

With heavy heart Freeman set himself to cut down expenses. Annear was forbidden to go to Abeokuta, and the committee even mentioned giving up Kumasi! Then came two stern letters from London, fixing the annual expenditure of the District at a figure Freeman knew to be impossible if the work was to be maintained. The Badagry-Abeokuta mission had been undertaken at the distinct order of the committee; was *that* to be abandoned? One missionary, John Martin, wrote to the committee: "It is painful, distressing, to see the ripe corn perishing. . . . Allow me to beseech you (notwithstanding your difficulties) not to diminish your operations on this coast." Annear added these pungent words: "If Abeokuta, with its thousands, has to go without the Gospel, let every Christian in England remember that it is not on account of indisposition to receive it . . . but solely for the want of more Christian liberality in the professed followers of Christ."

Freeman was almost in despair. Overworked as he was, he fancied that he had lost the confidence of the committee. His furlough was long overdue, but again and again he had postponed it owing to the exigencies of the work. Now he felt that he must delay no longer. He must come home and seek to explain to the committee the realities of the situation. The missionaries supported him in this decision—though he had not told them of the last two letters lest they should be discouraged.

Strengthened by the confidence and affection of

his colleagues, Freeman now set out to face the home Church. He had scarcely left the Coast when another missionary died of blackwater fever.

He landed in England on August 28th, 1844, and at once addressed himself to his task. That morning he wrote, "I am overwhelmed and overpowered. I can only repeat again from my inmost soul :

*Here, Lord, I give myself away
'Tis all that I can do."*

The facts he laid before the committee, and the explanations he was able to give as to the expenditure fully satisfied them, and they resolved upon a special appeal to the home Church to extinguish the debt of nearly eight thousand pounds on the Gold Coast Mission.

Freeman toured the country to plead for the work he loved, and everywhere had a wonderful reception. He had a fine story and knew how to tell it. Still further to spread the interest in the work, the *Journals* of his principal journeys were published in book form. This little volume so stirred Thomas Clarkson, the venerable father of the Anti-Slavery movement, that he wrote a review-pamphlet commending it to all friends of the Negro race. The interest soon spread far beyond the Methodist Church, as was well illustrated by Freeman's visit to Edinburgh, when the Lord Provost presided over a special meeting in the Assembly Hall of the Free Church of Scotland, and ministers and members of the Presbyterian Churches helped in various ways. Money flowed in from all parts of the land—even from people of other Churches. Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, the aged anti-slavery leader and hero of

Freeman's youth, sent a cheque for two hundred pounds, and his son added another fifty pounds. Ere long the committee was able to announce that five thousand five hundred pounds had been subscribed.

But Freeman's labours in England were not exclusively devoted to money-raising, or to fostering interest in his own work; he had in his purview the wider interests of the West African peoples, and used every possible means to rouse England to new efforts for crushing the slave trade. He was in close touch with Clarkson and Buxton, and addressed to Lord Stanley (as the responsible Minister of Her Majesty's government) a fine letter on the subject. At considerable length he told his lordship the things he himself had seen, and urged the adoption of the steps he regarded as most likely to lead to the overthrow of the hideous traffic.

While Freeman was boldly urging the committee to give him more men to replace those who had fallen, there came an offer of service from the West Indies. Henry Wharton, a young mulatto minister working in St Vincent, wrote to say that he had been deeply stirred by the story of Freeman's work, and that the news of so many deaths had become to him a personal call. He said: "Being inured to a tropical climate, I am convinced that I could much better endure the wasting effects of Africa than any European." Freeman felt sure that Wharton was right; the committee gladly accepted his offer, and Wharton lived to render more than twenty-eight years of fine service in West Africa.

Greatly encouraged and physically refreshed by his visit to Great Britain, Freeman returned to the

Gold Coast with Wharton. They landed in June 1845. Six months later the committee sent out two more recruits—one of whom lived only a few weeks.

Freeman's instructions were to carry on as best he could at all the stations, but with the utmost economy. Abeokuta was not to be occupied by a European worker, and no building was to be undertaken without express sanction of the committee. Freeman loyally accepted these restrictions, though he found it difficult to turn a deaf ear to the numerous appeals that reached him. By this time he was one of the best known and most highly respected men along the Coast and far into the interior. Everywhere the people knew him as "the great white prophet." Even from the far distant Ivory Coast on the west came the son of the chief of Grand Lahou to plead for a missionary or a teacher. From Popo on the east there was an invitation to station a trained teacher to take charge of a school already opened voluntarily by an educated African named Lawson. It went against the grain of Freeman's nature to say "No" to such people. One up-country chief begged for a teacher for his village, and, on being told that it was impossible, replied that "it was a very hard thing that so much food was cooked in England and he and his people were not allowed to taste of it."

It was evident that more attention must be given to the training of African workers—though that again proved costly. The training institution was transferred to Cape Coast, and a new missionary, the Rev. J. Martin, was placed in charge of it—and he was singularly successful. Efficient African ministers

were not easily manufactured out of the material then available; yet no less than twelve men who passed through his hands afterwards qualified for ordination. Martin also set himself to help the voluntary "local preachers," many of whom at that time were unable to read or write. Freeman rejoiced to have such a man as Martin available for this all-important work.

The mission in Ashanti appeared to be well established and was making progress. Very wisely Chapman did not press for quick results, but there were several earnest inquirers. One youth of royal blood learned to read the New Testament, avowed himself a Christian, and publicly burned his fetich. It was a thrilling moment for Chapman and not less for Freeman when he heard of it.

The young man's companions assembled to witness the first destruction of a fetich that had ever taken place in Kumasi. Two or three large drums were obtained, a fire was kindled, and the fetich was suspended by a cord over the waiting flames. One of the party, in imitation of the signal so often given by the king's death drum, struck his drum to the well-known sound, "Cut him down! Cut him down! Cut him down!" The flames instantly received the long-ador'd fetich, and another drum answered the first with a loud resounding "DOWN!"

At Juabin Chapman was frequently able to preach to crowds of from eight hundred to twelve hundred Ashantis, and even at Bantama, near to the gruesome mausoleum of the kings, his services every Sunday were well attended. But the strain on Chapman was too great; after two and a half years' splendid work he broke down and was obliged to

retire from the mission—another blow for Freeman. Soon afterwards the young prince who had attached himself to the mission was put to death, and another youthful convert, also of royal blood, shared his fate. They both perished amid politico-domestic troubles in the palace, probably because of their having become Christians.

At Badagry the difficulties were increasing. It was a veritable cockpit of rivalries—trading, tribal, and international. The townspeople were divided among themselves, and lived in constant fear of invasion by the people of Whyda or Porto Novo. One day, with some ceremony, a Dahomian war-hatchet was presented to the missionary in charge of the stations, and soon after bands of Dahomians made havoc on the strip of land between the lagoon and the sea. The mission workers were often in very real danger.

In the political sphere, Governor Hill was succeeded by Commander W. Winniett, a man of very different type, who soon discovered how valuable an asset Freeman was to the cause of civilization and good government. A year after entering office he resolved to pay a visit to the King of Dahomey to see whether he could persuade that monarch to enter upon a treaty for the suppression of slavery, and realizing Freeman's influence with Gezo, invited the missionary to accompany him to assist in the negotiation. Freeman gladly embraced the opportunity. They were received with the usual military display and salutes. During an interview Freeman asked Gezo if he really desired to confirm his request for friendship with England, made at the previous visit, and Gezo assured Governor Winniett that he

did. But the king could not be induced to sign the desired treaty. Probably he dared not do so, for like many another despot, he knew himself to be entirely at the mercy of his own army. At that very time the Amazons were imploring him to "give them" Abeokuta to conquer, and to have refused them the joy of slave-raiding might have meant assassination. But Gezo again protested his personal desire for English friendship, and repeated to Freeman his request for a mission in Whyda.

On the return journey Freeman again visited Badagry, and then returned to Cape Coast by land, travelling the three hundred miles by hammock.

In the autumn of 1848 Governor Winniett made an official visit to Kumasi. His object was to persuade Kwaku Dua to sign a treaty abolishing human sacrifice, and again he invited Freeman to accompany him. Freeman was accustomed to wonderful receptions at Kumasi, but this time, in honour of His Excellency the Governor, their welcome was on a grander scale than usual. But the object of the visit did not succeed. The offering of human sacrifices, especially in connection with funeral ceremonies, was so closely related to the religious beliefs of the Ashantis that it could not easily be uprooted. To allow a relative of noble family to pass unattended into the world of spirits would show lack of affection and respect, and would lead to serious results for the living. There are grounds for fearing that the governor's visit was misunderstood and misinterpreted by many Ashantis. From their point of view, the governor had come to pay his duty to the king, and was thereby admitting the king to be his superior. Etiquette is a very impor-

tant matter in the courts of West African monarchs, and it is always the inferior who comes to present his respects to the superior. The Ashantis were ever a proud, warlike race, and probably the visit did more harm than good. However, it gave Governor Winniett the opportunity of seeing something of the mission, for he was entertained at the mission house throughout his stay in Kumasi, and he wrote a glowing account of his impressions to Earl Grey, the Secretary of State, expressing himself as "interested and excited" by what he saw.

On yet another important occasion, Governor Winniett requested Freeman to accompany him, and this time the occasion was truly historic. In 1850 the British government bought, for ten thousand pounds, all the Danish possessions on the Gold Coast. Governor Winniett went to Accra to take formal possession of the forts, and he took Freeman with him to act as his official honorary secretary. On March 6th the governor and his attendants marched in procession to Christiansborg Castle—Freeman walking beside His Excellency—where the Danish garrison fired a royal salute and hauled down their flag. The Union Jack was run up in its place, and immediately greeted with salutes from Fort James and the Dutch Fort. In the courtyard, the ceremony of handing over the keys took place, and the transfer was explained to the local chiefs there assembled.

Shortly after these events there arose, in the neighbourhood of Cape Coast, a serious conflict between Christianity and fetichism. In the seashore village of Asafa a number of people, including two priests, became Christians, and built themselves a chapel. Not far away was the sacred grove

of Mankesim, where Brafo, the great national god of the district, was believed to dwell. This shrine was renowned for its oracle, through which the god spoke to the people. Very indiscreetly, three of the Christians cut a pole out of the sacred grove for making a fence—a quite ordinary thing for the villagers to do, but as these particular folk were Christians, it gave the priests the opportunity they were seeking. The whole Christian community in Asafa was attacked, put into irons, and flogged; their village was burned down, and their farms destroyed. The government summoned Edu, the Chief of Mankesim, to Cape Coast Castle to answer for the persecution, but for many weeks he defied them, being encouraged in his resistance by the priests and their oracle. At last he was prevailed upon to obey the summons, and arrived with a large company of armed men, and demanded to be heard outside the castle gates. To this the governor would not listen, and Edu and his followers crowded into the large hall of the castle. Freeman himself was present at the trial, and has described the exciting event. It was nothing short of a conflict between the forces of light and darkness. The Christians gave evidence, including one of the converted priests, who told how his wife had been outraged by the priests of the grove; as an ex-priest, he exposed the deceits of the old faith. The defence completely failed; the governor and council imposed a fine on Edu, and he was made to lodge fifty ounces of gold as security for good conduct.

During the trial there came to light a conspiracy of several priests of the grove to poison three

prominent Christians. The evidence against them was convincing, and some of them confessed their evil ways. Several were sentenced to be flogged and to work in irons as convicts for five years. Before the castle gates, in the presence of Edu and the people they had deceived, these men received the due punishment of their misdeeds.

In anger and shame Edu returned to Mankesim, and, following his custom, went to consult the oracle of the grove. From the darkness of the shrine came the answer as aforetime. But, in his disillusionment and wrath, Edu had placed men round the shrine, and when the "voice" was heard, they pounced upon the oracle and revealed the impostors concealed behind it. Instantly Edu had the priests put in irons. Fetichism was disgraced, and it was some time before the grove of Mankesim recovered its prestige. Edu welcomed the opening of a Christian school in his village, and sent to it fifteen children from his own compound. Such events gave Freeman and his helpers new opportunities.

The year 1851 was one of intense anxiety for Freeman, for the cruel hand of war was threatening to destroy the eastern section of his wide mission field. In March the fierce armies of Dahomey flung themselves against the walls of Abeokuta, but were driven off. In June the slave-dealer chief of Lagos, in alliance with the people of Porto Novo, attacked Badagry from both sides; failing in their object, they renewed the attack a month later, and were again beaten back with the aid of Egba forces. This attack was a deliberate attempt to drive the British from the Slave Coast, and at once the government prepared to retaliate. In December

the English fleet attacked Lagos, broke the evil powers so long dominant, and restored the lawful chief, who had been driven into exile by the slavers. On New Year's Day 1852, a treaty was signed by which the new chief agreed to abolish the slave-trade and human sacrifice, and to permit missionary work. This chief had himself come under missionary influence in Badagry, and was prepared to welcome missionaries to Lagos. How could a man like Freeman miss such an opportunity? Within a few months he stationed an African worker¹ there, and the Church Missionary Society took a similar step.

Almost at that very moment, trouble broke out with the Ashantis. A force of Ashanti warriors crossed the Pra to attack a Fanti tribe under British protection. The governor (Major Hill) sent them an ultimatum, and gathered a force of twenty-four thousand, including Fantis. Freeman was almost desperate. It looked as though the labours of years were to be undone; he was concerned for the safety of his missionary in Kumasi and the churches between the Pra and Cape Coast. But Kwaku Dua remained friendly to Freeman's representative, and protected him from harm; better still, he declared he had no quarrel *with the British*, and called back his war-hungry chiefs. "For the first time in history," says Claridge in his great *History*, "an Ashanti army had assembled and retired without giving battle." No one rejoiced more than the man who for so many years had spared no effort to create friendship between the

¹ John Martin. Not the English missionary, but the African "assistant-missionary" of the same name. See pp. 53 and 99. He died three months later.

Ashantis on one hand and Fantis and British on the other.

The British government was doing all in its power to enter into treaty relations with Dahomey. Major Forbes and Captain Duncan had been sent to offer Gezo compensation for abandoning the slave traffic. There were fears, too, of another Dahomian attack on Abeokuta. Recognizing Freeman's influence with the king, the missionary society asked Freeman to pay him another visit. So, in 1854, accompanied by Wharton, he went again to Dahomey. While at Whyda they saw a cargo of slaves shipped before their eyes! As the vessel they travelled on lay at anchor, Freeman saw with his glasses a number of large canoes paddling towards a Portuguese flag on the beach. Then, with incredible swiftness, a slave ship came up and cast anchor at the rendezvous. From sheds on the shore six hundred and fifty naked slaves—both men and women—were hurried to the canoes, their necks fastened together with thongs, and taken out to the ship. Through his telescope Freeman clearly saw four slaves leap into the water to the sharks rather than go aboard, one being a mother with her baby. In a few hours the ship sailed.

Lagos was now open to British trade. On its island in the lagoon, with easy access to the open sea, a new day of unexpected prosperity lay before it. Badagry, more difficult of access, could not compete with it, and its prosperity waned. Freeman saw the missionary possibility of the new port, and set to work to develop it. For eleven years he had been watching for such an opportunity, and he could not let it slip from him without effort. He realized

that it was the best port from which to reach Abeokuta, and although Shodeke had been murdered at the instigation of Ifa priests who were angry at his leanings to Christianity, he was convinced that the Egba metropolis was the strategic centre for evangelism in that part of West Africa. His warm friends of the C.M.S. were already established there, but the presence of so many Methodist Sierra Leonians gave Freeman responsibility he could not shirk. So in 1854 he visited Lagos, and then went by canoe up the river Ogun to Abeokuta.

Amid all the duties and anxieties that surrounded him, Freeman now took an important step in his private affairs. Since the death of his second wife he had known nothing of the joy and restfulness of home life. At times he had been unutterably lonely. His health was often poor; he had repeated attacks of fever, and sometimes could, for days together, take nothing but coco-nut milk. Feeling the need of companionship and domestic joy, he now married an educated African lady, a devoted Christian and keen worker in the church. "She proved a most devoted wife and mother, but was so unassuming that only those within her intimate circle were fully aware of her intelligence and splendid qualities." Soon four little faces brought joy and sunshine to the home—there were two boys and two girls. It was apparent to all who knew Freeman's circumstances that he had taken the right step.

The work was developing on every hand. A dozen missionaries or African "assistant missionaries" (as they were then called) were stationed at Cape Coast, Dixcove, Anamabu, Domonasi, Mansu, Kumasi, Winneba, Accra, Whyda, Badagry, Lagos,

and Abeokuta. The number of out-stations in charge of African teachers was increasing. In 1855 Freeman was obliged greatly to enlarge the Cape Coast church to accommodate the worshippers. In 1856 no fewer than eight hundred people received baptism and six new chapels were built. The Christian community under the care of the mission numbered about seven thousand. The burden on Freeman's shoulders was becoming greater than one man could possibly bear for an unlimited period. It was eleven years since he had had a furlough and he was feeling the strain; his letters became short and jerky, and he no longer had time to go into details about the work. Even his last journeys to Kumasi, Abeokuta, and Abomey were dismissed quite briefly, and botany dropped out altogether; he had no time for it. His very handwriting at this period bears witness to the haste and strain, and some of his letters are difficult to read. He writes of "these oppressive cares and their corroding consequences," and longed for "a little relaxation such as other men enjoy." Beyond all the administrative and financial worries, there was that which came to him daily—"the care of all the churches."

CHAPTER XIX

SIXTEEN YEARS IN RETIREMENT

1857-1873. Age 48 to 64.

FREEMAN was going faster than the home Church could follow. The opening of stations at Whyda and Lagos involved heavy expense. The intrepid pioneer had taken these steps on his own responsibility. He had hoped that the planting of missions in the two most important strongholds of slave exportation would appeal to popular feeling in England and call forth spontaneous liberality. It did not do so, and the mission stood committed to new annual expenditure. The committee protested vigorously and called a halt. Freeman could not halt. It was not in his nature to stand still.

The committee now took stern measures. But they found Freeman a difficult man to curb; though always courteous, he was by no means docile. Just as the Baptist Missionary Society had difficulty with Carey and the London Mission with Livingstone, so the committee of the W.M.M.S. found Thomas Birch Freeman could not be restrained. The struggle had now gone on for a dozen years and Freeman had always got his way.

It would not be quite fair to blame the committee. They had other fields to provide for—most of them clamouring for more men and larger grants—while the committee's income was strictly limited. Not

long before—in 1849—the Wesleyan Church in Great Britain had suffered the greatest disaster that ever befell it: acute controversy over matters of Church government had led to disruption, and a hundred thousand members had seceded; the financial position of the society was serious, and there was a heavy debt. Then, in the hope of awakening new interest, the committee had allowed itself to be drawn into a new venture—a mission to China. Beginning in 1853, this became more and more costly.

In the autumn of 1856 the committee took two drastic steps: they sent out the Rev. William West to become financial secretary to the mission, thus taking finance out of Freeman's hands, and the Rev. Daniel West as a special deputation to investigate the whole subject of finance, administration, and progress of the work. Freeman heartily welcomed both steps and wrote to the committee to say how glad he would be to co-operate with both new-comers in the tasks before them.

Daniel West, accompanied by Freeman, visited most of the stations near the coast and went to Lagos and Abeokuta; the latter greatly impressed him, and (though sent out to insist on economy!) he recommended that a missionary should be stationed there. At the end of his tour he wrote to the committee:

I am happy to inform you that my impression as to the spiritual state of the mission is that it is to a very high degree satisfactory. God has, by means of His servants, wrought a great work. We have good chapels, and schools, and houses, and large and attentive congregations. . . . The whole country is open to us. In many villages and towns through which I passed, one

uniform state of feeling was evident—one desire earnestly expressed: "Send us teachers and missionaries." Oh that we had the means!

But on matters of finance Mr West found a serious state of things. Freeman was not good at keeping the very complicated accounts of the mission. The system of book-keeping at all the stations proved "most slovenly"—indeed there was no system at all. On his constant journeyings, Freeman had transacted business in a haphazard way, and never had time to give a day or two to going over the accounts. He had received no business training, knew nothing of accountancy, and the result was confusion. He had only a vague idea as to how much the mission was costing, and when the figures were worked out, no one was more surprised than himself. But, though most unbusinesslike, there is every reason to believe that he had acted throughout with the purest motives and highest honour. Unfortunately Daniel West never lived to report to the committee. He died at the Gambia on the way home. Freeman firmly believed that had West been able to tell all he had seen, the results would have been different.

To the committee Freeman wrote a fine manly letter—courteous and restrained to a degree. It is just the letter we should expect from such a man at such a time. In humility he bowed to the censure of the committee. Referring to his own bad book-keeping, he said:

I will not attempt to offer my weary toils for so many years as an apology for any part of these difficulties. I ought to have minded what the world calls *the main*

thing in these matters, and been more quiet and calculating and less impassioned ; but in one sense it has been unfortunate for me personally that one single passion has absorbed my life—namely, the extension of our work, and in the midst thereof I have overlooked and neglected matters of expenditure.

Feeling that he had lost the confidence of the committee, he asked to be relieved of his office as chairman and general superintendent of the mission, as he had already been relieved of financial control. For the good of the work, he felt that it would be best to have a new leader, and he offered freely to step aside. There is not a trace of anger or resentment in his letter. He wrote :

In standing aside I should not deprive the mission of any services I may be able to render, and I would most willingly act as a local preacher under Mr William West or any brother who may fulfil the duties of General Superintendent. I would aid the work by every means in my power.

In this lofty spirit the painful business was carried through to the end. Just at the opportune moment, the governor (Sir B. C. C. Pine) offered Freeman the important post of civil commandant of the Accra district of the colony, including Christiansborg and the whole ex-Danish settlement. He at once accepted the post, feeling that by so doing he could still benefit the people of Africa. This step, by the rules of the Methodist Church, involved retirement from the ministry. A few days later William West wrote to the committee :

He wishes to continue a member of our Church and desires to retire very quietly and cultivate towards us

a very friendly spirit; and I have no doubt he will use what influence he has for the promotion of the interests of the mission.

A month later we find Freeman and William West—the man who had superseded him—journeying together into the bush to unite in the opening of a new chapel. So far was Freeman from bitterness.¹

Thus, after twenty years of magnificent service for the Kingdom of God, Thomas Birch Freeman retired. It was a catastrophe.

Freeman's new task was no light one. Three years earlier (1854), in consequence of a serious rising of the people of Christiansborg, the then governor had bombarded the town. The tribesmen retaliated by attacking the castle with sharpshooters, but next day were driven off; the whole population fled to the bush, and the town was reduced to ruins. Happily the loss of life was not great. For three years the place lay desolate, but when Freeman became civil commandant, the people began to return, and rebuilt their dwellings. This was new service for him, but he soon proved his value.

The next decade was a time of unrest and strife in many places. There were frequent changes of government; tribes revolted; there was repeated danger of war with Ashanti; an exchange of forts (with adjacent towns and spheres of influence) between the English and the Dutch led to war among the Fanti tribes concerned. During this struggle, the government sent Freeman to the camp

¹ The whole correspondence relating to his retirement does not contain a single word of reproach or resentment.

of several Fanti tribes who were besieging Elmina to try to induce the chiefs to abandon their project. At first his efforts were fruitless, but after a five-hour battle and a still longer attack on the town, he persuaded one of the chiefs to stand aloof, and at last succeeded in inducing the others to raise the siege and submit their quarrel to the judgment of the British administrator. In the negotiations that followed, Freeman was one of three men who represented the English and the Fanti tribes, and they succeeded in persuading the Elminas to sign terms of peace. Freeman's influence and his knowledge of the African mind were of great value on this and other occasions, and when after several years of service he retired into private life, succeeding governors availed themselves of his occasional services as special commissioner when any friction arose with the tribes. On one such occasion, when on his way to attempt the pacification of the Awunas, who dwelt east of the Volta, Freeman and his party, while crossing the river in canoes, were fired upon from the Awuna shore. Some of the party were for turning back, but Freeman ordered his men to go forward. The Awuna firing became irregular, and as they approached the shore Freeman stood up that they might recognize him. Immediately the shout was raised "It is Freeman! It is Freeman!" Firing ceased; the Awunas rushed into the water, lifted up the canoe bodily with Freeman in it, and carried him ashore for a palaver of peace.

When his work for government came to an end, Freeman attempted to carry out a scheme that had long been in his mind—that of a model farm.

He secured a site near Accra, built a house and put his experience to practical use. For a time he maintained his family largely by market-gardening. Botanical study again became his hobby, and he constantly corresponded with Kew Gardens concerning the flora of West Africa.

He never wavered in his love for his Church and the work connected with it. He frequently preached in Methodist pulpits, and kept in friendly contact with the missionaries. To stimulate missionary interest in England, he wrote a missionary novel, *Missionary Enterprise No Fiction*—a story founded on the facts of his own experience. Though mid-Victorian in flavour, it is in many ways a remarkable book; it was something new in missionary literature, and quite a revelation of the mind and culture of its author. Lest, through any prejudice, its usefulness should be limited by attaching his name to it, he published it anonymously through the official Methodist publishing house. He also wrote a much larger book (intended to be in three volumes) covering the whole of his African experience, but unfortunately it was never published. None of these writings contain a single word against the missionary committee, nor do they even refer to the trouble or to his leaving the mission. Freeman kept his heart and mind absolutely unsoiled by anger or jealousy. He remained what he had always been—a Christian gentleman and a loyal son of his Church.

CHAPTER XX

FREEMAN IN OLD AGE RETURNS TO THE WORK

1873-1890. Age 64 to 81.

It occasions no sense of surprise to find that, after an interval of sixteen years, Freeman returned to the full service of the mission. He was ever a missionary at heart, and on September 1st, 1873, he once more buckled on the armour.

He was then sixty-four years of age—a time of life at which most men think of rest. He rejoiced to be back in the ministry, and he rendered another period of thirteen years' fine service before old age and infirmity compelled his final retirement. His post was no more that of chairman and general superintendent—he did not desire that, and would not have accepted it—but that of a rank and file missionary. We have seen him as a pioneer and an organizer; we are now to see him as a circuit minister.

He was appointed to take charge of Anamabu—place of many memories of his vigorous early manhood. No longer burdened with the administration of a wide District, he was able to devote himself to pastoral duties in a way that had before been impossible. With all his old energy he constantly visited the outposts of his circuit. If such work was at all humdrum in comparison with the thrilling travels of his early years, it was

because the changed conditions of the missionary situation were themselves an abiding tribute to his early labours. At many places there were now churches full of eager Fanti Christians.

But such a man as Freeman could not be confined within the limits of a single circuit, and we find him constantly conducting special services in the surrounding circuits. At Cape Coast, Salt Pond, and many other places where he was well remembered and loved by the older people, he conducted what in modern phraseology we call "services for the deepening of the spiritual life" for the nominal Christians within the Church, and evangelistic efforts for people who still clung to their old fetichism. Conversions were numerous, for people were moved by the message he so earnestly proclaimed. His services at Cape Coast were attended by such crowds that the boys' school had to be used for overflow meetings. But in the midst of his mission there, he was recalled to Anamabu, for an S.O.S. from Mrs Freeman told him that the congregation at his own church, night after night, was so great that numbers of people were obliged to sit outside. Quite spontaneously the crowds so increased that there also overflow services had to be held.

In 1875 Freeman went to conduct a baptismal service at Salt Pond, and found the candidates so numerous that they were obliged to leave the church and hold the service under the shade of banyan trees. Later in the day he returned to Anamabu to conduct another baptismal service, and that also had to be held in the open air. That one day he baptized about three hundred converts. We read of prayer-meetings continuing until after mid-

night. Even then people refused to go home, and some devout souls remained praying till three o'clock in the morning. At the end of the year there was a crowded watch-night service, and on the first Sunday in the New Year five hundred Fanti Christians received Holy Communion at Anamabu alone. On another occasion he went to Asafa—where there had been trouble with the fetich priests twenty-five years before—and baptized two hundred and sixty people, many of whom were heads of families who were baptized with their wives and children.

At a later stage Freeman introduced camp meetings—for the first time on the Gold Coast—and people flocked to them in crowds. At some of these gatherings as many as fifteen hundred or two thousand people were present, and Freeman's heart greatly rejoiced at the beautiful sight of such large numbers of Christians sitting under the glorious coco-nut palms. Even in the village of Mankesim—close to the sacred grove—the chapel was too small for the crowd at a baptismal service, and a few months later he opened a new chapel there, baptized over a hundred converts, and married seventeen couples. During the year 1877 no fewer than three thousand converts were baptized on the Gold Coast, half of them by Freeman himself. We can understand the old man's joy over these harvests in the fields in which he had toiled so long.

Freeman was unflinchingly firm when discipline was required. He would not tolerate abuses in the churches under his care. At Mankesim there was a curious outbreak of fanaticism; several women

members, in a frenzy, announced that they were the Apostles of our Lord come again in the flesh, and there were signs of this foolishness spreading among the ignorant converts newly won from heathenism. Very prompt and decisive were the steps Freeman took: he summoned all the ringleaders before a court of African Christians at Anamabu, and then all adjourned to Mankesim to make fuller inquiries on the spot. After five days' investigation the ringleaders were expelled or suspended. The village catechist was dismissed for failing to report the trouble immediately it began, and for lack of firmness all through. All the delinquents submitted to their punishment, and the result was that not a single member was lost; even the ringleaders became penitent, and in course of time were readmitted to the outer circle of church membership.

After half a dozen years in Anamabu circuit, Freeman was transferred to Accra. There he carried on a work similar to that in his former circuit. While there, he had the great joy of seeing his eldest son, Tom, received into the ministry, and appointed to be his own junior colleague. Shortly after this, an ex-missionary of experience was sent out by the committee to deal with certain difficulties that had arisen in Lagos, and Freeman was appointed to accompany him—an honour the old man greatly appreciated, for he felt it to be a mark of restored confidence. On this occasion his knowledge of African problems greatly helped towards a settlement of the trouble, and his earnest preaching proved a stimulus to the Lagos Christians.

Freeman was now in his seventy-fifth year—a very tall, straight, stately old man, with silvery hair,

perfect, courtly manners and a splendid presence. He was never anything but dignified, and every one instinctively treated him with profound respect. Yet he had a fund of quiet humour, and always enjoyed a good joke. A buoyancy of temperament was one of his priceless assets. He had a fine flow of language; not only was his literary style good, but his spoken English also was polished and faultless in pronunciation and accent. To the African people and his colleagues in the ministry he was "Father Freeman." He was kind and courteous to all, always accessible, and wherever he went he was loved. Children ran after him in the street, and it was quite usual to see two or three of them holding each of his hands. Kind-hearted to a degree, he was always ready to go out of his way to help people in need or to deliver the oppressed. Once he walked twenty miles to plead for the lives of two chiefs sentenced to death by their own people.

In ripe old age there came to him a crowning joy: 1885 was the jubilee year of the Gold Coast Mission, and the whole District prepared to celebrate it. Father Freeman was chosen to preach the jubilee sermons in the Cape Coast Church. The Rev. W. Terry Coppin (then chairman of the District) generously stood aside and invited Freeman to take full charge of the celebrations. Sunday, February 1st, was the great climax of his life. At three o'clock in the morning the big church¹ was full for a prayer-meeting which continued till daybreak. For the later services, awnings were erected round the church to shield from the fierce rays of the sun the crowds

¹ The church Freeman built in 1838 had been enlarged in 1855, again enlarged in 1867, and practically rebuilt in 1879.

who could not find room within. At the morning service Freeman preached the chief sermon of the anniversary. With overflowing heart the white-haired veteran, "with great energy and eloquence, drew upon his rich experience, contrasting the past with the present." In the ground beneath the pulpit in which he stood, and within the Communion rail, lay the mortal dust of the men and women who had fallen at his side in the early years of pioneer work. In the castle yard, not far away, was the grave of his first wife. . . . And now, the work of half a century had resulted in a Gold Coast Church of many thousands of members. That sermon was Freeman's swan song. For several days the thanksgiving services continued, and smaller celebrations were held all through the District. As a tribute of affection the Church proposed to raise money to send the brave old pioneer for a holiday in England, but he could not face the journey or the English climate, and it fell through.

The following year Freeman, at the age of seventy-seven, retired from active work. In a little cottage on the open plain outside Accra, he and his devoted wife lived on a none too liberal pension. Slowly his strength failed. In 1890, his eighty-first year, when the rains began, the Rev. J. T. Price (then in charge of Accra circuit), fearing that the old man's health would suffer, and eager to supply every possible comfort, invited Freeman and his wife to live in the mission house, where he could be better looked after—for the end was evidently approaching. An attack of influenza hastened it. "I am like a little bird with wing ready raised for flight," he said to his son Tom. At the last "family prayers" he rallied

his strength and gave out the first verse of the hymn—

*Now I have found the ground wherein
Sure my soul's anchor may remain.*

He was free from pain, and looked very tenderly on his family. That night, while Tom was watching by the bedside, Father Freeman passed home to God.

AN EPILOGUE

IN his first year on the Gold Coast, Freeman wrote to the committee these words: "I verily believe that you have not one mission in the world to which more importance attaches, from every point of view, than Cape Coast and its dependencies. For hundreds of miles an open door is set before us." Twenty years later, when retiring under a cloud, he wrote, "I am willing to stand or fall by the results that shall hereafter be seen in the Gold Coast Mission." Let us see how far time has justified his confidence.

To-day the Gold Coast Wesleyan Mission numbers five hundred churches; forty-four African ministers; seven hundred paid lay evangelists and school teachers; fifty-two thousand communicants; with a total of over one hundred thousand members and adherents. Many of its churches are absolutely self-supporting and also contribute generously towards missionary work. Every year they raise almost incredible sums of money—steadily increasing from forty-two thousand pounds in 1919 to over one hundred and two thousand pounds in 1928.

The Ashanti section has one hundred and sixty churches, over eleven thousand communicants, and twenty-three thousand members and adherents. In Kumasi, once "the City of Blood," there is a handsome, self-supporting church, with a congregation of seven hundred. A mile outside the town stands the

splendid Wesley College for the training of African teachers, evangelists, and ministers. It cost twenty-one thousand pounds, of which the Gold Coast churches gave two-thirds!

And what of the "Slave Coast"? The work Freeman began in Badagry, Abeokuta, and Lagos has grown into a separate Methodist "District," with two hundred and thirty churches; nineteen African ministers; four hundred lay helpers; sixteen thousand communicants, and a total of thirty-three thousand members and adherents; raising annually about twenty-two thousand pounds for maintenance of the churches and schools and extension work.

What of Dahomey? The work begun amid such difficulties in Whyda extended to Porto Novo and other centres, but has grown more slowly than that in the other areas. To-day it has sixty churches and a total Christian community of eight thousand. There is a small chapel in Abomey near to the ruins of the old skull-decorated palace, and a small but promising mass movement farther north among a tribe once subdued by the terrible Amazons, and the skull of whose king lies under Gezo's royal stool. Such is the harvest from Freeman's sowing.

Nor is the harvest confined to the W.M.M.S. Other missionary societies have entered the fields first pioneered by Freeman, and they also report large ingatherings, the chief being the Scottish Mission, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the Church Missionary Society, several American Missions, the Primitive Methodist Mission, and before the war the Basle and Bremen Missions.

Laus Deo.

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