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A MODEST CELEBRITY.

SOME years ago I set out to visit Italy for the first time, and took my way up the Rhine and through Switzerland. A lady friend whom I was to meet, with her family at Milan, had desired me to bring her some of Jean Maria Farina's true and genuine eau de Cologne; and anxious, like a true knight, to fulfil the behest of lady fair, no sooner was I arrived at Cologne, and the duties of the toilet and my breakfast were over, than I sallied out to execute my commission. I had not taken twenty steps along the street, when, over a warehouse door, a large board struck my eye, thus inscribed in gigantic capitals—

ONLY VERITABLE AGENT FOR THE SALE OF
JEAN MARIA FARINA'S GENUINE EAU DE COLOGNE.

This was just what I wanted. The shop contained nothing but bottles of eau de Cologne, for the most part neatly packed by dozens in slight wooden boxes. I made my purchase, desired the box to be carried to the hotel, and went forth to take a survey of the town. But I had not proceeded many steps further, before another sign-board made precisely the same pretensions for its shop, as being the sole depository of the genuine eau de Cologne by Jean Maria Farina. I was startled. 'I hope I have made no mistake,' thought I. 'If I have, it must be rectified: there is full time.'

Vexed at my precipitancy, I walked on thoughtfully, and soon came to another, and another, and another warehouse of the same description; and so on, in every part of the town, all bearing, in every diversity of colour and characters, the same announcement of being 'the sole and veritable depository of Jean Maria Farina's genuine eau de Cologne.' I made anxious inquiries of divers persons, without arriving at anything satisfactory; and so, returning to my hotel, I determined to abide by my purchase, and to present it to my fair friend as the real and genuine eau de Cologne, without disturbing her faith by the doubts that distracted my own mind. The subject vanished gradually from my thoughts, only leaving behind it a general impression of the greatness of Jean Maria Farina, that European personage, whose name had stared me thus in the face at every turn in the old town on the Rhine.

Next morning I set off for Mainz by the steamboat. The vessel was crowded with passengers, of whom the majority were English. To own the truth, I am apt to feel greatly ashamed of my countrymen—speaking of them in the mass—when I meet them abroad, swarming in steamboats, railways, and hotels. On this occasion my eye wandered over the commonplace set, with

their endless and cumbersome abundance of travelling comforts in the shape of bags, baskets, bottles, and boxes of all sizes and forms. There were likewise flat-faced Germans, smoking extraordinary pipes, and wearing fantastical hats and caps; but of the whole crowd, the only individual who at all fixed my attention was a tall man somewhat advanced in years, and his black hair sprinkled with white, though he was still of comely appearance. The deep-set black eyes, olive complexion, oval-shaped head, and finely-cut features, the mobility and *finesse* of expression, the pliable and easy motions of the body, stamped him a native of the south. There was a shrewd thoughtfulness in the countenance while silent, brightening when he spoke into benevolent cheerfulness, a good-humoured smile lighting his dark eyes, and disclosing a fine set of white teeth, which gave something very agreeable to the whole physiognomy. He looked like a prosperous man, well contented with himself and with the world. That his prosperity had been *earned*, seemed denoted by an appearance of activity which age had not subdued.

The old gentleman was surrounded by a numerous party, and nothing occurred to bring about any communication between us. But by an odd chance we happened to meet every day for a week either in a steamboat, on a railway, or at a *table-d'hôte*—always at a distance, however, without at any time exchanging a word. There was a sort of silent acquaintance established, but we seemed under a spell which obliged us to look, and not to speak. At last it was with a kind of painful consciousness our eyes met, although feeling rather attracted than repelled; so that it was almost a relief the first day I no longer met my dark-eyed vision at supper, although I felt, notwithstanding, a lingering regret that I should now never satisfy a certain curiosity which had sprung up in my own mind as to who or what the stranger might be.

I stayed some time in Switzerland, and then went on to Italy. I crossed the Alps by the Simplon—that wonderful road conceived by the genius of Napoleon—as easy as an English turnpike-road, winding its way up through mountain pastures and vast pine forests to the regions of eternal snow and ice, and the wild territory of the avalanche. Nothing gives a more forcible impression of the power of man's intellect, struggling, calmly and successfully, with the awful powers of nature. Arrived at the summit of the pass, the descent on the Italian side begins from the village of Simplon; and you go winding down, between gigantic, perpendicular, larch-grown rocks, which seem to admit reluctantly within their jaws the road that winds along the edge of the roaring torrent, which has fretted its way during long ages through these rocky walls. Road

and torrent run together confined between them, and the traveller sees the sky far above the towering masses on either side.

After passing several hours in this gorge, you issue from it suddenly, where at your feet lies, opening to view, the verdant, smiling basin of the Val d'Ossola, rich in luxuriant Italian beauty. After the stern grandeur of the Alpine pass, the view from the bridge of Crevola bursts like enchantment on the sight, presenting a wide, gracefully-circular plain, watered by a winding river, and surrounded by the most picturesque mountains, clothed half-way up their sides with rich wood, while above stand out the naked, brown mountain-tops in fantastic peaks against the blue sky. Among the dark verdure of their swelling base stand forth in strong relief cheerful white villages and country-houses, and tall square white church towers, spotting the sides of the hills, while the town of Domo d'Ossola shines smilingly at the further end of the vale. The vine, allowed to run in its elegant natural festoons, the mulberry mixed with other trees, and the soft balmy air, all tell the traveller he has set foot in Italy. Domo d'Ossola struck me as a cheerful, elegant little town. It had an Italian character, quite new to me, which took my fancy. I travelled alone, guided solely by my own inclination; and I was so much pleased with the situation, that I determined to give some days to examine a few of the numerous valleys which diverge from the Val d'Ossola, winding among these picturesque, but rarely-explored mountains.

I have always had a passion for deviating from the high road. After resting a night at Domo, I inquired if a guide could be procured. My host informed me that as few travellers wandered from the high road, there were no regular guides, but that there was at that moment in his house a young man, servant to a gentleman of the Val Vegeste, who was returning to Santa Maria Maggiore, the principal village in that valley, whom I could accompany thus far. Arrived there, I might easily find some one else to guide me further on. The arrangement was soon made; and Battistino—so my guide was named—and I set out on foot together towards the Val Vegeste. My companion was a barefooted, tall, active, black-eyed, intelligent young fellow, with those free and supple limbs, and that somewhat melancholy cast of countenance—easily, however, brightening into an animated and cheerful variety of expression—which characterise the Italian peasant.

I knew something of the Italian language, but I was totally at a loss to communicate with my present conductor, whose only tongue was his native mountain dialect, in which I with difficulty recognised here and there some word disfigured by a pronunciation wholly new to me; so our communication was more in looks and gestures than in speech. We first retraced a short part of the road by which I had entered the town the day before; but soon deviating to the right, we crossed by a plank bridge the stream which intersects the Val d'Ossola, and proceeding to the limit of the valley in that direction, and then turning to the left, skirted the base of the mountain. Nothing could exceed the beauty of everything that met my eye. After an hour's walk, I was struck by the appearance of a very handsome country-house, which stood on a lofty eminence facing us, surrounded by noble terraced gardens. The mansion commanded the same extensive views of the beautiful valley that strike the traveller so forcibly from the bridge of Crevola. I pointed out this dwelling to my guide with an inquiring look.

'Palazzo del Signor Padrone' ('The palace of my master') was his answer.

'Your padrone then is rich?'

'Hu!' returned Battistino with a lengthened exclamation, waving his hand expressively up and down.

'Tanto ricco!—ricchissimo! Tanto scior!' ('So rich!—very rich! Such a great gentleman!') And this was followed by a long and eloquent eulogium, or history, unfortunately lost upon me, with the exception of the words, 'Generoso, generosissimo—da Paris,' by which I made out the very rich man to be likewise very generous, and to have come from Paris.

As we proceeded along our way, I found that we were not to go towards the palace, as Battistino termed the handsome dwelling upon the hill, our road turning sharp to the right, where a singularly picturesque opening gives entrance to the wild Val Vegeste. Here we crossed a bridge over a beautiful stream, flowing from between two high walls of rock, richly grown with overhanging wood. A few houses stand on this spot, and a chapel with an image of the Virgin, to which is attached a legendary miracle; and from thence a road cut in the rock leads up the course of the stream to Santa Maria Maggiore. At every step the picturesque beauties of this singular valley become more striking. As we advanced, the sound of a fine-toned church-bell came wafted on the air. It sounded like a rejoicing peal. Battistino became excited, and contrived to make me understand that the bell, the great bell, was a gift from his padrone to the church.

On entering Santa Maria Maggiore, we found the whole village in holiday trim: the women's heads adorned with snow-white muslin handkerchiefs, or braids of hair fastened round the back of the head by large silver pins placed in a semicircle—the latter coiffure having a peculiarly classical and Italian appearance. Some added coquettishly a natural flower on one side. Their ears and necks were adorned with large earrings and necklaces; and the neat stocking, and embroidered instep of a sort of slipper, with a wooden sole and heels, under a short smart petticoat, completed the holiday attire. Each, with fan in hand, was hurrying to church; while some, after a fashion peculiar to these mountains, carried their infants attached to their backs in light wooden cradles.

The whole formed a rich and novel scene. My guide had a word, a nod, or a smile for everybody, and you may suppose that the stranger with him excited no slight attention. Battistino seemed irresistibly impelled to follow the crowd, and led me with him into the church. We walked up a side aisle, and he pointed out from afar the altar-piece, with a gesture which implied that he looked upon it as a masterpiece of art, whispering at the same time, 'Gift of the padrone.' As I perceived the eyes of the congregation fixed upon me, I was going to propose that we should leave the church, when a numerous company entering, relieved me from the attention of the congregation, and I remained a forgotten observer. The new-comers were two young couples, surrounded by their respective friends, coming to the altar to receive the nuptial benediction.

'Pepino and Ghita, Giovanni and Maria,' said my guide in an undertone, as he pointed out the couples; and he went on to make me understand that his padrone had given the dota (marriage-portion.) His enthusiasm now seemed to lose all power of expression in words, and to concentrate itself in his two bright eyes; while I thought to myself: 'This padrone of his must be a rare character—a rich and liberal man dispensing his wealth in shedding happiness among the simple population of this retired valley. I should like to see him.'

The wedding-party had stopped in the middle of the church, as if waiting for some one; a moment after, the expected person made his appearance. 'Il padrone!' exclaimed Battistino; and at the same instant I recognised my old mysterious acquaintance of the steamboat.

The priest now stood at the altar, the marriage-ceremony was performed, and the blessing given. The two wedding-parties walked out of the church to return

to their respective homes. At the door of the church, all crowded round Battistino's master with various expressions of affectionate and respectful gratitude, which he received with fatherly good-humour, and then disengaged himself from the group. His eye had caught mine, and we exchanged a smile of recognition. Battistino darted forward, and said a few words to him; after which the stranger moved towards me, and accosting me with courteous ease in good French, said, that since fate seemed determined to procure him the pleasure of my acquaintance, I must allow him to look upon a foreigner, who did this remote valley the very rare honour of a visit, as his welcome guest. I was too well pleased with the invitation to hesitate in accepting the hospitality offered with so good a grace, and so benevolent a smile; and had I acceded less readily, a sudden clap of thunder, and the bursting of an unexpected storm over our heads, would have left me little choice: as it was, I was made doubly grateful.

I followed my new friend into the open door of a handsome house, while sudden night seemed to occupy the place of day; and the rain poured down in torrents, making me appreciate such comfortable shelter. My host was cordially and gracefully courteous. He assured me that the streams and torrents, swollen by the rain, would make it impossible to proceed in the direction I had intended; and that even when the storm abated, it would already have cut off my return to Domo; for the small stream I had crossed by a plank in the morning must now be swollen, by innumerable mountain-tributaries, into a wide, deep, and impassable torrent. He therefore begged me to submit with patience to necessity, and allow him to make me his guest for the night. He had come that morning from the country-house I had perhaps remarked before entering Val Vegeste, for the purpose of being present at the two marriages that had taken place, and purposed returning as soon as the rain cleared off. He added, that at Monte Christesi he should have the pleasure of introducing me to his wife and family. So, as soon as the storm rolled away, and a blue sky once more smiled upon the valley, Battistino brought to the door a four-wheeled open carriage drawn by one horse; he mounted the front seat as driver, and my host and I took our places behind.

We rolled along the rocky road I had followed on foot. Battistino pointed to the road, and said something to me, of which the word 'padrone' was the only one I understood. I turned to my host for an explanation. He said, laughing, 'Battistino is anxious to inform you that this road from Santa Maria Maggiore to Domo was made by me: some years ago there was only a bridle-path. Living in the neighbourhood, I was of course one of the most interested in the improvement.'

Battistino turned again to add some words on the subject. At the same instant, we came to a sharp turn in the road; and as our driver's eye was not upon his horse, we ran full against a car laden with hay drawn by an ox. The wheels locked, and that of our vehicle gave way, and came off. We got out of the carriage, leaving the mortified Battistino to remedy the damage, and follow in the best way he could. As we walked on, we were overtaken by two youths, each with a pack on his back, and a staff over his shoulder, with a pair of thick-soled shoes slung upon it. They went the swift noiseless gliding pace of the barefooted Italian peasant. My host exchanged kind salutations with the lads, and bade them go on to his house, where they should sleep that night, as the swollen state of the torrents would not let them proceed farther; and he added: 'To-morrow morning I will give you a letter which may be of use to you.' He then desired them to go on before us, and announce that he was following with a stranger gentleman.

My host then explained to me that these youths were leaving home to seek their fortunes abroad, their native valleys being too poor to maintain their population. A large portion of the males emigrate, and generally return at the end of a few months with the little earnings they have gained in some distant place by their industry; then, after a while, they go forth again, like bees to gather new honey. Their traffic is chiefly in tin-ware, or in simples, of which these mountains offer an abundant supply. During the absence of the men, the women and children cultivate the poor soil.

'Our Italians,' continued the padrone, 'are an intelligent race, full of resources, and generally succeed in what they undertake. A most erroneous impression prevails with respect to us in other countries. In my travels I have constantly heard of the idleness of the Italian peasantry—of the "*dolce far niente*" of Italy. Yet there is no country in which the peasantry labour so incessantly, and with so much intelligence, activity, and cheerful industry. I can vouch for so much at least to the credit of Lombardy and Piedmont, which I know intimately. If you, sir, were to remain long enough in this country, to have opportunities of observing our rural life, you would soon be convinced of this. No part of the world is more travelled by foreigners, and so little known. But if strangers underrate our country, most of its wandering sons hold it in loving remembrance. I have myself been absent many long years, and have seen many lands, but I never forgot this spot. I left it, fifty years ago, a poor mountain boy, like those you saw just now, and I always said in my heart, "If ever I can build a house, it shall be on Monte Christesi." I never changed my mind, and there stands my house to-day. Never did I forget my love for these valleys.' And as we advanced, he pointed out the different striking beauties of the prospect.

Everything I heard and saw served to heighten my curiosity respecting my companion, and I was framing in my mind some proper mode of shaping a few questions, when we arrived at the mansion. Here my host introduced me to his wife, a French lady, to two children, and to his brother. I immediately recognised the party in the steamboat. I was cordially received by all, almost as an old acquaintance, and the incidents of our unexpected meeting afforded subject of cheerful conversation. We sat down to dinner in a very handsome hall, ornamented, after the Italian manner, with fresco paintings on the walls and ceiling. Easy chat, and several bottles of good wine, rendered the meal very pleasant. After dinner, we passed from the dining-room to one of the garden-terraces, where coffee was served in the open air.

The terrace on which we were overlooked several others, shelving in succession to the limits of the property. The valley, enclosed by mountains, and watered by a rushing stream, was spread at our feet. The prospect was splendid; the sky glowed with the tints of the evening sun; and the late rain brought out in exquisite freshness the aromatic scent of the flowers and of the neighbouring woods.

It was a moment in which the heart opens to warm and easy sympathies. I felt no difficulty in asking my host to explain to me by what uncommon fortunes he had become, from a poor mountain boy, such as we had met in the morning, the happy possessor of so noble a property, and the benefactor of all around him.

He nodded with a shrewd and cheerful smile, saying, 'I often wonder at it myself. You must know that in my travels I met with a magician who pointed the way to a golden fountain. I will tell you my modest history.'

'I was born in Santa Maria Maggiore, the village you visited this morning. My parents were not so poor as the rest of the inhabitants, for my father, according to the custom I mentioned to you, had gone into foreign

parts. My mother, too, accompanied him; and at the end of some years, they had collected, by their industry in managing a humble commerce, that which was a little fortune on their return to their native vale. They possessed a field more than their neighbours, and two cows to fill the double office of supplying the family with milk and drawing the plough—as you see that cow doing yonder, guided by a woman and a girl. Yet when the family increased, and three boys grew into lads, the means of the family could not suffice for our maintenance. I was the eldest, and while yet in tender years, it became necessary for me to follow the course of most of our valcsmen, and go to earn a living elsewhere.

‘My parents had carried on their little trade in simples in a town upon the Rhine, and they gave me a letter of recommendation to a friend and distant connection, a chemist and druggist there. With this letter, a few pieces of money in my pocket, and a pack on my back, I set out for a foreign land—distant in reality, and still more so in my imagination. The fancy of youth is always excited by the thought of travel, adventure, and independence, and my spirits kept up well till the day of departure, when the awfulness of separation from all I loved came with full force upon my heart. In those days there were no steamboats or railways—nothing to reduce distance, or ease the toils of the poor traveller. On foot, or with some occasional lift from a slow-going vehicle, or some floating raft, was I to wend my way to my remote destination. I shall never forget the day of my departure. My mother accompanied me as far as the chapel of the Madona you saw this morning. On that spot we parted with many tears. Before our last embrace, my mother knelt before the image of the Virgin, and I beside her, to implore a blessing on my adventure. Then my mother hung round my neck her own rosary. “Keep this, my son,” she said, “in memory of your mother. Be a good boy, and never forget your prayers. Every evening I shall say a pater and an ave for you. Now, my boy, farewell! God bless you!”

‘I have this rosary still. Sad, indeed, did I feel that night when the melancholy tinkling of the Ave Maria bell sounded from a distant village where I was to rest, and which I hastened to reach before the twilight should deepen into night. How often, through many long years, at the sound of the evening bell, did my sinking heart yearn for my mother and my home!

‘Well, in due time I reached my destination, presented the letter to the protector to whom my parents had directed me, and was taken into his service. He was an intelligent man, with an inventive turn of mind, which he applied to the practical purpose of improving his business by the sale of certain mixtures, of which he alone possessed the secret. He was of a capricious disposition, and often became disgusted with his assistants. To me, however, he took a fancy, and proved invariably kind. He initiated me into the mysteries of the laboratory sufficiently to enable me to be of real use in his operations; but he carefully kept some mysterious secrets to himself: praising, nevertheless, my intelligence, activity, and zeal, and becoming more and more attached to me. I was of a cheerful disposition, and my lively sallies and ingenuous remarks amused and cheered the old man. But while I imparted vivacity to his age, my own spirits gradually sunk under the influence of a total change of life—shut up as I was in a dismal laboratory, behind a dark shop, in a narrow street, instead of roaming among our beautiful valleys and breezy mountains. My natural buoyancy bore me up for a time; but as month after month, and even year after year, rolled on in the same monotony, I sunk into unconquerable depression. All surrounding objects became disgusting to me; the very quality of the air, and colour of the light, grew odious. Day and

night I was haunted by the thought of the immeasurable distance I had traversed, and which divided me from home. The familiar faces and sounds of my native scenes gleamed upon me in waking dreams. The best moment of the day was when the bell of the Ave Maria brought to my lips my mother's prayer, and to my eyes a refreshing shower of tears.

‘Three years had elapsed since my departure from home, when these impressions reached their greatest intensity. My gains were small, and part I had already sent to my family. I thought with agony that not only I had no store by me, but that I had not even sufficient to take me home. I felt as if I must die an outcast in a distant land. My strength failed rapidly, and at last I was obliged to take to my bed. My master consulted a medical man who often came to our shop. He examined me, and pronounced my malady to be no other than nostalgia. The only remedy was to revisit my native land. My worthy master proved himself truly kind; not only did he allow me three months' holidays to go home, but he advanced me the sum necessary for the journey, undertaken of course in the most economical way. He gave me, besides, a letter to my parents, expressive of his satisfaction with my conduct and abilities, and likewise of his desire for my return to his service.

‘From that moment he obtained my unbounded gratitude and attachment. No sooner was this plan settled, than my spirits rose, and life seemed infused into my veins. In a few days I was able to rise from my bed of sickness, and set forth on my way homewards. At the first sight of my native valley, at the first breath of the mountain-breezes, at the first embrace of my father, mother, and brothers, all my ills vanished, and health and strength returned to me, as if wafted on the very air. I was speedily quite recovered. I spent a happy three months at home, and then set out to return to my kind old master with renewed courage, instead of the hopeless feeling of banishment. Now I went with the firm hope and resolve to return again, as my parents had done before me, with my modest gains, and settle in this spot, the dearest to me on earth. I trusted that a few years' exertion could accomplish this. I was animated also by a desire to prove my gratitude to my benevolent master, and I came back to his service with redoubled zeal. By degrees he initiated me into many delicate operations, and instructed me in the choice and preparation of various simples, which he often sent me on long excursions to collect. These he prepared for divers uses. His confidence in me increased, on finding that I never pressed inquiries on any point upon which he wished to maintain reserve. Each year the good old man grew more attached to me. He had no near relative of his own; I became to him as a son, and I endeavoured to fulfil the duties of one. Age crept on, with its infirmities; he felt life drawing to a close; and calling me to his bedside, he ordered me to take down in writing certain notes he dictated—the secret, as he termed it, of the golden fountain. “Your activity and ingenuity,” said he, “will follow out these hints so as to lead you to it infallibly, my dear child. I may well call you so, for you have been an affectionate child to me.”

‘Not long afterwards I followed my adopted father to the grave. He had bequeathed to me all his possessions. They were very humble; but I perceived that in his last instructions, if judiciously improved, he had indeed opened a road which might lead to fortune. The course pointed out shortly led me to Paris, where, without giving up my establishment on the banks of the Rhine, I opened another for the sale of genuine and improved eau de Cologne, by Jean Maria Farina.

‘Do I then stand,’ exclaimed I, rising with a feeling of enthusiasm and reverence, ‘in the presence of that celebrated man? Truly I thank my fortune for having

guided me so agreeably to the gratification of a strong desire in so pleasant a meeting!' My host was flattered and amused at this burst, and laughed much at the description I gave him of my perplexity at Cologne in trying to find out his real establishment.

'Tis true,' replied he, 'it stands in a very obscure corner of an old narrow street. I never left the old Ulick's Platz: I never abandoned the original establishment of my friend.' Our conversation then diverged to other interesting points, and my host added a few details, which completed his autobiography.

Eau de Cologne has been to him truly an Aladdin's lamp—a magic cruise. The sale rapidly brought him a fortune. Jean Maria early visited a second time his native place, and had the happiness to lavish on his parents more comforts and luxury than had ever even entered their dreams. They dwelt long in Santa Maria Maggiore, proud and happy in their son's prosperity. He never forgot his love for his native valley, and has invested part of his property in the purchase of land in the Val Vegeste and its neighbourhood. He built the mansion, and laid out the gardens on Monte Christesi, where he now received me, and where he has settled one of his brothers. His wife is French, and he has several children. He contributes with generous care to the welfare of the poor in his neighbourhood. He knows intimately their wants and their feelings; and is therefore competent, from experience as well as inclination, to dispense, with the best effect, his munificence among those who want his assistance.

He constantly spends the winter in Paris, and the summer in his native home among the folds of the Alps, much loved by all around. I slept that night under the hospitable roof of Monte Christesi; and my kind host and I parted next morning with the promise of meeting again.

Ever since then, Eau de Cologne is associated in my mind with the ancient cathedral town beside the Rhine—the romantic Val Vegeste and Val d'Ossola—the mansion on Monte Christesi—and the uncommon fortune, European name, and goodly benevolent presence of Jean Maria Farina.

DAHOMÉY AND THE DAHOMANS.*

DAHOMÉY, as every one knows, is a negro kingdom, adjacent to Ashantee, extending from the coast of Guinea as far as the Kong Mountains. The existence of such a kingdom was not known in Europe till the beginning of last century; though some suppose that *Dahama*, which is mentioned by the early geographer Leo Africanus (died 1526) as one of many African kingdoms lying south of Nigritia, was a corruption of the word *Dahomey*. The native tradition, however, assigns both to the name and to the kingdom an origin not much older than two hundred years. The king, Ada Hoonzoo, who succeeded in 1774, was 'the Macadam of Africa,' for he 'made roads leading to his capital as broad as Pall Mall, and as suited to the traffic of the country as our roads are to that of England.' Another of the 'institutions' of Dahomey, which owes its origin to this monarch, is the far-famed army of Amazons—that is, negro women, who act as the king's body-guard, and take part with the male soldiers in all expeditions, rivalling them in courage and ferocity. Ada Hoonzoo's successor was Agon-groo, who was succeeded by his son Adanazah. Adanazah proving a coward, was, after a short time, deposed, and superseded by his younger brother Gezo, the present king.

The earliest account we have of the Dahomans and their customs is contained in a letter written in 1724 to the commandant of the English fort at Whydah, by

a Mr Bulfinch Lamb, an agent for the English African Company, who was seized by the Dahoman army during one of Guadjah Trudo's conquering expeditions to the coast, and carried away prisoner to Abomey, where he was detained for some time, but treated with great kindness. One or two subsequent accounts and sketches have been published by persons whom chance or business had led into that part of the world. On the whole, however, very little has hitherto been known of Dahomey; yet, as it is the chief site of the odious slave-traffic, which, notwithstanding all the efforts of England and Europe, is still carried on between Africa and the Brazils, there is perhaps no country in Africa towards which it is more desirable that attention should be turned. Aware of this, the English government, in the autumn of 1849, appointed the enterprising African traveller, Mr Duncan, to the post of her Majesty's vice-consul at Dahomey. The death of Da Souza, the king of Dahomey's principal slave-buyer, and a great promoter of the slave-trade, having created a blank in the slave-market, it was imagined that the king would be more favourably disposed than at any other time to listen to proposals for the abolition, or at least the modification, of this hereditary branch of the Dahoman commerce. To give greater weight to Mr Duncan's mission, a naval officer was selected to accompany him; and the choice fell on Lieutenant Frederick E. Forbes, already known for his useful services in the African blockade. The naval commander-in-chief gave Lieutenant Forbes a letter to be delivered to the king of Dahomey.

On the 12th of October 1849, Mr Duncan and Lieutenant Forbes set out from Whydah, accompanied by a large retinue of black men and women, one or two of whom were to act as interpreters, and the rest were employed in carrying the baggage, and the load of presents, consisting of kegs of rum, pieces of cloth, and packages of cowrie-shells (the currency of Dahomey), which were to be distributed among the Dahoman king and his courtiers. Intelligence of the arrival of the mission had been previously sent to Abomey, and Gezo had forwarded the necessary passport through his dominions, in the shape of 'a gold-headed Malacca cane,' to Lieutenant Forbes. A journey of four days brought the party to Abomey, the first aspect of which is thus described:—

'The city is about eight miles in circumference, surrounded by a ditch about five feet deep, filled with the prickly acacia—its only defence. It is entered by six gates, which are simply clay walls crossing the road, with two apertures—one reserved for the king, the other a thoroughfare for his subjects. In each aperture are two human skulls; and on the inside a pile of skulls, human, and of all the beasts of the field, even to the elephant's. Besides these six gates, the ditch, which is of an oval form, branches off at each side the north-west gate to the north and north-west; and over each branch is a similar gateway, for one only purpose—to mislead an enemy in a night attack. In the centre of the city are the palaces of Dongelah-cardeli and Agrim-gameh, adjoining; on the north stands the original palace of Dahomey: about these, and to the south gate, are houses, the most conspicuous of which are those of the ministers. In front of Agrim-gameh is an extensive square, in which are the barracks and a high shed or palaver-house, a saluting battery of fifteen guns, and a stagnant pond. Just inside the south-east gate (the Cannah) are a saluting-battery and pond, and numerous blacksmiths' shops. The roads or streets are in good order, and though there are not any shops, the want of them is supplied by two large markets—Ah-jah-ee, to the eastward of the central palace, at once a market, parade, and sacrificial-ground; and Hung-jooloh, just outside the south gate. Besides these are several smaller markets, the stalls of which are all awned, and are generally attended by women, the wives

* *Dahomey and the Dahomans; being the Journals of Two Missions to the King of Dahomey, and Residence at his Capital, in the Years 1849 and 1850. By Frederick E. Forbes, Commander, R.N. 2 vols. London: Longmans.*