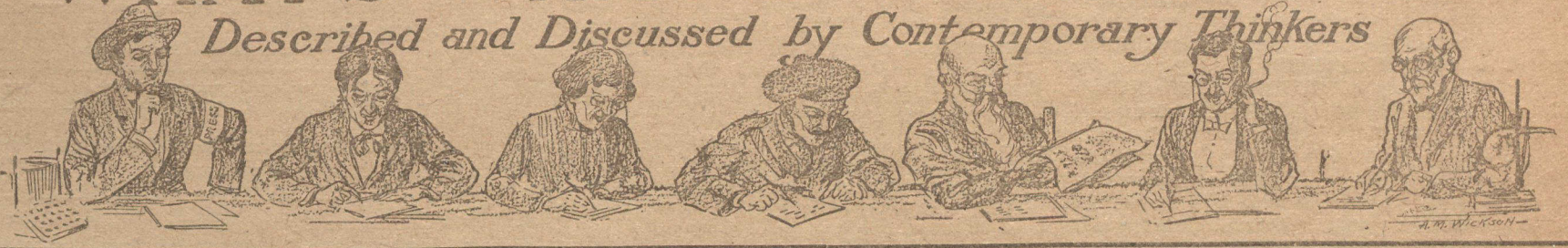


WHAT'S WHAT *the* WORLD OVER

Described and Discussed by Contemporary Thinkers



THE BULU'S WOMEN

The terrible story of present-day depravity in Africa

LIFE in the Southern Kamerun is not yet all it should be. If the Bantu is master, writes Jean Kenyon Mackenzie in the Atlantic Monthly, his woman is slave. She is slave to the Bantu triple obsession of goods and sex and fetish. "A girl," says the Bulu proverb at her birth, "is goods." She may be, among certain tribes, the subject of a tentative bargain before she is born. "A girl is not known," says another proverb, "till the day of her dowry."

Ask of that little nine-year-old, who is not yet tattooed, whose young head is shaved in designs—the headdress of the little girl,—whose sleek body is belted with beads, tailed with dried grasses, and aproned with leaves, ask of that childish creature, "Who is giving goods on you?" and she will know. How many goats have been given, how many dogs and dog-bells, how many sheets of brass, and whether an ivory. Or if she is to be given in exchange for another woman,—a wife for her father, or a little girl for her brother who must be set up in the world,—she will know that. The name of her tentative master she will know, who comes to consider his bargain from time to time. There he will sit in the palaver house with her father. There will be long talk of dowry, arguments for more or less.

The little girl comes on out of the sun-smitten street with food that her mother has cooked for her father and his guest,—a peanut porridge steamed in a great leaf, a roll of cassava bread, mashed plantains. She will put her wooden tray at the feet of her masters. She is a precocious child, born to the language of sex. If the buyer is old she will hate him. She need make no secret of this, she may tell whom she pleases that, having "come to her eyes," she hates the man who buys her. All but her mother will laugh at the venom of the little tongue, the heavings of the little chest. And the day when her master brings the ivory, or the woman, or the last articles of barter, that day there will be a feast in her father's town and the songs of marriage. If the little girl weeps—why, so they always do, the hearts of children are thus. And in the evening, when the sun goes down the path to its setting and she moves away in the caravan of her husband's people, you will not ask which of the children in that caravan is the little bride; you will know because she weeps.

In her husband's town they will be dancing the marriage dances, they will be singing the songs of marriage. Her husband's kin will be singing little songs of mocking:—

"There is a little goat capering in the clearing,—
A neglect of cooking,
A neglect of work!
There is a little kid capering in the clearing!"

"O little bride, hurry in the house and grind the meal!—hurry!
Hurry and get your hoe, hurry!
O little bride, hurry!"

"While the boiled greens are still quaking she hides the kettle behind the bed!
He ye—e!
While the hot greens are still quaking!"

"You come to steal—He ye—e!
You come to grudge—He ye—e!
You come to deceive—He ye—e!"

"There is a weed in this town, there is a little weed—
—he!
There is a child with sharp eyes in this town—He!"

So sing the husband's kin. And the bride's mother sings too, little conventional petitions that the child be adequately fed, that the tender child be spared—little phrases of maternal solicitude:—

"Don't send my child to fish in the stream,
There are little snakes—O!
Don't send my child to fish in the stream!"
"They count the bananas they feed my child—
They count them!
One, two bananas as they feed my child,
They count them!"

So sings the mother, and the child's kinfolk before they leave her in the care of strange women; and the little girl stands bewildered at the heart of the circling dances.

Or if it be her father's pleasure to delay the delivery of the goods, do not think that the girl is bred in innocence under her mother's roof. She was not born to the possession of her body; this is hired out to her father's material advantage among young bucks—prospective purchasers, men who bring wealth to the town. Not her father only, and her elder brother, may thus make profit of her person, but her husband will do so, in the times of the great clearings when a new town is to be built, or a great garden planted—she will then serve as hire to strong young men. Through her use a successful hunter may be attached to her husband's service, and she, if she is desirable, may be a token of hospitality to an honoured guest. By way of being security she may be lodged with her husband's creditors. How many women wear out weary years in this friendless bondage! Or, not having borne children to her husband, she may be sent on a visit to the town of his tribal brother.

But her children, born of whatever connection, be-



The First Member of the Reichstag: So, der Reichstag suspended ist. Himmel; must ve here Oliver Cromwellisiert be?

—Drawn by Will Owen, in London Sketch.

long not to herself, nor necessarily to their father, but to the man who owns her. To her own father, or other male guardian, if born before marriage, and to her husband if born after marriage. As she is not born to the possession of her body, so she is not born to the possession of her children. Women who have been sold from marriage to marriage may leave little children at every station of that aimless wandering. Thus the slave is branded on the heart.

And it is by way of the heart that the woman is slave to fetish. By her body she is slave to goods, and alas, by the consent of her body, to sex. But by her heart—the pangs of it, its maternal pangs, its hunger for permanent affections, its need to cast

anchor in some certain good—by that she is slave to fetish. To keep her husband's love, what love-potions! To ease her jealousies, what evil charms! To safeguard her little one, what plaitings of grass anklets and bracelets, what desperate hopes tied up in little amulets, in little things of magic! And if she die—this slave to fetish—they will tie a belt of bells about her baby's middle, and the sound of these bells will continually drive away that maternal spirit—still a slave.

ROUMANIAN TRADE

Presents great opportunities to those nations that can supply the goods

THE future of Roumanian commerce, including the finding of fresh export markets and new sources of supply for imports was equally involved with political considerations in that country's adhesion to the cause of the allies. Her declaration of war naturally meant the cessation of all business intercourse with the enemy countries, whose manufacturers and merchants had always been assiduous in penetrating this market, and as Roumania is now soliciting other commercial relations, Canada, says the Department of Trade and Commerce at Ottawa, should be in a position after the war to supply in larger quantities more of the local requirements.

Roumania is almost entirely an agricultural country, with an area of 50,800 square miles (nearly that of England and Wales), and a population of over 7,000,000. The land is cultivated by peasant proprietors, who form the great majority of the people, and their existence is largely due to the Land Act of 1889, when the State Domains, amounting to nearly one-third of the total area of the country, were distributed among the labouring peasants in lots of 12½, 25, and 27½ acres. The principal products of Roumania are wheat, maize, barley, oats, flour, petroleum, and lumber; and these form the leading exports. The total exports were valued in 1911 at £27,688,000. Of these Belgium received in that year £10,500,000 worth; the Netherlands, £3,076,000; Austria-Hungary, £2,514,000; The United Kingdom, £2,239,200; Italy, £1,983,000; France, £1,995,000; Germany, £1,320,000; and Turkey, £841,000. The Belgian and Dutch imports from Roumania, which appear excessive, doubtless include considerable quantities on their way to Central Europe. Our total imports from Roumania have varied considerably, depending as they do upon the results of the grain crops. In 1914 they were valued at £3,200,000, while we exported to Roumania in that year £1,985,000 worth of goods. But while Great Britain's imports from that country have been showing a rising tendency during the last few years before the war, British exports to Roumania have been losing ground.

To the new territory which Roumania acquired in 1913 from Bulgaria there will doubtless in due course be added a huge slice of Austria-Hungary, which like that south of the Dobrudsha, is essentially agricultural. The latter covers an area of some 3,000 square miles, but the territory which the Roumanian armies are now conquering promises to be three or four times as large. These new territories will need railways and roads, farm equipments, buildings, agricultural implements and machines, and it will be desirable when peace terms are arranged to bear in mind that the Allies can supply all of these things. The abolition of the most-favoured-nation clause as regards German exports, a principle in the Economic Decrees endorsed by the British Government, should ensure a preferential market for British products in the Roumania of the future.

Roumanians are enterprising as agriculturists, and more than three years ago imported a number of foreign motor plough tractors, using petrol, which were sold in the Braila district, and there is no reason why similar British tractors should not meet with the same success. At the chief ports, where the export of grain is the main factor in shipping busi-