

hear of them often enough to keep them awake to the sufferings of the victims of their indifference.

Very respectfully, your friend,
ELLWOOD HARVEY.

AFRICA.—THE MENDI COUNTRY.

The following letters, extracted from a monthly periodical, entitled the "American Missionary," may interest your juvenile readers. It is the organ of the American Missionary Association, in which have been merged several smaller associations, formed on the principle of having no dealings with slaveholders. The Mendi Mission in Western Africa, to which the letters refer, originated, if I mistake not, in the earnest desire of certain Christian philanthropists to convey the Gospel along with the Amistad Africans, who were providentially rescued in New England from an anticipated slavery, and sent back to their own country. Mr. Raymond was sent out with the rescued Africans by the then called "Union Missionary Society," which is now merged in said "American Missionary Association." The letters are addressed to the Juvenile Missionary Society in Dr. Duffield's Church, Detroit.

H. W.

LETTER FIRST.

Geography of the Country.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,—In promising to write to you this series of letters, I imposed upon myself a task for which I feel myself entirely inadequate. But since the promise must be redeemed, I will try to do the best my limited time will allow. The subject of this the first letter, will be the geography of the country.

After we leave Sierra Leone, which is very mountainous, we see no mountains except one or two at a distance. All of the land in the vicinity of the Mission is one vast plain cut up into islands by its many rivers. The country is so level that the tide ebbs and flows up all the rivers many miles into the interior. In the dry season the water of the river at this place is so salt that it cannot be used either for drinking or washing. In the rains we use it for both. It often happens that rivers are connected together far from their mouths. Thus this river is connected with the big Boom, as it is called, and canoes can pass from one to the other in the rainy season. The Yong and Mongray rivers are united in two places. Bordering on these rivers are what are called Mangrove swamps. These swamps are very low and every flood tide are covered with water. The Mangrove is a very singular tree. The trunk of the tree does not come near the ground. It stands upon its roots, which are like so many legs, which coming from various distances act as props and braces. When they stand close together, as they almost always do, these roots are interwoven and entangled with one another so as to render it impenetrable except to the natives. When a Mangrove stands leaning over the water, its overhanging limbs will send down shoots from half to three-quarters of an inch in diameter to the water. They are generally from twenty to thirty feet in length, apparently not varying the least in the size. The wood of the Mangrove is exceedingly hard and heavy. It is so hard that the Termites, commonly called bug-a-bugs, cannot eat it. For this reason it is used for house-posts. All the posts and timbers of the Mission-house are Mangrove. All the posts of all the houses at the Mission, except one, are of the same. They are very hard to get but very durable.

Many, in attempting to account for the unhealthfulness of this climate, attribute it to these Mangrove swamps, from which they suppose a "miasma" arises. (The effluvia of any putrid matter, rising and floating in the air.) For this reason Mangrove swamps are a terror to many. For my part I cannot see why a Mangrove swamp should produce any more miasma than many other places. It is true they are very low and muddy, but the water is changed every twelve hours, and consequently cannot become stagnant.

There are also bordering upon the rivers what are called Palm pines. They are so called from their trunk resembling the Palm tree, and their leaves resembling the leaves of the Pine Apple. They do not generally extend so far back from the river as the Mangroves, often growing only in the edge of the river from ten to twenty feet wide. The river at this place was completely shut in with them, and it has cost me a great deal of labour and expense to clear them away. The trunk of the tree is generally about four or five inches in diameter, and about fifteen feet in height, and stands upon its roots the same as the Mangrove. It has no leaves except at the top, like the Palm tree, and, like the Mangrove, it is all of one size.

There are also in this country many of what are called "grass fields." They are what at the west would be called "prairies." These prairies produce grass of uncommon size, similar to that I have seen in the west. They produce also a smaller kind fit for grazing and for thatching houses. They are burnt every year about New Year, by the natives. These "prairies" in the dry season afford pasture for wild cattle, &c., but in the rains they are covered with water to the depth of two or three feet.

The soil here has the appearance of being sandy, but it has so

much clay mixed with it that it makes durable plaster for the people's houses.

Perhaps I cannot find a better place to say one word about the climate. The dry extends from November to May, and the rainy from May to November. In the fore part and latter part of the rainy season, there is not generally much rain. July and August are the two most rainy months. In the dry season the ground is dry and parched—there seldom being a shower. At the commencement of the rains is the time for planting. In the dry season the thermometer stands at 82°, and in the rainy at about 76°. Although the thermometer does not sink lower, yet the air becomes so damp that we often feel chilly.

Your unworthy missionary,

WM. RAYMOND.

Letter second relates to the politics or government of the country, and is less interesting.

LETTER THIRD.

Towns—Houses—Food and Dress.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,—The people do not live here scattered all over the country. For fear of war they all collect together into towns. The more warlike the people, the larger the towns generally are. The towns in this country are much smaller than those in the Mendi country. They are almost always built on some river or creek, so that they are accessible with canoes. They are built without any kind of regularity. There are nothing that can be called streets. The houses are frequently not more than two feet apart. Between most of them, however, the space is much wider. Somewhere in the middle of the town there is usually an area of greater or less dimensions for the purpose of dancing, &c.

The houses for the most part are circular. They are built by planting posts in the ground some three feet apart. Half way between these posts another stick, some two or more inches in diameter, is placed, around which wattles are woven like basket-work. Wattles here are made of bamboo, from which they are easily made. When a house is wattled, it resembles in look an enormous large basket. After it is wattled it is plastered or "daubed," as it is called. The plaster is made of the soil dug up in the most convenient place and moistened with water. The roof is most generally thatched with the leaves of the bamboo, but sometimes with grass which is obtained from the grass fields or prairies. The chiefs' houses are superior to those of the other people, though built in the same manner, with the exception that they are usually oblong instead of round. The ends, however, are not unfrequently semi-circular. The house is usually divided into several rooms. A fear of war prevents them from building as good houses as they otherwise would do. They say if they build fine houses, the other chiefs would be jealous of them, and bring war upon them. Generally the largest building in a town is the kitchen. In a small town there is usually but one. At this all the families cook. In large towns there are more. Every man who is able to have several wives and a number of slaves, has his own yard, as it is called, in which is a kitchen. The kitchens are large oblong buildings, entirely open on one side. In them the women cook and do their work, such as spinning, making mats, &c. They sometimes work under the shade of trees. The lush is suffered to grow close to the town. This they consider a protection in time of war. It affords them a shelter to which they can run. In the dry season, when the grass is kept cleared out and the whole town is swept every two or three days, it has an exceedingly neat appearance.

Their food consists principally of rice and cassada. This they do not make into *foo-foo* as in Sierra Leone. They simply cut it into small pieces and boil it. After it is cooked they wash it in cold water to get out the starch, when it is ready for use.

They cook their fish and meat usually in the most simple manner. They make of them what they call soup, but this is what we should call broth, with the exception that it is cooked with Palm oil. They frequently make what is called "Palaver sauce." This is made by cooking some mucilaginous vegetable with the fish or meat. There are several vegetables they use for this purpose, of which they consider the *ocra* the best. They cook it with Palm oil, and generally season it highly with Cayenne pepper. I have become so used to it that I am now very fond of it, though I have it made without much pepper.

During the present famine when there is neither rice nor cassada in the country, the people are compelled to eat the "Palm cabbage," as it is called. The palm cabbage is the bulb, so to speak, of the palm tree. It is called cabbage, from the fact that its taste very much resembles that of our cabbage. It is cooked and eaten very much in the same way as cassada. Had it not been for the abundance of Palm trees in this vicinity, hundreds would have died of famine this year.

Their dress is as simple as their food. The children universally go naked. The men when at work have simply a piece of cloth around their middle, called a "*te-la-rija*;" when not at work they usually wear a country cloth wrapped around their bodies, extending from their loins to below their knees. Sometimes it is thrown over the left shoulder, leaving the other arm and shoulder bare.

The chiefs usually wear the European dress as far as shirt and trowsers, and many of the principal men do the same. Many wear