

SLAVERY'S DARK GRASP.

The Horrible Traffic in Flesh and Blood
Still Carried on by the Arabs in Some
Parts of Africa.

Few of the horrors of the slave trade in Africa are realized by any who have not been eye-witnesses of its cruelties. And when such an one bears testimony to the real facts in the case, its revolting scenes suggest an inquiry as to his veracity. Yet no human imagination could over-draw the real picture of desolation worse than death that attends the still onward march of the traffic in human flesh. Not of its past history, but of its present evils, are the statements of Mr. H. H. Johnston, Commissioner of British Central Africa, as reported in the London Graphic, and here given:

African villages are, no doubt, seldom peaceful, and the environment, probably, of most tribes, is always one of battle, murder and sudden death.

But none of their enemies are so dreaded by the natives as the Arab slave-hunters. Many of the tribes are not, it is true, clean handed in this matter. They have themselves levied war upon their neighbors for years, selling their captives to the traders. But sooner or later, Nemesis comes to them and they are themselves suddenly exposed to the same fate. Notwithstanding the most elaborate precautions against surprise the result is nearly always the same.

The Arabs are too experienced to let their movements be known, and as often as not the negro scouts have only time to run back into the doomed village, shouting out that

ESCAPE IS IMPOSSIBLE.

If resistance is attempted by the fighting men it is almost always in vain.

The slave-hunters always come in strong force, and are so ruthless in their attacks that they are rarely beaten off. It is known, too, that they punish resistance by instant death, and many natives at once lay down their arms and surrender at discretion. In a few minutes all the inhabitants in the village who have not been killed are chained; the hunters soon bring in, dead or alive, any who may have attempted to escape.

If by chance any of the Mohammedans are killed, they wreak a savage vengeance on their helpless captives. They tie the men to stakes

and trees and lop off their limbs one by one, and then behead them; they put the women to the sword, and, lifting up the children by the feet, they swing them round and round and dash their brains out on the stone seats in the village square. The details of raids, of course, vary, but the methods pursued have a terrible sameness.

The cruelties practised by the raiders baffle description, but the treatment meted out by the Batibari to "runaways," as the Fule Mohammedans—noted slave-dealers—are known to the natives, may be taken as typical. After the raid, with all its attendant horrors of cruelty and carnage, has been accomplished, the Arabs make the slaves stand up in their chains—men, women and children—and carefully examine them.

ALL THOSE WHO ARE

aged, or deformed, or weakly, are separated from the others and put on one side. Their chains are taken off, and they are told in grim jest by the Arabs that they are free to go where they please, but when they begin to slink off to the bush, the Fule, with shouts of laughter, shoot, or ride them down, or, with a refinement of savage cruelty, tie a rope around their ankles, and then ride round and round the square at full gallop until the victim is simply a shapeless mass of blood and bones.

Life is indeed cheap in Africa. Not perhaps a tithe of the captured slaves live to reach the slave-market. No care whatever is taken of them. Any who murmur as they are dragged away from their burning houses, are at once shot. If any refuse to eat, they are threatened with immediate death. It is small wonder, with such a system of discipline that they soon become tractable.

The order of march is almost always the same. The slaves

YOKED TOGETHER WITH "SLAVE-STICKS,"

are made to march together in the centre of the caravan, with armed men in front and behind, some widening the road as they go along and cutting down bush, in order to prevent any enemies from concealing themselves on the line of route.

All the men slaves have their hands securely tied behind their backs with coils of bush rope. The women's hands, however, are left free, so that they may take their children with them, either by holding their hands or slinging