

CENTRAL AFRICA.

CHAPTER I.

TOILING BY TANGANYIKA.

PAMBETÈ will be ever memorable as the spot where Livingstone first reached Lake Tanganyika, after his long and dangerous march from the coast. There he rested six weeks among the kindly and hospitable natives, to recruit his shattered health, and thence he set out to explore the great lakes to the west. At that time (April, 1867) Pambetè was a thriving and prosperous village, with its well-cultivated fields, its grove of oil-palms, and its fisheries.

When the East African Expedition reached it in the end of 1879 a blight seemed to have fallen upon the village, and it had almost dwindled out of existence. Ruined huts were its principal features. Those still habitable were occupied by a few old men, myriads of hateful insects, and innumerable rats. The chief, or headman, old and tottering, was wandering about in his second childhood, but still

cherishing some recollection of the great white man who first visited Pambetè.

Few oil-palms now remain; those trees having either been ruthlessly cut down during some war-raid, or killed by the rise of the waters of the lake—of which more anon. There is still, however, a little fishing done, as the natives are remarkably fond of fish.

The scenery around Pambetè is picturesque in the extreme. Seen from a distance the place has the appearance of a pretty landscape modelled in relief, and set in a niche cut out of the surrounding mountains, which rise, with their lower rugged talus and crowning precipices of red jointed sandstone, with much romantic effect. Over these mountains comes tumbling the river Eisè in a beautiful cascade. At their base is a small plain, formed by the detritus brought down by the stream, and varied by clumps of tropical forest, dense jungles, and open glades, dotted with fan-leaved palms. Here buffaloes, antelopes, and monkeys, roam or gambol unmolested. In front lies the lake, with its bordering fringe of dead trees, killed by the recent rise in its level, and then left standing out in the water on its subsequent subsidence.

Notwithstanding its picturesque position, however, the place is entirely unhealthy, and by no means a desirable residence. It forms a perfect oven, into which a cool breeze never enters; and from the swampy surroundings a constant malaria hangs over it.

On my arrival at this place, I was, like my great master, Livingstone, very much done up with fevers and hardships. I also, therefore, foolishly resolved to rest a few days to recruit myself, when I ought to have done so on the mountains. Preferring the coolness of the native huts to the flimsy tent, I bribed the chief to turn out of his for my benefit, and installed myself therein.

After getting my "traps" comfortably arranged, I went out to have a good splash in the cool water of the lake—a proceeding which resulted in an exciting sensation which I did not anticipate. Wading out a considerable distance, but not out of my depth, I observed what appeared to be a log of wood floating a short distance from me. Taking no notice of this, I went on laving the cool water over myself with great enjoyment. Looking up after a few minutes, I observed that the apparent log had floated nearer to me. Getting interested in its movements I examined it more closely. I made out the outlines of a crocodile's head, with its ugly snout, wrinkled skin, and glittering eyes. Fascinated by the sight, I stood for a moment motionless, and still it floated nearer. At last with a violent effort I threw off the enchantment, and regaining my presence of mind I made the welkin ring with a shout of "Mambo! mambo!" (crocodile). A considerable number of my men were near at hand, and my shout made them instantly aware of my position, when they saw me plunging desperately to reach the shore. Seizing their guns,