

An African Savage's Own Story

THE MARRIAGE ORDEAL

BY BATA KINDAI AMGOZA IBN LOBAGOLA

THIS is as wild and savage an account of primitive customs as one can ask for. The barbaric preparations for marriage; the dignity and ferocity of savage justice; the groping for truth before the Council, the all-powerful "Oro," and the mysterious "Circle"—all take the reader far from civilization, back into the shadows of the jungle.

The author is a Black Jew of the *B'nai Ephraim* or *Emo-yo-quaim*, "The Strange People," who live in unvisited forests south of the Niger River in West Africa. In the earlier chapters he told how he and thirteen small-boy companions, in a spirit of exploration, left their native compound and made their way forty-five days' journey southward to the Gulf of Guinea. There all the boys went on board a tramp steamer, from which Bata Kindai could not escape, as did his companions. Taken against his will to Glasgow the naked savage found a home with a kindly Scotsman, who finally sent him to school. At the end of four years Bata Kindai, with the faintest possible veneer of civilization, returned to his own wild people, as great a mystery to them as he had been to the good folk of Glasgow. In order to regain popular favor he had to submit to his father's will and at once marry six wives.

FREDERICK HOUK LAW.

III

MARRIYING in my country *is not* A simple matter. When my father offered me in marriage and promised Gooma as a bride, I was too young to realize the sacred ordinance and above all to know about the ordeal that awaited me, that is, marrying six maidens at the same time. I was only eleven years old, and I had just returned home from Scotland, after having been away from my native Africa four years. I was not fully matured, but I had begun to feel that I was a man. When my father told me that Gooma was to be my bride, I thought I knew what it meant and I was anxious to go through the ceremony. Little did I dream what was to happen and what consequences would ensue. All that I thought of was to be with Gooma.

The girl seemed to know much more than other girls and boys. It may have been because Gooma had saved my life, or it may have been that I loved her. I had chosen Gooma as a playmate before I left home, even though it was unusual, amongst Native Boys, to play at all with girls. Gooma and I liked each other all the more after she had saved my life from a man-eating lion.

I should have been devoured by the man-eater if it had not been for Gooma, who was the fighting daughter of a fighting Chief. Through the timely intervention of this girl, already marked by the claws and teeth of a leopard, and bitten by a hook-lizard, and through her superior skill with the assegai, I was saved.

It all happened one day after the

usual warning had been given; that is, when there was danger of beasts, or warriors from another tribe. I was playing near the Bush all by myself, when a great old savage man-eater got through somehow and came into the village before any one knew anything about it. Two babies, whose mother had left them lying on the ground when she ran away in fright, were torn into pieces and partly eaten; a young girl was torn badly but did not die; several boys, whose screaming made the beast furious, escaped by a hair's breadth.

By this time the old fellow had been struck by a clean assegai, that is, without poison on the tip. This stung him and made him more ferocious, and he darted back and forth, this way and that way, until finally he spied me. Gooma was not far away at the time, for it was she who had stung the beast with the assegai that was not poisoned with *Kootch-er-roo*. By this time she had found a poisoned assegai, and was pursuing the animal at a safe distance, when she saw the lion plunge in my direction. I was directly in its path.

Her cries made me look up; I saw the lion coming at me full speed. I did as I had been taught to do when confronted, at close quarters. I fell flat on the ground and tried to dig under the best I could. I was so frightened that I forgot what to do in this case, so I fell to the ground all right, but I began to cry out, which was unwise.

But Gooma, who was near enough by then, threw her poisoned assegai, and whether it was by sheer luck or skill, I cannot say, but the assegai struck the lion in the mane, and pierced its neck almost through.

This action by Gooma made the animal forget the object of his dash, and it

turned around several times, roaring madly from pain and the effects of poison, and then it turned over, head first, and died horribly.

Gooma was a rich girl in inheritance, a noble woman by birth, a brave girl in spirit, but an unfortunate girl, nevertheless.

Gooma had saved my life from the wounded man-eating lion, by stopping it in its course, with a poisoned assegai, when it was coming straight at me. Now if a girl is the direct cause of saving a boy's life, in my country, that boy's parents have the option of claiming that girl, from her parents, to be the bride of the boy, when both reach the marriageable age, which is thirteen and nine respectively. My father made the claim, and it was honored by the consent of Gooma's guardian parent.

I was a member of one of the four hundred Semitic families that had a strict rule that not any of us could marry into a Fetich family. But we were permitted to choose a wife from a Mohammedan family, because the Mohammedans believed in one God. But Gooma was not of a Fetich family; she was only connected with and guarded by such a family. There was mystery surrounding Gooma's antecedents, and the chief that owned her had watched her with a jealous eye. He said that she was his daughter, but there was no likeness between him and the child, nor did any one of his twenty-six wives own her. The name of the old chief was O-Lou-Wa-Li; and the women in his compound were abusive of Gooma; in fact, they were cruel to her. The chief himself was a born fighter and had distinguished himself in many wars, and as a result, had found favor in the eyes of the King.

While he had been on one of his

skirmishes in the desert, fighting the Tuaregs, he had found Gooma, whose name he had given her himself, which means: "Pearls of the Mother," pronounced: *Goo-hoo-maha*, and we call it Gooma, for short. The King himself would have taken the child from the chief, had the chief not shown such pain and distress in parting with her. The old chief stuck to his story that the child was his daughter by one of the women of the Tuareg people, but no one believed him. This chief was such an illustrious character, that the Fetich leaders would not permit any of the witch-doctors to interfere with him. The only thing that they forced him to do was to keep the girl away from other children, for fear of strange devils in her; she was supposed to be confined to the chief's compound. That is why the chief's wives were unkind to her, but the chief protected her by keeping her with him as much as possible. The general thought was that the chief would marry her when she became of age. The old chief spent much time teaching the girl how to use an assegai, to hunt and fight, and to do everything that a boy did.

Now Gooma was not white, but she was far from black, and she was a very beautiful girl. Not a few believed that she was not the gift of birth, but had been fashioned out of wind and sand during the storm called "Hum-seen," meaning Fifty. But regardless of all these rumors, Gooma lived on, and did as other children did. She was no different, except that she was smarter and quicker than other girls of her age.

Then came the time of that awful event about the lion, and the proposal of my marriage to Gooma, by my own father, to the old chief. The chief was pleased with the proposal, because he

was anxious that the girl should be married into a different people than his own, for as he said, a man cannot be kind to the thing that he does not like, and he knew that the poor girl was the object of hate amongst the Fetich people, and that our people were not Fetich, but were called "The Strange People," and he felt confident that we would be kind to her.

Gooma singled me out for walks around the villages, and I felt lonesome when she was not with me.

Once when Gooma and I were together, some boys of my village called after me the name that they had heard their fathers call me, *Yem-Saah*, 'Mystery.' That was one of the reasons why I did not choose to be in their company at all. Every one called me 'Mystery' and I was not pleased. That was all I could hear when I returned from Scotland the first time; so I took Gooma as my companion as much as I could, although that displeased my father and my eldest brother.

I had been transformed during the four years that I had been away, and I had become used to the company of women, and had quite a different view of them than did the men in my land.

My eldest brother was furious. He questioned me about my conduct, but I offended him by looking him in the eye while he talked; that was disrespectful for a boy in my country. The punishment for this infringement of native etiquette is severe; a boy is tied to a stake in the heat of the sun, in the middle of day, and left there four hours. When the boy is released from the stake he is likely to die from sun-stroke. Usually, the complaint comes from a parent or near relative but never from a sister or a mother. My brother did not attempt to give me any punishment other than

to hit me across the face with the back of his hand; then I flew at him. I had been taught to hit back when I was in school in Edinburgh, and I had become used to fighting. I forgot, for the moment, that it was my eldest brother; otherwise I should not have acted so unwisely.

When my brother had summoned me to come before him, I said: "Tell him to wait." I committed a serious offense by thus answering and by not immediately obeying him. When I did appear, instead of standing with bowed head, as boys should do in the presence of elders, I sat in front of him and looked him straight in the eye as I had been taught to do in Scotland. My brother cursed me, called me "Son of a Monkey," and spit in my face. Then he struck me across the face with the back of his hand. I could stand no more, and I jumped at him, bit him, and struck and scratched him badly. My brother, dumfounded, did not even hit me back, but he yelled loudly. My brother was a full grown man and could have given me a beating, but such action as mine had never happened before in my country, so he was paralyzed with astonishment.

His yells attracted all his women, of whom he had twenty-one. His chief wife ran to his house with all the other wives, and they all screamed and shouted *Haram Alake!* "A shame to God!" I realized what folly I was committing, so I jumped off my brother, who lay stretched on the ground, and I ran out of his compound and kept running until I reached my father's compound. I passed several old men, but I did not salute them in the customary manner, another breach of native etiquette that brought abuse on the head of my father and rendered me liable to further pun-

ishment. Many native boys have been put to death for conduct less offensive and I should have been put to death if my father had been guided by the persuasion of my eldest brother.

I was brought before the community chief and charged with "Laughing at the beards of old men" whom I had passed in a hurry and to whom I had not given the customary salutations. I was judged guilty even before I went to the community chief; therefore I had to go through "The Ordeal," just as other boys would have had to do. I stood before the chief and his counsellors with bowed head, and on my head I balanced a calabash dish full of palm-oil. While the old men, my accusers, piled up my offenses, I had to hold my head still and not spill a drop of palm-oil. When I heard the accusers tell false things about me, I simply had to speak, and every time I spoke I moved my head and spilled oil. For every drop spilled from the dish, I had to receive a hard smack on the cheek from every member of the council, including the chief, and the old men who accused me, about twenty-five people smacking me every time I spilled a drop of oil, and that was many times. One old man demanded that I be given to a Medicine-Man to have the evil spirit that controlled me, removed. That would have caused my death, because when the devilish Medicine-Men get hold of a boy to purify him, they usually injure him so that he dies. They give as an excuse for his dying, that there was so much evil in him that it overcame all the good. Even parents believe the Medicine-Men and think it is a blessing that the boy dies. I did not realize the full extent of danger at that time, but my father did, and he was inclined to be lenient because I was his youngest son, his heir, and the holder of the birth-right

of the family. My father opposed every motion to have me punished further.

The hardest blow came when my own brother put in his complaint. My father had promised to punish me for my offense to my brother, and so he thought my brother satisfied. My poor father was stunned when he saw his authority set at naught by his own son. My brother said many things against me. He told about my attack upon him, and supported his statement by the statement of his bride.

Now was the time for my father to stab at my brother and make an impression upon the chief and his counsellors. My father said: "It is a shame on my beard, that I should have given life to a son who must call upon a woman for support." The chief agreed with him and told my father that if he himself had such a son he would put him amongst the girls.

Then my brother complained about my having been in the company of Gooma, "The Outcast." Since Gooma was from a different people, and I was not a Fetich Worshipper, my brother's complaint did not bring the desired result.

The question arose, whether or not I was the *real* son of my father, so the matter was referred to the Fetich-Doctor, the Spiritual Head of my country. The Fetich-Doctor supported the claim that I was not the son of my father, but that my father had taken me in place of his lost heir, Bata Kindai.

The civil King of my country then intervened on behalf of my father, because my father had gained distinction as a warrior and had been made a Balogun Chief (Fighting chief), and the King stopped the Fetich-Doctor from killing me cruelly. The chief Rabbi of my own people also plead with the Fe-

tich-Doctor and convinced him that my father told the truth about my being his rightful heir. Under Fetich law no one can take the place of an heir to a family, so the witch-doctors and their chief were all against me. Some of my acquired habits made them believe that I was no blood kin to my father. I wore a few clothes, I slept on a cot bed, I had a lamp, and I talked to women. Much of my time I spent in the company of Gooma, my betrothed, in preference to boys. The boys never believed what I told them about the outside world, but Gooma did. The boys called me 'Mystery,' but Gooma did not. Gooma addressed me as "Small Grain," or *Unquatwa*, the name my mother thought of at my birth, whose meaning is, 'Trouble Waters.' My father called me "Bata Kindai," because I was his heir. He called me, "Small Grain and the Sole of my foot," the literal translation of "Bata Kindai."

I think the name my mother thought of when I was born was the more appropriate, for who can deny that I am just one bit of trouble after another? Every bit of trouble that I have ever had has been through my fault, and not the direct fault of any one else. I have caused myself much misery through my own folly, but can you altogether blame me, considering that my civilization is only veneer, and that my whole modern make-up is affectation? Everything that I attempt to do in my present state is to the extreme; if I love one, I love too much; if I drink, I drink too much, not because I am fond of drink, but because I have never learned restraint.

To Gooma I was "Bata Kindai," or "Unquatwa." The outcome of the trials and tests for the wrongs that I had committed against my eldest brother, and the affront to the old men, was that I

got a good beating on the soles of my feet, every complainant being allowed to strike me five times on my bare feet. How cruel it felt when my brother's turn came! His strokes were harder than those of any of the old men, who numbered six. Needless to say, I was hardly able to stand for days afterward. Considering all the offenses, I was extremely lucky.

It is customary for a father to punish a boy later, but my father did not raise his hand to me. Old chief O-Lou-Wa-Li, foster-father of Gooma, liked me and would have saved me from the beating had he been able. O-Lou-Wa-Li was a Fetich-worshipper and therefore a more influential chief than my father, but he had lost his prestige on account of his daughter, Gooma, so he did not offer assistance, for he thought that if he attempted to intervene it might do more harm than good, and that his word as a nobleman might be ignored, a serious thing for a man of distinction in my country.

The truth is, my father was more concerned in securing wives for me, than in punishing me. He had chosen the match-maker to decide upon my fitness for marriage, and the girls' fathers had done the same. None of the other girls who were to become my wives liked Gooma, and they did not wish to stand the test with her.

I had to wear a mask, called "The Mask of Chastity," made to cover my head, with holes for the eyes and mouth; and it was made of wild grass called *Trava*. It had a devilish look, and nobody wanted to speak with me while I wore it. The girls had to disguise themselves the same as I did, only their head masks were not so closed as mine was. I had to go about in this fashion for twelve months, and during that time

I had to be much with my match-maker, and the match-makers of the girls who were to become my wives. Match-makers may be men or women, according to the choice of the father. My mother was dead, and so was Gooma's, but the mothers of the other five girls lived, and they busied themselves with their own daughters, explaining some of their own experiences when they themselves prepared for marriage. Gooma's father spent much time with me, and so did my own father.

The match-makers took me out of the village twice a week for about three months before the time of the vows, and oiled and massaged me. Two or more old women kept with me and while one busied herself with me the others held whispered conferences, but I never learned what they said. They put me into a hut, built for the purpose, and watched me through the walls. Then I was led out of the Bush, for that is where all these things took place, and I was blind-folded and turned loose in the village. I never saw who brought me out, for it was never the same women who took me into the Bush. I never guessed what they would do to me from one time to the other. I had to wait and see; they always played some new trick. All boys have to go through these trials before they marry, but it is never a subject of discussion.

The girls also had their turn at this kind of thing but in a somewhat different way from that of the boys. According to some of the old men in my home, the girls' tests are harder than those given the boys.

The time came for the vows. While I was in the hut in the Bush, an image was made in copper, eight inches long and two inches thick, and this thing was placed on a brass tray and kept by my

match-maker until the day of the vow. On that day all the girls were lined up by their own match-makers. Young boys brought in the tray with the image and placed it on the ground in front of me, and then ran away. While running they sang a native song meaning: "Your manhood is perfect; so use it; so use it." All native songs are repetitions, so they sang the words over and over.

The girls watched this performance, and when it was finished, each girl was led before me singly, by one of the old women. Each girl was commanded by the old woman to kneel down in front of the image and to kiss it. Then they sang a marriage song, which means: "What a delight to me! What a delight to me!" The native words are:—*Aah-gu-ru-ma Guru-ma, Aah-gu-ru-ma, Yay-gaga-hogya, Yay-gaga-hogya, Yay-gaga guru-ma*. The girls danced to this song for hours, and I sat there and witnessed everything. The people gathered closer, and every one present came up and examined the image and made complimentary remarks. My father took away the tray and kept the image as a trophy.

Before the trial, my eldest brother made an accusation against me. If he had proved his case, my wedding would have been put off for another native year and both Gooma and I would have been subjected to indignities. My father and old Chief O-Lou-Wa-Li were ordered to present us before a special council. I was surprised because I did not know what it was all about, and when I asked my father he replied: "Your new ideas bring shame on my head; you will smart for your deviltry." Neither he nor Old Chief O-Lou-Wa-Li knew who accused Gooma and me.

The council consisted of all the match-makers and the chief Witch-Doc-

tor, who presided. Gooma and I were ushered before the council, and we sat directly in front of our fathers, but dared not look toward each other. We sat in our masks, and Oh! how I would have liked to speak to Gooma, and ask her what it was all about.

You could have knocked my poor old father over with a feather when he saw my own brother accuse me before the council. My brother saluted every one in the usual manner; then the Witch-Doctor chanted a song, supposed to exhort the spirits to clean the tongue of the accuser to enable him to tell the truth. My real accuser was a boy who said he had seen each of us do something unlawful. No boy can accuse another boy before a council; he must state his case to some adult, and if the adult thinks it proper to believe the boy he makes complaint. Everybody present was dumbstruck when my own brother accused me.

When one accuses another before the council he never jumps into the business right away, but makes a long speech and says a number of native sayings before he mentions the subject of importance. That was the way my brother proceeded: "Gazelles are fleet of foot, always," he said. While he talked, every one repeated what he said. He continued: "A snake is slow, but I do not know an animal that can out-run a gazelle, nor a reptile that can fool a snake. It is sad when a bird tries to mate with an elephant; it strikes me the poor thing must waste a lot of energy. Have you ever known an elephant who could fall into water without making a splash? I am sure a lizard would know that it is impossible for a monkey to become a zebra. Buffaloes are hard-headed, and so is the son of my father hard-headed. I am convinced that even our laws must

be obeyed, or we would never have goodness in the land. But how can you heal up a sore before it has become worse? When the evil spirit told my father's son to break his vows, he did so and he should accept his punishment. One whom we all know, and whose father has given him wonderful girls to wife, has sorely pledged himself to save our good and holy law from being profaned; that person saw with an un-sleeping eye, an act that makes the blood of our fathers jump. A female knows no better than to be loyal to him whom she loves; therefore I feel that Gooma also has an evil spirit. I say that the son of my father is guilty, and that he deserves the punishment of fire, lest the spirits avenge themselves upon our families. Burn them! Bata Kindai and Gooma! Burn them!"

I was dumfounded because I knew that I had committed no offense, neither had Gooma. Poor girl, I see her now, as she sat gazing with her brown eyes, eyes that did not belong to people like those around her. Gooma wept, because she knew that all the charges were lies, wicked black lies. The entire council arose, held up hands, and the chief Witch-Doctor screamed aloud: "Fathers of your children! Put this to the test! This must be so!"

When old Chief O-Lou-Wa-Li and my father jumped up to protest because they knew what such action by the council meant, the chief Witch-Doctor asked my father and O-Lou-Wa-Li this question: "Did you ever know any one that is accused tell the truth?"

These men were guided by the heathen religion of a primitive and ignorant people. Our fathers had to abide by the decision, which was final.

Gooma and I were taken to our homes and put through a kind of third

degree to make us admit the charges. Under the circumstances we were lucky because our own fathers did the testing, and not the devilish Witch-Doctors. When a case of this kind is given to the Witches and Witch-Doctors the poor victim seldom lives to admit anything. My father, I know, was sorry, but he could not show it. If he had cried that would have been unpardonable, because a man should never be weak enough to cry; if he wishes to cry he gets his women to cry for him. My father acted harsh and cruel in order not to break down, but I know that his heart nearly broke every time he hit me.

The women in my father's compound were commanded to come forth and to weep and wail. If a woman does not feel like crying or cannot cry, there is always a certain preparation that they find which makes tears fall like rain, and then all the women have to do is to scream. That is why we say when we see a woman weeping, that it is only *Mas-Kara*, meaning, "Crocodile Tears." No one ever sympathizes with a woman in tears, even if the tears are real.

Old Chief O-Lou-Wa-Li loved his child beyond the understanding of his own wives, but he had to torture her to make her confess. Gooma took the greatest oath that could be taken in my country, to prove that she was innocent. She said that she would stand upon the head of the Crocodile, our Sacred Animal, to prove she told the truth. Gooma was only a little girl, and I, a little boy barely thirteen years old. Poor Gooma was tied to stakes, stretched out flat on the ground, and she was whipped and whipped and whipped, and her eyebrows were burned off, and she was starved to make her admit that she had broken her vows, but she stuck to her denial, and so did I. Old Chief O-Lou-

Wa-Li did not administer the punishment to Gooma, but he witnessed it. His wives did the torturing, so the poor child suffered greatly, because the women of the old chief did not like Gooma, and they heaped curse upon curse on her head. The names they called her made the blood curdle.

In my case, my father did the punishing, and I believe that I made him more cruel, because every time he struck me with the stick over my bare back, I said that I would go back to my White Father, in Scotland, and I continually called on my White Father, and on his son, my friend, so my father hit me all the harder. I bear the marks on my back to-day from the severe floggings that I received, and the whole accusation was false.

The severe beatings, and the torture of hot needles in my tongue, stopped, but my statement was still a complete denial, and it was the same with Gooma. My eldest brother began to feel worried because it looked as if he were to be laughed at as a false accuser.

The council was called again, and poor Gooma and I were dragged to the place of meeting. My brother explained how he came by such a tale as he had related. He said that he loved me, his father's favorite son. At this my father objected, and said, "Principal son"; so my brother continued that it pained him to accept a story against his good little brother, and he could even then hardly believe such a thing. He warmed up and tried once more to force the case against Gooma and me, and continued talking. He added that his information had come from a reliable source, a small boy, and that it is as impossible for a little boy's mind to tell a straight lie as it is for the leopard to drink with a lion. "Therefore," he said, "this pair deserve

to be burnt." He stopped talking, because he had again demanded that Gooma and I should be tortured.

Old Chief O-Lou-Wa-Li could bear no more. He jumped up and answered by saying: "We must leave this case to *Oro!*"

No one dared to oppose this, because every one knew that it was just. *Oro* is a native Fetich superstition; the people believe that the *Oro* god can find out all wrong-doers, because every one who has committed wrong of any kind must admit that wrong to the *Oro* god when it is brought around, seven times a year, and seven days at each time. No native would think of hiding wrong from the *Oro*, because he believes that in so doing he would bring terrible disaster upon every one. We had to wait until *Oro* sounded.

The Chief Witch-Doctor stood up and said that he knew that O-Lou-Wa-Li was just in wishing to refer the case to *all-seeing Oro*. He added, "Woe be to the one that *Oro* puts his finger upon; it would be better for that one never to have been born." My brother did not feel comfortable, because he knew that he had put the devil in that small boy's heart to say what he had said, all lies.

In the days that followed, my brother tried in many ways to be friendly with me, but my father kept me from him as much as possible. In the case of Gooma, all the women who had flogged that poor girl unmercifully wanted to be kind to her, but O-Lou-Wa-Li kept Gooma from them as much as possible. The women had not taken part in the accusation; they had done only what they had been ordered.

The time for *Oro* came, and everybody prepared. Women dare not show themselves during the seven days of *Oro*; they must confine themselves to

their own compounds until it is all over. On the first night of *Oro* nothing unusual happened. Gooma and I did not go out to meet *Oro* because we had done no wrong. The little boy who had told the story, and my brother, did not appear either. The little boy was a Fetich-worshipper, and my brother belonged to the "Strange People." The little boy had no one in his own faith to consult, because no Fetich person would give him any encouragement in the wrong that he had committed. My brother had the Rabbi of our own Faith, with whom he could talk the matter over before going out to the *Oro*. Although we are a separate people, with an entirely different religion, we are nevertheless compelled to comply with all Fetich laws, regarding taboos, and secret organizations of the government. One thing we did have above the other people, and that was seven Rabbis, who were the guardians of our Faith and Morals. Whatever difficulty arose we had the Rabbis to consult. In this business the Chief Rabbi was unwilling to interfere, because it would bring down severe abuse on our community, if he dared to condone one in the dreadful evil of delivering one of his own blood up to another people. So my brother was advised to go out to *Oro*, after the boy had gone, and tell all he knew of this affair, and let all be the truth.

The next night *Oro* sounded, and it was louder and more weird than ever. Three men went before *Oro* on complaint of their wives. Every one of these men had ten wives, and the complaint was that every man had stayed too long with the last wife. One man had refused to go with any of his other wives; another had taken his new bride into his own house to live with him, saying that she was too delicate to do work

around the compound with other women; while the third had kept with his bride all the time. All three men lost their wives, and all three were so mutilated that one of the three died, and the other two lived in mockery the remainder of their lives, in a compound called, "The Place of the Agha," meaning, "Eunuchs." On this same night many other punishments were decreed. Two girls lost their fingers for stealing something; a boy was ordered put to death by the Ogoni Society, for disobedience; and two married girls were mutilated for being caught in adultery.

The little boy in my case did not appear before *Oro* that night. On the third night the boy appeared and related his story. He said that he was not friendly with Ibn LoBagola, neither were any of the other boys, because of the strange way that Ibn LoBagola had of associating with girls, and actually talking with them, and playing with them, and because Ibn LoBagola had brought forbidden ways into the land. He said that he had told the brother of Ibn LoBagola how he had seen me and the girl Gooma, who was possessed with many devils, in each other's company many times, and that the brother of Ibn LoBagola had urged him to repeat his statement over and over again, and had added a few words every time.

The case became controversial, and therefore no punishment could be given until ordered by the particular council where it was first heard. My brother appeared before *Oro*, and his statement was brief, saying that he had no evil intentions, and that it was justice that prompted him to bring complaint against the son of his own father. During all this time, my father was not asleep nor was old Chief O-Lou-Wa-Li. Both had received the report of the find-

ings of the guardians of *Oro*, and they pushed the matter ahead quickly.

It was the day just before *Oro* stopped when my brother gave his statement to *Oro*. I can never forget that day. If the case had turned against Gooma and me, it would have delayed my marriage another year, because the burning that I would have suffered would have been a long while healing up.

The meeting of the special council was called. Oh, what a meeting! Gooma and I cried! We pitied each other's state. I was still tender, and so was that flower, Gooma. Tears bring no pity in my country, but usually scorn, but we cried, nevertheless. I am crying now, as I write about it. I honestly believe that my brother was prompted by a sense of duty, and not by spite. Although my brother had me tested by ordeal and torture, and had me flogged, he was prompted by his natural sense of right. Had I not learned many strange things during the four years that I had been out of my country? When the meeting was over my father gave me his hand to kiss; and my! how I kissed his hand! Never before had I clung to the hand of my father as I did then. Gooma kissed the foot of old Chief O-Lou-Wa-Li, and washed his foot with her tears. We kissed the hands of all the adults present, and then sat down greatly relieved.

I was willing to take as many wives as my father desired me to take, which was a stupendous task, because he had already chosen six girls for me to marry at the same time, which was a little out of the ordinary, but my father was eager, so I bowed to his will.

My father stood up, which meant that a storm was brewing in his breast, and addressed the council in the following manner, saying: "It may be that the father to the mother of that son who

calls me father, ran fast after the woman that bore the mother who gave birth to the mother of the son that calls me father. If he only ran after her, let us rejoice, but it is plainly seen that he caught her, and I have my hairs to witness that the female was a monkey." This was a terrible statement. When my father said this my poor brother screamed, "*Ya Bah!*" meaning, "My father!" But my father kept on, saying further: "As the bold fighting leopard finds himself in a crowd of snakes, so I find myself, when I took to my own compound, the offspring to that mysterious union; I conjure all, to bear witness for me, that I have not stayed with the Mother Monk; still, how could a female be born to me, one who resembles a monkey so perfectly, in nature?"

What cruel words! My poor brother shrieked, and he dripped with perspiration, and he cried out to the Chief Witch-Doctor to save him from harshness from the lips of his own father.

My father continued in a loud voice: "My birth-right I have nursed; it has been profaned; I gave it to my rightful heir, the very core of my heart; I have had anguish that no other nobleman has ever known; I have faced death without the distinction of seeing my heir, The Sole Of My Foot (the meaning of my name, "*Bata*"). I want to know if one father has had an heir, who has actually died, who has ever come back to life again. My own child, him of my first thoughts, was as if dead, but he has returned to us, whole and clean, and now is about to complete the most Sacred Rite in our noble land, to take to himself as my choice and my wish, a household and a bride. This one here who calls me '*Ya Bah*,' this son of the monkey, not of mine, has tried to dash my every bone to the water."

My poor brother interrupted again by running to where my father stood, and falling down before him, kissing his feet wildly, and doing the same to all the men present. Oh, what a trial! It was not of much importance at first, but it had developed into a tragic event. My father was compelled to stop talking from exhaustion.

Old Chief O-Lou-Wa-Li rose and began to talk. He started slowly, but he became excited and screamed. He demanded that this affair be left to the "Circle." Now the "Circle" in my home is a bad thing. Any one who is accused in a "Circle" is always killed, in a horrible way, for the pleasure of the King. The "Circle" is an ancient cus-

tom seldom followed. Its purpose originally was to discover those who had evil in their hearts, and conspired against the King. The Witches and Witch-Doctors had charge of the "Circle," and it was their business to smell out guilty persons. This practice had been abolished but could be revived at any time, at the pleasure of the King, only. Now when old Chief O-Lou-Wa-Li called to the Chief Witch-Doctor to let the "Circle" decide the case, he surely had it in mind to have my brother killed.

The chief Rabbi of my people forced my father to oppose the terrible suggestion. My father said aloud, "Not a drop of my son's blood shall run."

[*"A Mating in the Jungle,"* by Ibn LoBagola, the account of the strange marriage ceremony and the fate of the beautiful Gooma, appears next month.]



The Southern Legend

BY HOWARD MUMFORD JONES

SECTIONALISM is defined to be devotion, especially when disproportionate, to the interests peculiar to a section of the country. It is supposed to be characteristically a Southern complaint. Yet when one views current Northern ideas about the contemporary South—ideas that in many cases are still as naïve and absurd as those movingly set forth in "Uncle Tom's Cabin"—one is at least sympathetic to Southern weaknesses. Professor Roulhac Hamilton points out that for over a generation Southerners have complained that their section has been given insufficient attention by writers on American history, and though, as he indicates, it is Southern carelessness and not grasping Yankee cunning which is

responsible for an undue emphasis, the undue emphasis remains. Because the classics of American letters are so frequently Northern products, Southern school-children learn about the barefoot boy and the over-soul and the headless horseman of Sleepy Hollow; whereas, unfortunately for regional understanding, the scenes of Poe's stories are laid in the misty mid-region of Weir. The results are natural enough; but it is also natural that Southerners should relish Mr. Pattee's dry witticism that Barrett Wendell's "Literary History of America" ought to be renamed "A Literary History of Harvard University, with Incidental Glimpses of the Minor Writers of America." As the colored heroine of T. B. Campbell's amusing novel, "Black