

ALUMNI AND FORMER STUDENTS.

Editor Alumni Department, HESPERIAN:

'88 in South Africa.

The place from which I write is a native town about forty-five miles north east of Freetown, the seaport. We reach Niagbele by boat on the Rokell river, a large beautiful stream. The tide comes up as far as this, making navigation easier, but I am told that in the rainy season the river is ten or fifteen feet higher, and the current is very strong. It is hard to believe that they ever have rainy weather here, for it has been bright and pleasant ever since I came, nearly six months ago. It has rained several times lately, however, and will rain more frequently the next six weeks; and in June will settle down to rain in earnest for a few months.

If you could see our city at a little distance you would think it was a collection of grain stacks, for our houses have tall, cone-shaped grass roofs reaching down to five feet from the ground. The mud walls are plastered in different colors; some of the houses are round, some oblong; and this is about the extent of the variety. I have lived in such a house for nearly three months and find it very pleasant and comfortable.

The grass roofs are the best protection against the fierce heat of the sun. A new house is being built now a few rods from here, in which we expect to live through the next season at least. It will be a native house in every respect, with the exception, perhaps, of glass windows. The new house is in a beautiful location with several magnificent mango trees at the front, and quite a large plat of ground behind, where we expect to have bananz, lime, and some other trees.

This country is beautifully supplied with fruit of many kinds. If it were not so, the natives would go hungry as far as fruit is concerned, for they do not take trouble to plant fruit or vegetables. They are fully endowed with the indolence so common to the natives of the tropics. They are very pleasant people to live among, (usually) quiet, and friendly, are small in stature as a race, with agreeable faces. I am just beginning to understand some of their interesting customs. One curious way of theirs, is, when a king dies, the people never allude to his death until the new king is crowned, about a year later. When the former king is spoken of, they simply say he is sick. Then when a king is crowned, he is obliged to stay in his town for a year without going outside at all.

The kingdoms are small in this country and some of the kings are very poor. Bai (king) Koblo at Marampa has only two slaves now, and very little property of any kind. He is a drunkard, and naturally, a bankrupt. After Mr. Fisher, the superintendent of our mission, came, he and two of the missionaries went to Marampa for a day or two, and were entertained by the king. After they came back, one of our new missionaries asked if they slept on straw mattresses. "Straw mattresses!" exclaimed Mr. Fisher, "did you think we went to visit Queen Victoria?" Then it was explained that His Royal Majesty had provided them with mud benches for beds. The king at this place is a hard drinker, but his head wife is a business manager and keeps his property together, so he is able to keep up more style. He promised one evening, to let Mr. Fisher ride his horse to Marampa, but in the morning he decided that the Krifis, (devils) in that part wouldn't let his horse live in Marampa a few days, so he didn't lend it.

I spoke of Krifis a moment ago. They are worshipped by

avert evil. Some animals such as baboons and snakes are called Krifis. They did me the honor to give that name to me, when I first came, saying that my long hair gave me power. The king here has a snake, which he saves in his Krifi; and I was introduced to it in rather a disagreeable way. The king came into our house one evening and produced from an enormous pocket in the front of his gown this precious serpent, then held it out within an inch of my chin. I am afraid I didn't appreciate all the features of its beauty, for I did not stay long enough to look it over. This is the only snake I have seen in Africa, and I shall not soon forget it.

There are many Mohammedans in this part of Africa. Mohammedanism here, however, is mingled with the heathen superstition, so that it is little improvement over heathen devil-worship.

We speak to the natives often through interpreters, but it is very unsatisfactory, and we are now going to work in earnest to learn the language. The opportunities for preaching are very numerous. Almost any time of the day, if one sits on the veranda and begins to read or speak the Gospel to one of them, in ten minutes there will be a company of fifteen or twenty standing quietly by listening attentively. These are the times when we long for the language.

The dress of the slaves and men who do manual labor is simply a loin-cloth. Those who are more fortunate wear the Arabian gowns introduced by Mohammedans, I suppose. The women wear a square cloth fastened around the waist, reaching to the knees. If she has a child under a year old it is carried on her back in another cloth tucked in across the chest. The mother always carries her baby with her at her work, so they have the best of care, and they very rarely cry.

The plan of our mission is very similar to that of the China Island Mission, if you are acquainted with that. Two, and possibly three, are to be occupied at once, so our party will be more scattered than formerly. I shall be the only woman in the mission for a few months at least.

Your sister in Christ,

ALMA B. CODDING.

Editor Alumni Department, HESPERIAN.

Southern California.

You have requested and I have promised something concerning Southern California. But descriptions are tedious. I think it will be much better for you and THE HESPERIAN readers to come with me to some eminence, and view the scenery for yourselves. If we could stand upon such a lofty point as Wilson's peak, or Old Baldy, we would indeed get a comprehensive view of what Charles Dudley Warner so fittingly calls "Our Italy." But as a trip to one of these would involve considerable expenditure of time and money, and a student has not much of either to spare at this time of the year, let us take a tramp up one of the canons of Puente Hills, (an isolated group lying in the centre of San Gabriel valley) and from Lookout Point survey the scenery.

This large gate at the mouth of the canon, bearing the legend, "No Shooting Allowed," indicates that these steep rocky hills are someone's property. They are owned by a syndicate that either uses or rents them for sheep pasturage. That large structure just ahead, looking like a huge house buried up to the eaves, is the reservoir that supplies with water the thirsty land and the people below. This black substance oozing out of the cliff, is asphaltum. Yes, that gurgling sound is from a small stream, which is running down