

THE GOLDEN STOOL

SOME ASPECTS OF THE CONFLICT
OF CULTURES IN MODERN AFRICA

BY

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TO THE MEMORY

OF

ANDREW DALE

(Sometime Magistrate in Northern Rhodesia)

AND

MUNGALO

(AN AFRICAN CHIEF)

MEN I WAS PRIVILEGED TO CALL MY FRIENDS

"There is nothing new under the sun—even immediately under it in Central Africa. The only novelty is the human heart—Central Man. That is never stale, and there are depths still unexplored, heights still unattained, warm rivers of love, cold streams of hatred, and vast plains where strange motives grow. These are our business."—HENRY SETON MERRIMAN.

FOREWORD

By the Right Hon. SIR F. D. LUGARD, G.C.M.G.

(Formerly Governor-General of Nigeria).

OF the making of books on Africa there is no end—especially of the travel and tourist type—but books which combine half a lifetime of the closest contact with, and work among Africans with a profound study of the best English and French authors on the subject are as rare as they are welcome.

Born in South Africa and with seventeen years' experience as missionary and pioneer, Mr. Smith has shown himself in his already published works to be a competent student of African languages and of African mentality, while the extent of his reading, as evidenced by the references in the present modest volume, is amazing. He

reviews the complex problems which face the Administrator and the Missionary with a breadth of view and an insight which command admiration, even if in rare instances the reader may not wholly share his conclusions. His study of Islam in Africa is particularly liberal and illuminating.

I can heartily recommend this little volume to those who desire to get at the facts and I know of none which I have found more instructive.

F. D. LUGARD.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

“**I** BEG to direct your attention to Africa.”

These words, so strangely unemotional to our ears, were spoken by David Livingstone to members of the University of Cambridge on December 4th, 1857. His journey across Africa had made his name famous. On his return to England, universities and learned societies vied with each other in doing him honour. At Cambridge the Vice-Chancellor presided over the meeting in the venerable Senate House which was crowded with graduates, undergraduates and visitors. The plain, single-minded missionary was accorded a reception that an Emperor might envy. And at the conclusion of his address he launched an appeal which was destined to have a tremendous effect upon men and movements in after days: “I beg to direct your attention to Africa. I know that in a few years I shall be cut off in that country, which is now open; do not let it be shut again! I go back to Africa to try to make an open path for commerce and Christianity; do you carry out the work which I have begun. I leave it with you.”

For as long as I can remember, David Livingstone has been my hero—my master. And when the Primitive Methodist Conference did me the honour of appointing me to this lectureship, I felt that in the choice of my subject I could not do better than follow his lead and direct your attention to Africa. I was born in Africa and the happiest years of my maturity have been spent there. To study its

history and its peoples has always been my delight. My thoughts naturally gravitate thither. And in these days when the problems arising from the contact of races and cultures cause grave concern to all thinking men, there are reasons why, apart from my personal predilections, your attention should be directed to Africa. I fear that my treatment of the subject may be summary. The space at my disposal does not admit of detailed examination of all the questions. Some indeed, the problems caused by the immigration of Indians, for example, must be passed over entirely; and others, such as the liquor-traffic, can be barely mentioned. But so far as the limits allow I shall endeavour to state the problems fairly and to indicate where in my judgment the solution is to be found.

So, I beg to direct your attention to Africa.

EDWIN W. SMITH.

Walton-on-Thames,
February 27th, 1926.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

The demand for a second edition affords me an opportunity of acknowledging the kindness of many reviewers and correspondents. It also enables me to correct a few misprints, to bring up to date a few of my references to current events, and to revise one or two misstatements of fact which trustworthy correspondents have pointed out to me.

November 24th, 1926.

E W. S.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I AM grateful to gentlemen, experts in their several departments, who after reading chapters of my book in manuscript have favoured me with valuable suggestions: to wit, Sir Humphrey Leggett, D.S.O., chairman for the past six years of the East African section of the London Chamber of Commerce, and Mr. H. Worsley, General Manager of the British Cotton Growing Association, who have read Chapter V; Dr. J. Howard Cook, formerly of Uganda, who has read Chapter VI; Sir Godfrey Lagden, sometime Resident Commissioner in Basutoland, who has read Chapter VII; the Rev. W. W. Cash, D.S.O., author of *The Moslem World in Revolution* and general secretary of the Church Missionary Society, who has read Chapter IX; and Major Hanns Vischer, secretary of the Colonial Office Advisory Committee on Native Education, who has read Chapter XI. Needless to say, none of these gentlemen is responsible for the opinions I have expressed. My friends and colleagues, the Revs. J. C. Mantripp, C. P. Groves, B.D., and J. B. Hardy, M.A., have read the entire manuscript and helped me materially

by their criticisms. I also wish to thank the able custodians of the magnificent library of the Royal Colonial Institute who have always been ready and courteous in their assistance.

I ought to add that the substance of Chapter VIII appeared as an article in *The East and The West* for April, 1924; and part of Chapter X in the *International Review of Missions* for January, 1922. The Editors have kindly given permission for me to use these.

Lastly and supremely, I thank Sir Frederick Lugard, who, in the midst of his abundant labours, has kindly given time to read the book and to write an Introduction. Sir Frederick's connexion with Africa dates back to 1885, when as a young soldier he went to the Sudan. Since then he has occupied many responsible positions, culminating in the Governor-Generalship of Nigeria. Now as a member of the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, and in other capacities, he is doing work for which we all honour him.

E. W. S.

The United Council for Missionary Education desire to acknowledge the courtesy of the Hartley Trustees in making this book available to them on generous terms, for publication in the form of this cheap edition.

K. M.

April, 1927.

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THE GOLDEN STOOL

CHAPTER I.

WHEREIN, FOR REASONS WHICH WILL PRESENTLY
APPEAR, IS TOLD THE STORY OF THE GOLDEN
STOOL OF ASHANTI.

I.

IN the interior of Gold Coast Colony, West Africa, lies the land of Ashanti, known to our fathers as the seat of a fierce barbarism that had its centre in the capital—Kumasi. The Wesleyan missionary, Thomas Birch Freeman, styled it “that bloody city.”

Early in the eighteenth century there came to the court of Osai Tutu, the fourth King of Ashanti, a celebrated magician named Anotchi, who announced that he was commissioned by Onyame, the

Note.—My authorities for this chapter are W. W. CLARIDGE, *A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti* (1915) ; *Ashanti, Report for 1921* (Colonial Reports, No. 1142) ; R. S. RATTRAY, *Ashanti* (1923), Chapters XXIII and XXIV.

god of the sky, to make Ashanti a great and powerful nation. In the presence of the King and a great multitude he drew down from heaven a black cloud from which issued the rumblings of thunder and a wooden stool. The stool sank slowly through the air till it rested upon the King's knees without touching the earth. Except for the gold which partially covered it, the stool was such as Africans commonly use. Anotchi proclaimed that it contained the *sunsum* (the soul) of the Ashanti people, that with it was bound up their power, their honour, their welfare, and that if ever it were captured or destroyed the nation would perish.

Thereafter the Stool was cherished as the most sacred possession of the tribe. It was never allowed to touch the ground. On the rare occasions when it was brought out, it was placed on an elephant skin spread upon the ground and was covered with a cloth of a special kind. Not even the King ever sat upon it. Whenever on great occasions its power was evoked the King would pretend three times to sit upon it and would then seat himself upon his own stool and rest his arm upon the Golden Stool. Once a year it was carried in solemn procession, under its own umbrella and accompanied by its own attendants who in pomp and number exceeded the attendants of the King who walked behind it.

When, some time after the appearance of the Stool, the King of Denkyira, who claimed the overlordship of Ashanti, sent to collect the customary

tribute, consisting of a brass pan filled with gold dust, together with the favourite wife and the favourite son of every chief, the Ashanti people, emboldened by possession of the Golden Stool, resisted his demands. In the war which followed, the King of Denkyira and his Queen were captured and beheaded and the golden fetters they had worn were taken to embellish the Golden Stool. Later on, the chief of a neighbouring territory arrogantly made for himself a replica of the sacred emblem. The King of Ashanti led an army against him, cut off his head, and melted the gold that adorned the rival stool. The gold was cast into two masks representing the face of the impious chief and these were hung as trophies upon the Golden Stool.

As time went on the power of the King of Ashanti increased enormously and every victorious advance added to the prestige of the Golden Stool. The extension of their dominions brought the Ashantis in the early years of last century to the sea-coast, where English forts had been built. Much of the subsequent history of the contact between the two races must be passed over. Frequent conflicts took place, culminating, in 1873, in the march of Sir Garnet Wolseley to Kumasi. After capturing and burning the town he concluded a treaty with the King. Fourteen years later Prempeh became King of Ashanti and in the early years of his reign peace and prosperity returned. But in 1893 trouble arose again and because Prempeh would not accept a British protectorate