AMONG WILD MEN.

The Adventures of an Exploring Trip on the Island of Madagascar.

FIGHTING THE SAKALAVA.

A Race of Dwarfs That Live in the Trees Like the Monkeys.

THE LARGEST EGGS IN THE WORLD.

Festal Rites During Which the Queen Drenched Her Guests.

LIBERTY BY A STOMACH FULL OF BLOOD

[WRITTEN FOR THE DISPATCH.]

When Mr. Frederick Taylor lay moaning in pain and delirium in the wilds of Madagascar last summer there seemed small chance that he would live to come back to civilized countries and tell the story of his achievements in that mysterious and wonderful island. Yet as he sat in the parlor of his hotel in New York he seemed the picture of health, and his eyes kindled with enthusiasm and his cheeks were flushed with excitement as he told of some of the things which he saw and some of the experiences which he passed through as he crossed the island from north to south and east to west in the summer and fall of 1891.

A son of the late Moses P. Taylor, a distinguished man of affairs for many years in New York City, young Taylor inherited wealth and could have spent a life in ease or in such pleasures as the so-called 400 of New York gives to its members. But when he was 15 years of age the desire to travel asserted itself, and since that time he has visited many lands and is familiar with all parts of the globe and with many portions which are far outside the paths of fashionable or accustomed travel. His researches have been recognized by the leading societies, so that he is now a life member of the Royal Geographical Society and a fellow of the Anthropological Society of London, and during the summer months he is to make a report verbally and in writing to those two societies respecting his recent discoveries.

Will Make Another Journey.

The writer spent several hours with Mr. Taylor. Said he: "I was not seeking for adventure; I was looking for information regarding those strange people and that strange country, and I feel that it is necessary to make another journey through the island before I can be sure that I know that wonderful country and its people well."

"Is traveling difficult there?"

"In one sense, yes. There is not a road or highway on the island. The Hovas, which are the reigning tribe there, are so jealous and fearful of white supremacy that they will not permit a road to be constructed, and if the French, who have assumed a sort of protectorate over the island, should attempt to capture the capital, it would cost them at least 20,000 men before they reached it.

"There are nothing but paths. There is not a horse or mule or other beast of burden upon that island. Nine millions of people and the only method of carriage which they have is upon the broad backs of strong men."

"How then did you travel?" I asked him. "Did you make a pedestrian tour?"

"At Tamatave, which is the chief town on the eastern coast, I was very kindly treated by the governor and by his help I secured 28 porters, strong, lusty fellows; some of them carried my provisions and some of them carried me.

The Mode of Travel in Madagascar.

They have a primitive sort of carriage, consisting of a canvas seat with footrests fastened to two iron poles. I was seated thus, and four of the men, two in front and

Mr. Taylor Traveling by Palanquin.

two in the rear, put the poles upon their shoulders and carried me much of the way. Part of the journey, however, was made in canoes, and while going up and down the precipitous mountain sides I got out and walked. I suppose my greatest danger with one exception, was in crossing these mountain ranges. Had the porters been treacherous they could have pushed me over a precipice and had they not been careful I might have taken many missteps which would have hurled me hundreds of feet below."

I asked Mr. Taylor something about the scenery and he described it as exquisite along the coast, while the mountain scenery is grand, but in the interior the country is desolate and barren and does not even furnish sustenance for wild beasts.

"There are a few pumas, something like the American mountain lion and some snakes, but the traveler in Madagascar has nothing to fear from ferocious beasts, and the huntsman will find little sport there except in shooting ducks and crocodiles.

Familiar With a Sacred Nobleman.

Mr. Taylor, becoming interested as he proceeded with his description, narrated the story of his sport shooting crocodiles. Said he: "There is a sacred island in the Lake Itasy on which lives a sacred nobleman, along with his wives. I was determined to see this old fellow, but I found that my porters had an unutterable horror of crossing the lake. They believed that it would be death for them to go to that sacred island.

"I said to them, 'You will go. That nobleman is not your king, but I am now,' and I used another argument more awe-inspiring than the sacred presence of that mysterious nobleman could possibly have been. So the men paddled me out and at last I touched the island, and there stood the nobleman, with much assumed dignity and real astonishment, his robe wrapped around him and he glaring at me. But I went up to him and hit him a thumping whack on the shoulder, saying: 'Hullo, old man, how are you?' and he melted at once. He was very courteous to me, showed me around the island, where there was nothing particular to see, and then indicated where the crocodiles were.

"My men paddled me out to a point near the shore and there, sunning upon the banks were hundreds of enormous crocodiles. Some of them must have been fifteen feet in length. I shot a number of them but it was dangerous to try to capture any. In fact the water swarmed with them so that I thought at one time they would overturn the canoe. I have seen crocodiles in other parts of the world, but I never saw any that would equal these. One of the porters took me to a place where I found some crocodile eggs. They are very large and I have some in my collection of curiosities which I am going to loan to the World's Fair."

Taylor Attacked by the Sakalavas.

I asked Mr. Taylor if he met with any resistance from the natives or whether he found any of the cannibal tribes said to live in Madagascar. He replied: "Excepting on the west coast of Madagascar I was treated everywhere with the utmost courtesy. As evening approached when we entered the village I would select my hut for the night and the people with perfect courtesy abandoned it to me and for the night I was the guest of the tribe. That is their idea of hospitality. Even in the capital they gave me special honors, but as I approached the west coast where the ferocious Sakalavas live I had reason to understand why it is that they are dreaded by the white people. We approached that country in canoes on the river. A party just ahead of mine, of which a French physician was the leader, was fired upon by these fellows from ambush and most of them were killed. I heard of it. I could not turn back, nor could I remain where I was, and I began to prepare to defend myself and party. I did so successfully."

Mr. Taylor seemed loath to go into particulars of what must have been a bloody skirmish. He admitted that he was attacked; that two of his party were killed; that a battle was fought for some hours, and that the savages were at length dispersed. He seemed sincerely to regret that he had been compelled to use his weapons and declared that that was the only unpleasant recollection of his trip.

Exquisite Specimens of the Orchid.

Upon the west coast Mr. Taylor found some exquisite specimens of orchids. He has seen the orchids of Borneo, Australia and South America, but he says in beauty, delicacy and size none of them can compare with the orchids of Madagascar. He also found there a gigantic specimen of tulip, pure as snow, delicate as wax, and more graceful than any of the European specimens, notwithstanding its enormous size. His specimens of the flora of Madagascar will be exhibited at the World's Fair in Chicago.

"We hear," I said, "much about enormous deposits of gold in Madagascar, and it would be interesting to know whether you saw any evidences of them."

"Evidences?" said he, "Why the half has not been told." Here he put his hand into his pocket and drew forth a nugget of alluvial gold, absolutely pure, which he himself picked up near the bed of a mountain stream. In the crevice of it some of the sand still remained. It was a specimen which would have made one of the Argonauts crazy with excitement. Mr. Taylor had it valued when he reached London and was told that it was worth a little over $16.

"There is no doubt," said he, "that the gold mines of Madagascar are enormously rich. Geologists who have been there unite in this opinion. California or Australia prospectors would go wild if they saw the country. Yet until white men obtain domination there these deposits will be of little

West Coast Warriors.

value. It is impossible to secure concessions from the Hovas except upon an agreement to pay them 55 per cent of the output, and that is practically prohibitive restriction. Two concessions have been granted, but this royalty is so enormous that the owners of them have practically made no money."

No Coal on the Big Island.

"But will not the knowledge that this island is so rich in gold ultimately lead to its mastery by the French?" I asked.

"There are 9,000,000 of people in Madagascar. The Hovas, which is the reigning tribe, are unquestionably of Malay descent, and they are shrewd enough to see that if the French or any any other civilized people get a foothold there their power is doomed, and they will gradually become extinct. They employ foreigners to build their armies, they have guns and a cartridge factory, and because they have no roads they are practically inaccessible. Therefore, I am inclined to doubt whether, in our day at least, it will be possible to reap the royal riches which these mountains contain. They have inexhaustible mines of copper and of magnetic iron, but no coal whatever."

As Mr. Taylor was glancing over his photographs something in one of them suggested to him the aepyornis' egg. Said he: "Do you know they have in Madagascar a very wonderful egg, laid by an extinct species of gigantic ground pigeon? It is found by digging in the sand, where it has lain buried for ages. The egg is ten times that of the size of the ostrich, and I believe that not more than 10 or 12 of them have been discovered. They are very valuable and easily fetch as much as $500 apiece. One will be exhibited with my other collection. I forgot, speaking of eggs, one rather unpleasant experience I had. After I had had my fight with the Sakalavas I was not personally disturbed, but they have an insulting custom to show their dislike of white people. When a traveler comes among them whom they regard with favor it is the highest courtesy not only to give him a hut but also to send to him a female who becomes his slave; but when the traveler is disliked they send instead rotten eggs, and the effect may be imagined. It entails an unpleasant night to say the least.

A Slave's Stroke for Liberty.

"I remember one incident in one of the villages which happened while I was there. A slave had a very cruel master, and desiring to escape this master the slave conceived a stratagem which was successfully executed. He killed a bullock and drank an enormous quantity of warm bullock's blood. Then he went into the presence of his master and vomited the blood before him. The master was frightened, thinking his slave had broken a blood-vessel and at once gave him away."

"Did you see any specially peculiar people on this island? There are strange stories told about some of them?" I asked.

"Well, yes, I did. In the northwestern part of the island I saw in the distance a very remarkable tribe of dwarfs. As near as I could judge none of them was over four feet tall, many of them much shorter. They were so timid that it was impossible to get anywhere near them, and they are regarded by the other tribes with so much contempt that they let them severely alone. My interpreter told me that they spoke a rude sort of gibberish, lived on fish, spent much of their time like monkeys in the trees and were cave-dwellers. I was very anxious to get near enough to them to overcome their timidity and study them, but it was impossible. I also saw something which I do not know exactly how to describe. I was told of it while I was in the capital and also told that it belonged to the Queen who regarded it as a curiosity. I went to see it. From the waist down it was the body and legs of a boy, but its head, shoulders and paws, for they were not arms, were almost exactly like those of a lemur. The lemur is the only species of the ape or monkey tribe which lives in Madagascar and these animals are very affectionate, gentle and easily tamed. I examined this curiosity, thinking that it might possibly suggest the connecting link. I was told that there were others on the island, but I believe them to be nothing more than lusi naturæ."

The Capital of Madagascar.

Mr. Taylor speaks most entertainingly of his experience in the capital af Madagascar. Here he saw the queen, a slender, light complexioned Hova woman, and had several interviews with her. No European queen could assume more dignified manners than she did. She was dressed in European costume and her husband, the Prime Minister, was also arrayed in garments of as recent a European fashion as it was possible to bring into Madagascar.

"The capital is a city of some 100,000 people, of whom not more than 30 are Europeans. There are some fine buildings, notably the palace. The Queen keeps a standing army, miserable wretches who are obliged to uniform themselves, but who are well provided with arms. They are fairly good shots. In their uniform they present a rather amusing spectacle. Some of them have shirts, some of them simple wraps of cotton cloth, and here let me say that I frequently saw going to the churches established by the missionaries men with no other garment than a piece of white sheeting bearing the familiar blue label of one of the American cotton mills, and also wearing a stovepipe hat of very ancient make, of which they were very proud.

"It was my good fortune to be in the capital at the time of the fan-drona festival, which in other words is nothing but the sacred festival of the Queen's annual bath. On the day before the festival the nobles and the invited guests, of whom I was one, were assembled in the room in the palace and were seated, Turk fashion, upon the floor or ground.

Strange Feast of the Natives.

"Then there was a feast, and in the evening torches were lighted all around the city and in such manner as to indicate the tradition of the ancient fire-worshipers. On the following day there was another feast. The nobles built a fire, cooked

Native Hovels.

rice and put in the pot the meat which was left over from the feast of the year before which had been carefully preserved by jerking. It is a sacrilege to allow a bit of this meat to be wasted. In addition to that they brought bullock's meat and they cut a bit of flesh out of the flank of a live bullock and brought it to me as a special honor and it was then cooked and I, of course, out of courtesy, was obliged to eat it. During the feast the Queen sat upon her throne presiding over the ceremony with great dignity, and by her side was the Prime Minister, her husband, a man 65 years of age, although he looked much younger.

"After the feast the Queen retired to an apartment adjoining the feasting hall, and here she took her bath in a silver bathtub. A half-hour later she returned, bearing in her hands a large silver bowl perforated like the nozzle of a watering pot, and then she went around sprinkling everyone of the nobles and guests and blessing the water as she did so. When she came to me, as a mark of special favor, my interpreter told, she not only sprinkled me but she tilted the vessel so that I was well drenched with this sacred water. This is the great sacred festival of the year, and although it is the festival of the Queen's annual bath, it is not just to infer that Her Majesty takes only one bath a year, but she takes only one sacred bath. The Queen has no children, and when her reign ends the throne will pass to the next in line, a person who is now a boy of some 8 or 9 years of age.

Strange Myths of the Island.

"I have made a collection of some of the myths, strange traditions and sort of folklore of those people, and some of them are of extraordinary interest. Two examples, perhaps, will illustrate the nature of them. There are two mythical animals in Madagascar in which all the people absolutely believe. One of them is a strange creature, which lives in a cave and which would do terrible things were it not captured and destroyed in a strange way. They take a baby and put it in a pot with perforated cover, so that it will have air, and then set the pot a few yards away from the mouth of the cave in which this beast is supposed to live. They dig a pit between the pot and the mouth of the cave and then go away for a few hours. They believe that during their absence the beast comes out that he may devour the baby but falls into the pit and is annihilated. They believe that as absolutely as do little children in England and America in the existence of the Bogy-man or Santa Claus.

"They also believe absolutely in the existence of a donkey which has but two legs, one front leg and one hind leg, and which is nevertheless so fleet footed that as he runs over the land he cannot be seen."

Mr. Taylor expects to return to Madagascar after he has addressed the Royal Geographical Society and has published a brief report of what he saw and experienced in that country. His conversation is most fascinating, and in the report above given only a few of the interesting things which he said have been quoted.

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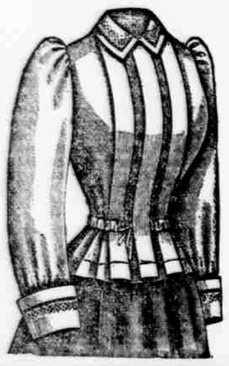

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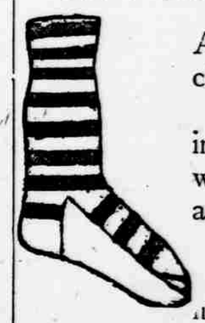

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