



ACTUAL AFRICA

OR, THE COMING CONTINENT

A TOUR OF EXPLORATION

BY

FRANK VINCENT

AUTHOR OF

"THE LAND OF THE WHITE ELEPHANT," "THROUGH AND THROUGH THE TROPICS,"

"NORSE, LAPP, AND FINN," "AROUND AND ABOUT SOUTH AMERICA,"

"IN AND OUT OF CENTRAL AMERICA,"

JOINT AUTHOR OF "THE LADY OF CAWSPORE," ETC.

WITH MAP AND OVER ONE HUNDRED ILLUSTRATIONS

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DEDICATED, BY SPECIAL PERMISSION, TO
HIS MAJESTY LEOPOLD II
KING OF THE BELGIANS
AND FOUNDER AND SOVEREIGN OF THE CONGO FREE STATE

PREFACE.

WHEN, some years ago, Victor Hugo said that in the twentieth century Africa would be the cynosure of every eye, and when, more recently, Lord Salisbury, apropos of the European situation, remarked that foreign politics meant African politics, each statement was an index to the immense resources of that great and crowded continent in which the Twilight is now succeeding to the Dark.

Africa contains about one-quarter of the land of the globe. This area is more than thrice Europe's, or nearly as much as North and South America's combined. This wonderful triangular continent, whose general configuration is not unlike that of South America, is inhabited by one-eleventh of the human race, almost equalling the population of the Western Hemisphere. One-fifth of her surface is occupied by rich savannas, and one-half by tilled fields, valuable forests, and fairly fertile soil as yet uncultivated. Her variety and profusion of animal life are without a rival, and her output of gold and diamonds is unparalleled in the history of the world.

What Europe thinks of the natural advantages and early possibilities of Africa may be inferred from the latter's political partition. Out of a total area of 12,000,000 square miles Europe has left unappropriated only about 1,000,000, and these are confined to the sandy seas of the Libyan Desert, and the inaccessible and powerful States of the Central and Eastern Soudan. The number of Europeans, and of persons of their descent, throughout the continent is estimated at 1,500,000—facts that make more than plausible Lord Salisbury's dictum.

The Powers represented in Africa are, moreover, strenuously seeking, and with considerable success, to develop the resources of their respective possessions. The general salubrity tempts civil-

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isation. Only the tropical coastal belt and a few of the river valleys are in the main unhealthy. Elsewhere—as far, at least, as climate is concerned—the foreign settler may live with impunity, and speedily reap a plenteous reward. Settlement, therefore, is certain to expand, with peace and commerce following in its train.

Attracted by these circumstances, which promised to this strange continent so near and prosperous a future, and encouraged by the success attending one of my previous works, “*Around and About South America*” (that enjoyed five editions here and three in England), I wished to closely examine a division of the earth so little known to the general public, and spent two years in accomplishing the task. Within that period not only was Africa completely circled, but many deep dips were also taken into her vast and mysterious interior. Nearly all the capitals and important towns (native and foreign) of the seaboard territories, were inspected; the great island of Madagascar was traversed; several of the western archipelagoes were visited; the peak of Teneriffe was scaled in mid-winter; a long excursion was made through the centre of the Boer Republics and British Colonies; the Nile, Quanza, Congo, Kassai, Sankuru and Kuilu rivers were ascended—the latter for the first time by a white man; and in the very core of Africa’s heart a most interesting point was reached—the curious capital of the famous Basongo chieftain, Pania Mutembo. In short, my attention was equally divided between native States, with their tributary provinces, on the one hand, and European possessions, protectorates and spheres of influence, on the other.

The present volume, then, like the one on South America, is the result of personal observation. It is the kinetoscope of the actual as revealed to me by my senses. Some special studies in geography and ethnology are reserved for future publication as monographs. My object now is simply to give, in a popular manner, and as succinctly as possible, accurate general information concerning certain imperfectly known regions—both savage and settled—of the Africa of the present day.

F. V.

NEW YORK, *March, 1895.*

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