

KING JA JA OF OPOBO DEAD

ENGLAND'S AFFAIR WITH HIM AND THE END OF IT.

A CRY OF JUSTICE THAT FELL ON DEAF EARS—WEALTH HE ACQUIRED AND THE ISSUE ENGLAND MADE—TWO SIDES OF THE STORY.

It is announced that Ja Ja, once Chief of Opobo, is dead. It will be remembered that Ja Ja was deposed by the English Government some years ago, and that his case attracted a good deal of attention in the House of Commons and in the English press. The work of deportation from Opobo was intrusted to Mr. H. H. Johnstone, who subsequently defended his action in the columns of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Ja Ja, he said, was a runaway slave from Bonny, who found a refuge and a stronghold in the marshes of the lower Opobo River, became the head and forefront of the middlemen, the champion of the reactionaries. He identified himself with the last recoil of fetishism before the spread of Christianity and clean living. He alone, among all the Oil River chiefs, steadily opposed the introduction of Christianity into his country, and he actually forbade, and forcibly prevented, the landing of agents of the Church missionary and other evangelizing societies in Opobo. So soon as he departed, these agents were (according to Mr. Johnstone) well received, and the opposition of the middleman to the exploration and exploitation of the interior entirely and quietly ceased.

According to his friends and champions he was everything that could well be desired. Ja Ja (they averred) was arrested because he would not allow the traders in oil to break a treaty which England had concluded with him. He refused to separate his interests from those of his subjects, and insisted upon the maintenance of the agreement which had been entered into. For this he was punished by fine and deposition. The cry of "Justice for Ja Ja!" was vigorously raised, but it fell on deaf ears. He was carried first to Accra, on the Gold Coast, and finally to the island of Teneriffe, where he recently died.

The *Standard* of London makes the following comments on the occurrence: "The death is announced of Ja Ja, Chief of Opobo, and though it would be idle to affect regret at his decease, the world undoubtedly loses in him a very remarkable man. More than two years ago, his sable Majesty, having become an obstacle to the pacification of our Oil River Protectorate, was removed to the Cape Verd Island of St. Vincent, and, the climate of that spot not agreeing with him, he was permitted, twelve months ago, to take up his residence in Teneriffe, where he has died. At intervals during the last few months Ja Ja has been the theme of various questions in the House of Commons, chiefly by Irish members, who were anxious to represent the Opobo Chief as a victim of Saxon oppression—a view which must have amused the African traders, to whom for long he was a menace and a pest.

"A few years of exile seemed, however, to have taught him a lesson, and it was, we believe, understood that on his giving guarantees for good behavior in the future the banished 'King' would have been allowed to return to his disconsolate subjects. In his way, nevertheless, this black potentate was a notable personage. Blue books are filled with the tales of his misdeeds. War ships have time and again anchored in front of his filthy town, and there was a time when the staple items of news from 'the Rivers' was the state of war between Oko-Jumbo and Ja Ja. The former was, and is still, a Chief of the Bonny River, one of the fetid creeks through which the Niger crawls to the Atlantic. Both were nominally subjects of King Pepple; but after the death of the crafty old savage, who was so well known to the palm-oil traders under that name, they became powers behind the throne far more powerful than the throne itself.

"Ja Ja was a slave, but, by natural ability, earned not only his freedom, but wealth in addition. He acted as a middleman between the whites and the inland tribes who bring to the coast the yellow grease that forms the staple of the Niger Delta. In time, however, he and his colleagues fell out, and Ja Ja removed to Opobo, further up the river, where his riches and his power became so great that at one time he could put 8,000 men, not exactly into the field, (for the country is simply a wooded swamp,) but into war canoes upon the water. He was constantly trying conclusions with the Bonny chief. Guns and ammunition were imported in quantities, and when Ja Ja heard that Oko-Jumbo had received a Gatling from New-York he immediately ordered a battery of Armstrongs from Newcastle. The result may be imagined. Slaughter of the most truculent character was a daily incident. Magazines of gunpowder—with their guards—were blown up.

"Hosts of natives were enslaved on either side, and raids were made systematically on the surplus stock of wives owned by either sovereign. Trade naturally was paralyzed. The tribes of the interior were unable to reach the traders, and Ja Ja, being a rival in the purchase and sale of palm oil, threw every obstacle in the way of the whites establishing 'factories' in the territory over which he had control. One of his favorite methods of robbing both parties was to insist on the payment of a tribute, or 'dash,' before any white could be permitted to buy a puncheon of oil or a stick of camwood. At last he went so far as to decree, under the name of 'coomey,' a tax amounting to £70 as a 'shake-handdash,' preparatory to any traders being allowed the privilege of doing business with him as agent for the oil producers. These exactions became so great that the British Consul under whose jurisdiction the Oil Rivers Protectorate then was interfered and compelled, by the threat of bombarding Opobo, the restitution of £1,800 extorted under cover of this tribute.

"But Ja Ja, though he promised better behavior, returned to his old pranks the moment the irresistible gunboat was out of sight. It was evident that until he was removed there would be endless trouble on the Bonny River; and removed, for a time at least, he was. The result quite answered the anticipations which dictated that rather high-handed act. The news from the Delta has since been wholesomely dull, there has been a reasonable amount of peace, and, whatever Ja Ja's paid agents and disinterested—though not always well-informed—advocates may say, a security for commerce which never existed during the period of his autocracy. The British protectorate has been put on a firmer basis, under a Special Commissioner, the 'coomey' tribute is abolished, and Europeans are permitted to trade where they please, without the mischievous intervention of the middleman, in return for the payment of a small export duty, intended to defray, in part, the expenses of the Commissioner and his Vice Consuls."

THE HARBOR POLICE OF NEW-YORK.

WHAT IT CONSISTS OF AND WHAT ITS SPHERE OF DUTY IS.

The handsome and commodious steamer *Patrol*, which when not steaming along the river or on the waters of the bay is moored on the inside of the slip at Pier A North River, is the home of the harbor police, known in the records of the department as the Twenty-fourth Precinct. This force must not be confounded with the steamboat squad referred to recently, whose sphere of duty lies on the piers and wharves along the water front, but on the land side, and then only during the day.

The harbor police is an entirely distinct force, and its territory comprises the waters of the East and North Rivers and the port. They look after river thieves, guard the outer ends of the piers and wharves during the night, board ships coming into port flying signals of distress, arrest mutinous sailors, quell disturbances on ships lying at anchor in the bay, and assist in extinguishing fires on shipboard or along the river front. They also look after the Sunday water excursions, which often result in riot and disorder, and perform escort duty during the naval celebrations which occasionally take place in our waters.

The force was organized in 1858, soon after the organization of the Metropolitan Police. The force was then small, and the patrolling was done entirely in rowboats. The first headquarters of the force was in a dwelling house at the corner of Whitehall and State Streets. Some years after the sphere of duty was enlarged, and a steamboat known as the *Deer* was provided for the force. When this boat became unfitted for the service the steamboat *Seneca* was purchased, and it was in use until about ten years ago, when she was burned to the water's edge while lying at the wharf at the foot of Seventeenth Street, East River.

Soon after this the *Patrol* was built for the department, and she has been in service ever since. She is a very good boat for the purpose intended and is equipped with powerful fire pumps and several hundred feet of hose, and is regarded as a valuable auxiliary to the Fire Department at fires along the water front. Regular day and night patrol in rowboats is kept up, and this is about the most disagreeable duty which falls to the lot of the force, especially during a stormy Winter.

This system could be rendered much more efficient if the department were to procure two or three steam or naphtha launches, such as are employed in the navy, for the use of the patrolmen. Capt. Harry D. Hooker is the present commandant of the *Patrol*, and the force under him consists of three Sergeants, three Roundsmen, two of whom act as pilots; two engineers, three deck hands, and twenty-five patrolmen.