CHAPTER VI

Nuer cattle kraal—The White Nile—The Shilluk—Cranes and kob antelopes—With camera and gun—Everyday life in a negro village—The rock-dwelling Nuba—Gay colours and athletic sports—Arab horsemen in chain armour—The Eliri.

TOWARDS evening Nuer with grazing cattle appear on the bank. We land near them. I send for the cameras and meanwhile observe the natives with their cattle and inspect the herdsmen's straw huts. Each animal is carefully tied to a peg and girls are milking them. As soon as they have drawn off a quart of milk into a gourd, they loose the calf, which at once begins to drink greedily. Children sit with the men beside the large mounds of ash in which they have slept and play with fresh cow-dung. A girl is carefully rinsing her gourd with cow's urine, washes her hands in the same liquid and goes back to her work. The boys collect dung. Half dried it is piled in heaps and in the evening they set fire to it. The smoke spreads and envelops man and beast in a blue cloud that keeps the mosquitoes away. Somewhat to one side stands a cow which, they say, is giving too little milk. Girls and boys go to it in turn, press their mouths against its anus and vagina and blow with all their might (Fig. 15). The cow does not seem to like this, so it has to be held. Everything is ready and I start to photograph some of these things. As we do not intend staying long, I get to work without introducing the Nuer to the camera, as I have invariably done elsewhere. At once the scene changes. The people preserve a hostile silence. The men sit on their clubs, with spears in their hands, and ill-humouredly puff dense clouds of smoke from

their long pipes. When a "family bull" maliciously rips up my shirt, scarcely a man bestirs himself to drive it away. One of the milking women suddenly stops work and declares that we have frightened the animal and it will not give any more milk. A cow urinates. A girl dashes up to it and washes her hands in the stream, but at once runs away when I try to photograph the scene. The few films I have put in are, all the same, soon turned. We return to the boat. Tudj and Boll remain behind to buy some milk. Hardly have we reached the boat when they rush up with empty bowls. When we had left the circle of natives, they drove my men away with their spears and blamed us for bewitching their cattle. If a cow should die in the course of the next few weeks, then I wish any Europeans luck who choose to visit these negroes.

It is late in the evening when we arrive at Fangak. We make a short halt, catch a large floating island and let it tow us the whole night. In the morning my people find a Nuer canoe drifting keel upwards. It was made with unspeakable labour out of a palm stem and seems pretty new. One rarely gets the chance of buying one of these dug-outs because the native is very loath to part with his boat. We fish it out and turn it over. A negro's ambach shield is floating inside it. What kind of tragedy has been enacted here? Perhaps the man came to grief on a hippopotamus hunt; many natives lose their lives that way. Or did he meet death in the jaws of one of the large crocodiles that inhabit the thick sedge everywhere in numbers?

After some miles our attention is caught by the circling of a lot of vultures above a certain spot near the bank. As the dense belt of reeds prevents our getting a view, I land with the rowing-boat not far from the spot and creep up slowly. With ponderously beating wings the glutted birds rise from their prey and I stand before another drama of the desert. A waterbuck had been seized by a crocodile and dragged head first under water. The crocodile had

lain in wait among the reeds, but could not pull the heavy antelope through the thick belt of *um sufa* into the open water. So it ate slowly at the fore-part of its victim while the vultures greedily tore up the hinder quarters and gulped down the entrails.

Tonga, our next point, lies ten miles before the junction of the Zeraf with the White Nile. About two in the afternoon we reach the mouth of the river. But then the wind drops and the men, with a great deal of shouting, have to pull the boat from the bank against the current. Slowly we go up the White Nile to the south. At one place we see, not far from the bank, an enormous cobra coiling its way across the burnt-up grass. One can make out the white marks on the neck quite clearly when it raises itself from time to time to watch something that we cannot see from the ship.

Boll is lying near me, straining his eyes after one of the many Shilluk villages which stretch along the left bank of the Nile here. On the horizon, hardly visible, stand a few natives near a village. Of a sudden Boll makes a peculiar movement with his right arm. At once one of the Shilluk answers in the same way. Boll repeats the signal and the negro begins to run at top speed and arrives panting at the bank. The ship glides along with the feeble wind. There is a joyful exchange of greetings. It is Boll's home village and the decorated warrior armed with a spear is his brother, whom he recognised at that incredible distance. A breeze springs up, the Shilluk stays behind and Boll's wistful eyes watch the *tukul* with the doom palms disappear on the horizon.

During the night we arrive at Tonga, our first post station. In the morning a Shilluk comes and asks if we would not like to shoot a kob antelope. I have no objection and the following morning the good old Ford takes us inland. Before long we leave the road and make our way uphill and downhill, past Shilluk villages, towards an island where there

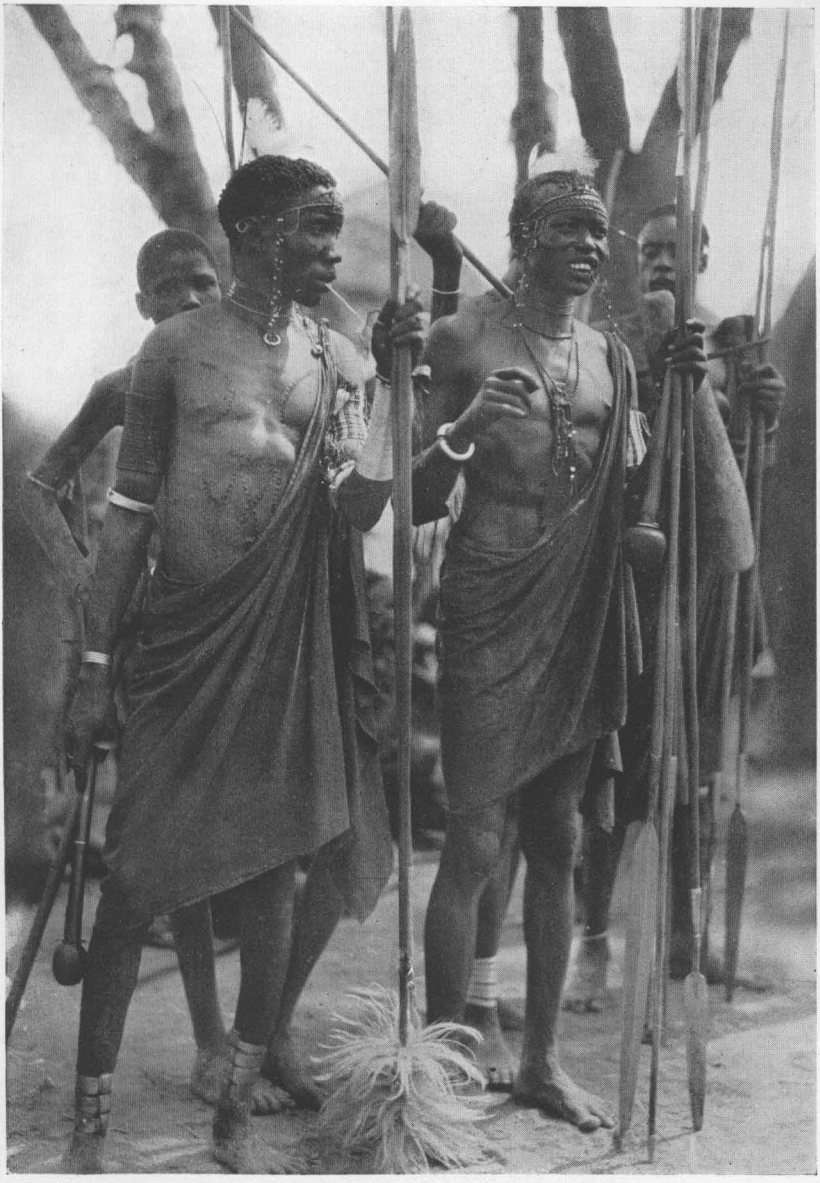
are said to be antelopes. The guide leads us to his home village, where his brother, a Shilluk warrior with spears and ivory rings, comes out to meet us. According to the custom of the Nilotic negroes, they raise the right arm as a greeting, to show the Europeans that they are unarmed. Then *merissa* is handed to us as a welcome. Unlike the Nuer, the Shilluk are exceedingly hospitable; the best they have is always ready for the stranger. Boll naturally does not let the opportunity slip and drinks till his eyes begin to glisten. I take the precaution of giving my gun to one of the others to carry. Then we go, three of my people, four Shilluk and myself, to a deep khor. The negroes bring along ambach rafts (Fig. 70) and dug-outs and so gun and camera are carried across dry. The Shilluk then wade through the khor, constantly jabbing into the water with their upraised spears to keep away the numerous crocodiles. A raft is brought for me, and to the amusement of the Shilluk I seize one of their broad spears and paddle across with it. Not far from the landing-place hundreds of cranes are looking for food. Pelicans and Egyptian geese are playing about behind. As soon as everybody is across we go on. Half an hour later the guides call a halt and point to dark spots in the distance. My companions stay behind and I stalk forward by myself. There is soon no cover and I have to creep on my stomach to get within shot. It is very hot and there is no wind; the way leads over sharp, newly-parched swamp stubble. I manage to go on well and watch the game. Some seventy antelopes are grazing, others are lying in the water, for just where they are is a swampy khor. An old buck is standing on a termite hill looking alertly about him. I fire and the picture changes as if by magic. The whole troop, wrapped in a cloud of dust, is in flight. The buck I had aimed at has given no indication of having been hit, but still I follow the animals. They are already far off when I see that one is dropping behind. I start running, feeling fairly sure that that is the

one. A tree on the horizon serves me as mark and enables me to keep my direction although the animal is out of sight. Suddenly the buck appears fifty yards in front of me and follows the troop with its nose to the ground. It had lain in a hollow, the soil of which shows that it had been hit. The country grows swampy and grasses prevent my giving a finishing shot to the antelope, which is still dragging itself along. All I can do is to wait till it is forced to lie down again. Half an hour later I start looking and find the dead buck three hundred yards from its first refuge. The bullet has gone home; it has not touched the heart, but wounded the lung and torn the liver. It is amazing how far the animal's strength had carried it with a fatal wound. Meanwhile my companions have followed me and in no time they have skinned the antelope and cut it up with their long, broad spears. Then a fire is lighted and the entrails are roasted on the shaft of a spear. The Shilluk squat in a circle on the ground, each of them holds the head of his spear firmly between his legs and cuts off strips of the meat on the rigid, sharp metal (Fig. 92). The pieces are half raw, half burnt, but they are devoured as delicacies. Then the bag is divided up. I take the loin piece, my guide a leg. The Mohammedans do not touch the meat because it has not been ritually slaughtered. The rest therefore falls to the five Shilluk, who are visibly pleased.

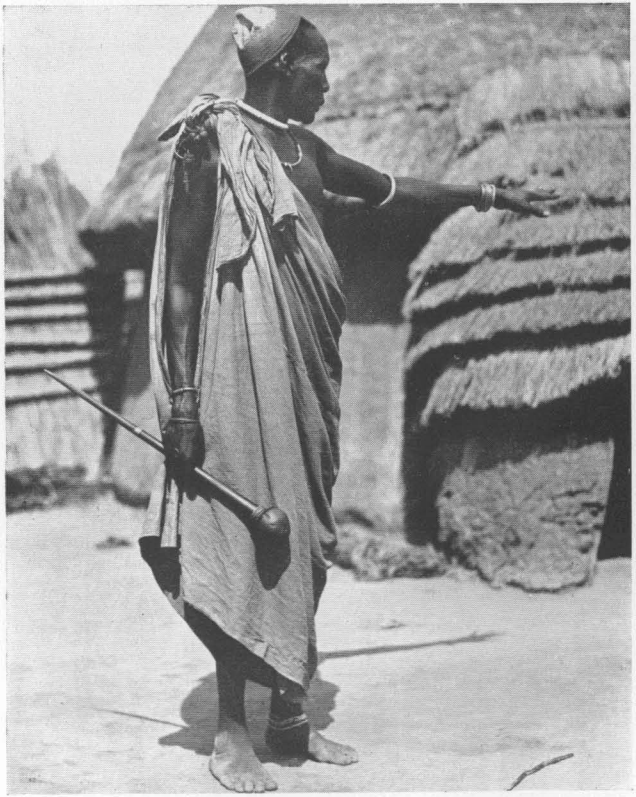
Next day we inquire if there is not a feast due to be celebrated some time in the near future. We are in the country of the Shilluk, that proud and warlike Nilotic tribe who, once upon a time, under their King Nykang (a figure wrapped in legend), migrated hither together with the Dinka. The land of their origin is not known with exactitude, but it is supposed to have been the region north of Lake Victoria. There at the present day live the Atjoli, whose language bears considerable resemblance to that of the Shilluk. The people split up in the Bahr el Ghazal Province. One section, the Jur and the Dembo, settled there; the remainder

trekked northwards and eventually occupied the district on the west bank of the Nile which is still inhabited by the Shilluk to-day. In their new home they engaged in uninterrupted feud with the Dinka, on whom they several times inflicted crushing defeats. On one of these raids over a thousand Dinka girls were distributed among Shilluk lads. Through this intermixture they have with time been assimilated to that tribe in height and figure. Originally light brown and short, as the Jur still are, they soon appeared long-legged and thin, almost like the swamp people, the Nuer. They were, by the way, defeated by them and the Nuer carried off rich booty in the shape of women and cattle. The Shilluk were in all probability originally armed with bows and arrows like the Jur, but the long spear was gradually introduced. In later times the tribe had much to suffer at the hands of the Arabs. At first the Shilluk made common cause with the Mahdi against Egypt, but they became embittered opponents of his successor, the Caliph. He sent troops out and carried thousands of men and women into captivity and slavery. Still worse did the Shilluk fare with the Selim Bagara. These warlike Arabs had settled on the border under their leader, a notorious slave-trader, and stole Shilluk women and children who were at work in the fields: they would throw a lasso from horseback over their defenceless victims and gallop away with them into the distance. Eventually the Shilluk dared not cultivate their fields any more and terrible shortage of food ensued. Parents often sold their children for thirty piastres to slave-dealers in order to buy a little corn.

Famine and oppression, however, could not break this people's spirit. Beaten, half starved though they were, they never bowed their neck to a stranger's yoke. To-day as always they stick to the ways of their forefathers with incomparable tenacity and they have thereby preserved their own character intact. Let the slave peoples of the Bahr el Ghazal Province suffer from the itch to imitate, let every



82. Funeral feast at Tonga. Shilluk warriors in festal array.



83. The head chief of Tonga gives the order to begin the funeral feast.

84. The guests arrived the day before.

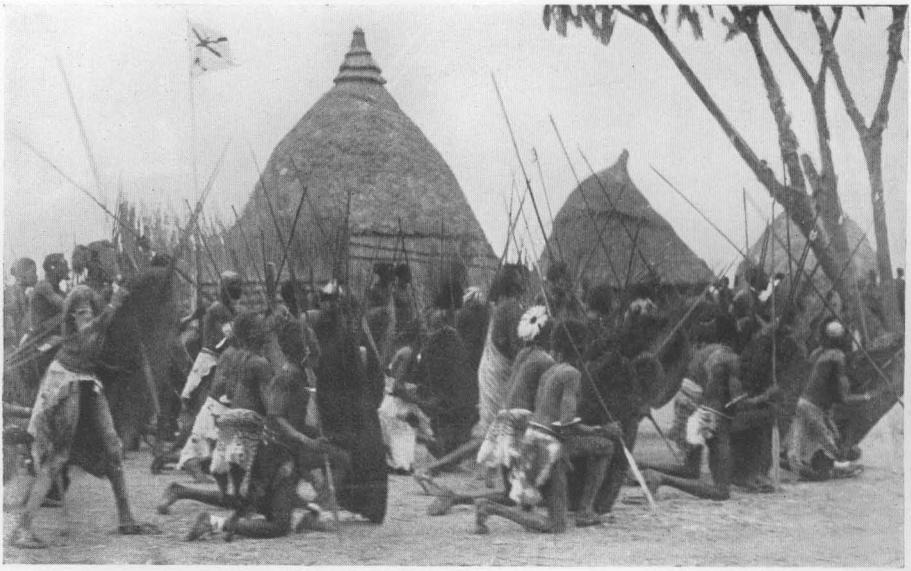
85. The funeral feast at Tonga. Every village carries its own flag.

86. The funeral feast at Tonga. Groups of warriors from neighbouring villages arrive.

87. The funeral feast at Tonga. The warriors encircle the village, running.

88. The sacrificial oxen are let loose and the Shilluk warriors kill them with well-aimed spear thrusts.

89. The funeral feast. A sacrificial ox, struck down by the warriors' spears, falls to the ground. It is cut up and distributed on the spot without being first skinned.



90. The funeral feast at Tonga. The warriors on their knees do honour to the dead man.

91. The funeral feast at Tonga. Women lift the dead man's belongings, which have been piled up near the grave, on to their heads, to carry them among the rows of dancers and then break them to pieces.

Sheikh there plume himself on turning out in European costume, the Shilluk despise everything foreign from the bottom of their souls. Highly intelligent and capable, they have not taken long to discover the European's weak points and turn them to their own advantage.

The supreme chief is the *Mek*. He has lost part of his former power—the infliction of capital punishment has been taken out of his hands—but he still enjoys unlimited authority. He is freely elected by his people from among the King's sons. Despite his many wives and his great wealth (fines do find their way into his exchequer), he lives as simply as anyone else in the tribe, eats his durra porridge and sleeps on the ground. He cannot rejoice in the prospect of a very long life. If he gets ill or old, he is killed by the nobility. Even his own brothers lay hands on him as soon as he has been bound to a sick-bed for any length of time. These negroes hold the view that a king must not be allowed to suffer. Their religion is monotheistic, they worship "Djouk," the Creator of the Universe. In addition they reverence their ancestors as guardians and protectors. They build temples to them and sacrifice to them the best of their possessions and entreat their help in any danger.

As is the case with most negro tribes, marriage is a business deal. The bridegroom has to pay the girl's parents ten cows and make up the number if one of them should die from any cause whatsoever. This often means ruin for the poor young man, who cannot wrest wealth from the infected, unhealthy and infertile land. Labour is shared between the sexes. The women do the housework, the men hunt, fish and tend the cattle. This is a dangerous job on account of their Nuer neighbours, who are still great raiders. A Shilluk never beats his wife and very rarely a child. The boys must not learn to be afraid, they say. Some of their customs are extremely odd. Before her first confinement the young wife must confess what men she has had relations with prior to her marriage. If she refuses to give her lovers'

names, it is believed that the child will die and the mother herself incur danger. Each of the friends whom the woman names has to pay her husband an ox as compensation. If there have been more than ten to whom she has given herself, then the popular girl names no names but throws a handful of sand in the air, to signify, " My lovers were as numerous as the grains of sand." In this case they have nothing to pay, but general contempt falls on the parents who have brought up their daughter so badly. The girls on the whole are not light of love and a slip is, as a rule, expiated. If a girl becomes pregnant, the young fellow has to pay ten cows.

Shilluk society is divided into three classes: members of the kings' families (the highest nobility), the *Orror* and the common people. The *Orror* comprise those members of the kingly families who have been degraded by a later king for some reason or other. The influence of this caste is nevertheless very great indeed. It is usually the *Orror* who kill the king.

I set out one day to visit the head Sheikh of Tonga (Fig. 83). He comes out some way to meet us. We let our eyes rest on each other for a while before exchanging greetings. The Shilluk regard nothing as so impolite as excessive haste. On the other hand, leave-taking is always short—the reverse of European ways. We ask after each other's health and by way of an extensive chat I lead up to my request. No feasts are due at the moment. The rain dances are already over, the interpreter translates, but there might be a funeral feast. The head Sheikh does not yet know what day the dead man's relatives will choose. I have it explained to him that I should very much like to film the daily life of the Shilluk. I promise the Sheikh a handsome present if he will help us. In the end it is agreed that we shall return in two days' time. I spend these two days photographing antelopes.

From Tonga we go to Attigo to see if there is anything to

photograph there. We are in luck. At the entrance to the village we meet some smiths busy making long, broad spears and decorating them very artistically. Near by some tanners are preparing a hide with ashes. Elsewhere some boys are getting their sleeping-place ready. They rub their entire bodies with ashes, fetch their head-rests so as not to disturb their beautiful coiffure when they lie down (Fig. 69), and cover themselves over with ashes to keep vermin and insects away. Not far from them a Shilluk is being bled (Fig. 76). The surgeon is sitting beside him on the ground. A hole is dug in the sand in front of the patient. His head is first of all shaved, then the " doctor " tears a hole in the skin of the crown with a piece of iron. The blood flows slowly to the ground into the hollow, and from time to time the leech pours cold water over his victim. By poking a stick into the wound he keeps it bleeding. Finally he washes it out with cold water and the patient is allowed to go. At another spot a boy is freshening up a warrior's coiffure. He has a stick in his hand with which he beats the hair most thoroughly. Near by some warriors are trying out their spears. I should also like to see the preparation and consumption of food, but for that the Sheikh puts us off till to-morrow.

Next day the women are diligently cooking, but in the dark *tukul*. They absolutely refuse to come out into the open, so we have to go away empty. We have no better luck when we try to watch them eating. The Shilluk only take their meals in the open after sundown. It would be a scandal to eat in the open air by day. But I do manage to take a woman pounding durra with a long pestle in a hole dug in the earth and lined with clay as a mortar. In my efforts to photograph women I again meet with great difficulties. The daughters of Eve are quite as inquisitive here as anywhere else, but they believe that photography will bewitch their souls. At first they spy on us through crannies in the matted fences. At last we try a ruse. We distribute dates among the children. The scuffle over these dainties

produces the liveliest scenes. The head Sheikh himself joins in the fun. The shouting and excitement gradually entice the women out of the *tukul*. So as not to scare them, we leave the camera alone. Machulka gives one girl some coloured beads. That does the trick. Women hurry up from all sides to get some of the finery too. Each of them is to have two handfuls of the coloured stones. While Machulka is distributing the first handful I start the camera and by the time his hands are empty the picture is taken. No one has noticed what was happening and I have got a lovely set of photos. The Sheikh now asks if we want a dance arranged. As that is an expensive luxury among the Shilluk, we answer evasively. Shortly afterwards we learn from our interpreter that the funeral feast that had been spoken of will take place in the course of the next few days. The Sheikh seems suddenly eager to get the feast into my film, for he brings the matter up again twice. But we are told on the ship that the Sheikh wants to put off the dance to a later date. That would be disappointing. So we gather together the presents labelled " For big chiefs " and set out once more with cloths for the women and a fine red woollen shawl. As soon as the head Sheikh sets eyes on these splendours he communicates his decision to order his people to go ahead with the feast. Eventually we even succeed in photographing him, although he does not fancy this kind of magic. His predecessor as chief was his elder brother, who died a few years ago. A missionary showed the Sheikh a good photograph of his brother one day. The Sheikh turned away with every sign of horror and asked a policeman standing near him, " Is it really he? " In spite of the assurance that it was only a piece of paper and not the dead man's ghost, he could not be persuaded to look at the picture again.

The feast takes place two days later. At seven in the morning we are on the spot. I try to find a suitable place to bring up the car so that I can photograph from it. The

rising ground from which a *tukul* has been removed seems to be the best place, since it affords a good view over the whole space in the middle of the village. The cameras are soon set up. But our patience undergoes considerable strain. The drums had been brought into the village the preceding evening. They must "sleep" there, it is explained to us. The Sheikh's relatives, whose funeral feast is to be held, live far away from here in other villages. They also arrived the evening before (Fig. 84) and have spent the night here. Before sunset three oxen were slaughtered and all the *tukul* are full of guests from the neighbouring villages, who enjoy meat and *merissa* for a start. Towards ten the men begin to beat the drums. Three old women open the dance and are joined little by little by a large number of women. Meanwhile troops of warriors arrive from every quarter (Fig. 86)—all the friendly villages have sent some. In each case the flag of the village is carried in front (Fig. 85). The warriors are in full war kit (Fig. 82), the *lau* being left at home. In its place they wear the coloured skins of leopards, servals and cheetahs hung round their waists. Their bodies are powdered with red clay. Some have lavishly made up their faces with spirals. Many wear strips of hide round their ankles. The most marvellous sorts of hair-dress, decked out with ostrich feathers or other material, add to the colourful picture (Fig. 75). Each man is wearing all the ornaments that he possesses. Some have two or even four thick, heavy ivory rings on their arms, and broad ornaments of giraffe hair round their necks. The caparisoned warriors with shields and glittering spears march singing round the village and the dancing-place (Fig. 87). At the grave they sing loudly, beat their shields and greet the dead man by going down on their knees (Fig. 90). The grave lies in front of a *tukul*, rather to one side. It is covered with a skin, and beside it spears, a shield and earthen pots, the dead man's property, are now placed to be given to him in the grave. The place is

soon swarming with people. The old folks have sat down by their huts to watch the proceedings, the young ones are jostling together. A large group of warriors now approach and the real dance begins. The girls circle round the drums. The warriors remain in compact groups; one group dances round the girls several times, then withdraws into the prairie while another goes through the same game. The general hubbub, the singing, the Shilluk war-cry—that high treble trilling *li-li*—are drowned periodically by the booming of the shields when all the warriors at the same instant beat them with their spears. Thus it goes on for hours until suddenly the head Sheikh of Tonga, as representing the King, gives the command to sacrifice the oxen. At a little distance from the dancers three splendid fat oxen are tied up to trees. Several warriors run to them and loose them. Scared by a few sharp blows and the howling of the crowd they gallop away towards the steppe. The warriors give them a short start and then, shouting loud war-cries, they chase them with long, springing strides. They quickly catch up with the animals. The spears hurtle through the air and the oxen fall to the ground, mortally wounded (Fig. 89). A goat is also sacrificed in the same way. But the goats in these parts are as swift as gazelles and the creature tries to escape the spears by zigzagging. Several thrusts miss and short reeds block our view of the wild chase. Next the victims are left on the ground and everybody returns to the dance. Women now advance to the grave and with inimitable grace drop on to their knees. One of them throws herself full length on the ground and begins a long-drawn-out dirge. Men dig deep trenches beside the grave. The women form a long procession and carry the dead man's belongings through the rows of dancers (Fig. 91). They return and lay the objects down beside the freshly dug holes. A sheep is also brought and an old man holds it fast on a rope. Suddenly all the women utter a loud wail and sink forward on their knees with every sign

of pain. Some seize wooden clubs and smash the pots. The spears are broken and the old man kills the sheep with a stick. Everything is thrown into the trenches, last of all the sheep, which belonged to the dead man and is the sacrifice. The holes are filled in and the death rites are over. The slaughtered oxen are divided up with their hides and the pieces given to those present.

I have attended a number of funeral feasts among the negroes but none that equalled in impressiveness this magnificent one. Although the dead man had been buried three years before and consequently the first burning grief was past, the women at the grave expressed their sorrow so overwhelmingly that I could not help being deeply moved.

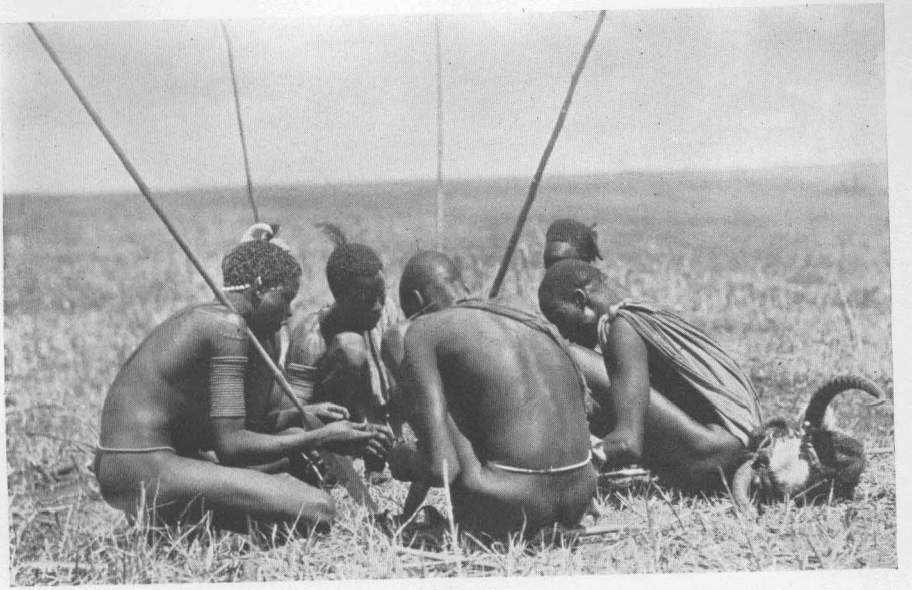
We proceed to Talodi, the chief town of Darnuba. This province too is closed to traffic, as the land is anything but quiet. The previous year the Government sent an expedition against the Nubians and it took several months to subdue the rebels. This land is also interesting, although it has not had to go through such hectic times as the Bahr el Ghazal Province. The nomad Arab tribes live with their herds on the plains. They have preserved strange customs. At the riding sports which take place here and there on ceremonial occasions the horsemen appear in ancient accoutrement. One sees chain armour from the time of the Crusades fairly frequently. Bulls are also very much ridden, saddled in a special way, and are surprisingly swift and untiring. One meets long caravans of such pack animals when the Arabs take crude gum to market. They collect the hardened sap of various kinds of acacia that grow on the plains and send it down the Nile as gum arabic. The long caravans are a curious sight, composed as they are of oxen both ridden and used as beasts of burden, especially when the riders are girls, unveiled and strikingly pretty, who drive the cumbrous animals with great skill.

The valleys among the hills are inhabited by the original people of the land, the Nubians, who migrated there before

the Arab persecution. Already in earlier times heated struggles broke out between them and the Arabs pressing hard upon them. To-day they are still very warlike, as their continual risings prove. The Government has no easy task with them, especially as they are armed with guns taken from the Arabs. And finally the Eliri, a mixture of negro and Arab, adhering to the Mohammedan faith, are not uninteresting. Full negro lips are often to be seen in the round, ape-like faces of these people, who have inherited little of the Arabs' good looks.

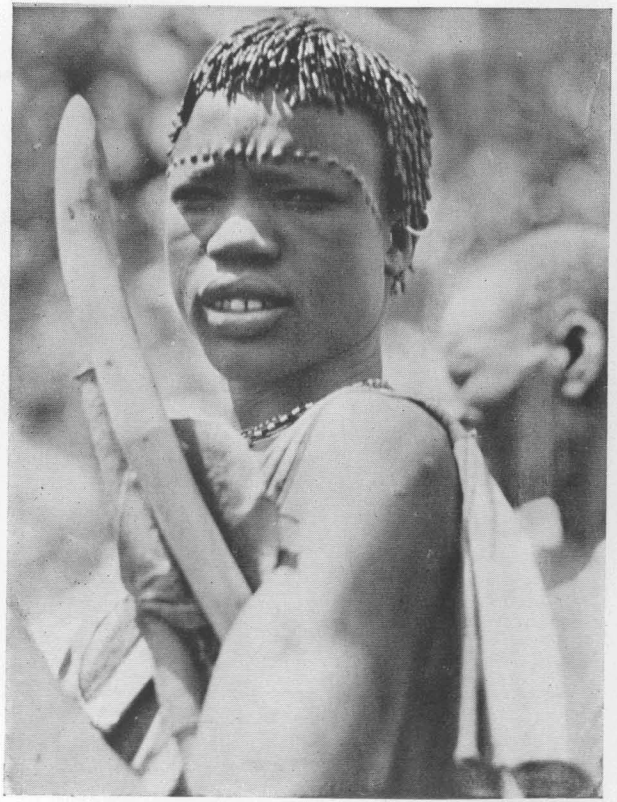
As soon as the baggage is loaded in the car we set out. We are not taking much with us and can make comparatively rapid progress on the really good roads. At the start we cross dry steppe. It is uninhabited and the dry, yellow grass is not burnt up. As far as the eye can see the plain extends without so much as a termite mound. It looks like a vast sea. We go through a wood of red acacia and slowly the mountains come into view in the distance. So far the soil has been humus, but here it is reddish-sandy earth containing iron. The vegetation also changes at once. Large trees and green plants which offer a pleasant shade take the place of acacias. Among them queer, pointed termite hills stand, up to four yards high. The sun pours down unbearably and the heat makes the air quiver around us. Driving the car is very tiring work and I take a deep breath of relief when we at last reach the Eliri mountains. As at Amadi, these are great cliffs of primeval rock rising sheer from the plain. The villages of the Eliri, right up against the cliffs, are very picturesque. As we are making for Talodi, we take a short rest and then go on.

We reach our destination in the afternoon. In answer to our inquiries after the rest-house, we are told, to our surprise, that there is not one. I doubt this and ask a policeman, who confirms it. We still cannot believe that there is no rest-house at a station of the importance of Talodi, where several Englishmen live who often receive official visits, so

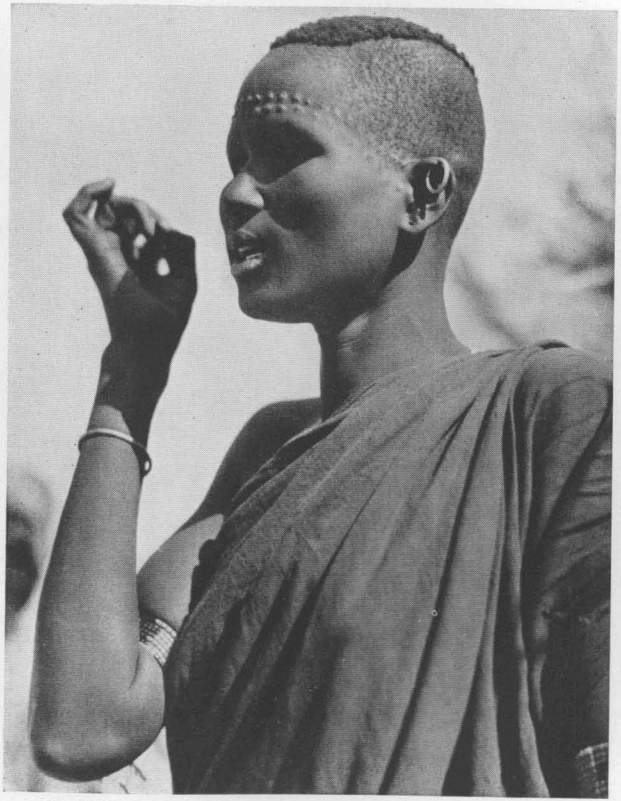


92. Shilluk at a meal. The spears are fixed in the ground and the meat cut by rubbing it up and down on the blade.

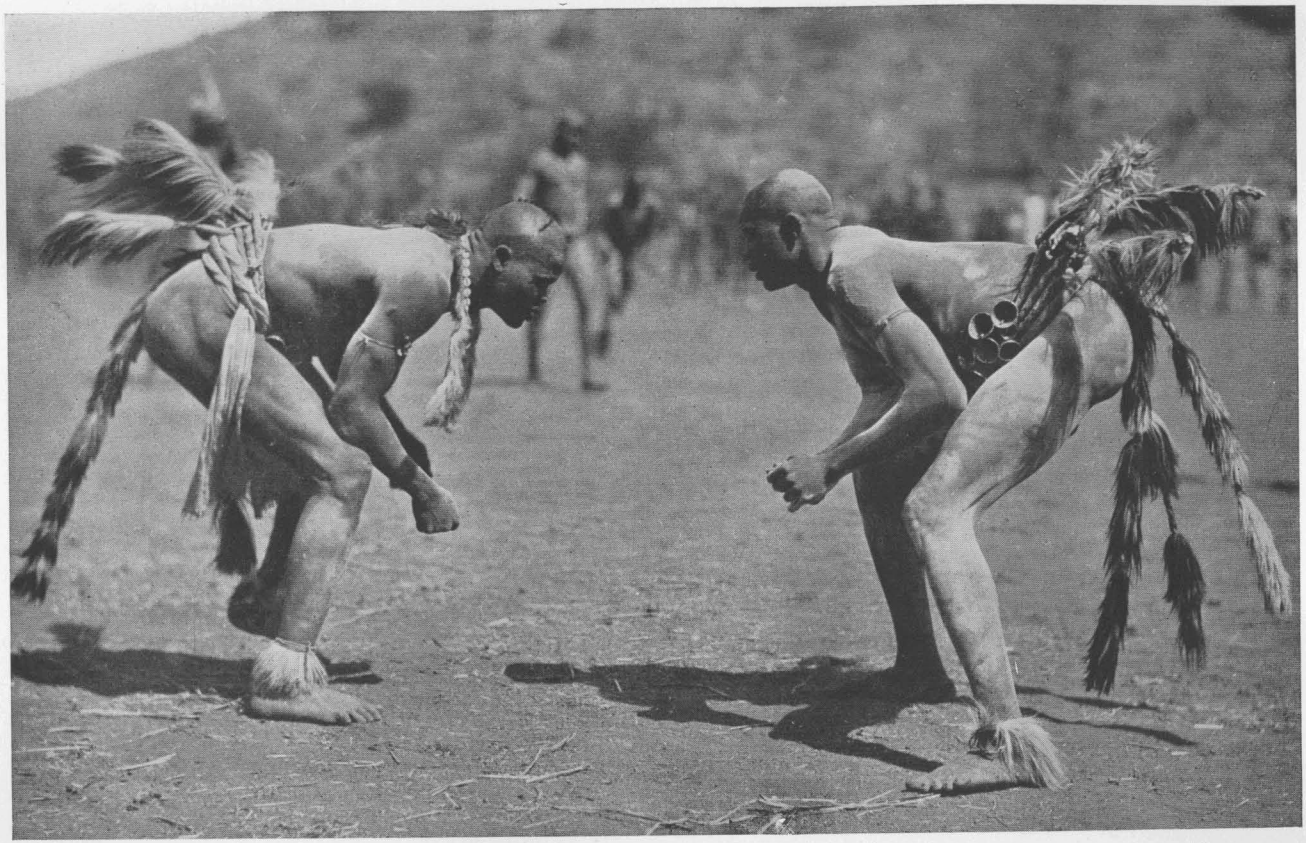
93. Shilluk tanning cattle hides. The hides are stretched and rubbed with wood ash.



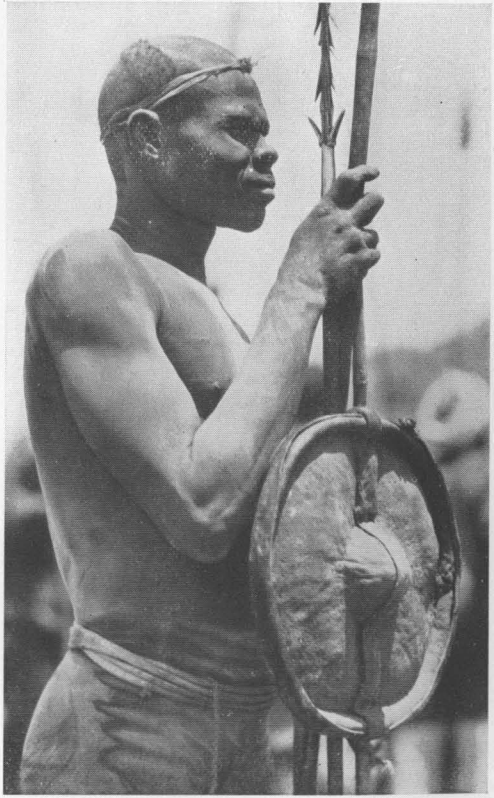
94. Shilluk warrior with flat club.

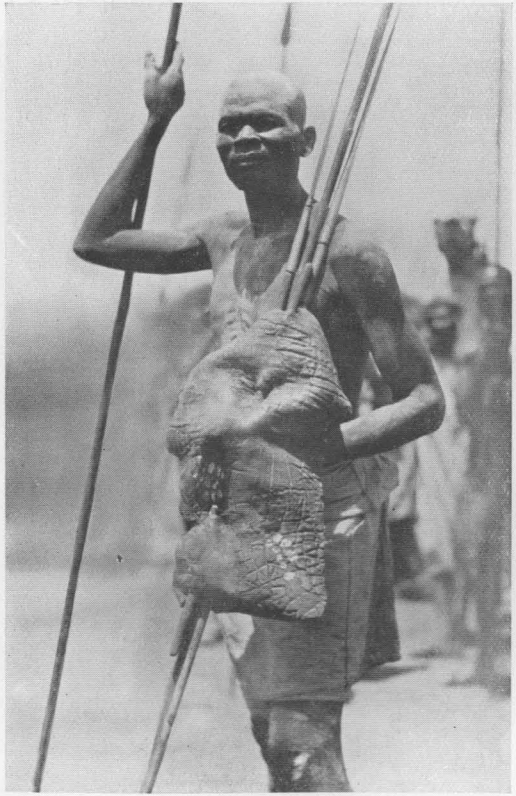


95. Young Shilluk woman trying to get a higher price for her wares.



96. Stance of Nuba wrestlers. Each contestant wears a belt of bells with feathers and looks like a fighting-cock.

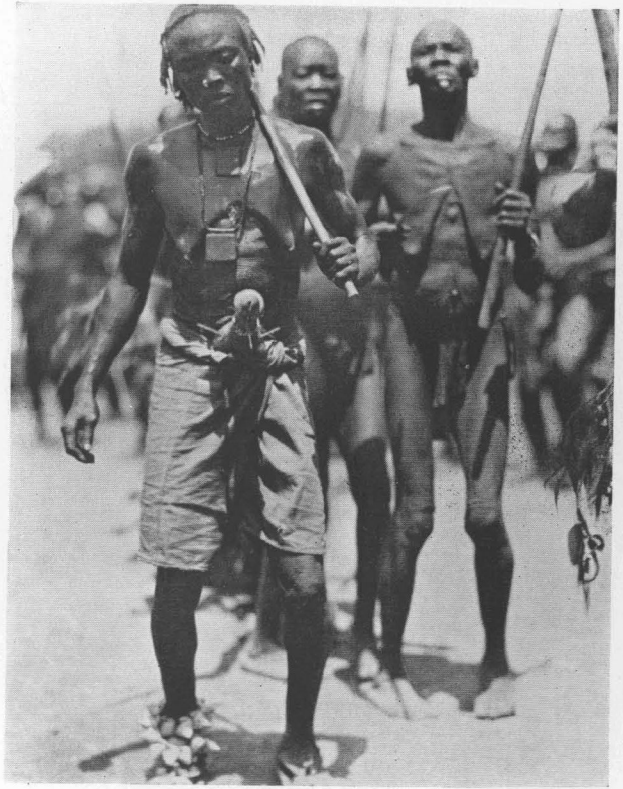




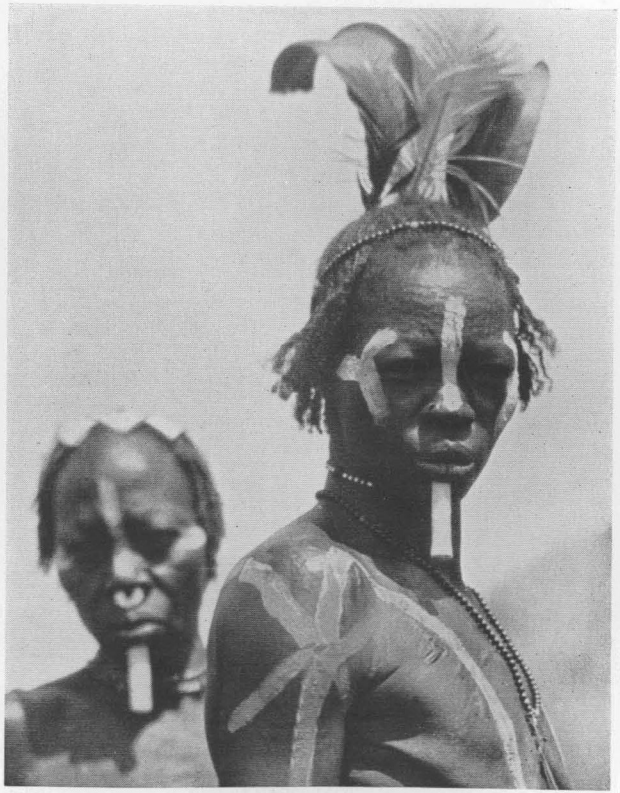
97 and 98. Nuba warriors at Talodi.

99. The Nuba women paint their bodies with weird chalk designs for the feast. They wear a peg in their pierced lips.

100. Rattle-dancer among the Nuba warriors, near Talodi in the Darnuba Province.

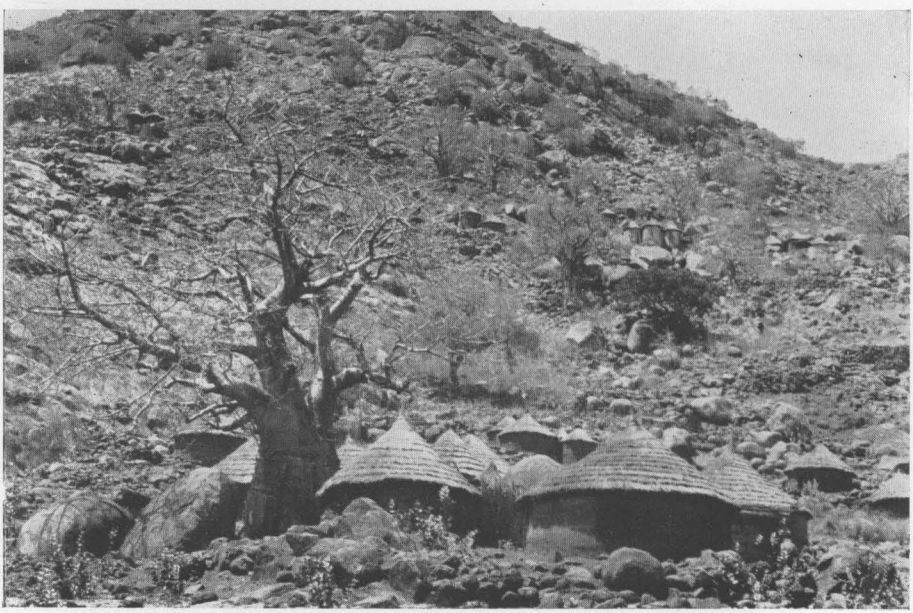


101. Leader of Nuba dance.



102. The impression is made that the Nuba women deliberately make their bodies and faces uglier with paint and ornaments.

103. Nuba women performing a rain-dance. Besides the curious ornaments, the plaited straw on the right leg is worth noticing.



104 and 105. The Nuba settlement stretches high up the hill at Talodi.

we ask for the Governor's house. On the way there we pass several buildings. Each time I ask what they are for. The first is said to be a hospital, then it is officials' residences, but at last we come to two large stone houses with corrugated iron roofs and tiled floors. "What is that?" I ask a servant passing by. "The rest-houses," he answers.

We have soon settled in and I try to visit the Governor. He receives me at tea and says I shall come to him at his office next day at nine. As that means a day's idleness for us, I attempt to get my business done there and then, but without success. There is nothing for it but to possess my soul in patience. We want to use the interval, so we set about discovering where the Arabs' camping places are to be found. We visit a market. The information is not very satisfactory. The Hauasma, Arab nomads, left a few weeks ago because feed for the animals began to get short in consequence of the drought. They wandered into the interior of Kordofan, say some; towards the White Nile, say others. It will be more practical for us to confine ourselves to the Eliri and Nuba here and then try to reach the Arabs from the White Nile.

At the appointed time the Governor receives me in the most cordial manner; he even supplies me with some petrol (we are running short again) and a letter of introduction to the District Officer. The Officer also obliges me in the most friendly fashion and gives us an N.C.O. as guide and interpreter. The soldier leads us to a place with a glorious view. On one side the steppe rolls away endlessly; in the distance rise some mountain ranges of Kordofan; and just before us stands a hill some thousand feet high whose rocks have the most extraordinary shapes. Perched in them like little castles are the *tukul* and outhouses of the Nuba (Figs. 104 and 105). This strange village stretches up to the highest summits of the cliffs. We eagerly start climbing and soon understand why the Arabs have never succeeded in taking the abodes of these bold people.

Even the English avoid storming these cliff ramparts. The Government contents itself when necessity arises with bombarding the eyries from the air. As the negroes withdraw into crevices in the rocks, the attackers achieve at most a moral victory. Of course it can be dangerous for these people if a hill is surrounded and they are starved, like robber barons in the Middle Ages. But there are hills whose inhabitants can hold out for a long time against a siege, as water is to be found in the cracks of the rocks and they have provisions enough for a considerable period.

An old man, naked, approaches me. He is obviously suffering from elephantiasis. He is the head Sheikh of whom the Governor had spoken. The soldier explains to him, briefly and to the point, that the *mufetish* has given orders for a feast to be arranged to-morrow and he is to see that everything necessary is done. The old man is not exactly enchanted at the command, but says he will do his best. We look round the village. The huts, which look extremely artistic from afar, are dirty inside; in this respect they differ from the negro dwellings that we have seen hitherto, which were remarkable for their painful cleanliness. But by way of compensation these people have a sense of colour. Some *tukul* are painted grey and red, and ornamented gourds with pleasant patterns are used everywhere as vessels. In one hut I notice a finely plaited lid. It is used to cover food and protect it from sorcery. But by all appearances it has come from the north. The pottery, on the other hand, is a home product and the women mould large round vessels very skilfully without a potter's wheel. The small spears too with their large barbs and the shields are worth seeing; they are quite differently shaped from those of the Nilotic negroes. The people are excessively ugly. Thick, bulging negro lips distort their large heads (Figs. 97 and 98). The neck is thick and short, the figure squat but athletic. Many of the men could almost be mistaken for gorillas. The women, with their hanging

breasts, are anything but attractive. As at Amadi, the number of cases of elephantiasis strikes one immediately. Out of twenty men who have gathered round us, five are suffering from this disease.

The feast is to be held next morning. I do not expect much from it, as the village is small and I know what people are like at such compulsory festivities. The negro is above all a creature of temperament and understands nothing less than to be "jolly" at the word of command, as is indeed the case with most people. But from the moment of arrival we are agreeably surprised. A great crowd is waiting for us. The Sheikh rules over other villages as well and he has mobilised the lot. The men are ceremonially decorated and powdered white, the women painted the same colour with weird designs (Fig. 99). The Sheikh, who has donned his gala dress—a present from the English—in honour of the day, comes to meet us. An undulating red caftan reaches down to his feet, his head is covered with a sun helmet and in his hand he carries an old sabre. He is evidently conscious of his importance. We move to a large open space where a lot of people have already assembled in a circle. Strange masks now appear. One man is grotesquely got up and wears an old dried-up marabou skull on his head (Fig. 106). He is an African jester, such as go about far and wide and are even to be found in Morocco. Rattle-dancers are performing not far away (Fig. 100). A murmur runs through the crowd and a small troop of giants enter the arena. The broad, muscular bodies are powdered white, and long, curved tails of feathers hang from their belts. These are the "Nubian wrestlers." They make the round with dancing steps, their legs wide apart, and then draw up in a row in front of us (Fig. 96). At a signal from the Sheikh the fight begins. Cries of enthusiasm go up from the spectators. From time to time men run to the fighters and sprinkle them with powder. When two particularly strong wrestlers enter the ring, the behaviour of

the audience shows at once that these are a couple of champions. There is absolute silence and everyone follows the course of the bout tensely. The onlookers divide into two camps and the betting runs high. Each of the contestants, egged on by the shouts of his supporters, makes the most tremendous exertions to throw his opponent. The excitement rises from minute to minute; shouts in a strange, hoarse language shrill through the air. One of the fighters has got hold of the other man's leg and is trying to bring him to a fall. But his antagonist clasps him and throws him over his head backwards to the ground. The crowd goes wild with delight. Everybody rushes into the arena, the Sheikh leading the way in his red cloak. They lead the winner in triumph before us, while a group of young men proclaim his victory at the top of their voices, hand him a palm and wallop the ground with a broad piece of cow-hide tied to a stick till the dust flies up in clouds.

Meanwhile the women have assembled at another spot to perform a sport dance. They are nude except for a narrow piece of cloth or bass drawn between the legs. Their hair is decked out with feathers and the whole body is painted with white patterns from head to foot (Figs. 102 and 103). One looks like a chess-board, others prefer spirals or crosses. They draw up not far from the arena. There are no drums, so the women sing a song instead as they march one behind the other and mark certain beats by stamping their feet. They now form a circle in the middle of which two women execute special figures with their arms raised. An obscene mask leads the dance. It is a woman dressed as a man, and she has an enormous wooden penis tied round her waist (Fig. 101) with which she makes indecent movements in time with the music. This dance ends the proceedings and we return home.

We should very much have liked to see the armoured Arab riders who are natives of Darfur but are also to be seen in Kordofan and Darnuba. They wear parti-coloured and

padded under-armour beneath their chain shirts and have steel greaves. Helmet, sword and lance form their weapons. Having heard that the Arabs had already left we were not expecting to meet these interesting figures. We are all the more agreeably surprised, therefore, when the friendly inspector informs us that he has arranged riding sports for the following day.

A large feasting ground lies near to Talodi. There the riders are waiting for us, so-called light-armed warriors dressed in chain shirts (Fig. 107). If one is expecting such a display of horsemanship as is cultivated by many Mongolian tribes, one is doomed to disappointment. The Arabs know nothing of sticking with the lance, standing on galloping horses, vaulting and similar tricks. They draw up facing us in a long line and charge forward. A few paces from us they suddenly check their horses. The animals, thus pulled up, slide several yards on their hind-quarters, churning up the sand.

In the afternoon we go further and by sundown reach Eliri. The deputy Sheikh very obligingly comes to meet us. The Sheikh himself died recently and his successor has not yet been appointed. We are generously supplied with eggs, milk and water. The wells, it is true, remind us of Tindilti, but bad water is better than none. Next morning several inquisitive persons appear at our camp and I photograph them (Figs. 66 and 67). One boy has just greased his beautifully plaited pigtails thick with butter and marrow to give his hair the right shape. We then drive into the villages. The Eliri mountains were originally uninhabited. Bit by bit runaway slaves from the most various tribes settled on the slopes and were successful in defending themselves among the rocks. This mixture of peoples fused with time into a unity, the Eliri—Mohammedans in faith, but not fanatics like the remaining Sudanese. Their *tukul* are typical. They have stone walls. One of these dwellings is in course of being built. There are no tools for wall-

building and hands have to suffice. The clay mortar is carried and carefully smeared by hand. A lad stands by and presses the horn of a tiang antelope into the soft mass to decorate the façade. The women produce every possible kind of handwork, of which we have already seen specimens at Omdurman, and offer us pretty coloured mats for sale.