



In the Wilds of Africa

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I had already made a trip to the West Indies, and two to this terrible coast; and as I had escaped without an attack of yellow fever, or cholera, when the Liverpool owners of the brig Osprey—commanded by Captain Page, an old African trader—offered me a berth as supercargo, I willingly accepted it. We were bound out to the Cape of Good Hope, but had arranged to touch at two or three places on the coast, to trade and land passengers. Among other places we were to call at Saint Paul de Loando, to land a Portuguese gentleman, Senhor Silva, and his black servant Ramaon. Our object in trading was to obtain palm-oil, bees'-wax, gold dust, and ivory, in exchange for Manchester and Birmingham goods; and for this purpose we had already visited several places on the coast, picking up such quantities as could be obtained at each of them. We had not, however, escaped without the usual penalty African traders have to pay—two of our men having died of fever, and two others, besides the captain, being sick of it. The first mate, Giles Gritton, and another man, had been washed overboard in a heavy gale we encountered on the other side of the Equator, and we were now, therefore, somewhat short-handed. The first mate was a great loss, for he was an excellent seaman and a first-rate fellow, which is more than could be said of the second mate, Simon Kydd. How he came to be appointed mate seemed unaccountable; unless, as he was related to the owners, interest might have obtained for him what his own merits certainly would not. Taking him at his own value, he had few superiors, if any equals.

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