CHAPTER NINE

FURTHER ADVENTURES. WITHDRAWAL TO MONROVIA

During the first half of July, first SALA, and several days later I too, became afflicted with a severe colic, and more than once we thought that neither of us would ever see the coast again. We now had sufficient supplies, but no appetite, and our food remained untouched. After this affliction had lasted for about a week, SALA’s condition improved again, but my attacks
became more severe with each passing day. Finally, I could neither stand, sit nor lie down. Furthermore, a terrible fear came over me, as well as a constriction of the chest that almost took my breath away and left me no peace by day or night. The people from the town came around each morning to see whether I had died, and I too didn’t believe that I would ever leave this place alive. In desperation, to at least numb myself a bit, I drank quite an amount of the alcohol in which our fish and reptile specimens had been preserved, but all was in vain. After this condition had continued for some 14 days, the four porters that we had ever since ordered from Soforeh Place arrived in order to carry me to Mühlenburg Mission. They were accompanied by Chief Sickly and his brother Soforeh. Finally, after lengthy discussions, I was carefully rolled into a woollen blanket, laid into my hammock, and this was then tied to a long pole, which two men placed upon their shoulders. Then the column set out. However, it had hardly progressed for more than several hundred paces into the forest, when one of the porters complained that I was too heavy for him, and then, not even one English mile away from the station, they laid me down on the wet forest path, helpless and tied to the pole as I was, and walked off. A Pessy Negro who happened to pass by, found me lying unconsciously. As he knew me from a previous occasion, he took pity upon me and carried me to the station on his back. At the station, Sala had in the meantime already been informed of what had happened. It now soon became apparent that the running away of the porters had been planned in advance in order to rob us, and the two noble Moor Princes had done their best to entice Sala to leave the hut to have a look at me, which he fortunately refused as he was already suspecting some kind of villainy. The best of the whole affair was that my condition took a turn for the better after this event and the attacks of cramps ceased. In a relatively short period of time I got fairly well again.

As the summer progressed, the rainy season became more and more unpleasant. The river rose each day and began to overflow its banks. In these conditions larger hunting forays were no longer possible, and day by day the hunt became less rewarding. Furthermore, we were subjected to ever increasing pilferage, and always had to be on guard. If one heard these crooks speak, then one was supposed to believe they were the most honest people in the world. “Golah people don’t thieve” they would say with the most innocent expression, “thieving p’laver bad p’laver; me tell you, if me want something, but Pessy People there up the river like thieve plenty, too much!” At the very same moment, however, and in a manner that rivalled even the dexterity of a London pickpocket, they would somehow manage