1882: Lavigerie takes possession of his presbyteral title of Sainte Agnes hors les murs.

Conference given at Saint Sulpice
(1st July 1888)

But the slavers do not only attack isolated individuals: they organise their expeditions in the same way as a war is organised, sometimes alone, sometimes by a refinement of wickedness, allied to neighbouring tribes to which they offer part of their pillage and who, the next day become their victims in their turn. During the night, they fall on defenceless villages; they set fire to the huts built of straw. They fire on the first people they meet. The population begins to flee, looking for safety in the forest, amongst impenetrable creepers, in dried-up river beds, in the tall grasslands of the valleys. They are chased and the men who resist and the old people are killed. The women and children are taken as captives. But I have already described these horrors. I grow tired of looking for new ways of describing things.

Listen, my dear brothers, to what I have to say about the caravans of slaves: all those captured, be they men, women and children, are immediately marched off into the interior. Then begins for them a whole series of ineffable sufferings. The slaves trudge along on foot; those men who appear to be strong and who might take off, have their hands bound and sometimes their feet, in such a way that the march becomes a form of torture. They are linked one to another so that they cannot escape. Such is the description the missionaries have given in their letters.

They march the whole day. In the evening when they stop to have some rest, the prisoners are given a few handfuls of uncooked sorghum. This is their food. The next day they set off once again. From the first days, fatigue, suffering, the never-ending privations cause a great number to become weaker and weaker. The women and the elderly are the first to fall by the wayside. Then, so as to instil fear in the others, the slavers, armed with thick sticks, approach those who appear to be exhausted; they strike their unfortunate victims with a terrible blow on the neck. The victims fall to the ground in the convulsions of death.

The terrified prisoners then begin to move along once again. What they have witnessed gives extra strength to even the most feeble among them. Each time that someone stops, the same dreadful scene repeats itself. Their bodies remain where they are., that is to say, when they are not hung from the branches of overhanging trees. And it is near to their dead companions, that the remaining slaves are forced to eat and sleep.

But what a sleep they must have! It doesn't take much to imagine what the prisoners dream about. Among the young negroes we have been able to rescue from this hell on earth, there are who every night for a long time wake up shouting and screaming. They are reliving in agonising nightmares the dreadful scenes which they have witnessed.

It is like this that the marches take place, sometimes lasting entire months, when the expedition has far to go. The caravan is reduced in numbers, each day. When pushed to despair by the bad treatment they are experiencing, some try to revolt or flee, it is then that their ferocious masters strike them with their swords and abandon them along the paths, attached to each other by their yokes. You could say that if you were to lose the way which leads from Equatorial Africa to the towns where the slaves are sold, you would find it easily by the bones of the Negroes scattered alongside the paths.