





AN    
AFRICAN  
YEAR   
CULLEN   
GOULDSBURY



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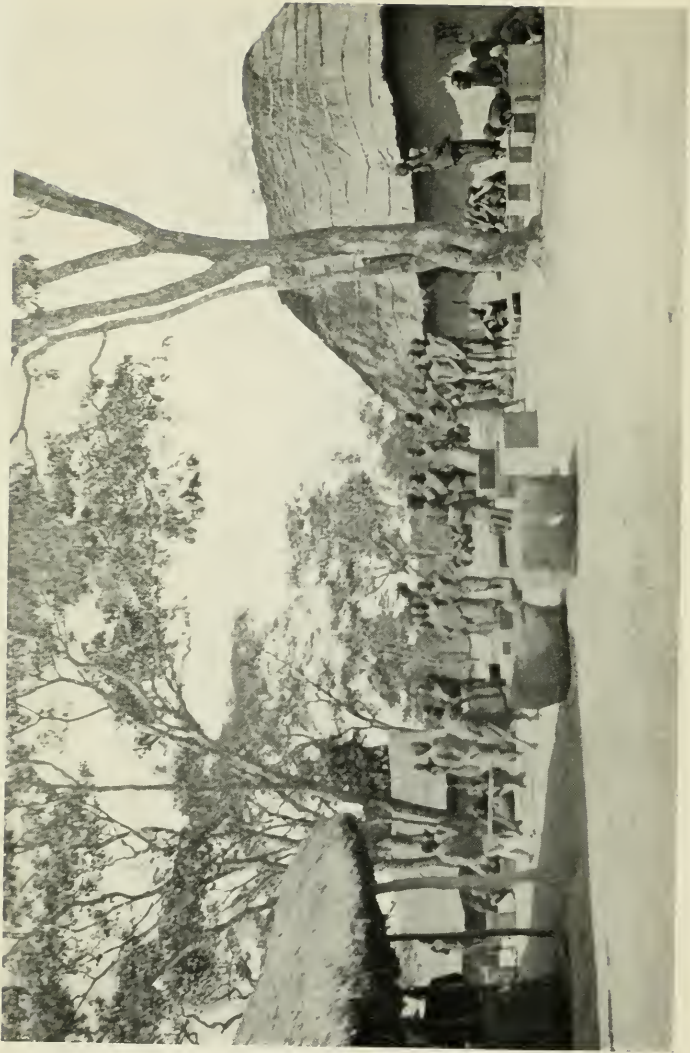




AN AFRICAN YEAR







ARRIVAL AT RAILHEAD.

# AN AFRICAN YEAR

BY

CULLEN GOULDSBURY

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AND JOINT-AUTHOR OF "THE GREAT PLATEAU OF  
NORTHERN RHODESIA"

ILLUSTRATED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

LONDON

EDWARD ARNOLD

1912

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## FOREWORD

ALL that follows is true, otherwise there would be no point in writing it. I do not say that every event occurred in the exact chronological sequence in which it is reported to have happened in this book—nor, for that matter, in the exact place. But everything which happens between these covers did actually happen in the manner described, more or less at the time, more or less in the place, and in the company of MORE OR LESS the people who are described.

Remember, however, that I do not vouch absolutely for the accuracy of the portraits which I have painted. In fact, when one is dealing with a remote dependency where the European population is an excessively scanty one, it is invariably wiser to refrain from personalities as much as possible. Therefore, possibly, none of the characters in this book are alive to day in exactly the guise in which I have painted them. Bits of them may be; but they are probably so mixed up with other bits of other people that their own mothers would not recognise them. I trust it is so, and that the resulting mosaic may be found to yield a true picture of the domestic life of Northern Rhodesia of the present day.

It is just a year since Mr. Sheane and I inflicted upon a public, satiated with books of travel, our somewhat ponderous "Great Plateau of Northern Rhodesia." The critics may maintain that in this volume I am flogging a dead horse—recapitulating where further emphasis was unnecessary. My only reply is that in "An African Year" I have endeavoured to depict the more purely domestic side of life on the Outer Fringe, disregarding the heavier political questions, avoiding the weightier matters of ethnology and native social problems, and laying stress, if stress be needed, upon the theme that women as well as men may find a congenial sphere in the frontier life, provided that they are of the right calibre. Hams and jams are almost as important in a new and barbarous country as administrative measures and schemes for tribal control. And, if more women went abroad to supervise the hams and the jams of their husbands in the tropics, I have no doubt that we should hear less of the Suffragettes.

CULLEN GOULDSBURY.

LONDON, *July*, 1912.

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# AN AFRICAN YEAR

## JANUARY

Rain on the grand scale—Africitis, its symptoms—The philosophical standpoint—The balance of Nature—A country of lights and shades—Scene from our windows—Within and without—The English mail—Messages from “the other world”—Early morning—Fowls—Prisoners—*Askari*—Inscrutability of native races—The Wemba women—The farmyard again—Domestic economy—Rain in the bedroom—No matches—Drugs—Native specifics—The white man as a doctor—A tragedy—The Diddybird—African visitors—Travelling costume—The Diddybird’s first elephant—“Molesting” a cow—A walk round the station—The exercise in chunks—The village—*Mitawa* trees—Want of privacy—Women and babies—Noise at night—Roads—Irresponsibility of the native during garden seasons—Police lines—Cattle kraal—A bird’s-eye view—Cheering up—Sunset—The house—Want of space—Sandow development—The guest-room—Rats—The doctor’s dilemma—A married couple—Baths—African architecture—Back premises—The rest of the station—The native clerk.

IF there is anything more solidly depressing than perpetual rain, I should be gratified to hear of it. The drizzle of London streets is bad enough; but when the rain is falling steadily over the untidy

wilderness of tropical bush, when the wife of one's bosom has retired to the fastnesses of her bed-chamber with pronounced "Africitis" (for which there is no known cure save the healing lapse of time), and the English mail is eighteen hours late—then, indeed, the matter becomes a tragedy meriting the attention of the High Gods.

I have said that my wife has Africitis; it is an infectious mental disease, approximating to "the hump" of more civilised lands, and I am conscious that my own peace of mind is threatened even now. The symptoms are varied. Occasionally an attack commences with violent vituperation of shivering natives, succeeded by lethargy and coma. Sometimes one weeps—that is to say, Beryl does; more often, in my case at least, one curses vigorously the Powers That Be, the Fates that have arranged one's destiny, the station and its population and all that appertains thereto, until overwrought Nature reasserts herself and frenzy gives way to sudden calm. But it is an unpleasant disease, in whatever form it may seize one—and the rains are conducive to its recurrence.

Probably—if one could only view it from the philosophical standpoint—it is merely part of the tribute which one pays for the pleasure of sojourning in tropical countries. And, thank God, it does not last. Africa holds in her bosom marvellous recuperative qualities. I have slunk to bed at seven in the evening from sheer, utter and detestable boredom, to awake at dawn radiant with an energy just as wonderful in its way as the overnight depression. Indeed, on the whole

Nature holds her balance fairly enough out in this weirdly fascinating country; were it not so, one could not live for three or four years cut off from most things that make life bearable and yet conserve one's sanity. Sometimes, indeed, the thread snaps—and then a man is invalided Home; but, speaking generally, the few Europeans whom one meets in the course of a twelvemonth have an air of chubby hilarity that is extraordinarily stimulating.

Indeed, the country is one of vivid lights and shades. Contrasts, definite and complete, make up the sum of life. Even now—for the rain has ceased for a moment, and the sun, never wasteful of his opportunities, has darted out from a grim, full-bellied thunder-cloud—the shadows of the gum-trees on the lawn slant across the velvet *dhou* as if drawn with a ruler—inky-black, clear-cut, concise. On the hither side of my window—though it is true that the ants have left their traces on the woodwork—are all the attributes of an English room: silver and curtains, and tall flowers touched by a woman's hand. Without, along the broad, red road that leads to the office and the gaol, a shivering, woebegone native, wrapped in dingy cloths that still drip with the recent deluge, hops disconsolately between the shores of one puddle and the next.

And then, to crown the picture, a splotch of red flashes among the wet, wild greenery of bush—the mailman this, nearing the end of his hundred-mile journey with those precious English letters, eighteen hours late Envelopes that were licked

in London six weeks ago will be ripped asunder now within an hour's walk of the shores of Lake Tanganyika—and, no doubt, the letters within them will, in some cases, be mere sodden, blotchy pulp, undecipherable and maddening to look upon. Can one wonder that such should be the case when they have been passed from hand to hand, up hill and down dale, over squelching swamps and through dripping bush, in canvas bags borne on the sweating shoulders of native runners from Railhead three weeks and five hundred miles away?

The mail is, perhaps, one of the best cures for Africitis that exists. For there is a fascination in breaking seals and cutting grimy shreds of native string—in searching the folds of canvas for lurking bugs and nameless horrors—in unwrapping fold upon fold of greasy *chikaduli*, as the tarred cloth which is the local substitute for canvas is called. Stripped of its coverings, the package of letters and papers proves, often, slim enough—two or three bills, half a dozen official letters, maybe the yellow-covered catalogue of some eagerly enterprising bookseller in far-off Bedford Street, Strand. But even one letter proper goes to prove that there is another world besides this one; a world where, in January, people sit over cosy fires, at snugly-appointed writing-tables, and fling cheerful messages out into the wind-swept spaces of the globe.

Beryl has emerged from the bedroom. For the moment Africitis is in abeyance. She clutches her letters—seven of them, as I live, while for

me there are three "officials" and an advertisement!—clutches them as the starving widow-woman of fiction clutches at the loaf that is to save her and her child. The avaricious gleam which lit her eyes while I was cutting the string and unfolding the wrappings has given place to a look of sheer content. If she were a cat she would purr. Meanwhile, the rain is moaning gently down over the valley, prior to renewed onslaught upon this higher ground of ours, and the wretched mailboy is squatting upon the steps of the porch. Out he goes—down to the village and the smoky huts of his own people. For Home letters are too sacred a matter to be dealt with under alien eyes. Tea and toast, a crackling fire and the solace of drawn curtains that screen us from the gathering gloom without; these are the fitting circumstances in which to gather up the links with London town.

\* \* \* \* \*

Six o'clock and a glorious morning. Last night's rain has but served, it seems, to wash the paths and gem each individual grass-blade with diamonds. The shadows are still long, sloping even from the tall clumps of dahlias that tower, erect and wonderfully bright, along the fence—crimson, and mauve, and old-gold flecked with pink, and cream picked out with russet and maroon—a gorgeous sight indeed upon which to feast the eyes in the dawn. There are voices behind the house and a mighty clucking of hens—Nemesis in the shape of a cookboy with a long

knife is striking terror into the fluttering breasts of the farmyard. Only the cock—an arrogant, red-brown thing who would be an undersized chicken at Home—realises his immunity, and crows blatantly. He probably knows that he is as tough as the tyre of a bicycle, and that, in any case, he is needed to ensure the arrival of other broods.

There is a clanking of buckets under the rise below the garden, and in a moment a prison-gang slummocks into view, chained neck to neck, and bearing threaded upon a pole paraffin-tins full of water and with the tops knocked off. Behind, in proud consciousness of a military overcoat, which is quite unnecessary, as the sun is already well above the skyline—stalks an *askari*, or native policeman, charged with the duties of prison-warder. He carries his rifle smartly enough at the slope, and pauses for a moment at the angle of the fence to bandy a sufficiently broad jest with a comely maiden in a blue and white check cloth who is sauntering riverwards with a nut-brown gourd upon her head.

Native races must needs remain inscrutable, even to those whose whole duty in life it is to understand them. But these Wemba women of ours are far more inscrutable than their menfolk. Shrewd and, for that matter, shrewish, sharp-tongued, and mistresses of many words, they are, none the less, fascinating enough. The cases which they bring to judgment—sordid, petty matters of dowry and divorce, unfaithfulness



and evil treatment—these serve, indeed, to shed some light upon the fringes of their lives; but it is upon the fringes alone. For the Wemba woman is not always at variance with her husband, nor for ever the sworn foe of her sister-wife. There must be love-stories working themselves out, now and again, down in the grey-roofed huts of nestling villages; tragedies of child-hunger, maybe; idylls, even, of happy family life. But these are the stories which are never told. And they are, moreover, stories to which the respectable married official will never hold the key. In the old, cheery, disreputable days—the bad grinning days of the past, to which one now refers with a shrug and a smile—the days when men did things they should not, and learned the language (and other matters, no doubt) from slim, nut-brown girls—opportunities for probing more deeply into the native character were not wanting. But our morals have improved with time, and, in some ways, we are doubtless the poorer for it.

This, however, is a digression from the farm-yard—which ranks, perhaps, as one of the most important points in Central African domestic economy. Here are no butchers—not even the ham-and-beef shop of other lands. The meat of the country roams the woods and needs accurate shooting before it can be transmuted into joints. And just now, when the rains are falling and the world is a wilderness of tall green grasses, the haunts of game cannot be identified with any reasonable certainty. So the domestic fowl plays

an all-important part. Beryl, for instance, kills four a day with the utmost nonchalance, and a brutality which is, otherwise, wanting to her character. That is to say, she issues orders for their execution, and I retire incontinently to the front of the house, lest my ears be assailed and my bosom wrung by the smothered death-clucks of some unhappy hen.

There are pigs, also; but they need a prodigious amount of fattening, and, as often as not, will take revenge from the grave by turning green and odoriferous just when they should be becoming bacon. Ducks, too, add to Beryl's *joie-de-vivre*. There is a family in the back-yard at the present moment—a ponderous, knobby drake, with eleven wives and a keen sense of his own importance. Later, when we have breakfasted, and I have gone to the office, Beryl will sit herself down in the compound, regardless of dignity, and allow them to pick millet out of her hair. That is to say, she claims that they do so, and is inordinately proud of the fact—but I must confess that I have never witnessed the performance. I do know, however, that the pigeons have been over-educated to such an extent that it is with the greatest difficulty that they can be dissuaded from walking up the legs of my trousers.

Engrossed in the glories of the morning, I have forgotten to mention that it rained during the night. But it did—diabolically. Between one and two, Beryl sat up in bed with a smothered shriek and clutched me by the hair. "It's coming

in again," she said, and then something which sounded remarkably like "Damn this roof"; but I was too drowsy to be certain, and she denied the phrase this morning with an expression of angelic innocence. When I lit the candle it promptly spluttered and went out again, drowned and dejected. Then it transpired that I had used my last match, and it became necessary to search the store. A rat ran over my slippers and I barked my shins on the sharp edge of a whisky-case, and it was not for nearly ten minutes that we remembered that there were no more matches nearer than the Mission Station, eight miles away. In the meantime the dripping in the bedroom had become a waterspout, and the sheets and blankets on Beryl's bed were soaking wet. So, in the dark, save for an occasional flash of lightning now and again, we arranged a canopy of mackintoshes propped up on broom-handles, and disposed all the available basins and a zinc bath to the best advantage in different corners of the room.

To-day, instead of re-whitewashing the office, as I had intended doing, I shall have to employ the chain-gang in carrying in grass—and the Lord only knows where any is to be found dry enough to thatch with.

This matter of matches is a serious one, and I trust that my wife will, perhaps, begin now to realise the fact. She does not smoke—except for an occasional cigarette in the evening—and therefore the grim tragedy of a shortage does not appeal to her. The same thing happened two or three months ago, and, having wrested

from the sergeant of police one match which was carefully wrapped up in a fold of his fatigue uniform, and having recovered the last empty box, I sat in the office at broad noon with a guttering candle, and smoked tobacco flavoured with cheap tallow. We borrowed from the Mission on that occasion, too, I remember, and it was just as well. For towards evening a runner, who had been sent to the metropolis, eighty-seven miles away, returned with numerous other household goods and a polite note that there were no matches in the store, but that a consignment was expected up in three weeks or a month!

Drugs, fortunately, are supplied to Government stations by the Administration. And it is astonishing to reflect upon the amount consumed. The native still clings to the remedies of his forefathers—such a specific as a dried beetle tied tightly to the forehead with a greasy piece of string is, to his mind, an unrivalled cure for headache. But he has no objection to blending the white man's medicines with his own. With "Livingstone Rousers," quinine, and phenacetin, the official is fully equipped to battle with all diseases, from lunacy to a broken leg. Exceptional cases may call for Worcester Sauce and hot fomentations; but the remedy is nearly always efficacious. Speaking with all due modesty, I myself feel competent to take charge of a native hospital. If any patients died it would be out of sheer ingratitude for a generous and varied treatment.

But sometimes tragedies happen. A case occurred only last week. Early one morning the station *capitao* (headman) told me that his child—a boy of five—was seriously ill. Inquiries elicited the fact that he had fallen into the fire a few days before and had since then developed hæmorrhage. The man was not an alarmist, as so many natives are, and I could see that he was genuinely upset. So the child was brought up to the house and installed in an empty store at the back. The usual cortège accompanied it, including the mother, the grandmother, and three or four other female relatives.

The treatment of sick babies is frankly beyond me, and I handed the matter over to Beryl, merely standing by to keep up a supply of warm water, castor oil, compresses and the like. It was obvious from the first that the poor little chap was in a bad way. His eyes were half closed, his breath came heavily, and he was as cold as a stone. So we set to work to restore circulation, rubbing him with castor oil and so forth. I saw that his heart was failing, and went to the house to fetch some brandy. As I crossed the compound on my return, I noticed that Beryl was standing outside the store alone.

“They won’t let me in,” she said, as I came up; “I think they’re mad—and the child will certainly die if they don’t give it more air.”

As I went towards the store the door was suddenly burst open and a woman—the grandmother—flung herself out, waving her arms above her head and chanting horribly. She threw her-

self upon the ground and bit the dust; then, sitting half erect, poured handfuls of the soil upon her hair and body, until she was as white as a leper. And all the while she wailed, while from within the building came sounds like the groaning of some animal in pain.

It was as much as I could do to force my way in. All respect for the white man had left the poor, mad souls within. In one corner a woman rocked to and fro, grinning and mouthing. On the floor the father lay stretched at full length, sobbing and tearing at the ground.

The child was still alive, but the mother in her frenzy was fast crushing from him what little breath remained. I bent to feel his pulse, but she beat me off like a wild thing. And, indeed, it was too late—for he was even then in the death-throes.

Beryl and I went back to the house. We could do nothing, and it was no scene for a white woman to witness. Half an hour later the father came to me, still shaken with sobs, and begged for a little calico in which to wrap the body. Later again a tiny bundle was carried past the house on the shoulders of two men; and alongside there danced a crowd of madwomen singing that we had killed the child.

To-day Diddybird arrived. Beryl christened him by that name, for some inscrutable reason of her own, and he and I have adopted it; in fact, I may say that he answers to it. Somehow it seems to suit him. He is something like a fowl—a chicken, full of the zest of life, which has not yet got its full complement of tail-feathers. Very



long; telescopically so, indeed, and apparently very thin, though as a matter of fact he weighs more than I do, with the demure expression of an inexperienced curate and a fund of dry, cool humour which would be sardonic were it not intensely human. He was educated first at Malvern and then on a Wiltshire farm, and has come out here with the idea of breeding cattle for the Southern markets. The odd chinks of his time are filled up with big-game shooting and the recruiting of natives for the mines. As he is the official recruiter of my division and he, Beryl, and I have tastes in common (which include a *penchant* for shooting things and a facility for enjoying old experiences), we travelled together most of last dry season, and, the Gods being willing, propose to do the same this year. So it is probable that you may eventually come to hear more of this strange fowl.

The Diddybird had given us warning of his coming, and we were, therefore, in some measure prepared for him. But there is a disturbing uncertainty anent the arrival of most visitors in this country which would drive the English hostess, accustomed to sending carriage or motor to meet a certain train, into gibbering insanity. As often as not the event occurs at eight or nine o'clock in the morning. One has mapped out one's programme for the day and spurred oneself to the commencement of its execution. And then, after the approved fashion for the entry of the comic-opera villain, things begin to happen. Beryl, probably, is sitting upon the verandah shrouded

in a cloud of chicken feathers, which are being picked preparatory to being baked and stuffed into a cushion cover. I, as likely as not, have embarked upon a complicated case relative to some domestic infelicity which cannot possibly be concluded until midday, and in which it is of the most vital importance to conserve the thread of the narrative. And so, of course, there comes a low hum from the belt of bush that fringes the station, and in a moment or two it resolves itself into the song of a *machila*—or hammock—team. For native courtesy decrees that some warning, at least, shall be given of the arrival of a caravan.

The case dissolves into thin air, plaintiff and defendant being incontinently dismissed for the time. Up the path to the house speeds a native messenger with a note to Beryl, telling her that visitors are abroad. And in less than five minutes I am shaking hands with someone or other—a brother official, or an agent of the local trading company, a French Father or a member of the London Missionary Society—even, perhaps, a lady journalist upon an epoch-making trip to Cairo, or a party of scientists *en route* to survey the Mountains of the Moon—and assuring him, her or them that I am overcome with delight at the unexpected good fortune!

In nine cases out of ten it is true. For when one has lived for six weeks alone with one's wife—even such a wife as Beryl—one is apt to welcome any European importation with delirious transports of delight. Beryl herself may flounce about



for half an hour; there will be bad times in the kitchen, and whispered consultations between her and me as to the advisability of slaughtering a goat instant—here the goat replaces the fatted calf—but, an hour later, when the visitor's loads are in and he has been provided with a whisky-and-soda and a bath, we shall both be genuinely glad of an opportunity to discuss matters with a third party.

Such visitors come to us travel-worn and—if men—in the scantiest of costume. For it is the custom of the country to travel in the garb of a paper-chaser or a football-player, and, as often as not, if the day's trek has been a long one, the visitor will be forced to lunch in such comparative nudity pending the arrival of his loads. It is a delightful custom, and one which makes for *camaraderie*. I myself am entirely against the gentleman who travels with a tweed suit rolled in his *machila* and a canvas-covered basin containing sponge, looking-glass, and comb slung to the pole. When one is really touring in the tropics it is just as well to look the part.

Of course, with such a person as the Diddybird—who is for all practical purposes one of the family—the ordinary routine undergoes no such upheaval. He knows his room, and is capable of sending his superfluous loads up to the brick store behind the house without the attendance of perspiring messengers and personal boys. If there are pickles or devilled sardines for lunch he is proportionately grateful; if not, he goes without. And, best of all, if Beryl and I are busy we tell him

so, and he acquiesces—as likely as not sitting down upon the verandah to remove the “mask” of some buck he has just shot.

The present occasion is, however, rather out of the ordinary, as he has just returned from his first elephant hunt. A fortnight ago we packed him up some bananas and a bottle of milk and cast him out upon day-old spoor some ten miles off. To-day he returns with a pair of thirty-pound tusks, a tail, two feet, and several loads of meat, which has not been smoked so completely as I could wish, and has to be deposited on the leeward side of the verandah. And, during lunch, we question him concerning his experiences. I give his replies in his own words.

“They’re like several things, Mrs. G.,” turning to my wife. “Back view, like nothing so much as a very fat old gentleman in baggy trousers. Sideways on, like a motor bus. Moving off, something like a tug in a choppy sea. Coming for you—well, it’s pretty nasty, and they look a bit imposing—that high-stepping sort of action isn’t as funny as it might be when you’re standing still ten yards off and pretending to be a stump. But the cows are the worst. I ran into one old lady when I was after the bull, and just as I was trying to slide behind a tree, round she waltzed, flapped out both her ears and sort of curtsied—there’s no other word for it. Then she came straight for me. I found out afterwards that my infernal boys had intercepted her wretched calf and tied it up. Well, there wasn’t any time to remember that she was a lady, so I let bang

and got her somewhere above the eyes—a rank bad shot, but enough to turn her. Round she went again with a sort of swoop and disappeared into the bush. Naturally, I was quite pleased—I wasn't looking for any *mulandu* (trouble) for shooting a cow with a calf—and after a few minutes to let her get clear off, I went again after the bull.

“We sorted out his spoor all right, and had been on it for about ten minutes, when I saw something moving ahead. I ran up a small ant-heap to get a better view and—whump!—there was that infernal old cow looking at me over the top! She wasn't five feet off—and I could see blood trickling down her forehead where I had clumped her before. So she had to have another—more or less in the same spot—and off she flounced again.

“When I got down to Meredith's station I told him about it; it had happened in his division. He looked at me a bit stodgily, and said that he would take no official notice unless the cow was found dead, but that in that case he'd have to send me a summons for molesting a cow with calf! Molesting—ye Gods! I spent half a day trying to dodge her, and it lost me forty-eight hours on the bull spoor, besides giving me the worst fright I've had yet.”

\* \* \* \* \*

To-day, after the Diddybird had left—he has been here just a week—Beryl and I strolled to the top of a small rise which overlooks the station. The excursion was somewhat longer

than are our daily walks abroad; in fact, I am afraid we do not take quite so much exercise as we should do at this time of year. For one thing, it is not exhilarating to plunge along muddy roads in mackintoshes, and really, for the moment, it seems as if this persistent deluge will never cease; we have had ten inches already, and it is only the 23rd of the month. For another, there is nowhere to go. And, in extenuation, I may perhaps plead, as Beryl does, that in this country one gets one's exercise in chunks. For six months of the year—during the dry season, that is—life is an alternation between packing up, travelling round the district, and unpacking again for, perhaps, ten days at home. No doubt this accumulation of energy can be, and is, stored up for the dripping months when district travelling is an impossibility.

However, to-day we had Africitis in more pronounced form than usual—probably the departure of the Diddybird had something to do with it, and there seemed imperative necessity for the stretching of legs. So, as I have said, we walked up the hill.

In the distance the little station looked peaceful enough. Just below us lay the village—a block of tiny, red-brown huts, each with its halo of pearl-grey smoke, line upon line—for my predecessor was a man of orderly ideas—and each line marked sharply with a row of cool-looking *mitawa* trees.

They are wonderful trees, these *mitawa*, with broad, glistening leaves that look as if they had

been varnished, and smooth bark from which the natives make an excellent cloth. Indeed, in certain localities where the trees flourish more especially, the tap-tapping of tiny wooden mallets upon strips of bark forms one of the integral parts of that hum which goes to represent, acoustically, the life of a village. And on a station the trees are of exceptional value, since mere limbs, lopped off and planted, will grow in the space of a very few years into an avenue of majestic shade.

Seen from where we stood, the village was a pretty sight; yet alien to the country, and symbolic of the white man's mania for order. For the ordinary village, tucked away in the outlying parts of a division, sprawls headlong, devoid of all symmetry, yet none the less picturesque. Huts are jumbled together pell-mell; and at this season of the year, when the tall mealie-stalks are already putting forth their cobs with the crimson tassels, each dwelling is hidden in a grove of its own. Grain-bins, conical and uncouth, start up here, there, and everywhere; now and again there is a cleared space, littered for the most part with gnawed mealie-cobs or wisps of dry yellow grass, blown from some overhanging thatch.

Indeed, wandering through such a village, it is marvellous to consider the mental fibre of the people who inhabit those doll's-house dwellings. Privacy and silence must be less than nothing to them. For, remember, the walls of each dwelling are but a thin shell of mud upon a frame of light poles; and often enough they are

set so close together that the eaves overhang. In almost every hut there is a baby, and, whatever their mothers may say to the contrary, the native baby has just as good lungs and makes quite as effective use of them as does his little European brother or sister. As a matter of fact, it has become a habit with such natives as live in close contact with white children to affect a kind of horror at the volubility of the English infant. Yet the dusky mothers will sit placidly for hours at a time, combing each other's hair, it may be, or retailing the gossip of the day while, three feet off, a baby howls lustily at the high heavens.

Then, again, the native village never sleeps. All through the night there is a buzz of sound; maybe the singsong murmur of adventurous bachelors detailing their latest love-affairs, or coughs or groans from some uneasy dreamer, or, perchance, the sobs of some woman in disagreement with her husband, who is tasting stick after the old patriarchal custom. Again, perhaps, it may be the lowing of the village cattle, or the bleating of the village goats, which in the former case are penned in the centre of the village, in the latter shovelled pell-mell upon the verandahs of the very huts themselves, with a fine disregard of all laws of hygiene and personal cleanliness.

Last week's mail brought papers, in one of which was a seriously written article anent the danger to the present generation of the street noises in London at night. Well, no doubt Town



has changed much since Beryl and I drove to Waterloo in our last hansom two and a half years ago; but from what I remember of it, I imagine that I could sleep very much more easily in a front room in, say, Piccadilly, than within a hundred yards of a native village.

Beyond the village there is a broad road—which, by the way, is not so clean as it might be; the *capitao* must be remonstrated with, and he will then smile ingratiatingly, and tell me that the people are extraordinarily busy with their gardens just now. Certainly it is true that, from December to April, few natives can be brought to recognise the existence of any possible responsibility to the Administration or to any one else beyond that of getting their crops satisfactorily raised. And, since laziness means famine for nine months or so to come, one cannot wonder that it should be so.

Across the road are the tall, gabled roofs of the police lines—likewise in orderly rows. These police of ours constitute—in their own minds at least—the aristocratic section of native society. A smart uniform, glittering accoutrements, roomy dwellings built for them by the Government, liberal pay and a monthly ration of food, cloth, soap, and salt, must inevitably raise them in the eyes of their fellows. And, within certain limits, it is well that it should be so. As a corrective to excess in this direction, there is the salutary institution of daily “fatigue.”

From the lines to the cattle kraal is but a step. For every station, through the wise fore-

thought of a previous Administrator, is stocked with a herd of Government cattle, ranging from twenty to, it may be, a hundred head. The system ensures fresh milk and butter to the official—an inestimable boon in a country where tinned milk is often difficult to obtain and, almost as often, bad when opened.

Beryl and I let our eyes wander over village and lines and kraal in silence. We had seen it all so often before, and we had still got the hump. But, suddenly, as we looked out over the scene, backed by a line of bush-clad hills, set, as it were, in a vast saucer whereof the rim was a wall of impenetrable green, the thunder-cloud that had been lowering all the afternoon slid away and the sun came out. Away among the trees, at the end of one of the long avenues, we could see the flag floating lazily from the tall staff. Further to the left a stray ray of sunlight lit up the chimneys of the house with a warm, mellow glow. It was all very prosaic and humdrum, no doubt—but, up in that house were, at least, books and papers and a thousand and one knick-knacks that belonged to England and the outside world. And it was home—for the time being.

Beryl cheered up first—but that was only because I had just remembered that the end of the month, with its interminable accounts and returns, was within a week of me. However, I was not long in following her example. By the time we were half way up the long avenue of pawpaws and lemon-trees that leads from the lines to the house we were both exuberantly cheerful. And



when we stepped on to the verandah we were rewarded with one of the most gorgeous things in sunsets that I have ever seen. Lemon and purple and gold, blue and mauve and salmon-pink—they were all there, and we sat down on the brick steps of the porch and looked at it in silence, until the sun went down at last behind a hog-backed hill, and the glory of it faded into a tender, pastel grey. Then we went indoors—still in silence—and had whisky and quinine.

\* \* \* \* \*

The house itself is typical of Government houses in this part of the world. That is to say, it is well and strongly built of locally made bricks—which here happen to be of a pleasing shade of greyish white, pointed with clay and sand—has a high gable-roof thatched with grass which has been baked by the sun to a mellow brownish shade, and boasts a broad verandah in front and along one side, raised about three feet from the ground, with its roof supported by brick pillars, while a balustrade of sawn timber runs along its length. In front of the verandah juts out a kind of portico—a pergola, let us call it—which is a delusion and a snare, since it has no roof other than a web of grenadilla upon a flat wooden frame. One is liable to forget this latter fact both in glaring sunshine and in pouring rain—in either case with disastrous results. And from the pergola three steps lead down on to a path, the surface of which is of broken brick, pleasing enough to look at, but monstrously hard upon boots and shoes.

The rooms are all in a line, and they are all far too small for a semi-tropical climate. This is the outstanding fault common to our official dwellings. For there is none of the cool spaciousness of Indian bungalows—never a room in the whole country where one can get the restful, shadowy effect of distant corners and arched doorways leading into other spaces beyond. Our rooms are strictly utilitarian; there are not, perhaps, quite enough windows, and they lead out of one another with a distressing monotony.

More or less in the centre of the frontage is a hall—just large enough for a gun-rack, an ammunition cupboard, two rain-coats, and a dozen pairs of horns. To the right is the drawing-room—Beryl's domain—fifteen feet square, and with a fireplace like a lodging-house grate. Half of the room is taken up with a cosy corner, the other half with a tea-table and pots of flowers wherever there is foothold for them. There are also white ants; but they do not make so much headway as might be expected, since Beryl hates them with a deadly hatred, and is never so happy as when pouring boiling water down their holes.

Across the hall is the dining-room—and, as the house-agent might say, this *is* a room—sixteen feet by eighteen, it seems a perfect palace to any one who has sat for long across the way, with his feet tucked under his chair to prevent people treading on them. My writing-table lives here, and the bookcase and the typewriter and the files of unpaid bills. In the midst of one wall there is a small hatchway, which opens into the

pantry behind. Curious sounds float through occasionally, when the cook is having a difference of opinion with the *sukambali*—a subordinate official, corresponding to a scullery-maid—or when the cat is found stealing the milk. But in Africa servants, like the poor, are always with us, and nobody seems to mind. The Government has here been generous with windows—in fact, the whole front is taken up with them; it is the best room in the house, and our only regret is that the existence of the buttery-hatch does not allow of its being converted into a drawing-room.

Out of it leads the bedroom—a gaol of a place, I am sorry to say. Its walls are bare and white-washed, whereas those of the other two rooms are tinted with a fetching shade of blue calcarium, and can boast a few pictures. But the Public Works Department ran short of calcarium, and we of pictures; so the place has the depressing effect of a workhouse ward, which is conducive to bad dreams. One of these days we shall furnish it as it should be furnished. Beryl even cherishes visions of an ottoman at the foot of her bed, and is vastly indignant when I point out that, in that case, the only method of entry would be through the window. For a washstand and a dressing-table are indispensable, it would seem, and one or the other would certainly have to yield to the ottoman from mere exigency of space.

The house ends here, lengthways. There is a positive relief in turning at right angles and going through another door which leads in a new direction, even though it be only to find oneself in a

portion of what was, originally, the back verandah, but has been bricked off as a dressing-room. Here, again, space is at a premium. Everything possible has been hung upon the walls, including most of my clothes; but even then there is only just room for the bath. One learns to dress carefully in such a room as this, since unconsidered action may easily sweep a whole outfit of clean linen into a foot of soapy water.

On the last door of the series—which opens out on to the side verandah, and so down a set of slippery wooden steps, like those of the old-fashioned bathing machine, into the backyard—hangs a Sandow developer. If you have in any way followed the gist of the above description you will easily see that, once the bath has been brought in—which is the time I choose for my development—those sets of exercises in which you lie down on your back and wriggle your legs are utterly out of the question. So I confine myself to such posturings and plungings as can be conducted in a more or less upright condition, always remembering that the bath lies at my feet. Three days a week at least I bark my shins; on the remaining four I usually find myself tubbing before I intended to and, on these occasions, there are malevolent chuckles on the other side of the door which leads to the bedroom. Beryl seems to think I am not developing as rapidly as I should, according to the diagrams and muscle-maps which are supplied with each set.

I have forgotten to mention the spare room. That lies at the other end of the house, first turn



“THE QUADRANGLE IS COMPLETED BY THE OFFICE.”



“THE HOUSE ITSELF IS TYPICAL OF GOVERNMENT HOUSES IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD.”



to the right after you have passed the larder. It is, in fact, the end verandah, bricked in; and, lying as I have said, next door to the pantry, I have no doubt that our visitors occasionally suffer from rats. We can hear them (the rats, not the visitors) scuffling above the mat ceiling of the drawing-room every evening after dinner, and I invariably thank Providence that our bedroom lies far away and has no ceiling at all.

The spare bedroom is very comfortable for a bachelor. In fact, the only mishap I can remember occurred the last time the doctor stayed with us. There was a heavy rain-storm at the time, and his boy, in a mistaken zeal for fresh air, had left the window open. When I went to his room just before dinner, I found him sitting ruefully in a puddle on the floor, gravely wringing out sheets into a basin, which was already half full. The bed was just below the window, and, as the mosquito net had a linen top, an effective little shower-bath had been going on for some time. We mopped him up and gave him dry sheets and blankets; but he was not really happy for some while after.

For a married couple, however, the room must be a positive nightmare. Once we put a couple in there with a baby. It was a wicked thing to do, and I said as much to Beryl. The wretched husband pitched a tent outside the window for a bath-room, and for the first morning or two I saw him stealing at dawn, like a grey ghost, along the verandah, past the drawing-room window, down the steps, and round the path to the tent. Afterwards I missed this pilgrimage of his. I had



come to watch for it, and was at a loss to understand how he got to his tent until, the day before he left, I happened to see him climbing back through the window. Personally, I cannot blame him. I believe that I should have put the baby through the window as well.

On revising the above, it seems to me that there is a good deal about baths. This must not be construed as conceit. We are no cleaner out here than in any other part of the world; but the fact is that, in describing the geography of any house built upon the plan of ours, two main questions always arise. One is, how to get the baths into the bedroom without going through the dining-room; the other, how to avoid the drawing-room in clearing the dining-room table. Amateur architects are apt to overlook the most obvious details. It is all right when you have built or designed a house or two, as you probably will have done by the time you have been a couple of years in Central Africa; but in the beginning it is quite possible to make mistakes. There is a story (which I believe to be true) of a man who was laying his own bricks and, forgetting the necessity of a doorway, bricked himself up, and had to be dug out with a crowbar. More improbable things have happened.

Back premises are always uninteresting. Ours consist of a kitchen some ten yards from the house, with, next to it, a store where we keep potatoes, empty bottles, and the like. Most people are fortunate enough to possess an inside kitchen. Those who do not are at their happiest



on a windy, rainy night, when the soup is blown out of the plates as it crosses the compound, and the pudding arrives in the shape of a greasy, sodden mass. What Beryl has said, at various times, about the man who built and designed this particular house would fill a good sized book, and, I imagine, it would be read with avidity.

Behind the compound are the boys' huts. In line with them, some hundred yards away, is the gaol, where there are always three *askari* on guard. In theory, one man remains awake all night; in practice, they curl up and sleep soundly from dusk till dawn, except on the rare occasions when I go and kick them at midnight. The quadrangle is completed by the office, about the same distance from the gaol as the gaol is from the house. It has two rooms. I work in one, and the native clerk—a fat, smiling personage in white uniform, who writes the most extraordinary letters and does his work uncommonly well—in the other. Behind there is a store, filled with tents, calico, beads, soap and white ants.

You ought, by this time, to have some kind of mental picture of the station. It is just a month since I began to write this chapter. I may, perhaps, mention that it is still raining.

## FEBRUARY

Origin of the book—Lack of interest among British public—Orders to move—Packing—The stove—Furniture—Books—Literature for Central Africa—Periodicals—The whist quartette—Bokosi—Mwanakatwe—Kafwanka—Manolela—Handing over—The Lupolo-Malale road—Arrival at Malale—Sleeping sickness—Administrative measures—German East African and Congo borders—The sentimental value of Malale—The Malale house and station—Watson—His early trials—His departure.

THIS book is Beryl's idea. I had just finished a novel, and was promising myself a period of blissful inactivity after dinner o' nights, which is the only time at which I can find sufficient leisure to record my invaluable impressions for the benefit of a more or less pachydermatous public, when she glanced across and said, "Why don't you write something about us two, just to give people some idea of how we live and all that?"

I objected that there were only a mere handful of people in the world who cared to know how we lived, and that they would, in all probability, get the book from Mudie's, or else buy half-a-dozen copies and lend them round among themselves. But Beryl was not to be daunted.

"Our lives are so different from anything that

people at Home can possibly imagine," she said, "I'm certain a faithful description would interest lots of people."

There I completely disagree. We have all heard the truism that one half of the world does not know how the other half lives; what is much more to the point is that, as a general rule, it doesn't want to. Before we came to this part of Africa, Beryl and I spent some years further south. Compared with the Tanganyika Plateau, Southern Rhodesia is as mild and civilised as Brixton; but there were a few interesting things that had happened to us on outside stations, and when we got Home Beryl and I fired these off—a little proudly, perhaps—at the heads of cousins and aunts and chance acquaintances. They were received in cold and gloomy silence. People did not say that we were liars, but they obviously thought so. When we passed to little sketches of our daily life it was almost worse; they said, "Dear me!" "Really, now!" "How *very* interesting!" and switched off on to the last by-election or some new kind of coal that consumed its own smoke.

It has always been my honest belief that people in England do not wish to be told how their countrymen live in far-off lands. The Colonies exist: Africa is a shadowy, uncomfortable fact; India rather better defined, because such a lot of persons one knows have been there, but none the less a muggy, uncomfortable place, full of cobras, bombs, and seditious Baboos. They are quite happy where they are, thank you, and would much

rather not hear of places outside Little Muggleton, or wherever the nearest station may be. Because other people lead topsy-turvy, mad lives, there is no reason why solid, stay-at-home Britishers should be beguiled into reading about them.

That was the attitude which I took up with Beryl. I told her that such a book as she had sketched would not pay. She was incredulous. I said that not only would it not pay, but that probably no publisher would ever take the trouble to consider it. She was scornful. Then, in a weak moment, I admitted that I should like to write such a book, and she pinned me down at once and took the cover off the typewriter.

That was how the book came to be commenced. My wife is, in some ways, persevering, and I have no doubt that some day it will be finished. Whether it will ever be published is another matter.

But if it is I would ask you carefully to erase from your mind all impressions which you may have gleaned from reading the previous chapter. For, since I wrote that, we have been transferred to another station, so that all the descriptive matter will have to be gone through again. I am sorry—but Government did it. We go Home in December, so they are not likely to do it again—in this book, at any rate.

Beryl cried when I told her, and ten minutes later threw a soup-plate at the cook's head. Africitis again. However, it was only a short spell, and in the afternoon I began to pack. Administrative changes wait for no man, and my

relief is due in a week. As between now and then I have got to square up all outstanding matters in the office, collect a *ulendo*, or gang of carriers, and pack all the furniture so that it will travel on carriers' heads a hundred miles in the rain, it is probable that this faithful record of the proceedings will be somewhat disjointed.

\* \* \* \* \*

To-day we took the stove to pieces. The heaviest portion (probably a damper—any way, a square slab weighing several pounds) fell on the table-boy's toe, and the patching-up of him absorbed three-quarters of an hour of valuable time.

I hate that stove with a deadly hatred, even though it is the apple of Beryl's eye. To begin with, when I ordered it at Home, I gave distinct orders that it was to be dissected and packed in loads of not more than fifty pounds, for head-transport five hundred miles up country. The ironmonger, or whoever he was, smiled blandly, and said that I might rely on him to carry out instructions implicitly—in fact, he gave me to understand that he had packed up several scientific expeditions for various uninhabitable parts of the globe.

At Railhead I found what looked like a small wooden bungalow among my loads. It was the stove. And there, in the compound behind the store, among a litter of old iron and empty packing cases, with a tropical sun beating down upon my unaccustomed head, I wrestled with the wretched thing until it was resolved into its com-

ponent parts and could be divided among eight men. One foot was smashed clean off, and the tap of the boiler bent double by the time I had finished; but I didn't care, and returned brutal answers to Beryl's tearful reproaches.

On the journey up that stove haunted me. It was always miles behind the rest of the loads, and usually crawled into camp just as we were thinking about bed. Twice I was called upon to sally forth and rescue its wretched carriers from lions; each time, I am pleased to say, it was a false alarm. Finally, I hit upon a plan. The stove should be transformed into an instrument of Justice—a scourge, a Sisyphus' stone to strike terror into the hearts of evil-doers. It had worried me quite long enough, and it was high time that some one else should come to hate it as I did. So thenceforth the shirkers and the idlers and the insubordinate of the caravan—those men who did not bring in wood enough for the camp-fire and those who made trouble in the villages we passed—such men were condemned to the stove for a day, or, in grave cases, three. The *ulendo* was peaceable enough after that.

But I had not finished with it yet. A week after our arrival Beryl came to me and said that the cook wished to set up the stove. "Very well," I replied, "let him set it up." An hour later I went out to see how matters were progressing. Two more feet were off, and the chimney part looked like a tall hat that had been sat upon, while the cook was wringing his hands and calling for a hammer.





"A SCOURGE TO EVIL-DOERS."  
PART OF BERYL'S STOVE GOING UP COUNTRY.



"BERYL IS LONGING FOR THE TUBE."

(See page 265)





I set it up in two days—the most strenuous days that I have yet known. Willingly, at any stage, would I have bartered my somewhat superficial knowledge of French and German for the education of a blacksmith. Then a wild native who said he was a bricklayer came and built a chimney, and dropped a brick and snapped off the plate-rack.

And now it has to be packed again. Beryl tried to cheer me up by reminding me that we could probably get a good price for it when we go Home. I looked at her with a fishy eye and said nothing. If there is anything left of that stove to sell after this coming move I shall be very much surprised.

There are, of course, other things to be packed besides the stove. Item, a native-made dressing-table, which looks very nice when propped up in the bedroom, but which is a heartrending piece of furniture to pack. Last time, we swathed it in bracken and corded native mats round it—cases are, of course, out of the question. It took a morning to do, and we then found that it was too large to go out either by door or window, so the afternoon was consumed in unpacking it and repacking it outside. Unfortunately the bracken was damp, and it arrived in a pitiful condition of blue-mouldiness which had to be treated with monkey-nut oil.

Then there are the books. Not that we have very many, but they receive prior consideration and the best tin-lined boxes.

It is difficult for one who has lived all his life within hail of a circulating library to understand the inestimable value of books in such a country

as this. No one, however intimate a friend, can choose a man's books for him; and so the selection has to be left more or less to chance. Meanwhile one gnashes one's teeth in impotent rage over the latest reviews and wonders why the dickens So-and-so's latest has not been sent out by whoever is responsible at Home.

Indisputably it is not the country for heavy reading. The grinding monotony of official routine, the incessant flow of native cases (just sufficiently unlike one another to prevent one treating them by a mere casual reference to, say, "Specimen Case, page 7, Application for Divorce"), and, lastly, something insidious in the atmosphere itself, act as most effectual preventives of sustained mental effort. But there is a certain class of literature—rare enough, alas!—which makes all the difference between Heaven and Hell upon an isolated up-country station. No matter whether it be prose or verse, novel or essay, written with a purpose or frankly disdaining one, books of that particular *timbre* give just the mental fillip which is needed if a man is not to sink into utter, irretrievable savagery. One realises in a dim, subconscious fashion that there are other aspects of the world than rank green grasses, blinding mists of rain, and squalid huts; but as the months go by the perceptions become blunted, the memory fails, and the present overshadows both the past where one has known of such things and the nebulous future wherein one hopes against hope to experience them again in person.

To every man his own likes and dislikes. For

myself, when I say goodbye to England in April of next year or thereabouts, I shall leave explicit and detailed instructions with some reliable bookseller. He will have to send me every new book by Hichens, for example, by Mrs. Humphry Ward and Gertrude Atherton, by Stanley Portal Hyatt and Morley Roberts, and De Morgan and E. F. Benson ("A Reaping" has cured both Beryl and myself of Africitis more times than I can remember), and a host of others.

What one wants out here—at least, what I want, and Beryl's tastes are curiously similar—are delicate, lacy writings of the softer side of life—writings redolent of old-world fashions, and *pot-pourris* and rose-gardens, and old silver, of London and Paris and Vienna, and of the "*monde où l'on s'amuse*." When you have been living for months upon salt beef, a *bombe glacée* is a welcome change. There is too much realism, too much of the elemental about this land and its people. To drift away of an evening into utter forgetfulness, to lose oneself in a world of make-believe, is worth all the tonic compounds of the pharmacopœia.

I have said that our own stock of books is small. But it is well-thumbed and perhaps a trifle trite in selection. Bourget and Balzac, Thackeray and Marion Crawford, Edwin Arnold and the inevitable Omar in a rather gorgeous French edition, cheap copies of "The French Revolution" and "Sartor Resartus," some of Sterne and Smollett, Marcus Aurelius (for the hump), Austin Dobson, Swinburne, and Eric Mackay—these are some of the mainstays. One does not always need them,

but it is a comfort to know that they are at hand, waiting silently on a rough, ant-eaten bookshelf to do battle against some sudden hideous cloud of black depression and mental nausea.

I shall also—Providence and my bankers approving—order a goodly supply of papers and periodicals. My political views being utterly limpid and colourless and my knowledge of all burning questions nil, the party bias of any particular organ does not matter a jot. I shall take the *Nineteenth Century* as a matter of habit and the *National Review* because I want to be kept up to date about this German invasion, *Punch* because it is indispensable, and the weekly *Graphic* so that I may scan the features of prominent politicians, criminals, and the like, and feel that I know them as intimate friends. I shall also order the *Athenæum* in the hope that it may one day give me a really cordial review, and the *Overseas Daily Mail* in case I want new boots or a cheap watch. When I have read them—frequently, no doubt, before—Beryl will seize upon them to paper the larder shelves.

This, however, is an unpardonable digression. If I remember, Beryl and I were packing. That is to say, she was sitting on a table in a corner, I was filling a pipe, and the Whist Quartette were straining at a tangled mass of native string, raw cotton, and jagged planks on the verandah.

I have been wanting for some time to introduce you to the Quartette, but have refrained, for the simple reason that I felt I could never draw them for you as they really are. However, if you are

to gain any insight into our life out here some acquaintance with these particular savages is absolutely indispensable.

We christened them the Whist Quartette because none of them ever smile, and, in addition, their voices are low and remarkably well-modulated for natives. They are all Alungu, and each lays claim to royal blood—a common pretension among this particular tribe, but, I believe, in these cases well authenticated enough. One of them, I know, is a Hereditary Grave-Digger, but, as he has been with me now for close on three years, I suppose that some one else has been acting as *locum tenens* in the disposal of royal corpses.

The first is Bokosi, my wife's nurse. His duties are varied and, I should say, interesting. On *ulendo* he dries and warms Beryl's gloves, acts as stoker-in-chief to the camp-fire, carries her *machila*, is responsible for pillows, rain-coats, and a ridiculous little bag in which she keeps her keys, and sees that the deck-chairs are dry after rain, besides keeping awake most of the night in case anything else is needed. On the station he ranks as house *capitao*—a mixture of butler and land agent—catches the fowls at night and puts them to bed, supervises outside and inside alterations and repairs, leads malefactors apart by the ear for reproach or retribution, and interprets Beryl's attempts at the language to all and sundry. He is probably about fifty, with a kind old face resembling that of a goat; his head is invariably shrouded in cloth—an exception to native custom—and he has a marvellously fascinating way with

children, both white and black. Incidentally he is a gentleman, and therefore a *rara avis* among natives. Twenty-five years ago, when the country was first opened up, he attached himself to one of the original officials of the country, and since that time I doubt if he has for even one week reverted to the life of the ordinary native. I doubt if now it would be possible for him to go back to his village and live away from the white man.

The second of the Quartette is Mwanakatwe, a somewhat lachrymose individual with a head the shape of a squeezed lemon. The Diddybird always insists that this last fact is due to his having carried my wife across a river in flood some eighteen months ago. The current was intensely strong at the time and the bridge—the usual line of poles bound with twisted bark—was some two feet under water. On one side ran a sagging hand-rail of flimsy boughs, on the other the river swirled away on its tumultuous course to Bangweolo and eventually to the Congo, for it was the Chambezi, the head-waters of which are said to be the ultimate source of the great Congo River.

The Diddybird and I crossed first, and from the further bank took photographs of Beryl in mid-stream. She sat astride on Mwanakatwe's shoulders, set her teeth and squeezed hard. Gradually the wretched man's face lengthened, his eyebrows seemed to rise to a point, his nose to droop, his eyes to become mere vertical slits. But he staggered bravely on, supported by a shrieking crowd, while Beryl clung to him like a veritable Old Woman of the Sea, and they reached us with-



out mishap. The photograph which I have is one of my most cherished possessions.

Unfortunately Mwanakatwe has now developed some affection of the foot—a common one enough—which debars him from all *ulendos*. It is a pity, as he used to be one of the best *machila* men I have ever met. However, he has proved to be also the best and most conscientious gardener in the country, and Beryl loves him for it, so I suppose things are for the best. She and he have animated discussions about worms and beetles, cauliflowers and some funny little weeds which Beryl says are sweet peas. Mwanakatwe rarely speaks to me; when he does it is usually to beg a little medicine for himself or his wife or his baby. But I believe he is really very happy, though he certainly does not give the fact away.

Third on the list stands Kafwanka, a ghoulish spectre of a man with slit ears—witness that he was once a slave of the Angoni. His blood is in reality the best of them all, and he is, I believe, in measurable distance of the sacred Stool of the Tafuna, the Paramount of the Alungu. To look at him one would say he had one foot and two or three toes of the other in the grave. But wait until you see him stoking the camp-fire, waving great logs like so many twigs, balancing huge poles upon his shoulder, to spring deftly aside with a half-turn and a crash and splutter of sparks. No! there's life in the old dog yet. He must be within reach of sixty, yet he comes on every *ulendo*, and though Bokosi can perhaps give him points in running (for Bokosi is distinctly a sprinter—his lean legs

can twinkle marvellously on occasion), I would back Kafwanka every time for weight-lifting and putting the log.

Kafwanka and Bokosi are the Damon and Pythias of the staff, being close blood-relations. One rarely sees them apart. On the road, if they are carrying the *machila*, there is always one at each end of the pole. On the station they hold each others' measuring pegs and bash each others' thumbs with hammers and the like in loving companionship. Last rains they produced one night on *ulendo* a large square of white calico—probably their joint accumulations of *poso*, or food cloth—and gravely proceeded to stretch it over a horizontal pole after the fashion of a tent. It was complete in every way, ropes and all, except that it had no ends and was not in the least watertight. The first difficulty was overcome by the hanging of Bokosi's blanket at one end and Kafwanka's at the other. The second did not seem to matter.

Being interested in the experiment, Beryl, the Diddybird, and I strolled up that night to see them in bed. It was an affecting sight. Kafwanka lay with his arm round Bokosi's scraggy neck and his battered old toes sticking out under the blanket, while the rain poured in impartially upon them both.

The last of the gang is Manolela, who, by the way, is the Grave-Digger. Originally he was a corporal in the police; what he must have looked like in uniform I cannot imagine. Eventually it occurred to some one in authority that Manolela was not earning a penny of his pay, so he was



discharged. For utter, sheer ingenuity in shirking work I have never seen his equal; in fact, we keep him for that reason, as his wiles and wariness are so intensely interesting. You put him on a job and he attacks it lustily, with an air of ferocious determination, for he is a brawny, upstanding heathen. If you so much as bend to flick a beetle off your boots Manolela vanishes. Go in quest of him and you will hear his peculiar, raucous giggle proceeding from a hut. Drag him out and lead him back by the ear—he giggles again, and in five minutes' time he is back again in the hut like a Jack-in-the-box. But he is an excellent *capitao*, and possesses the knack of getting a tremendous amount of work out of other people, so that I suppose in a way he is worth his keep.

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My relief arrived two days ago, fresh from England, home, and beauty. He is a friendly person with plenty to say for himself, and within twenty-four hours we had been furnished with a fairly accurate diary of his leave, embellished with thumb-nail sketches of most of the people he had met. The next day was filled in with hints and expositions upon the correct way to run a division, the importance of the personal factor, the extreme value of sympathy with the native, and the superiority of, let us say, the Lupolo Division to all and sundry.

As a matter of fact, he is an extremely competent official. I made a considerable hole in the whisky which he had brought out with him, and we

parted the best of friends. But my ears are still buzzing.

It is hard to believe that Government can know that such a road as that from Lupolo to Malale exists. Otherwise I am convinced that they would never have sent us on it in the rains. Certainly there are only four "sleeps" between the two stations, but the days which lead up to those "sleeps" would have given Doré many new and original ideas for his pictures of Hell. Almost as soon as it leaves Lupolo the road begins to climb upwards. In most parts it is nothing but a drain, down which the water rushes in a swirling torrent, sweeping your feet from under you upon the slimy, red clay. Then down again, slithering and stumbling, with the water running out of your boots and the blackness of futile despair in your heart. Then up once more—a veritable switch-back, until a momentary glimpse of Tanganyika, blue, placid, and peaceful, as if no such disease as Sleeping Sickness lurked along its shores, lends you for a moment heart of grace. But thereafter it is the same once more until, some ten miles from Malale, you come upon a stretch of level road and thank God for it.

But even that does not last. For, insidiously at first, then more brazenly, it begins to rise once more.

Beryl slid most of the way from Lupolo with her arms round Bokosi's neck and her hat jammed over one eye. There was mud up to her knees in front and even higher behind, as she sat down about every eight minutes. A *machila* was utterly

out of the question; even carrying the empty one the men slithered and plunged incessantly. How the stove and the dressing-table (which we had passed on the road, one leg, naked and bedraggled, waving brazenly at us from the sodden bracken) and the various other loads ever reached Malale is beyond my comprehension. What is still more wonderful is that, having caught a glimpse of the place, the carriers ever waited to be paid.

There is no use disguising the fact. Malale is not a paradise. Lupolo was, more or less, which makes the contrast the more pointed. When we breasted the crest of the last—the very last—hill and gazed down upon the station, Beryl and I held each others' hands and gasped. Then we slid bravely down the slope, whistling very cheerfully, but a little out of tune.

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The division of Malale is what is known as a Sleeping Sickness Area. That is to say, in certain parts of it—notably along the shores of the lake, and of the rivers which flow into it for a certain distance from their mouths—can be found the horrible little insect which has of late years caused so much worry and trouble, nay, tragedy and death, in tropical Africa—the *Glossina palpalis*, the particular tsetse fly which transmits the infection of this fell disease.

It would be unfitting in such random sketches as these to attempt to discuss at any length a question so wide in its bearings, so vastly important, as that of Sleeping Sickness. Moreover, medical knowledge is necessary to accurate

treatment, and although the official who is placed in charge of an area quickly becomes absorbed in the question, and devours the latest literature on the subject with all the avidity of, say, a stamp-collector to whom is given a philatelic magazine, his knowledge must, of necessity, remain crude and scrappy for lack of a medical groundwork.

But the administrative conditions are interesting also. For the whole division is a huge quarantine ground. A line—the high road, as it happens—has been drawn across the northern portion of the map, and at each village along this road are stationed native messengers, whose whole duty it is to see that no one passes into or out of the area without a pass. Inside the area are some sixty villages, with a total population, men, women and children, of roughly twelve thousand. There, for the present, they must remain—until either the repressive measures have been crowned with success, and the fly disappears or becomes, beyond all manner of doubt, incapable of transmitting infection, or until the disease spreads beyond the borders of the area and further quarantine is useless. The former result cannot be expected for some years to come—the latter is vastly improbable, since, in this country, at least, the disease makes but slow progress. So the official sits on his station or patrols his border, and the natives, long ago reconciled to the new conditions, cultivate peaceably, are born and marry and die, and probably do not in the least understand why

any one should pity them. Certainly they do not speculate upon the future.

Conditions are not, after all, so hard as they might, at first sight, appear. For a really good reason a man may be allowed out of the area to visit relatives and so forth—always supposing that he has been “palpated” and that there are no suspicious glands at the base of his neck—at present the recognised test, although it is said to be an unsatisfactory one. Similarly men from free areas may visit inside the charmed circle—but for, at most, a day or two. For, down there by the lake, some six miles from the Boma, there are still *palpalis* thirsting for the blood of human beings. And, also, down in the lake are fish to be caught—the prize delicacy of all these lake-dwellers, and now unobtainable, since all the canoes have been confiscated and all the villages moved away from the shore. So there is another boundary which has to be guarded—the boundary that hems in the lake shore. Three years ago villages were scattered along its length, the blue waters of the lake were dotted with canoes, gardens grew almost down to the water’s edge. Now it is deserted, lonely as a dead world, save for the crocodiles and an occasional patrol who wanders along on the lookout for breakers of the law, and, it must be confessed, for the more than occasional caravan of Swahili smugglers who still patronise their old trading-routes on dark nights when God-fearing men are asleep. But of them more anon.

The frontier line of the area is some one hundred miles in length. The line of the lake shore is, roughly, about the same. And it is the duty of the Malale official with some twenty-five native messengers and twelve *askari* to preserve the integrity of those borders. That is his *raison-d'être*. Such matters as taxes, cases and the like are subsidiary to this shepherding of his flock. But the district census is more important here than in other divisions. Elsewhere it is kept more for fiscal and statistical purposes; here in the Sleeping Sickness Area every man, woman and child in each of the sixty villages must be known and noted, so that newcomers may be traced, fugitives reported, and every person be produced for the periodical inspection of the medical officer.

The situation—which in the heart of British territory would be simple enough—is here complicated by the geography of the division. On the east, extending northwards up the lake, is German East Africa; on the west, the Congo Free State. From neither side can much assistance be looked for—the Germans have their own system of safeguarding their people, and the Belgians theirs. And just here lies one of the great caravan-routes of Central Africa—the main trade-road between the depths of the Congo with its wealth of rubber and ivory on the one hand and, northward, on the other, Ujiji and Zanzibar, the markets of the African world.

Much has been done already. In 1908 all the



lake villages were removed beyond the danger zone—and that without the slightest administrative disturbance. For a time it seemed as if the risk of famine among these transplanted people might become a serious matter, for native gardens are not made in a day. But the danger had been foreseen, and nothing worse than a temporary shortage resulted. We were dealing with a docile people, and, moreover, dealing with them after the approved standards of British administration, sympathetically but firmly, appealing to their good sense rather than adopting coercive measures.

Much remains to be done. When the time is ripe it will be done. And, in the meantime, thousands of lives have been saved. So that, on the whole, Malale Boma has a sentimental value as the centre of administrative measures, even though its untidy, bedraggled huts and general air of poverty-stricken unhappiness may strike a depressing chill into the heart of the newcomer. Unfortunately, that sentimental value is no protection against draughts.

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I gleaned most of the above information yesterday evening from the man I am relieving, over whiskies and sodas in a sufficiently depressing mud-walled dining-room.

The whole house is mud—that is to say, “wattle and daub,” a glorification of the native method of hut-building. It consists of three rooms, with various shut-in spaces at the back which serve as dressing-room, pantry, &c.

There is no hall; one enters from a weedy path by way of a verandah which is evidently liable to sudden collapse, since it is shored up with poles placed diagonally at frequent intervals. Inside and out are discolourations upon the whitewashed walls where the white ants have worked their sweet will; here and there, indeed, the plaster has tumbled wholesale, and the light of day streams in.

Save for the dining-room there are no doors. On the right is our host's bedroom, with a curtain flapping disconsolately in the connecting aperture—on the left a similar room, which he uses as a sitting-room, and which he has most considerately placed at our disposal until the time comes for him to evacuate altogether. A similar *portière* divides this from the dining-room—which, be it understood, is the main thoroughfare. Therefore a bath is not a matter to be rashly undertaken, without due reconnoitring and the adjustment of blankets over the doorway.

Overhead, up in the gloom, are the poles and grass and rusty bark bindings of the roof. Underfoot—praise be to the saints and to the outgoing tenant—are strips of invaluable rubberoid, thanks to which the rooms are singularly free from beetles, cockroaches, and the like. Even the white ants have broken their hearts over it, and have given up their attempts to penetrate it in disgust.

The rest of the station is in keeping. From the front verandah the view includes, in the



order of their proximity, a tall red ant-heap, a brick-kiln (for we hope to build a new Boma some day in the future), a ragged-looking cattle kraal and the huts of the herdsman, the roofs of the station village—rising, just now, out of a sea of mealies—and a vast swamp, fringed with palm-trees, where there are said to be sitatunga and snipe. Across the swamp is a *nyika* or plain, which looks promising for roan and reedbuck, at least. Out in the distance are the hills over which we have come on our journey from Lupolo.

From the side verandah one sees a tall flag-staff of jointed telegraph poles, lurching precariously sideways, a large circular office-hut, a circular gaol, and two conical native bins, in which is the station grain supply. On this side there is a ridge, and upon it can be faintly discerned the tops of grass shelters, wherein are several hundred thousand bricks. This is the new site—and when the European builder arrives we shall build there if we are still alive. It ranks as a Mecca already, though we have been two days in the place; before the week is out Beryl and I will, no doubt, have learned to prostrate ourselves towards it at dawn and at dusk.

Watson, our host, is almost the exact antithesis of our friend at Lupolo. Silent, reserved—one would almost say morose, were it not for a dry, caustic humour which is stimulating to a degree—he has seen the Sleeping Sickness movement through from its infancy. He it was who moved

the villages, he who toured the division with the District Surgeon when first the news of the pest was bruited abroad. They transferred him then to this temporary station at Malale, and here he has been ever since. If any man has earned his leave one would say that he has done so. Beryl and I will, no doubt, survive our nine months' sojourn, interspersed with attacks of Africitis and buoyed up by the hope of homegoing; but the life here of a solitary man hardly bears considering.

Yet, I imagine, he was happy enough. When first the area was proclaimed there must have been more than enough work to occupy the days—later, a commission from the Liverpool School came out from England and camped at the top of the cliffs overlooking the lake, some eight miles away. The medical officer toured the division constantly, and, in the intervals, consignments of rabbits, guinea-pigs, and monkeys arrived for purposes of research—so that, perhaps, he was not so lonely as he might have been. Besides which, there is a station of the local Missionary Society six miles away, and it is only forty miles to “the Metropolis”—the headquarters of the district.

We spent to-day in handing and taking over the station—weighing grain, counting cakes of soap, inspecting the kits of the police, checking trusses of calico, and the like. In the meantime Beryl, who took over the commissariat from lunch-time, was organising some kind of system in the kitchen, and wringing her hands at intervals over the dearth of eggs and fowls. As a preliminary she pulled

down a line of disreputable hutches wherein the live-stock of the commission had been accommodated, and set a gang of men to work on the straightening of paths and the digging of drains. It is all very praiseworthy—but rather uphill work after the trim comfort of Lupolo.

Watson himself eyes her efforts with benignant approval. He knows that we bear him no grudge for the condition of the station—why, indeed, should he have troubled himself when, for all he knew, the new Boma might be commenced any day? When a man lives alone, such trifles as the set of a garden walk or the insecurity of a log fence are matters of the remotest indifference. Indeed, I believe that when he first came to Malale he lived for three months in the dry season without either doors or windows. As there was (and still is) no fireplace in the house, he existed in an overcoat, with a dressing-gown on top by way of evening-dress.

To-morrow he goes. His loads are packed, his carriers are in. In three weeks or a month he will be at Railhead—another three and the smoke and fogs of London Town will have swallowed him up. Malale and its petty discomforts and its vital interests will have faded like a dream. The lake and the cliffs, the scattered villages and the days of travel, the blare of the bugle and the drone of litigants, will have fallen from him like a mantle—he will doubtless have forgotten even that that mantle must, sooner or later, be re-assumed.

Good luck go with him! I doubt if, at the

moment, I would change places with him. Malale, despite its drawbacks, seems an interesting place, and I should like to know more about it before the time comes for us to return to the fleshpots.

## MARCH

Native close season—Bush and *nyika* shooting—A week-end shoot—Things go wrong—Unsuccessful chase of a roan—News of eland—Jack—A tremendous herd—Shoot three eland—Jack's tactics—A note out of the darkness—Swahili on the move—Smuggling caravans and preventive measures—I decide to go—Beryl left behind—Contrast between South and Central Africa as regards the Black Peril—We start off—A storm on the cliffs—Native method of averting lightning—Down the cliffs—The guide and the abyss—Down at last—Into “fly”—The birds flown—Back to camp—A Job's comforter.

THERE is no close season in this country for the sportsman. The ordinary game licence—upon which may be shot most animals except elephant, rhinoceros, zebra, and eland—is available all the year round. But Nature makes her own close season, none the less. For all practical purposes the ordinary *nyika*-shooting—that is, the kind of shooting when the whole country is burned as bare as the palm of your hand, except upon the plains, where the young grass is just beginning to sprout, and where you may be sure of finding a herd of roan, hartebeeste, reedbuck or waterbuck any morning or evening—this class of shooting, then, only obtains from, say, mid-August until

the end of December. During the rest of the year—and, therefore, just now—the game has to be found. For the country is now waist-high with supple green grass; the bush is thick with new growth, every tree-stump and trunk hidden in its leafy clothing, and there is a plenitude of water everywhere. Far from frequenting the open plains, as they do later in the year, the buck have now taken to the bush, and must be “spooed” to be bagged.

The Diddybird professes to prefer bush to *nyika*-shooting. It is a fertile source of argument between us. Candidly, I do not. What I like is the sharp whistle of the man ahead—the sudden crouching in one’s tracks, as horns and backs and switching tails suddenly flash upon one’s ken—half a mile, it may be, across a strip of blank plain, bare save for an ant-hill here, an undulation there. Then comes the feeling for the wind and the laying of plans—and, ultimately, the long, slow stalk, as often as not under a scorching sun that burns through one’s hunting-shirt, over spiky, charred grass-blades and stubble that scratch one’s bare knees and elbows unmercifully. Nearer and nearer—until the muscles of one’s neck and thighs begin to crack, and one feels that it would be better to risk all and chance a long shot, so impossible does it seem that the herd can ever be reached. And then, at last, the range has shortened to a hundred and fifty or a hundred yards. Slowly, and with infinite caution, one props a tender, half-skinned elbow upon a tussock of grass, looks for the bull or the biggest cow (since cows,

as well as bulls, must be shot for food), aims as carefully and as steadily as is possible under the circumstances, and—pulls the trigger.

With luck there comes a “clop,” and an animal drops. Quick reloading often gives a second shot, for most buck, if not too often shot at, will stand at the first report, and perhaps another bounds into the air, to drop dead beside his friend.

At any rate, whatever the result, one has had the pleasure of the stalk, the sour-sweet bliss of uncertainty, spread out over, it may be, ten or twenty minutes. Not, I am afraid, that the recollection of an exciting stalk has ever at the moment been of real solace to the hunter who has missed his buck—but it is of inestimable value in retrospect.

Contrast the doubtful joys of bush-shooting. You must commence by finding a recent spoor—which, as often as not, will prove a delusion, if a herd is travelling fast and your time is limited. Once on the spoor you must follow—it may easily be for three hours—alert and loaded, if not at full-cock. Every rustle in the bush will make you stiffen expectantly, every sound cause you to throw your rifle to your shoulder. Then, after two or three hours, when you are beginning to believe that there is nothing bigger than a beetle alive in the country-side—crash! A big bull water-buck has been looking at you for the last few seconds, immovable beside a tree, the trunk of which matched his dark, silky coat completely. You didn't know it—but he did. Just a flash of a white tail, the gleam of horns, the thud of hoofs,



and he has gone—probably with a badly-aimed bullet plopping into a tree some twenty yards behind him. If so, back you may go to camp; for you have scared everything within a couple of miles at least.

The Diddybird calls my kind of shooting target-practice; I retort by comparing his to the sort which obtains in cheap booths at a country fare, where you blaze wildly at swinging bottles and ridiculous running rabbits, and all manner of other irritating baubles. But I notice that, in the dry weather, he is keen enough on my despised *nyika*-shooting—and I must admit that, in the rains, I often go out in the bush of a week-end.

That happened this week. Beryl and I were rather tired of the charms of Malale; the love-in-a-cottage business (a very draughty cottage, be it remembered) was getting distinctly overworked, and we decided to sleep out on the Saturday and return late on the Sunday evening. Our plans were altered, as will be seen; but the first part of the programme was adhered to rigidly enough.

There is a village about nine miles out, where I had reason to believe a large herd of eland had their headquarters. Now, I had never shot a decent cow, and badly wanted a head—for to my mind the long, slender horns of a good cow eland are infinitely more desirable a trophy than the shorter and more massive ones of the male.

To the proper understanding of what comes after I must mention that the back tyre of my bicycle—which had been punctured a few weeks before, and at which I had been tinkering for five



solid days—gave out, just as I topped the rise out of Malale (up which I had walked most of the way) and just as I saw before me the long “free-wheel” slope which led down to the hunting-ground nine miles away. So I sent it back, with instructions that a “*machila* team” should follow, and set off to trudge the distance.

Everything went wrong somehow. My boots began to hurt before I had gone half a mile. I had done no walking lately, and was out of condition. My *machila* men were somehow delayed and never caught me up at all—while Beryl’s *machila* was a mere speck of dust in less than no time. The day was blazing hot, and, to crown all, I found that the *capitao* had misjudged the distance, and that it was much nearer twelve miles than nine.

However, I arrived—somewhere about three o’clock. Beryl was not in the best of tempers—goodness knows why—and I told her so, which led to a silent and badly digested lunch. Thereafter I set out for the game.

At first, ill-luck continued to dog me. It began to rain just as I left camp, and I had to plod for nearly two hours with a raincoat flapping at my heels and the sodden ground squelching at every stride. The spoor had been clear enough at first—evidently a large herd of eland had been feeding on that very ground that morning—but they had moved off across a wide plain, which was now but little better than a swamp, and through it we had to trudge after them.

After two hours I gave up and turned towards

camp. Ten minutes later we saw a roan in the bush. He was a fine, solitary bull, and my heart warmed towards him. But the wind was short and choppy, and he evidently got a whiff of us—not quite enough to make him take to his heels altogether, but sufficient to cause him to skip about from bush to bush, just out of range—a far more irritating proceeding under the circumstances. After following him for some while, now crawling on all fours after the approved fashion of the Boy Scout, now plodding on, grimly erect, in irritable defiance, I turned off short in disgust and again made for camp.

We had come, by now, some eight miles—that made twenty in all that day, and I was beginning to feel that shooting, as a pastime, was vastly overrated. Suddenly the luck turned. I heard a low whistle on my right, and turning, saw a man whom I had detached about half an hour before with instructions to locate the eland if he could.

From his face I saw at once that he had been successful. He was evidently bursting with news which, as yet, he did not dare to shout aloud. So he merely made the most horrible grimaces, and nodded his head like a Chinese mandarin, plunging through the grass as he did so and jerking his thumb over his shoulder as he came.

Yes, they were there—just the other side of a belt of trees. Ah, but such a herd as the Bwana had never seen; with a bull among them which, from his description, must have been the size of a church.

“Many?” I asked, as I loaded the .450.

“Hundreds, Bwana!”—an obvious lie, as the spoor had shown us that the herd consisted of twenty head at most.

“Bulls?”

He reverted to the previous pantomime to express some idea of the size of one bull at least—then conceded that the majority were cows. This was the more satisfactory, as I had not told the men that I wanted a cow—they will naturally follow bulls if they can, as the meat is more plentiful—so possibly it was the truth.

I sent back the crowd behind, and signed for Jack to come up. You have not been introduced to Jack, by the way—an unpardonable oversight. He is a cross between a rough-haired terrier and a pointer, about the size of a collie, black and white, with a square head and a long tail. Notwithstanding his pedigree and the fact that I bought him from a native for a sovereign (although he had been born in a white family), his manners are those of a gentleman, and there is nothing that he loves so much in all the world as to be let loose on the blood-spoor of a wounded buck. Last year he saved me several puku and hartebeeste; but he had never seen an eland before, and I was anxious to see what he would make of one, seeing that the average bull weighs well over 1,000 lb. and stands nearly as high as a horse.

Jack and I and the gun-boy crawled slowly and cautiously towards the belt of trees. The scrub was thin here; and beyond, I could see a small stream and a little plain. The stream led

towards an ant-heap, and we waded up to it knee-deep in water.

I crawled up the ant-heap and looked over the top. I have never seen such a sight in my life. Clearly this was not the herd whose spoor we had been following, or else those scattered individuals had merged themselves in the sum total. For the plain was positively black with eland; here a knot of cows, there a clump of young bulls, yonder a bunch of calves. Even as I looked a party of old bulls sauntered away from the densely-packed mass and walked towards me. Within fifteen yards of the ant-heap they stopped, flicked their tails leisurely, cropped a blade of grass or two, and sauntered back again.

I lay there for a good ten minutes trying to count the herd; it was almost impossible, for individuals moved from place to place continuously and the switching of tails made my eyes hazy. But I am convinced that there were not less than two hundred and fifty eland on that little plain, certainly not more than a quarter of a mile square.

After my first amazement at the sight I began to realise that it was a case of *embarras de richesse*. Cows there were, in plenty, of all sizes and ages; but how to make sure of a good, even of an average head? Close-packed as they were, it was almost impossible to see to which particular animal any one pair of horns belonged. Besides, I could hear Jack grumbling away behind me, intensely indignant at so unwarrantable a delay, and I was afraid that, in a minute or two, he would

give one of the frenzied yelps for which I have chastised him so often.

Just then three cows came apart from the rest. The horns of one at least looked above the average—those of the other two were not so long, but, under the circumstances, as good as I could hope to obtain. Fortunately none of them had a calf with her. So I got the .450 fairly on to the shoulder of the best of the three and let drive.

In a second pandemonium was let loose. The animal I had hit gave a wild leap in the air and fell dead, almost without a kick. But the rest stamped and snorted and lashed their tails, and the very earth shook beneath their hoofs.

The other two cows were still distinct from the *mêlée*, and at them I fired two more shots in quick succession, one apiece. Then, at last, the herd came to their senses, and streamed off across the plain like a huge mob of cattle, while a streak of black and white flashed past me—Jack, let loose.

The two last-wounded cows divided, one going to the left and one to the right. They were both badly hit, but the one on the right seemed to be making off. I saw Jack dash for the one on the left, and reckoned that she would be safe with him, so off I went after the other.

When she settled into her stride I began to doubt if she was so badly hurt as I had imagined. After a hundred yards or so she gained on me rapidly, and was soon well ahead. The going was heavy, and I had the rifle in my hands. However,

we plunged on, until she pulled up in a little clearing for just too short a time to allow me to get a steady shot. Then off she went again.

I was almost in despair, for a wounded eland will travel for hours together. I glanced back and saw the gun-boy following up. And the next moment, up dashed Jack—head down, tail out, but going with the precision of a machine.

He flung me a glance as he passed, as much as to say "Don't you worry! I'll fix her!" and vanished. Then I knew that the cow was safe, and stood for a moment to take breath and steady my aim. Sure enough, a minute later I heard his deep bay—half a mile ahead it seemed.

A few seconds later he was back again. I knew his tactics: it meant that she was safe. With an encouraging wag of the tail he was off once more, and following the spoor, I came upon him quickly enough.

The cow stood under a small tree, panting heavily. Each time she moved, Jack dashed in and snapped at her heels. Every now and again the huge horns would come round with a whistling sweep—but the dog was never there.

One shot finished her—she crashed to the ground and never moved. It was then that Jack had the narrowest escape of his life, for she fell almost on top of him. An inch more, and the poor old chap would have been a flattened lump of flesh and bone.

When I heard the story of the second cow, I almost wished that I had waited to see it out. For it appeared that, as she would not die, Jack had



sprung at her tail and, swinging to it, had kept her until a man could finish her with a spear.

It sounds like murder, I know—three eland in one afternoon ; but as a matter of fact there were extenuating circumstances. I had a large number of carriers with me, who had agreed to come out on the chance of meat alone. They had been out the week before also, and had drawn a blank. And, besides, I was anxious to buy grain, as the supply was low. So I can assure you that not a pound of the meat was wasted.

I did not get back to camp until close upon seven o'clock, and had, by that time, walked a good twenty-four miles. Beryl's temper had improved (she made the same remark about mine, curiously), and a fairly stiff whisky-and-soda made me flatter myself that I was only comfortably tired. And then, suddenly, there came a bolt from the blue, in the shape of the small boy who sweeps the office, who appeared like an evil little ghost out of the darkness with a note in his hand.

I glanced at the address casually enough. Notes turn up in Central Africa at all hours of the day and night, and even out in the veld one is by no means immune from them. For a moment I thought it might be from the builder—long expected, long overdue, and eagerly awaited. Had he turned up at last, and, finding us away, sent this note after me? Or was it an auditor from headquarters, thirsting for the key of my office safe?

My dilatoriness in opening the letter nearly drove Beryl frantic—for she has the crowning



vice of curiosity in common with most of her sex. So, in deference to her expostulations, I opened it at last.

It proved to be from the native clerk—a few lines in unimpeachable English, engrossed in the most scholarly hand upon an official memorandum form, in which he had the honour to inform me that a large “track” (presumably “trek”) of Swahilis had been reported as having slept the previous evening some six miles from the station.

For a moment or two the words conveyed to me simply nothing at all. Then I began to realise their drift. From what little I had seen of this highly educated personage—he had only come to me the week before—I had conceived a certain respect for his common sense. If he took the trouble to send a note after me at this time of night, it was clearly because he fancied it would be worth my while to know.

I have already referred to the prevalence of smuggling along the lake shore. But a further digression is necessary.

As has been pointed out, Malale itself lies upon what was, until quite recently, one of the best used trade-routes of this part of Africa. Even before the advent of Sleeping Sickness, the evasion of duty on the part of Swahili caravans passing between the Congo and German East Africa, laden on the outward journey with trade goods such as cloths and calico, on the return with rubber and ivory, had been a thorn in the side of the Malale official. But, since the introduction of the new regulations, the matter had become a hundred

times more urgent. For, although the native population had been removed from the shore, the fly remained. All the hopes and efforts of the administration had been directed for the last two and a half years to the ultimate stamping out of infection, by the common-sense method of removing all human flesh and blood out of reach of the *palpalis*. Yet, thanks to these incorrigible caravanners—the rascallions of the country, the “hard nuts,” one may say, of all three territories, British, German, and Belgian—men, moreover, as far superior to the ordinary native in cunning and education as is the European to the aborigine, who moved calmly and perpetually from one infected area to another with as little fear of detection as of infection—it seemed as if all the work of the past must be rendered useless.

Of what use to confiscate canoes, keep up a costly force of messengers and police, move villages wholesale, and establish famine funds for those who suffered in consequence, when bodies of thirty or more moved nonchalantly every fortnight or three weeks across the very ground which we were striving to keep uninhabited?

Watson, before he left, had commended the matter to my keenest attention. He felt very strongly on the matter himself, and had asked headquarters for a launch in which to patrol the lake. Unfortunately it was impossible to grant the request.

There was a certain fascination in the pursuit of such caravans. The smugglers travelled only

by night, lying up in the daytime in well-hidden retreats along the shore or on the cliffs which fringe the lake. They seemed to be gifted with almost superhuman ingenuity, which was, in reality, merely the result of a well-engineered spy system, since their informants were posted throughout the division, and word was sent to them of every patrol of mine which left the station. They avoided the vicinity of villages and gardens, and, when one path was blocked by a patrol, merely turned aside across country, or made part of the journey by water. And hitherto all my efforts to intercept a caravan had been unavailing.

I had tried everything. "Plain-clothes" natives (literally, since their whole wardrobe consisted of a yard of calico) prowled along bush-paths at night, listened at hut-doors, scanned the lake from the cliffs in search of canoes. Messengers and *askari* patrolled the shore unceasingly. Large rewards were promised in the event of a capture being effected. But hitherto it had been all in vain. Often enough I had been told that a caravan had just passed; but that was entirely and absolutely useless, since, when actually on the move, they travelled at such speed that it was hopeless to pursue them.

To-night, however, the chances seemed more in my favour. I knew that the caravan in question would not begin to move until sunset, and that its route would bring it within six or seven miles to the north of me, along the shore. For, at the particular point where we were encamped, the

division narrows, between the lake and the high-road, to a stretch of seven miles as the crow flies—eight, if you include a vertical mile down the face of the cliffs.

Was it worth while, or would it prove merely a wild-goose chase? For the life of me I could not make up my mind.

I tossed the note across to Beryl. She read it, and puckered up her forehead.

“I felt that would happen, as soon as we left the station!” she said. “Surely you aren’t thinking of going down to-night?”

But I was. That was just the point. It seemed a golden opportunity, too good to be allowed to slide. On the other hand, the boy had just brought in my bath water, and my bed, seen through the looped-back flap of the tent, looked particularly inviting in the red gleam of the fire. I began to think of the twenty-four miles I had walked that day. Also, it looked very like rain, and there was an ominous growling in the distance which sounded like a storm brewing somewhere over the lake.

The main difficulty, of course, was Beryl. I must admit that she had never appeared an incubus before; she has a marvellous knack of adapting herself to circumstances, and accepts, philosophically enough, situations which would raise on end the hair of the average woman. To-night, however, she was a definitely disturbing factor.

For, undoubtedly, if I went, she would have to stay behind. She certainly could not stumble

along bush-paths at night, to say nothing of going down a cliff which was like the wall of a house. And at the bottom of the cliff were *palpalis*—certainly, theory has it that they do not bite at night, but one's wife is hardly a fit subject for experiment.

On the other hand, if she stayed, she would have to sleep in camp by herself. There was, I felt convinced, no actual danger; but she and I had, during our first year in the country, a midnight visit from a lioness, which, together with its sequel, we are neither of us likely to forget so long as we live. Beryl has been a little nervous at night since then; most women would have booked their passage home by the next boat.

By way of solving the problem, I went in and had a bath. Almost unconsciously, after the bath, I again got into my hunting clothes. Then I came out and sat by the fire again and held a council of war.

The consensus of native opinion seemed to be that we should be successful, provided we reached the lake at dawn. I knew nothing of the country, and so was forced to rely upon various hopelessly divergent expositions of the geography of the place. But they were all unanimous as to the road being bad. They were quite right; I discovered that later for myself.

Fortunately I had two *askari* with me. One of them, therefore, could be posted on guard outside Beryl's tent, together with the faithful Bokosi and Kafwanka, and half a dozen men to keep the fires going—which they would have done in any case, seeing that there was plenty of meat.

Beryl had by this time quite entered into the spirit of the thing; her only anxiety was lest I should be bitten by "fly," or accidentally obliterated by the cavernous blunderbuss of some desperate smuggler. And so in the end, having packed up some cocoa, bread and cheese, and a flask of whisky, together with a change of clothes—for the night promised to be wet and windy—and having selected some twenty men to carry a *machila* in case it was necessary, I started out of camp at ten o'clock by the light of a lantern and half a dozen grass torches.

Perhaps I had no right to go. I certainly felt guilty enough as I stalked out into the darkness and the gleam of the fires was swallowed up by the pitch-black night. Nevertheless, in my heart of hearts I knew full well that old Bokosi was absolutely to be trusted, and that no harm could possibly come to Beryl so long as he, Kafwanka, and the *askari* were there. It affords rather an interesting insight into the character of the Plateau native that a woman may be left by herself at night, out in the bush, at least twenty miles from the nearest Europeans—in this case the Mission Station beyond the Boma—with no fear for anything except, perhaps, the very improbable chance of a lion prowling round the camp. In civilised South Africa the thing would be impossible: here, in the wilds of Central Africa, it calls for no more than a passing qualm in case the utterly unforeseen should occur.

Beryl, as I have said, was far more alarmed on my account than on her own. As I left camp I



heard her commend me to the especial vigilance of Mwanamwazi, my head messenger, who was accompanying me, and of whom more anon. So we moved out of camp, and in five minutes were deep in the bush.

For the first four or five miles the road presented no great difficulties. Certainly it was moist and clammy; we were following what had at one time been a well-used path to the lake, but which had now, with the introduction of the Sleeping Sickness regulations, fallen into disuse. It was overgrown in many places, studded and strewn with stones and sharp stumps; but the lantern gave a good light, and the guide, whom I had taken from the village, swung along at a round pace. I followed, and the faithful Mwanamwazi came next, so obsessed with the idea instilled into him by Beryl that he was on no account to lose sight of me for an instant that he frequently tripped over my heels. Even then his task must have been a difficult one, so dark was the night.

Behind him, again, was my gun-boy with a loaded .450—for there is no saying what one may not meet on bush-paths at night. And behind straggled the rest of the army—an *askari*, two or three messengers, and the rank and file, carrying odds and ends. Truly it was an extraordinary procession, the most incongruous element in it being perhaps the station *capitao* in a grey flannel suit, of which the trousers were rolled up to his knees, tightly grasping a very battered umbrella.

After perhaps an hour and a half we came to the



edge of the cliff, and here our troubles began. For it transpired that most of the carriers and hangers-on had straggled so far behind that they were in danger of losing the path, and the lantern had to be sent back to gather them in.

There was no hurry, or so I believed. The general opinion seemed to be that we had better halt on top of the cliff until the moon rose, which it would do about midnight; it was then just after eleven. So we lit a fire in a sort of saucer-like hollow on the very edge of the cliff, ringed about with huge stones, and sat down to wait.

The provision basket arrived shortly, and I had two or three cups of cocoa and a nip of whisky. I was heartily glad that it came when it did, for the ominous rumblings which had been audible the whole evening had resolved themselves into the presage of a sharp storm.

Sure enough, I had no sooner finished my cocoa than it was on us. Perched as we were at the edge of the cliff, surrounded on every side by huge granite and ironstone boulders, it is hardly to be wondered at that I felt rather nervous of lightning. The more so, perhaps, from the fact that for a good ten minutes it was a real dry storm: not a drop of rain fell.

Every second, as it seemed, there was a simultaneous flash and crash; hardly had the echoes died away than there came another, worse than the last, until the whole face of the cliff seemed to tremble. As each flash lit up the heavens, and the blackness before us rolled away like a curtain, it seemed as if we were poised in mid-air: nothing

could be seen ahead but space, and in the far distance, an awful depth below, the shimmer of water.

The natives themselves did not seem to like it any more than I did. For one thing, we were within easy reach of one of their most dreaded Spirit Mountains, and anything unpleasant might be expected to happen. For another, they evidently thought the lightning too near to be pleasant—a considerable concession on their part, as, usually, the native is not perturbed at the most vicious flash and crash. One individual sitting next to me at the fire put up a spear in a perpendicular position and tied a charm to it. He said it was a most efficacious protection; but I don't like steel in a storm, and prefer to trust to science rather than to superstition; so I had it removed, and by way of additional precaution covered up my rifle—not that I really believed it would make much difference, but on the principle which actuates the cook to hide the knives and put the fireirons in the coal-cellar when there is lightning about.

However, in ten minutes down came the rain, with a whistle and a roar which completed the full concert of the heavens.

They had slung my *machila* between two trees, and I crept into it, overjoyed to be out of the worst of the storm, but feeling distinctly sorry for those who had to remain outside. However, they did not appear to mind. Mwanamwazi, Manolela, and the gunboy, claiming privilege, and, indeed, on such a night and in such circumstances the whole

universe seemed topsy-turvy enough, crouched under the overhang of the *machila* cover. The rest tied a few wisps of grass to stray branches and sat chatting happily, as if the whole affair were the most ordinary occurrence in the world.

It was hot, stuffy, and cramped inside the *machila*—my rain-coat had got drenched through, and I could hardly move for fear of falling out into the rain. With infinite pains I managed to extract my flask from a pocket, and took another long pull. "So much for precautions," I thought, and tried to go to sleep.

But it was difficult. Mwanamwazi's elbow was in the small of my back. The smoke from the fire was blowing full in my face. Through a tiny hole in the cover, just above my face, the rain trickled in drop by drop and fell upon my nose. And, more than all, I was thinking of Beryl, four miles away, and wondering what was happening, and whether she was getting the storm, which had by now passed us by.

I had told Mwanamwazi to call me when the moon rose, and I suppose I must have dozed off, though it seemed as if I was wide enough awake the whole time. Anyway, when I next looked at my watch it was one o'clock.

I plunged out of the *machila* and looked at the sky. There was a kind of watery glow out over the lake, which I took to be the moon. Clearly, it was time to be moving.

Mwanamwazi looked at me in sleepy astonishment when I made the suggestion. His wrinkled old face puckered up in sheer astonishment.

“There is no light,” he said at last; “we must wait for the dawn.”

“Why?” said I.

“Because the road is very dangerous, and we do not wish the Bwana to arrive at the bottom very quickly on his head,” he answered dryly.

“Nonsense,” said I, and I shook up the caravan and we crept cautiously towards the edge.

I am not laying claim to any exceptional courage; rather, in fact, the reverse. For a cliff face—a sheer drop of any kind—is simply martyrdom to me. Two hundred yards away from the edge I felt an insane desire to lie down and hold on to the grass for safety’s sake. And I had a crafty idea that I could face the descent far more easily in the darkness, when I could not see what lay below, than in the mysterious, disconcerting light of the moon. Therefore I determined to take advantage of the gloom while it lasted. Beside which, I was afraid of missing the caravan if we delayed longer.

Something, though not all, of the foregoing I conveyed confidentially to Mwanamwazi as we moved towards the face of the cliff. I said that I had boots on, with nails in them, and that I might easily slip; he was, therefore, to keep a tight hold upon my arm; he promptly seized it with a grip of iron, and the *askari*, who had overheard, loomed up at my other side out of the darkness and grasped the other. Neither of them let go for a moment until we reached the bottom, an hour later. And so, with a curious feeling that I was under arrest, we went over the cliff.

It was not pleasant. The guide with the lantern

went first, skipping downwards with the agility of a goat. He was a surly person, and grunted whenever he was told to hold the lantern so that I could see where to put my feet. Mwanamwazi made matters worse by halting after we had gone down a few feet and arranging with the guide that he should give us full warning when he came to a precipice—*luwema* he called it. It sounded an unpleasant word somehow. I had never heard it before and hoped most devoutly that I never should again. "Right," said the guide with alacrity; "there are two bad ones and a smaller one. I'll let you know." And down he popped like a startled rabbit.

The descent was a positive nightmare. As far as possible I kept my eyes on the ground; but sometimes we turned sharply, and the ground itself seemed to slide away from under us; at such moments I could fancy that we were crawling along a narrow ledge, with a drop of hundreds of feet beneath us, and the sensation was not a pleasant one. Trees grew out at all angles; great boulders had to be climbed, and the whole path—if path it could be called—was set with crumbling stones.

Suddenly—" *Luwema sana!*" (a big drop) sang out the guide in cheerful tones.

"Now for it," thought I. I caught a glimpse of him—a veritable monkey of a man—clinging to a tree stump, swinging out the lantern over space. Then he disappeared.

Instinctively I stopped and listened for the thud and the splinter of glass far below; but instead

there came another grunt a few feet beneath us, and shutting my eyes, I resigned myself once more to the guidance of the *askari* and Mwana-mwazi.

After what seemed centuries—in reality it must have been about three-quarters of an hour—I noticed that we had left the sheer face of the cliff and were working down a steep gully. On my right there loomed the huge outline of a great black spur, similar to the one on which we were; far below was a darker patch of dense gloom, and I could hear the distant sound of water. We were about half way down.

It was nearly two o'clock when we halted on a flat ledge some sixty feet from the bottom of the cliff. There was a slight rise in front of us now, and we were hemmed in on all sides by a wall of dense, impenetrable foliage; it seemed, indeed, like some witches' forest hidden away in the bowels of the earth. Far above, the moon, free from clouds at last, floated in a misty sky; ahead, a wall of tangled, matted creepers barred the path, and incessantly the water rushed past below us.

We crawled over the rise and then—down, down, down. Time for me had ceased long ago, somewhere half way down the face of the cliff. As a matter of fact, it must have been about two o'clock; but when I looked at my watch I found that it had stopped. Behind me the men dragged along wearily; curiously enough, those who had been shooting with me in the afternoon seemed fresher than the rest. When I thought about it I realised that I was tired too—by that time I was drawing



near to my thirty-fifth mile since the morning—but a deadly depression was the worst part of it. The whole expedition seemed a leap in the dark, a mere wild-goose chase. I could not realise that there were such people as Swahili smugglers; the whole business seemed fantastic and unreal. Just as difficult was it to realise that, some time or other, the sun would rise again and, perhaps, I should get back to camp.

Incidentally the place was getting on my nerves. We were well down at the foot of the cliffs now, and groping our way through a veritable labyrinth of undergrowth; it seemed more than likely that wild beasts would have their lairs in such a dismal and uncanny locality; and at the back of my brain was the thought of the fly—the little beastly insect who could inflict suffering and death by a mere pinprick, and whose haunts we had so rashly penetrated.

At last we came to the river which we had heard from above; it rushed along between steep, rocky banks, and I crossed it as quickly as possible, still thinking of the fly in the undergrowth, only, however, to find that our way lay now for some half mile along its very edge. We crossed it again half an hour later, and yet a third time after that; and then, just as I began to feel that I could and would go no farther for all the smuggling caravans in the universe, the *capitao* crawled up alongside, his teeth chattering either from fear or cold, and the hand that grasped the umbrella quivering like an aspen leaf. It seemed that we were near our goal; there remained only half a mile or so between us



and the lake shore, and we might come upon a path at any moment.

We had just crossed the river for the third time, and were now between it and the lake. From a narrow stream, it had widened out into a broad, sluggish lagoon—surely the place for fly, if anywhere in the world. But I am bound to confess that I had neither seen nor felt one.

Ahead, there seemed to be a slight rise, with a kind of shimmering haze behind it—Tanganyika, without a doubt. Behind was nothing but a wall of impenetrable blackness—the forest through which we had come. And, as I gazed, the shadows seemed to lighten. When I turned again I could see, though dimly, the line of the cliffs and the clumps of bush dotted about upon a level stretch of open ground. The dawn was at hand.

We pressed on, and in less than ten minutes had found—not what we wished, but what we had dreaded to find. There at our feet was a snaky track of freshly trampled grass. Here and there lay one of the round pads of grass which carriers place between their loads and their heads—sure evidence that tusks or some bulky loads had been carried past none so long before. A little way off the path were the remains of a fire, one or two charred logs still smouldering. And most potent proof of all were the footprints of a caravan of not less than thirty men. Fresh rain lay in the tracks—tracks which had, undoubtedly, been made in dry ground, yet quite recently.

We had been badly “had.” The caravan had passed—had actually camped for a while on this

very spot—just before the storm; certainly between twelve and one. Probably, while I feasted upon cocoa and whisky above on the cliff-top they had been munching mealies and lumps of porridge here beneath us. And it was now dawn. By this time it was useless to follow. A well-known harbour for canoes lay within three miles of us; ten thousand to one they had embarked and were by now gliding swiftly towards German territory and laughing in their sleeves.

I could have cried, without the least effort. Instead, I sat down and had some more cocoa and whisky. By now the dawn was well advanced, and I could see the faces of the men. I have never seen disgust more clearly depicted.

After cocoa, I drew a pair of dry flannel trousers over my "shorts." There was still that infernal river with its three separate crossings to be negotiated on the way back, and though the fly apparently did not bite at night, there was no knowing what time they got up and breakfasted. Then, as there was absolutely nothing more to be done, I gave the signal to return, and we faced back again towards the cliffs.

We climbed them with the sun on our backs, and I had ample opportunity for examining the precipices of the night before. They proved, in the sober light of day, to be drops of from thirty to forty feet; I had pictured them as between two and three hundred feet deep at least. Still, thirty feet on a dark night would probably break bones, and after that there seemed no reason why one should ever have stopped rolling.

As we climbed up, and I saw the road by which we had come five long hours before, I marvelled at my guide. Incidentally, also, I made a mental note to keep an eye upon him, since such knowledge of a path could be gained only by one who traversed it regularly; and I have no doubt that one of these days I shall be able to imprison him for illegal fishing in the lake.

On the top of the cliff I crawled into my *machila* and went to sleep. When I woke up I was in camp, and Beryl met me with a dry shirt in one hand and a cup of tea in the other.

She, it seemed, had had almost as miserable a night as mine. At first she could not sleep. Then, when she at last dozed off, a storm (*my* storm, in fact) came along and woke her up again. In despair she called in the faithful Bokosi, who had apparently been sitting outside in the rain, and from what I could gather he squatted on the floor most of the night and refused to say anything comforting at all. When Beryl asked him where I was, he pointed a lugubrious finger into the darkness; when she asked if he thought we were getting the storm, he said "Yes—a very bad storm, and not at all the sort of night for the Bwana to be out." He held, also, gloomy ideas as to what might happen if I met the caravan, and altogether proved so much of a wet blanket that Beryl finally turned him out and went to sleep again. But the fire had been kept going all night, and there had been no lions, which at least was something to be grateful for.

I slept in my *machila* the whole twelve miles

into the Boma (station). When I came to reckon it up I found that I had walked close upon forty miles in the twenty-four hours. It was certainly the longest day and night that I have ever known.

## APRIL

All Fools' Day—Dates in the wilds—The real New Year—Preparations for the dry season—Kapembwa Mission—Mr. and Mrs. Saunders — A *jinga* — Methods of locomotion—The native on a journey—His advantage over the European—The Mission again—Beer—Most of what you want all the time—Blunting the edge of anticipation—A visitor—The "Ring Fence"—The sport of millionaires—Modern elephant-hunting—The native as a weather prophet—A typical day—Alungu and kindred tribes—Their character—Their skilled workers—Their morals—Encouragement from "outside"—Difficulties of the literary man—African unpunctuality.

To the majority of people, I suppose, the 1st of April ranks as All Fools' Day. I doubt, however, if a single white inhabitant of this territory remembers the time-honoured association of date and idea any more than he remembers Guy Fawkes' or St. Valentine's. With us, the year becomes curiously perverted. Christmas, certainly, is a date, marked usually by a sweltering break in the rains. The 24th May is, perhaps, even more important, as being the date of the annual Cup Shoot of the Rifle Association. Easter and Whitsuntide mean less than nothing, for there is not a church within a radius of three hundred miles of

any station beyond the Mission schools. Public holidays are certainly laid down in the calendar; but they are remembered only in such stations, few and far between, as are connected with civilisation by the transcontinental telegraph line, and there only because the office is closed for the day and the postmaster takes a well-earned holiday. In this country one works every day and all day—Sundays, as often as not, included. For there is nothing else to do.

But, nevertheless, the 1st of April is a date which somehow sticks in the memory. For the 31st March is the end of the Government financial year. A week—it may well become a fortnight—of fevered haste, of checking and rechecking, of rows and rows of figures that haunt the brain and dance through the darkness of the night—statistics of population, hut tax totals, yards of calico and slabs of soap, reports and returns innumerable—and then, peace. . . .

So we float out upon a new year—far more convincing in its newness than that which is ushered in upon the 1st of January, and which is marked by nothing more conspicuous than a difficulty in remembering the new date. New accounts are opened in the books, new votes come into force by which expenditure is to be regulated; the scattered threads of office routine are gathered up and knotted together again. And, best of all, the rains are over, and the better half of the year is in sight.

In another month the touring season will have begun. It is true that the grass will not begin

to burn until late June, or July; meanwhile there is all the pleasure of anticipation. Tents and *machilas* are overhauled, rifles are fingered lovingly, ammunition is sorted and counted, and a touring programme arranged. Six months at least of cool, dry windy weather, culminating in ten weeks or so of perfect shooting over a burned and blackened country!—no wonder, then, that the memories of the rains with their depressing mugginess, their disheartening restrictions and discomforts, fade and are forgotten in this veritable new-year season.

To-day I sealed up a gigantic envelope at 11.45, and hid it away in the mailbag with a final, affectionate malediction. It held the annual returns and reports, and, as the rain had poured through the office roof on to the first copy, it had been done twice over. Before three Beryl and I were out at the Mission.

My views upon missionaries and their work, from the general point of view, stand recorded elsewhere. I have no intention of recapitulating them here. Let me rather dwell upon the personal standpoint, as exemplified in the festive little couple who are our neighbours at Kapembwa station, six miles away.

Let us call them Saunders, since it is not their name, and quite sufficiently unlike it—Joseph Saunders then, and Jane his wife.

All missionaries in this country, whether Baptist, Presbyterian, Church of England, or White Fathers, are hard working, whatever else they may be. Saunders himself is a man hung upon wires,



each of which would seem to be charged with a full current of electricity. He and his wife and the sun rise together—a most energetic trio. Before breakfast he has conducted service, taught for an hour or two in the school, visited the workshops, and checked the labourers about the station. During the rest of the day he is occupied with translation work, repairing boots, blacksmithery, joinery, and the like—laid in slabs between other chunks of teaching. As likely as not in the evening he will go out after a buck, for Joseph Saunders is that *rara avis* among missionaries, a keen hunter. And after dinner, if there are people in the house, he will play ping-pong until all is blue. Not the ordinary ping-pong, you may be sure; that does not afford sufficient outlet for his exuberant spirits. Kapembwa ping-pong has mysterious rules of its own, such as that the player must bound upon the table between strokes, or lie flat on the floor between serving and receiving the return. It is a curious game. I can generally stay out two sets; after that, Beryl and I sit on the sofa and watch Saunders and his wife play.

As for Mrs. Saunders, she is one of the nicest little women in Africa. Demure, placid, the very antithesis of Joseph—an adorable touch of Lancashire in her soft, drawling speech, and an utter freedom from affectation or pose of any kind—she is the ideal next-door-neighbour for Central Africa.

Saunders sent over the *jinga* for Beryl, so that she was able to cover the six miles in comparative comfort, while I pedalled furiously

behind her upon an antediluvian bicycle. For the benefit of the uninitiated I should, perhaps, explain that a *jinga* is anything which moves upon wheels. Originally it meant a bicycle, but in this particular instance it refers to a marvellous construction balanced upon one wheel which was built by Saunders himself in the Kapembwa workshop out of some old packing-cases and gas-piping, and which has, to my mind, solved the question of locomotion in this country.

Bicycles are most useful—so long as you stick to the highroads which connect the various stations and settlements. But they have their disadvantages upon narrow bush-paths which wind and twist like the trail of a drunkard, and which are rich in jagged, bitten-off stumps—hidden, usually, in rank grass—that just catch the pedal at its lowest and hurl you through the air in an inglorious curve. Also, in the rains, it is more comfortable and less fatiguing to walk. *Machilas* are the invention of the devil; they are stuffy, unwholesome things, and you are never quite sure when you are going to be dropped by both men at once. I tried a donkey for some months; but he had an evil nature, and was also addicted to stumbling. Horses are being imported gradually—there are five now in these parts—but the prevalence of tsetse makes it impossible to use them except in one or two favoured districts, and, seeing that every known domestic animal is a prey to some particular disease, it is more than probable that Nature will devise some especial malady in their behalf.

On the whole, therefore, I am inclined to think that Saunders's bush-cart meets the case. Of course, the idea is not a new one. Bush-carts—elaborate wickerwork constructions like glorified bath-chairs—have for some years been in use upon the West Coast; but the ordinary model is far too wide for native paths out here, and also far too delicate for the handling which it will inevitably receive at the hands of the native. Saunders's cart is not more than two feet wide at its broadest part; the single wheel, set in the centre, was once part of an ancient bicycle, and its tyres have been replaced by strips of hide bound round and round the rim. Fore and aft run double sections of gas-piping acting as shafts, between which one boy pulls and another pushes. The seat is a soap-box, covered with a cushion, beneath which a set of springs from the dining-room sofa has been cunningly inserted. And really it travels extraordinarily well. It is true that, some three miles out, the wheel caught in a deep rut, and the machine turned completely over, depositing Beryl head downwards in the bush—but this was a minor *contretemps*, more than counterbalanced, as Beryl assured me afterwards, by the advantage of being able to sit up straight and see the view. Anyway, it is better than a bicycle—and, in a country where the average man has to cover some five hundred miles per annum, improvements in locomotive facilities are things to be solemnly considered.

That, undoubtedly, is where the native scores. He will set out on a journey which may last any-

thing from a month to six weeks with the utmost *sangfroid*. His luggage is scanty; a spear and a bundle of mealie cobs, together with a goatskin bag and a weather-beaten cooking pot. Now and again his feet get sore—more especially when his way lies along the highroad in the hot weather. I could never understand why a native should prefer the winding paths of his own people—twice as long and infinitely more dangerous—to the wide, straight, and level roads of the white man—until I was informed that there were two very excellent reasons. The first was that along the roads the bush had been cut down, and therefore, owing to want of shade, the hot surface burned the feet; secondly, that on a straight road, where one could see miles ahead, the way seemed much longer than on a winding native path. Both reasons seem logical, I must confess.

Monotony and *ennui* mean nothing to a native. From the time that he hoists his load upon his head at daybreak and sets off to the time when he lowers it with a long-drawn “Ah-h-h!” of satisfaction at camp in the afternoon, I verily believe his mind is a total blank. The white man, walking along the interminable road, has his thoughts to make the time go quicker; he stops, now and again, to light a pipe—his watch tells him how many miles he has covered. And yet nine in ten white men pluck at leaves and grass and suck straws as they go—sure signs of intolerable boredom. Not so the natives—partly, no doubt, because inherited instinct has taught them that to snatch at a blade of grass at the wayside usually means a cut hand.

You to whom a six-hour railway journey is an undertaking to be embarked upon after prayer and fasting—you for whom motors and tubes and aeroplanes are waiting round the corner—pause for a moment, and think of the men who are walking over Central Africa! A hundred miles a week is good going—and it is mostly done upon one's two legs. Beryl has asked me to add, for the information of intending settlers, that a hobble-skirt is not an advisable item of outfit.

When she interrupted me, I was just thinking of embarking upon a description of our stay at the Mission. But, on second thoughts, I don't think I will. It was very quiet and very peaceful—the roses in the garden were at their best, and the house, like all missionary houses in this part of the world, extremely comfortable, and fitted with every kitchen appliance and article of furniture that one could desire. We played croquet in the afternoon, and in the evening listened to Saunders on the concertina. And what we talked about I really forget, though it was quite interesting at the time. But if I go further I shall, I know, become embroiled in some controversy as to the benefits of education for the heathen—and, perhaps, discretion is the better part of valour.

On the way back from the Mission, Beryl and I beguiled the way by heated argument. The *jinga*—probably owing to the upset which I mentioned a page or two back—had contracted some curious internal disease, and absolutely

jibbed when Saunders took it off the verandah this morning. So, as we were up at some unearthly hour—the force of good example, no doubt—and it was a fresh and heavenly morning, we decided to walk into the Boma.

I cannot walk six miles with any person without an argument. Some people are built that way, and in this country the characteristic becomes more marked. Besides, when you are living with another person in almost perpetual isolation, when the whole blessed universe revolves around your two precious selves and there is nothing else to do, argument has distinct tonic properties.

This morning we argued about beer. That is to say, it started with beer, as I happened to see an advertisement in a Nyasaland paper at Saunders's stating that a dozen of Bass could be purchased in Blantyre for sixteen shillings. Now, both Beryl and I are fond of beer (in Central Africa one may admit such a predilection without any false modesty), and as neither of us had tasted any since a memorable occasion nearly two years ago, the bald statement naturally awoke slumbering memories.

Eventually the subject at issue crystallised as follows: whether it is better to have your enjoyment concentrated or diffused. In other words, whether the man at Home, who has most of the things he wants all the time, is better off than he who, in Central Africa, has nothing he wants most of the time and makes up for it during about five months every three years.

At first, I think, Beryl was inclined to agree



with me. But when she saw in my eye a pained surprise, and a determination not to be defrauded of an argument at any cost, she slid gracefully into the opposite point of view. One delightful thing about her is her tact. And before we were out of sight of the Mission we were at it hammer and tongs.

In reality the whole thing is a matter of imagination. Here, in Central Africa, face to face with the prosaic monotony of the Simple Life (which loses more than half its glamour from the mere fact that you are living it from necessity and not from choice) the fleshpots gleam seductively through a gauzy veil of romance. The lamplit streets of Town—the little dinners and the little suppers—the final frenzy of an orchestra just before the curtain rises on the first act—the *petit verre* and the expensively fragrant cigarette, purple and fine linen and Bond Street socks—all these, being unobtainable, stir one to a sense of delirious anticipation. And, if it were in reality the age of flying machines perfected and adapted to the needs of the multitude, one might, perhaps, one of these days, savour the fulfilment of that anticipation in utter ecstasy.

If that were so, I, for one, would undoubtedly plump my vote in favour of prolonged abstinence and periodical orgy.

But, unfortunately, it is not so. One looks ahead too much, and so half the joys of clear-cut contrast are discounted. Here are Beryl and I, seven months before our leave is due, already deliberating upon what we shall have for dinner



our first night in Town. (Beryl inclines to dressed crab and *méringues*—my decision has not quite crystallised yet, but I know there will be anchovies and olives, and, very possibly, sole). In anticipation, we have already worn our new clothes threadbare—we have rehearsed the reception which will be accorded to us by our various relatives—I have smoked my first decent cigar, and Beryl has already had her hair dressed several times by fashionable artists. What on earth is there left to savour?

And, remember, we have not even begun to pack as yet. There are six long weary months before we need even begin to sell up! Then will come the long, slow *ulendo* to the coast, civilisation growing gradually and imperceptibly with every mile: the knowledge that one can buy a drink when one wants it: the board-ship life, utter luxury after years of the wilderness. Until, at last, one will reach England almost jaded, too quickly surfeited, like the starving man before whom a feast is set, and with the keen edge of contrast utterly and irretrievably blunted. It is almost a tragedy.

No! I think it is better to have most of what you want all the time.

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We got back to find a visitor awaiting us—an excellent fellow temporarily down on his luck who was making for the Congo with the idea of shooting elephants.

Nowadays, I am glad to say, the genuine Distressed British Subject, known far and wide as

the D.B.S. and constituting a well-recognised class, is but seldom met with. The days are past when every man who lost his billet in the South came northwards as to some Tom Tiddler's Ground where gold and silver—or at least, ivory—might be had for the asking. Either Government has grown more foreseeing, better skilled in preventive measures, or the human race is less optimistic. Be that as it may, the feckless, whisky-sodden individual, who arrived humping his own swag and was only too delighted to receive the gift of an old pair of boots, is now almost unknown. Before I came to this country I was stationed at a place on the main route to the North, and it was an unpleasant part of my duty, almost day by day, to make out official requisitions for the ration allowance which was conceded by the Government to the genuinely destitute. In the vast majority of cases these rations were exchanged for their equivalent in liquor over the bar of the nearest hotel. The few who stuck to their rations and plodded forward into the unknown were, as likely as not, never heard of again. Fever, lions, and trackless bush; these were among the causes of their disappearance.

But times have changed. Our present visitor could certainly not have been classed in any such category. He had a tent, and boys, and, apparently, money in his pocket. But—he had not got a job; and there is no worse place in the world than this for one who is looking for such a luxury.

Not that I believe he would ever have settled down in a humdrum circle of routine. He had hunted most of Africa south of the Zambesi; he had been wounded in the Boer War; in the early days his people had fled from rebel Zulus in Natal, and he told me that one of his earliest recollections had been the sight of his home in ruins and his mother crying over them. Such men are blessed or cursed with a wandering destiny; and it may be believed that they are just as happy as the humdrum stay-at-home.

Anyway, he was interesting and amusing. He brought us news of the outside world—the world, that is, of stations further south. Beryl looked after him for a couple of days, and gave him a nondescript kind of puppy when he left. A week later, I had a letter from him, written across the Congo border, in which he told me that he had been told the terms of the new elephant licence in that State: two elephants only, tusks not to weigh under ten kilogrammes, and the cost—sixty pounds. In his own words, it “bust his contract”! Apparently the “Ring Fence,” of which poor Arthur Neumann spoke so bitterly, has closed in upon the Congo as well. That is the end. There is now no part of Central Africa where unlimited elephants may be shot—and in ten years from now the race of elephant-hunters will be as extinct as the dodo.

It is inevitable, of course. Promiscuous slaughter of elephants has sometimes, in the past, amounted to little short of crime. Unscrupulous hunters, who will kill anything and everything, down to

the calf with eight-ounce tusks, and add to their ill-gotten gains by trading the meat with natives, deserve extermination. They must go—and one does not regret them. But it is sad also. For there are men who, strange as it may seem, can at one and the same time depend upon elephant-hunting for a living and also practise the self-restraint and judgment of the true sportsman. Such are the men who will be hardest hit by the modern craze of the Ring Fence.

Elephant-hunting is now in a fair way to become the Sport of Kings—since none but crowned heads and multi-millionaires can afford to indulge in it. The rich man wants a fillip to his liver—a romantic fillip, *bien entendu*. Sixty or six hundred pounds matter but little to him, so long as he can bring home two decent pair of tusks, and can, for the rest of his life, indulge in reminiscences of the days when he was shooting in Central Africa. “The finest sport in the world, my boy, and don’t you forget it!” He brings money into a country: he engages a huge *ulendo* at fabulous rates of pay, and is welcomed with open arms. And, in the meantime, the elephants continue to destroy the native gardens—which is another aspect of the case, and one which is frequently overlooked.

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The new moon rose last night. I saw one or two natives bowing to it from behind trees, so evidently the rains are almost over—not, as a matter of fact, that the average native is nearly

so trustworthy a weather prophet as he should be, or is held to be. But for all that he can usually foretell within a little when the rains will be over. Indeed the seasons in this country wax and wane with so machine-like a precision that it would hardly be fair to bet upon dates.

In a week or so I hope to be out in camp. We have been cooped up here for close upon three months now, and that is far too long under local conditions. The temper of a man is a very fair barometer out here—mine tells me that it is high time I shut up the office and went off for a three weeks' tour. Meantime, however, the office is in the same place as before, and the bugle sounds the call for "Orderly Room"—a pleasing fancy of the bugler's, which he must have learned when undergoing a course of drill at headquarters—with relentless punctuality every morning at nine o'clock.

Popular opinion inclines to the belief that upon a "one-man" station there is nothing whatever to do, and that the official in charge spends most of his time on the verandah of his house with a novel and a whisky-and-soda. I can assure public opinion, with heartfelt conviction, that it errs.

I admit that, at the end of a day, it is somewhat difficult to say what, actually, has been accomplished. That, however, is owing to the fragmentary and disjointed quality of the work.

To-day, for instance, I administered eight pills to three prisoners—one was a small boy, and he got only two, in case you query the accuracy of the figures—bound up the foot of a youth who

had incautiously chopped off a toe while hoeing, and duly entered up the yard of calico so expended. A native who had killed a leopard then brought me the skin and skull, and received five shillings reward—another entry. Subsequently he and I discussed a little difference of opinion in regard to an outstanding tax upon the hut of his second wife, whom he had concealed with a certain ingenuity for over a year, and, ultimately, three shillings out of the five found their way back into the safe, via the native clerk and the tax receipt book.

The next item upon the programme was a dispute between my cook and one of the *askaris* who was suspected of paying illicit attentions to the cook's wife. He admitted it with the utmost *sangfroid*, and his statements (which could not be written down anywhere except in a native casebook) were confirmed by the lady in question, who appeared wreathed in smiles, notwithstanding an abrasion over one eye which she owed to the jealousy of her husband. So the cook divorced his wife and obtained possession of the children, and the lady herself went down to the lines with her new spouse, where, no doubt, she will remain in conjugal felicity until some one still more attractive turns up. Your Central African reckes but little of the sanctity of the marriage bond.

In half an hour the *askari* was back again, with a shilling, in which he had been mulcted for costs. But he was evidently in a litigious frame of mind, and determined to enjoy his



morning, for he brought with him the wretched specimen of humanity whose duty it is to herd the calves of the station. Forthwith we embarked upon another case, in which the charge was one of neglect of duty, in that the herd had omitted to watch his charges, and that they had entered the *askari's* garden, trampled down standing crops, and caused inconceivable damage. After an adjournment to view the garden, where the spoor of the calves established the matter beyond a doubt, the *askari* was awarded one shilling damages—so that he got his morning's pleasure for nothing.

It being now eleven o'clock, I received my daily tea-tray, and a piteous note from Beryl to the effect that she had no wood for the kitchen stove. That matter having been adjusted, an hour was spent in interviewing an ancient headman who had come in to report alterations in his village census. He had never known the names of half the people in his village, and had forgotten those of the rest, so that it was a matter of some difficulty to allocate new-born babies to the right families, and to make sure that alleged dead men were not still liable for taxes. It was just about then that I began to realise that my duty lay out in the district, and that a change of scene was imperative. In the end, however, he took himself off, hugging to his skinny bosom four yards of calico, and leaving behind a lean and squawking fowl. And after I had issued half a dozen passes, and had released two prisoners whose sentences had



expired, the bugle sounded for the luncheon interval.

At two o'clock I found reposing upon my table two very greasy bushbuck horns, a native-made bell, and several curious little packets of twigs and dried leaves, a lizard skin, and the comb of a cock. Inquiries elicited the fact that a witchcraft case had been brought in by a couple of messengers. Much to my relief, however, it transpired that one of the witnesses was still on the road, so the case stands adjourned until to-morrow. I then bought some native mats for salt, with an eye to the drawing-room ceiling, and entered up the rainfall return for last month as shown by the gauge. Afterwards, there being nobody in sight outside the office except the *capitao*, I proceeded to file some accumulated correspondence. No sooner had I settled down to this, with the papers spread all over the table, than a native arrived to report the suicide of his wife, who had hanged herself the night before at an outlying village—piqued, it appeared, at a quarrel with another woman over some caterpillars and monkey-nuts which had been brought in as a relish by a friend of the family. So an *askari* had to be sent to view the body and bring in witnesses, and in the fullness of time I settled down again to my filing.

That and the writing of half a dozen letters brought me up to four o'clock. After tea Beryl and I went for our usual walk round the new site, where some two hundred men are now engaged in cutting down bush, &c., preparatory

to the builder's arrival. There were new clearings to be measured, new roads to be marked off, and the sun was low over the swamp before we got back to the house. And there in the midst of a jabbering crowd I found a woman who had been bitten by a snake. So we got dinner rather later than usual.

Multiply such items by three hundred and sixty-five—or say three hundred and thirteen, to allow for Sundays—and you will arrive at an average of the work done each year by an outside official. Now and again something of exceptional interest crops up—now and again, though very rarely, occurs a case which has some entirely new feature, which throws a vivid light upon some little-known native custom. Sometimes—at the end of the month—the office-door is closed jealously from dawn to sundown, and the wretched official slaves within at his returns and accounts. Sometimes a morning or an afternoon may be spent in the open, when a new gang of workers is installed or a new village is to be laid out. But, for the most part, the days are alike as peas in the pod. It is not to be wondered at that the Native Commissioner gladly falls into line with the excellent theory of district touring, and spends his travelling vote to the last farthing.

Still, taking it all round, it is better than stockbroking, or bank-clerking, the daily round of the medical man, or the treadmill grind of the City. The native is sometimes humorous and always interesting—his domestic affairs are in

a perennial state of muddledom, and no matter what may be wrong, he invariably comes to the Boma to get the tangle adjusted. One may hate him on the station, but one—almost—loves him on leave. He is not an altogether pleasant person, and he smells a little strong at times, but he is a human being, and his principal vices are those arising from a too exuberantly human nature.

His life, in the olden days, must have been intensely interesting. I am speaking more particularly now of the Alungu and kindred tribes around the southern shores of Tanganyika. Always, northwards and eastwards, lurked the grim shadow of the Arab slavers; their dhows were upon the lake itself, their emissaries frequented the villages. The caravan routes to Ujiji and Zanzibar were open then, and not a youngster in the tribe could say for certain that his bones might not one day go to swell the bleaching piles that lined those roads.

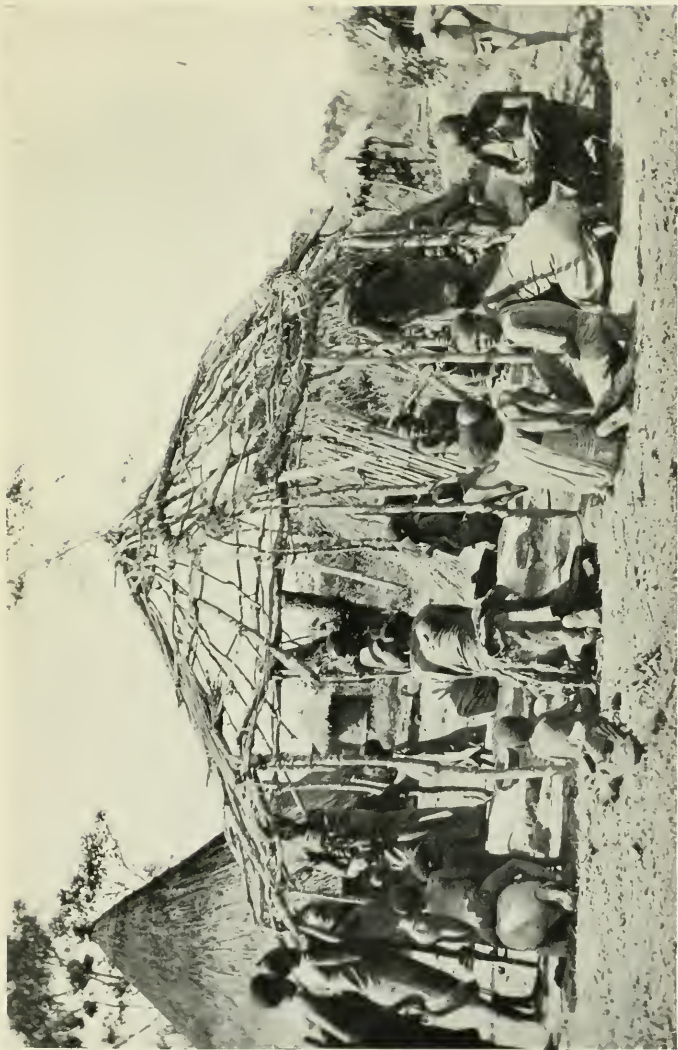
Southwards were the Awemba—almost as much to be dreaded, indeed, as the Arabs themselves. War, famine, mutilation and red ruin crouched always within three days' journey of the borders. And, while in the forests were the beasts of prey, there were dreaded gods upon the mountain tops, and the spirits of the dead in the very gardens and huts of the villages.

Yet they survived; though, had not the white men come when they did, their identity as a tribe would no doubt, sooner or later, have become merged in that of some more enterprising people.

For the Alungu are docile, inoffensive folk—simple fishermen, tillers of the soil, husbandmen, and breeders of cattle, sheep, and goats. War is not their *métier*; they do not shine as hunters; they talk far too much, as a rule, and every third man is chief in his own right of an empire of half a dozen huts. Combination for a tribal object would always be beyond them, no matter how pressing the need. For ten years they have had no paramount chief—family bickerings, clan dissensions have prevented any attempt at cohesion. If the Administration withdrew tomorrow the Alungu would, by Sunday week, be once more under the thumb of the Awemba and the Alungwana.

They form, indeed, an interesting exception to the general rule that fisherfolk should be stalwart, independent men. The Atonga of Nyasaland have ideas of their own; the Waunga of the Bangweolo swamps also had ideas anent the inexpediency of paying hut tax, and managed to evade their obligations to Government for quite a considerable time. But the Alungu, as a tribe, are incapable of saying “Boh!” to a goose, much less to a suave Swahili trader from, let us say, German territory, compact of the astuteness of both the Oriental and the Arab, with a dash of African blood thrown in to make him the more formidable.

Still, such as they are, we must be thankful for them. They are easy to govern, when they can be induced to lay aside for a moment their interminable petty tribal jealousies. And any-



"THE ALUNGU ARE DOCILE, INOFFENSIVE FOLK."





thing which tends to amicable relations in this very hot and dusty country is to be commended.

Economically—and at the risk of repeating the tritest of truisms be it said—the natives are, at present, the greatest asset of the country. Head transport is their speciality; they have been trained to it for generations. At levelling bush, clearing sites, making roads, they have no equals. Work in which they have the companionship of their fellows is that which appeals to them above all; and it would be no exaggeration to say that a gang of twenty workers engaged upon a task where the singing of choruses is admissible will perform twice as much per head as forty individuals each with his own separate job.

But they have their skilled workers as well—weavers, net-makers, blacksmiths, ivory-workers, and the like. The brain is there; it needs only encouragement and opportunity to expand. When they have lived in peace for a decade or two more, and have forgotten to start at their own shadows, they will furnish an instance of the perfectly Utopian community—that is, if they have by that time broken themselves of the habit of making love to other people's wives. At any rate, they are Bayards, *sans peur et sans reproche*, compared with the abortive result of sentimental civilisation met with in the mine compounds or railway shops of the South. A native of this country would as soon purloin the offerings of flour from his village god hut or the trinkets of beads from his brother's grave as attempt a criminal assault upon a white



woman, or, even, the theft of a white man's load upon the highroad. No doubt, their awakening will come. Civilisation and education, the twin scourges of the native races, must inevitably be theirs eventually. We, who know them as they are, can only pray that those scourges may be withheld as long as possible.

Beryl, to whom I have just read this, declares that it is all wrong, and that the native is, instinctively, a beast. I think, however, that is because the villagers have refused to sell her any eggs for a day or two—probably they want them for setting.

\* \* \* \* \*

This week's mail brought us a letter from the unknown: from a lady who, happening to read something which I had written in the *Pall Mall Magazine*, and being herself interested in Africa, launched an arrow at a venture—and struck the gold.

I wonder whether people realise how cheering this sort of thing is. Literature is heart-breaking work at times; and probably nowhere worse than when the writer sits solitary in a desert and weaves what he has to weave five hundred miles from the nearest railway station. To see one's work in print is tonic—even the correcting of proofs is a step towards the goal. But to sit and thump a typewriter night after night in the silence of the African bush, or, worse still, to the maddening accompaniment of native drums—to be tied for ever to the eternal

dissection of one's own thoughts and surroundings; to be debarred the stimulus of current literature, music, drama, conversation, and to evolve new plots, new ideas out of a dreary inner consciousness—that is when the writer knows the bottommost depths of despair.

A good many people will, I know, be of the opinion that under such circumstances it is, perhaps, better frankly to admit the impossible, and to refrain from writing anything at all. Granted, gladly, except for the fact that such counsel is a counsel of perfection. Some people *must* write, whether other people are likely to read what they write or not. I am afraid I am one of them.

But to know that what one has written has, at least, appealed to some one in the outside world; here is measure of payment pressed down and running over; stimulus sufficient for half a dozen novels at least!

After Beryl and I had read the letter, we took down the number of the *Pall Mall* in which the contribution had appeared and read it over again. It was very ordinary stuff, I'm afraid, but, for the moment, it seemed a work of genius. Had it not elicited a letter from a flesh-and-blood person living and moving somewhere in the world of actualities, of civilisation? And then, casually turning the leaves, I found that the same number of the magazine held, not only my own contribution, but a story by the lady herself, and, a little further on, an article by a man who had been in the Sixth Form of my school when I was in the Upper Third. It's a funny little world when all's

said and done! But, in certain parts of it—here, most notably—one is apt, perhaps, to develop an inordinate sense of its vastness, a sense which is somewhat dulled when one gets once again into touch with the mechanism of modern life, with the marvellous facilities for locomotion and communication with one's fellows.

I should like to take the New York business man and plant him out here for a six months' rest-cure. Perhaps Lupolo would really be a better place for the experiment, as he would there be over 100 miles from a cable-station, whereas here the distance would be only forty. On consideration, however, I am afraid the rest-cure would not be a success, as he would, inevitably, be a gibbering lunatic before six weeks were out. The debonair unpunctuality of everyone in this country would soon settle that point.

Whether or not it is the influence of the native example I do not pretend to say; but the fact remains that it is an unknown thing for a man to keep an appointment out here within a week at least of the specified time. For the last ten days Beryl and I have been eating our hearts out waiting for the Diddybird, who is due to go out with us on tour. The last I heard of him, a week ago, was that he was hunting elephants. Now, when a man is elephant-hunting, the bush swallows him up, and it is next door to impossible to reach him with a note. So that, instead of bombarding him with winged words, as I should like to do, we must simply possess our souls in patience until such time as he graciously deigns to walk

into the station. Whether that will be from the north, the south, the east or the west, only Providence knows. In the meantime the dry season is beginning to slide away; we have lost this month's moon, which is a luxury on *ulendo*, and our tempers are steadily deteriorating.

## MAY

A change of plans—Off to the “Metropolis”—Crawford’s arrival—His licence—Rifle-practice—Tick fever—A dismal time—The Metropolis—Its lake—Attempts to stock with fish—A Central African regatta—The Dabchick—A voyage in a tub—Rifle Club meeting—Beryl and the washboy—The populous township—Barney Moikart—“Line-down”—Dispersal of the population—Influence of the country upon the European—Lessons to be learned from natives—Superstition—Weird scenery—Nature’s gentler side—“An annexe of Fairyland”—Off after elephant—Buffalo—The “kill”—Weighing the ivory—A day’s shoot—A tea-party of cows—Photography under difficulties—A nasty moment—Two bulls and a cow—A bad tusk and a young calf—Our first introduction to elephant trunk.

THE doctor, as I learn through the medium of an attenuated runner, clad in inexpensive raiment of goatskin and bead necklet, has been diverted to a station some hundred miles south-west, to attend a somewhat urgent case—that of a sporting visitor to the territory who has had his jaw broken by a wounded buffalo. So the proposed tour with the Diddybird must be abandoned for the moment, or rather, altered in scope, as we should want the doctor to examine recruits. Instead of going north-east, we now propose to travel westwards.

Natives are always "at home," and so long as every village in the division receives its fair share of official attention during the year, it really matters very little about the order of precedence. I have no doubt whatever that my northerly friends, far from being disappointed at my non-appearance, will be only too delighted at the prospect of another month or two in which to chase the nimble shilling with an eye to the adjustment of outstanding tax liabilities.

There are advantages, too, about the change of plan. For, on the 24th of the month—Empire Day—the Metropolis, which lies only one day's march from my western border, will be the scene of the annual gathering of the local Rifle Association. My duties, I take it, will deposit me on my border about the 22nd, and there are several little matters in regard to which a personal confabulation with the magistrate of the district would be advisable. Beryl, too, has one or two new dresses which she is anxious to submit to the criticism of Mrs. Magistrate. Altogether the gods are with us for the moment.

Meantime, we have a visitor, who arrived last night, and who already ranks, almost, as one of the family. He is visiting the northern stations in the interests of semi-official organisation in the South, and will probably be here some days. He shot an elephant the day before arriving here, just beyond my borders, and, besides providing a topic of conversation as a lead-off, the fact has enabled me to relieve him of a matter of twenty-five pounds for a licence, which will materially improve

the look of my monthly revenue. Here in the North we cherish our revenue as a mother does her new-born babe; just as she weighs and re-weighs him, week by week, gloating upon every additional half-ounce of fat and chubbiness as if some meritorious action of her own had brought it about, so do we cast and recast our figures and speculate upon the possibilities of the future. It is a childish occupation, in reality, but, none the less, it fosters the competitive instinct and lends an additional interest to existence. Human nature is an extraordinary thing. Why I should, metaphorically, shake hands with myself upon the fact that the wretched Crawford—let us call him—shot his elephant, and so incurred the liability to take out a twenty-five-pound licence, just before reaching my station, is entirely beyond my power to explain; but the fact remains that not only did I do so, but that I also stood Crawford an extra drink on the strength of it, and fell in with his childish idea that he would like all the stamps on his licence to be, so far as possible, of different colours and values. Ten minutes after he arrived I took him down to the office and, throwing open the safe door, displayed my stock of revenue stamps, and we spent quite a while choosing them, and finding out the best places to stick them on. When it was finished, the licence was encrusted with stamps back and front, and made one perfectly giddy to look at it. Crawford, I think, was rather pleased: he said that he thought the ordinary five £5 stamps displayed so little artistic ingenuity, besides being such a bilious



colour ; whereas his licence might easily have been mistaken for an advertisement of Maypole Soap.

However, he got even with me next morning, when I took him down to the range for a practice shoot. Now, with an eye to the Cup on the 24th, I have been practising quite a little lately, and was feeling rather pleased with my scores ; so much so that I put ten shillings on myself. Over the 200, 500 and 600 yards I totalled 87, a very fair average score for my top form. Crawford, if you please, calmly laid on 96 and then complained of the light on the range ! I found out, later, that he was the champion of the Territory, and had won the Southern Cup three years running, while any score of less than 97 was a serious matter with him, involving an alteration of diet and the knocking off of cigarettes. I got no sympathy from Beryl, who gave us breakfast in a tent behind the 600 yards mound ; she merely said it served me right for betting on myself when—note the feminine view-point—I had been up so late the night before.

The more credit is due to Crawford in the matter from the fact that he is only now recovering from *spirillum* or "tick" fever, which he contracted at the last station, and which has, as it so often does, affected his sight. One of his eyes is, for all practical purposes, temporarily paralysed, and he finds it impossible to keep it closed. Fortunately, it is not his shooting eye ; but he told me to-day that it was a very definite nuisance when after elephant, and that he had had to go into action with a bandage over one eye to

keep it shut while he took aim. He is an extraordinary person, and would appear to have no nerves at all. Last year he was rather badly mauled by a leopard in the South, and was for over a week without medical attendance, alone with his "boy," an experience which would dissuade the average man from further adventures. But he has shot one or two leopards since then, and has recently a lion to his credit.

Beryl also had tick-fever some time ago, and it is quite an interest in common between her and Crawford. The way those two "swap symptoms" is enough to make one feel one has it oneself.

Certainly, it is an unpleasant disease, though very rarely a fatal one. When Beryl got it, we were at Lupolo, well over a hundred miles from the nearest doctor. It followed the usual course, constant relapses extending over nearly a month, accompanied by high temperatures and deadly depression. To begin with I diagnosed malaria, and plumped in twenty grains of quinine straight off, which merely had the effect of making her deaf and more disagreeable than ever. Then, as the fever grew worse and the temperature mounted—it was 106 one night, I remember, and she was hopelessly delirious—I had recourse to Warburg's Tincture, and sent the best runner I had flying off for the doctor.

I do not think I shall easily forget one afternoon and evening. As almost invariably happens, the affair had come at the very worst possible time—that of the end of the financial year, when all reports and accounts have to be checked and

the books made up. For two days I had practically lived in her room and done my work there, but on the afternoon in question she seemed better, and as the mail was due to leave that evening, I left the faithful Bokosi in charge and went down to the office to finally check over the books.

It was a dismal, rainy day. Even so, the office compound was packed with natives—and no wonder, since I had had no time to attend to the poor wretches for three days, and certainly had no intention of doing so that afternoon. Yellow, frothing streams swirled around the office steps; in the short passage from the house my mackintosh had been blown above my knees, and I was nearly wet through. And low, sullen thunder growled around the hills.

Five minutes later Bokosi came down to call me, saying that the *mama* was much worse. Up I rushed to the house, and, sure enough, the temperature was up again. Phenacetin and hot blankets brought it down within the hour. By then it was too late to think of catching the mail, and, as a matter of fact, I felt I didn't care tuppence whether I did or not. So I got the boy to brew me some tea, and in the middle of it up came the sergeant of police to say that one of the station workers was dying, and would I go down to see him?

Down we went to one of the *nsakwes*, or grass shelters where the station workers live. It was nearly half a mile from the house, at the end of one of the long avenues. The rain was

still coming down lustily, and it was beginning to grow dark. Of course, by the time I reached the shelter the man was dead—they had not called me until it was too late. Arrangements had to be made for burying him, and I got back to the house about seven to find Beryl, looking pale and interesting, sitting up in bed in an uncommonly pretty wrapper and clamouring for something to eat.

Ten minutes later a runner came in with the doctor's reply, to the effect that my treatment seemed quite suitable, but that he was on his way to us.

It was too late to stop him. Next morning Beryl was up and about as usual. She met the doctor at lunch, and played tennis with him in the afternoon. And, curiously enough, the doctor did not seem to mind in the least having been dragged a hundred miles on a bicycle to prescribe for a fraudulent patient. But then there is no one in the world like the African doctor—the Good Samaritan was a colourless humbug in comparison.

So that on the whole I sympathise with Beryl and Crawford in their absorption in symptoms, always remembering that I have not yet had the beastly thing, and that I am practically certain to get it before I go Home.

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Beryl and I arrived at the Metropolis this afternoon. It is nearly a year since we were last here, but it seemed to be much the same as before, except that the recent earthquake has played havoc

with several of the buildings. And the lake which lies just behind the magistrate's house seems to be drying up. It is a curious little lake, this—probably in prehistoric times it was the crater of a volcano which has been extinct for many years. Twenty-five years ago, when first the missionaries came into the country, one could walk across it dryshod; ten years ago an official was drowned in it in the endeavour to retrieve a duck which he had shot and which had fallen among the reeds. Now it would seem that the cycle has come round again, and probably in a year or two it will be once more a mere plain haunted by buck.

Evidently there is some peculiar medicinal quality about the water, as many attempts have been made to stock it with fish from Tanganyika, but so far unsuccessfully. The woodenheadedness of the natives partly contributed to this result—on one occasion an official who was fond of his fishing despatched a large bath to Tanganyika in charge of two Amambwe youths, with instructions to bring back live fish. The natives, under the impression that quantity would be more appreciated than quality, brought back the bath packed tight with fish of all sizes and shapes; and as there was no water in the bath, and they had been travelling all day in the hot sun, needless to say they were all dead. On being remonstrated with, the natives returned on the next day with the bath full of water and one solitary fish the size of a small sardine. Whereupon the patience of the official gave out, and the attempt to stock the lake was abandoned.

Last time that we were here a regular regatta was held. For the official then in charge, being a most handy man, had built a canvas boat, stiffened with strips of palm-wood and coated with tar, which proved to be invaluable for duck-shooting among the reeds on the far side. There was an old steel dinghy belonging to the Lakes Company, which had been brought up from Tanganyika when the *Cecil Rhodes* was dry-docked on the outbreak of Sleeping Sickness—a prehistoric tub, abnormally broad in the beam, which wallowed over the water like a porpoise. And, not to be outdone, the doctor launched his vessel, the *Thunderer*, a collapsible canvas boat with a freeboard of some two and a half inches and an irritating knack of shutting up in the middle at inopportune moments. So that all the material for a regatta was available.

But a week later the fleet was dispersed. The doctor went out on *ulendo* and took the *Thunderer* with him, the official was transferred, and could not be parted from his craft, and the old tub was transported over hill and dale to the shores of Lake Mweru, two hundred miles away. So that one evening, when Beryl and I went down to the lake with the idea of having an hour's duck-shooting, we found that all means of locomotion had been removed, and were vastly indignant in consequence.

Two days afterwards the Diddybird's young brother, whom we will call the Dabchick, came into town. He and I had had a long-standing engagement to slaughter duck on the farther side,



but under the circumstances it seemed as if the arrangement would have to be called off. However, the Dabchick was a person of an ingenious turn of mind, and after some little discussion of the situation it seemed to us both that the difficulty could probably be obviated with the help of a couple of zinc baths.

So, on the following Sunday we repaired to the beach, accompanied by a crowd of natives loaded with two baths, some soap-boxes, cord, logs of wood, a native mat, and a couple of rough paddles hastily improvised from some planking which was lying about. In less than half an hour we were launched.

The baths, in this instance, were shipped side by side upon a framework of rough logs. In the centre we had run up a sail, consisting of a native mat, rigged upon a pole with Beryl's washing line. The block was a reel of cotton, which Beryl afterwards missed—but that is another story. Midships of each bath was an empty soap-box, and by sitting very still and coiling one's legs round one's neck it was possible to remain in the boat without upsetting for as much as ten minutes at a time. But we found that the "cutwater," which was represented by the space between the two baths, militated against the attainment of any great speed. As a matter of fact, we covered seventeen yards in an hour and a half. So thereafter we dry-docked the vessel and altered her shape, lashing one bath in front of the other, and tying the handles together.

On re-embarking we discovered that under the



new arrangement the freeboard had been brought down to the irreducible minimum, something under half an inch. On my endeavouring to retrieve a paddle which had been lost in the bustle of settling down, we promptly sank in some two feet of mud. And a sneeze on the part of the Dabchick resulted in the whole outfit turning turtle with alarming completeness. However, after half an hour's practice we managed to get the hang of the thing, and eventually circumnavigated the lake in great style, followed along the shore by a crowd of yelling and delighted savages.

But duck-shooting was clearly impossible. The mere notion of bringing a gun to the shoulder would assuredly have sunk our craft with all hands, and as for letting off a cartridge, it was absolutely out of the question. So we cruised gracefully about for a while in full view of Beryl, who had brought tea down to the shore, and finally disembarked amid the applause of the crowd.

There will not be much boating this time, I fancy, for the Cup shoot comes off the day after to-morrow, and everyone is practising with frantic energy. Conversation is of nothing but "bulls" and "mags" and a new tonic which, according to the doctor, is warranted to steady the hand and the eye, no matter how late the shooter may have been in retiring the night before. I myself was dragged down to the range before I had been in the station ten minutes, and missed my tea in consequence; and the practice to-morrow has been set for 6.30 a.m., so that it seems we are to lead

the strenuous life for a while. Beryl, I am glad to say, is also booked for a share in the proceedings, as there is to be a ladies' match over the one, two, and three hundred yards ranges. Last time she made a very passable score, and finished by nearly shooting the marker, so her performance is almost certain to lend interest to the proceedings.

I think Beryl must be singularly unlucky in this respect. For she is really quite a decent shot, and has brought down her buck on the open *nyika* many a time in most workmanlike fashion. But it is only a short two months since she very nearly put an end to the existence of her wash-boy altogether with a shot-gun.

It all came about through a hawk that was hovering in the back compound with an eye to the chickens. Beryl loosed off one barrel and apparently winged him; in the excitement of the moment, unfortunately, the other barrel went off as well, and emptied itself into a hut where the wretched washboy was sitting over his fire thinking about turning out to work. With a blood-curdling yell he bounded out into the compound, streaming with blood, and when I arrived a few seconds later, having scurried up from the office at the sound of the shots, I found him extended at full length on the ground, fully convinced that he was already among the company of his ancestral spirits. However, fortunately, the damage was not very extensive—a pellet in the lip, one over the right eye, and another in the left leg, which had just missed the bone. He was

patched up and rewarded on a lavish scale, and is now one of Beryl's most devoted adherents. Either he takes the mere fact of her having hit him as proof positive that there was no *malice prepense*, or else he regards being shot at current rates as a very satisfactory profession.

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The Metropolis is filling up rapidly; in fact, we are nearing our record, which is seventeen white people in town at once! It is curious to reflect that this number represents practically the whole population of a district of some 30,000 square miles. The matter was put to me rather graphically the other day by a man who had just returned from leave, and who had taken the trouble once, when in Town, to count his fellow-passengers in one of the Tube lifts at Piccadilly Circus. The total number of people in that lift exceeded the whole white population of the Tanganyika Plateau.

Round about the Metropolis, indeed, we reckon that we are rather overcrowded—in fact, quite recently I heard a farmer grumbling to the effect that “people didn't want to sit in each other's pockets in a country like this,” owing to a rumour that some one had taken the farm next to his! Neighbours within twenty miles are, for all practical purposes, within just as easy reach as they would be did they live next door to one at Home.

I was somewhat surprised to-day to hear that Crawford is still “in town,” as he left Malale some

three weeks ago, and, I understood, was hurrying through. However, he has been delayed here waiting for an answer to a wire, and I am in hopes that we may fix up a week or two's "phunting" (*i.e.*, elephant-hunting) before he moves on. He has still three to go on his licence, while I have shot none so far—and Beryl says she wants to see what they look like, so I have no doubt that we shall be able to arrange it one way or another.

Barney Moikart came into town to-day, riding upon the inevitable donkey. He is a huge, up-standing fellow from the Cape, scales close on sixteen stone, and rides the most wonderful donkey in the world. It carries him gaily over the most extraordinary distances upon the flat, and when they come to a rise Barney dismounts by the simple expedient of dropping his legs and letting the donkey walk away from between them. I hear that on reaching town to-day his first visit was to the doctor, and that the following dialogue ensued :—

DOCTOR. Morning, Barney—how's things?

BARNEY. Morning, doctor. Are you busy?—because I'd like you to take off this finger of mine, if you have the time.

DOCTOR. My dear chap, one doesn't take off a finger 'tween drinks, so to speak. What have you been doing to it?—let's have a look.

BARNEY (exhibiting a much mangled finger, apparently held together by a well-used bandage). Dunno! Blood-poisoning, probably—scratched it, going round the kraals the other night, and its been swelling ever since. I got fed up with it

yesterday, and had a shot at taking it off with the scissors, but couldn't quite get through.

(General sensation of "upside-downness" among the assembled company, resulting in drinks all round.)

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We shot for the Cup this morning; highest score 88, which was duly telegraphed to Headquarters. Last year the highest score was 90—so there is just the chance that this year also the Cup may stay in the North. All the ladies—four of them!—were down on the range, and Mrs. Magistrate topped the list with 27 out of a possible 50, at which she was hugely delighted. There was, as it happened, a gathering of donkeys on the range, and donkey races to and from the pits were quite a feature of the day. The doctor, working his passage with legs and arms at once, and with a "smasher" hat crammed well down over his eyes, was generally well to the fore.

Unfortunately the "line" went down to-day, just after we had got our message through to the South, so that we cannot expect to hear for a day or two what scores have been made by other branches. The fault is somewhere down Nyasa way—probably between Karonga and Kotakota—and as it is now the dry season, and the rains cannot be responsible for the breakdown, it is more than likely that some irritable old bull elephant has been scratching himself against one of the poles, with disastrous results to the integrity of the line. However, the native linesman got away at once,

and communication will probably be restored inside of a day or two. It is extraordinary how the line nearly always goes down just when one is waiting the reply to an urgent message. But still, doing without the wire becomes a matter of habit very soon after one arrives in the country, as there are only two stations in this part of the world which are "on the wire," and all messages for other stations have to be sent to and fro by runners—often a matter of ten days or a fortnight.

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To-day people are beginning to disperse—by to-morrow, at the latest, the Metropolis will have regained something of its usual peacefulness. Farmers are hurrying back to their farms, trembling for the welfare of their cattle, which have been left for a day or two in the unsympathetic hands of native herdsmen, who think nothing of muzzling a wretched calf to ensure a larger milk supply for themselves in the absence of the *Bwana* (master); the missionary goes back to make up leeway in his translation and school work, the trader to check the doings of his *capitao*, or storeboy, the "outside" official to the affairs of his division. Mrs. Magistrate spends the morning packing up her extra cutlery and glass, which will not be wanted again until Christmas-time—Mr. Magistrate has an accumulation of letters and so forth in the office, which must be brought up to date before the end of the month. And so the population of the district scatters itself once again, and all is as before.



But a reunion such as this gives one "furiously to think." Shut off from one's kind as one has been for the past six months or so, little traits of character, little details of development and progression, spring to the eye. One realises, indeed, more plainly after such a meeting what are the vital characteristics of the country, what their effects upon the White Man who dwells among them.

Outstanding among the attributes of this land is the vital quality of peace. Not the mere peace which stands for freedom from bloodshed and the little hostilities of men, not the peace of a drowsy English afternoon; but rather the warm, full-blooded, opulent peace of some mythical fairy island, where a ripe golden sun looks down for ever upon the tracery of rich undergrowth and the soft velvet of quiet lawns. It is, indeed, a peace which springs from the very fullness of the life that pulsates beneath; the peace of aims achieved, of desires attained, of longings gratified and lulled to rest. Nevertheless, a dangerous peace, maybe, and one which is liable to rude awakenings—how could it be otherwise in a land where deadly snakes lurk in the tapestry-carpet of gold and green and the purple of bush-flowers, where grasses, tawny or lemon-coloured, swaying indolently in the breezes of silent afternoons, may part with hideous suddenness to disclose some sullen beast of prey lurking in their satin depths?

So the tragedies of Central Africa are, for the most part, tragedies of silence. Whether it be the lion crouching in the heart of night or the



crocodile lying in wait amid the silver eddies of some quiet river, the fever which springs out from the moist, green depths of forest lands or the bite of the snake upon the narrow winding path, there is none of the fluster, of the deafening uproar, which are the mates of tragedy in more civilised lands. Here, man is powerless and knows it. It is no land for whining or for tearful expostulation; when Fate comes upon one, there are but two courses open. The one is to fight, tooth and nail, stubbornly, and with all the might that is in one—the other, mere policy of the lotos-eater, to bow to her decree. And both are courses which are best pursued in silence, lest the queer gods who rule in these quiet places should hear one and mock. Here, far from the tonics and stimulants of the workaday world, bereft of those standards which are set constantly before the eyes of men who have their part in modern straining and striving, a quite other set of factors and of incentives must be reckoned with. They are neither better nor worse than the factors and incentives which prevail in, say, the vicinity of Clapham Junction—but they are very, very different.

Perhaps the main difference may be defined as a question of perspectives. Right, wrong—vital, trivial—expedient, inexpedient—all these adjectives have lost their meaning, or have, rather, veered in their sockets and thus point in quite other directions than the inhabitant of Clapham Junction would look to find them pointing. Matters which would be tragedies in England are

here but the topic of languid discussion, while the over-boiling of an egg or a dearth of tobacco may, upon occasion, rank as a tragedy to make the very angels weep. To-day the air, strong and sweet as wine, yet soft as the softest thistledown, renders simple enough feats which in other lands would be left to the High Gods—to-morrow, though the sky and the sun may, to all outward seeming, be the same, a nameless depression, cowled and cloaked, stalks abroad and will not be gainsaid. Day by day and year by year the country is the same, yet different; and in this very fact lies some, at least, of both its terror and its charm.

Perhaps, indeed, it is from this very terror that the charm, deadly as it is, proceeds. Think of the death-roll of the early years—from 1875 onwards, let us say; reckon up the number of those invalided from the ranks of officials and of missionaries alike. How many men have succumbed to the sinister influences of the country? And yet, many a man invalided through black-water or some similar cause has crept back again to the country to die—not missionaries alone, but rough-and-ready settlers as well.

Yet the existence is by no means one to deaden the softer traits. Sickness finds ready helpers; difficulties are smoothed by willing hands—provided only the sickness or the difficulty be one to merit the attention of grown men. Here is no place for toothache or for wounded sensitiveness, but birth, marriage, and death has each its due value, and each is appraised at its proper worth. Narrow as a needle-

eye yet broad as the skies themselves—hard as pig-iron and soft as cotton-wool—somewhat out of date, maybe, in the affairs of the nations, yet posted minutely in the matters of the tribes—such is the average European upon the great plateau which lies twixt Tanganyika and Bangweolo.

It would no doubt, from a psychological standpoint, be interesting to indicate the qualities which are his heritage from the natives among whom he lives; but the unfortunate fact is that those qualities come to him filtered through a complex environment, and finally, when the time for analysis is at hand, are found to have been drawn almost as much from contact with nature as from intercourse with men. For the land itself is impregnated with the spirit of its own peoples; every blade and twig, one may say, drips with a distillation of the essences of that spirit, and yet, so cunningly are these essences distilled, so successfully disguised, that, in the end, the white man, though he is by no means the white man who sailed from Southampton ten years before, is still not the white man you would expect to meet after a due study of the people around him. He has, unaccountably, absorbed certain qualities, and, just as unaccountably, proved himself impervious to certain other influences; where you would have expected him to assimilate he has rejected—where rejection was clearly indicated he has absorbed. And the result is a curiously complex creature who, nevertheless, believes himself to be as simple as the

alphabet, and who would be intensely irritated at being held up as a psychological study.

Instinctively he has learned to stand or fall by the inherent qualities that he has brought to the country. For, except in rare instances, the native is not to be relied upon. In a tight corner he may stand by his master to the death—instances of such devotion are many and varied—or, with just as much probability, he may decide that the matter lies entirely in the hands of the white man, who is obviously competent to deal with it, and so may efface himself at precisely the critical moment. Again, the mere knowledge (which, conceited or not, no European can fail to acquire within six months of his arrival in the country) that he stands to the people of his charge in the light of a demi-god must, of necessity, result in a certain growth of self-reliance. Sooner or later we all appraise ourselves at the standard by which the world judges us, whether that standard be set by our equals or by our inferiors.

In the moulding of such self-reliance, freedom, another of the vital qualities of the country, is of the greatest value. For nothing tends more either to dwarf the self-respect of a man or to cramp the workings of his common sense than the knowledge that he is in every action safeguarded by the supervision of vigilant overseers. In Central Africa, as in all waste places of the earth, a man must make up his mind quickly or not at all, and must abide by his decision without repining. He may be brilliantly right or

hopelessly, helplessly wrong, but, in any case, the responsibility is his and his alone.

Undoubtedly the most valuable lesson which is to be learned by the European from the native is that of common sense. Not an uncivilised tribe in the world is without this valuable asset; indeed, it is only by the exercise of such a quality that the forces of nature can be struggled against with any hope of success. Yet the casual globe-trotter will almost invariably preface his criticism of the native by the assertion that he is destitute of even the rudiments of this most useful of qualities. Nor is the reason far to seek. It lies simply in the fact that the globe-trotter knows nothing of the inner social and everyday life of the native, and is therefore constrained to judge him in relation to the everyday matters of the white man. That the untutored savage should endeavour to fill a kettle through the spout seems to him a sight to make the great gods weep. He forgets, or, more probably, has never realised, that to the native the kettle is as much an unknown quantity as was, until quite recently, the aeroplane to the cultured Britisher. Put your perambulating critic amid the grain-fields or the garden-lands, send him out to hunt or to catch fish with the native whom he despises, lead him, even, into a native hut with instructions to mark and learn, and if he be honest he will admit that, in his own domain, the common sense of the native will more than bear comparison with that of the rest of the world.

And in no less degree the qualities of justice, bravery, and endurance will impress themselves upon his mind. So that, in the end, converted from the cheap cynicism of his globe-trotting days, your critic will come to the stage of toleration—whence to admiration is but a hair-breadth.

Morally—from our own view-point—we have nothing to gain from the native. Intellectually, beyond the sweet simplicity of common sense, we can acquire but little, if we except the inestimable advantage of learning to look out upon the great facts of life through other eyes than our own. But if, in the end, we have only peace, freedom, toleration, and self-reliance to our credit, we shall not be wholly unindebted to the native races, and to the countries which have evolved them.

There is, however, another factor—and a less dignified one—to be reckoned with in considering the especial charm of Plateauland, or, for that matter, of any similar tract of uncivilised country. And that is the desire, deeply implanted in the human breast, to be, as it were, a Triton among the minnows. Many a man who, in London or Glasgow, would be chained to a wholly uninteresting office-stool, unnoticed and unknown, rises here, in his own small sphere, to the dignity of a plenipotentiary. Standards of comparison are very different, the touchstone of merit quite other than in Europe. And, too, no doubt, what Mr. Punch's Baboo called the "devil-may-carefulness" of the country may conceiv-



ably have much to do with its elusive charm. When perspectives change, the universe at large swings wildly.

Nowadays, perhaps, we are less superstitious than we were. But even to-day the man who lives alone is apt to imbibe native superstition in a degree which would almost bear comparison with that of the West Coaster; and this fact is more indubitably true of the real "old hand." It cannot be marvelled that such should be the case, since a land of formless mystery such as is this, a land where the indigenous population, to a man, tests even the more ordinary occurrences of daily life in their relation to superstition and witchcraft, is hardly one to excel in sane and level-headed outlooks.

Surely in the very scenery the weird is predominant. What could be more awe-inspiring, to the new-comer, at least, though custom may, perhaps, blur its poignancy, than the grand scene of a bush-fire by night? As the sun sinks, maybe, there is nothing on the purple skyline but wisps of smoke, hovering, dancing like genii just released from some magic casket, and as yet hardly materialised. But wait for an hour! Now, where before was only dull grey twilight, streaks of orange and crimson cut into the blackness of the night; tall strips of flame slant upwards almost to where the lower stars are set in their inky pall; whole mountain-sides are terraced in fire, and the trees near at hand stand out like grey ghosts amid the brilliance of the scene.



Take again the huge Plutonic rocks, the massive boulders which line parts of the old Stevenson road, even the grown man may be forgiven for half believing that such a path can lead only to the castle of Giant Blunderbore. Or what of the fields of towering ant-heaps, like nothing so much as vast cemeteries of the plains, save that here there is not even the peaceful homeliness of an English graveyard; what of the torch-like *Candelabra euphorbia* set upon open plain or in sparse thicket? Are they not, one and all, fitting symbols of the harsh, all-compelling mystery that shrouds the land?

Yet all is not gloom. Nature here, as elsewhere, has her gentler side. There are cool, dark *musitos*, baby forests, almost, sheltering some tiny stream where the water is crystal clear and the vegetation of a heavenly green; there is the glamour of widespread *nyikas*, seen, perhaps, in the early dawn, when the dew clings and sparkles on every blade of grass; there is the glory of young spring foliage, red and pink and delicate russet-brown, which, in England, would presage the fall of the leaf, but which here speaks only of the promise of springtime. Even the flat, wide swamps tell of the much-needed moisture in a parched land; even the black stretches of charred grassland just before the rains give rest to eyes that have hitherto been saddened with the riot of greenery and glaring sun. And when the moon sails up and the forests are alight with her rays—when the trees that in daylight, disfigured with the workings of myriads

of ants, are uncouth enough, stand out against the darker backgrounds in a filigree of silver—then, perhaps, most of all is the plateau an annexe of Fairyland.

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Beryl, Crawford and I started off this morning after elephant, Fortunately, I have one or two villages to visit in the westerly part of my division, and a portion of the country to map thereabouts; and as there are always a good many herds round about there, I feel that I can combine business and pleasure with an easy conscience.

For the first day or two it is roughish going, as a spur of the range which runs southwards from the lake has to be crossed. The country hereabouts consists of deep parallel valleys alternating with hog-back ridges, and the undergrowth below the hills is dense and matted to an extraordinary degree. *Machila* travelling is almost out of the question for the greater part of the time, and we do not average more than twelve miles a day, while our camps are, for the most part, pitched upon the slopes of hills at an angle of forty-five degrees.

We spent two or three hours this evening looking for an old bull buffalo who, according to native tradition, has inhabited one particular *musito* or river-bed for two generations. He has an unsavoury reputation round about, and a deserted village site hard by the *musito* bears witness to the fact that at least one community

preferred to move rather than occupy his neighbourhood. Last year he developed an unpleasant habit of patrolling the paths and "treeing" any unfortunate individual whom he might chance to meet; one ancient headman, in particular, whose gardens lay near, spent several afternoons up the highest trees he could find, and only descended to slink home at dusk when the buffalo had wandered down stream to drink.

However, our luck was out. There was fresh spoor along the river, and it was plain that the old gentleman had been feeding on a little clearing which lay across our path only an hour or two before our arrival. But, though we followed the river bank for some miles, and only gave up at dusk, he had gone far afield, and we returned to camp empty-handed except for a reedback which I managed to secure on the way home.

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To-night we are camped in dense bush among the hills, ten miles at least from any village, and three elephants are lying dead within a radius of a quarter of a mile. The fires gleam redly round about, and over each, in the gloom, can be dimly seen the little erections of branches and stakes called *malambo* upon which the strips of meat are hung up to smoke and dry. Notwithstanding our distance from any centre of population, men, women, and children have flocked in steadily all day, and there must be close upon five hundred souls in camp, counting our own caravan of some hundred men. The din and hubbub are inde-

scribable, and I cannot see any possibility of our getting any sleep whatever.

Beryl, coming out of the tent after her bath, has just warned me that it is advisable to use considerable care in "tubbing," as the bath has evidently been used by some enterprising carrier as a receptacle for meat, and is in a very slippery state—she tells me that she came down rather hard in it, and from certain smothered exclamations from the other side of the path where Crawford has pitched his tent, I am inclined to believe that the same fate has just befallen him.

The ivory, I am sorry to say, is by no means heavy. In fact, Crawford and I spent an anxious half hour this afternoon endeavouring to set our minds at rest upon the point as to whether two tusks in particular are over the minimum of eleven pounds which is laid down by regulations. We had no scale with us, and therefore rigged up a crosspiece on an overhanging bough and weighed the tusks against one-pound tins of provisions. One of my tusks—that of a cow with a diseased tooth—turned the scale at four of cheese, half a dozen of jam, and three small tins of milk, so that I am afraid a fine and very possibly confiscation may be expected on that one. And a bull tusk upon which we had set great store, being exceptionally long (though, as it transpired, also very hollow), only went two fourteen-pound tins of flour.

We killed at about ten o'clock this morning, and it has really been a most interesting day. To begin with, we were awakened in the small

hours by the trumpeting of a big herd up on the hill-side over against our last night's camp, and not more than half a mile away. I looked out of the tent to find the cook careering wildly about with the bake-pot in his hands, intent upon saving, at any rate, his new batch of bread in the event of the animals stampeding the camp. All singing and speaking above a whisper was stopped, so that they should not take fright, and at six we dressed and breakfasted in a camp which was as silent as the dead.

We set off at seven, Crawford, Beryl, and myself, with the gunboys, well in advance of the carriers and *machila* men, and in less than five minutes found the spoor of the early morning. The herd was evidently just ahead—in fact once, on the downward slope of a hill, we heard them on the opposite slope. At this point the dogs broke loose from the boys who were leading them, and after a wild circuit through the bush, came tearing up to us, barking with delight. They were ignominiously collared and returned to the rear—but the mischief had been done, and they had let us in for a good two hours' tramp, which would otherwise, probably, have been unnecessary.

On we went in absolute silence, save for a whispered remark now and again to comment upon the spoor or the freshly torn branches in which the sap was still wet. The herd was evidently one of about twenty animals, and the majority were cows, but now and again a big bull spoor cut into it, and then branched out again into the forest. However, we held to the spoor of

the herd, as there were one or two smaller bull spoors there also.

Once we checked suddenly for a moment, and I thought that the elephants had been sighted—but it turned out that Crawford, who was at the time a little in advance, had thought that he had seen a lion. It proved to be a wart-hog, easily mistaken for the larger beast in thick bush, and on we went again.

And then, at three minutes to nine by my watch, one of the gunboys tapped my arm and pointed in front. We all stopped dead and peered ahead. There was nothing to be seen—but a hollow rumbling sound just in front told us that the elephants were standing not a hundred yards from us. Now and again would come the sharp snap of a branch torn down by some great trunk.

Crawford and I knelt down and put on the rope-soled shoes, which we had carried hitherto, owing to the moisture of the undergrowth. And Beryl, pale with excitement, tiptoed about from one to the other with finger to lip, as if we were in some nursery or other and the baby were asleep.

Then once more we advanced—but very, very cautiously, you may be sure—until, two minutes or so later, there came another check, and, standing on tiptoe, we gazed ahead.

Some sixty yards in front were, it seemed, two great grey, weather-beaten rocks, wedged in among the trees. The bush hereabouts was low and stunted, with an occasional tree standing out above it. To our right was a small clearing. But I could see no sign of elephants, though the



rumbling noise which we had noted before was louder now, and sounded close at hand.

And then, as we looked, one of the great rocks moved, and flapped an ear, and glided slowly across our front towards the clearing. I felt Beryl's hand tighten upon my arm, and, glancing down, saw that her eyes were sparkling, and that she was apparently thoroughly enjoying herself. The next moment Crawford swung her up on to his shoulder so that she might get a good view of the main herd, which he had just spotted away to our left. And there, for the time, her share in the proceedings ended, as she was handed over to my head-boy to be escorted well away to the rear before the firing took place.

Beryl having been removed out of danger, Crawford and I sat down and held a council of war. From where we were it was, of course, impossible to form any judgment upon the herd—we should have to work our way right in amongst them, and, very probably, up and down the herd from end to end before we could be certain whether or not the big bull whose spoor we had seen was there, and, if so, whether his ivory was good enough to secure. But, to begin with, we loaded up, and then very solemnly selected two blades of grass of uneven length and drew lots for the first shot—which fell to Crawford.

There was only my gun-bearer with us—a long, lean savage with a crooked forefinger which invariably pointed round the corner when his hand was extended towards game. Matungwa—that was his name—had been down to the Southern



mines, and being of a mechanical turn of mind, had one day investigated some machinery at close quarters, the broken finger being the result. Crawford's bearer we had left behind, as he was far too excitable a person to introduce to elephant, and the old *fundi*, or skilled hunter, who had helped us in the spooring was in charge of Beryl, as being the most trustworthy person we had with us.

As for the carriers and *machila* men and personal boys, they were, we hoped, at least two miles in the rear; one can never be too far from the ragtag and bobtail on occasions of this kind.

It was now about 9.15, and the wind was beginning to get a little choppy. One puff from behind us, and the herd ahead would break away, with very little prospect of our ever again catching them up; so we began to move forward, cautiously yet quickly, bending slightly and taking advantage of what cover there was, yet paying more attention to the variations of the wind than to concealment.

The first animal we came to was an old cow, standing meditatively in a little clearing by herself. A newly stripped branch lay on the ground beside her, and she was chewing happily, while close beside her a little calf stood, shoulder-deep in the grass. The scene was too domestic for my tastes, and I silently nudged Crawford and turned away towards another bunch of animals about forty yards off.

Every step forward brought more elephants into view. The great grey shapes loomed up all

around us, wedged in, as it were, among the trees, and almost impossible to distinguish except for the great ears that flapped now and again, or the huge trunks raised aloft to the branches above them. Once I nearly walked straight into a half-grown young bull, who was only about ten yards off when I distinguished him, half hidden as he was by a spreading bush. And so, for nearly half an hour Crawford and I picked our way through the herd, with our rifles ready and our hearts in our mouths lest the wind should suddenly veer round and a stampede occur.

By degrees we made our way towards a clump of animals somewhat apart which seemed rather larger than the rest. They turned out to be five old cows, half asleep under a large tree—a regular tea-party, it seemed, as all the rugged old grey heads were turned inwards to the centre of the circle, and, nodding and swaying, looked like nothing so much as a gathering of slightly deaf old ladies collected around a tea-table. One or two of the old dears had quite respectable tusks for cows, and Crawford and I approached within twenty yards and took several photographs—which unfortunately were never destined to see the light, as they turned out to be, without exception, under-exposed.

It was nervous work, focussing and winding up the spools, while each click of the shutter sounded to me like the crack of a rifle. But the cows never moved, and at last, having felt an unmistakable puff of wind on the back of my neck, I came to the conclusion that it was time to be off out of that

particular tea-party. So, very cautiously, inch by inch, we worked our way to a safe distance, and then, after a few minutes' rest, commenced to reconnoitre in another direction.

So far we had seen nothing worth shooting—the big bull we had hoped for did not appear to be there, or else he was right in front, away at the other side of the herd. At this point it occurred to Crawford that it might be as well to climb a tree and see what was to be seen; so, surrendering his 9-mm. Mauser to my care, he climbed a sapling about twice the size of an ordinary rhododendron bush, and got his glasses to bear upon the situation.

A moment later I caught an agonised whisper from the topmost branches: "Get out of this! She's coming straight for the tree!"

Here was a pretty kettle of fish—Crawford up in the tree without his rifle, myself at the bottom with two rifles, Matungwa, the gunboy, shivering with funk at my side, and, presumably, a cow-elephant making direct for our position! It was clearly out of the question to decamp with both the rifles; besides, I had no idea of my position in regard to the rest of the herd. But the tree was a very slender one, and Crawford is a heavy person; I was very doubtful if it would bear us both, or, for that matter, whether or not I could manage to climb it with a rifle under each arm.

However, there was no time to weigh the pros and cons of the situation, and the next moment I was scrambling up the tree as best I could. When two or three feet from the ground I caught

sight of the cow coming, as Crawford had said, straight for the tree; but she was still some way off, and was merely slouching along, apparently without any definite object in view.

I got up as high as I could—but it was not very high, as Crawford, besides being heavy, is long, and extended some considerable way down the tree. And then, with one foot perched upon a small fork and the other dangling precariously in mid-air some fifteen feet from the ground, I awaited results in considerable trepidation. If she came much nearer I could not imagine what would happen, as it would have been quite impossible, hampered as I was with the two rifles, to fire at her without being shot out of the fork by the recoil, and it was too late in the day to think of handing up the spare rifle to Crawford.

On she came, nearer and nearer, until we could see her wicked little eyes quite plainly. She was only a small animal, standing some nine feet at the shoulder, with a very poor pair of tusks; still, she weighed well over four tons, I have no doubt, and had an unpleasant face.

I had drawn up my spare foot as high as it would go, and was beginning to suffer the agonies of cramp; if she passed underneath us I should only clear her by a foot or two. And there was the boy under the tree behind us—that is, if he had not cleared long ago (as I must admit I should have done had I been in his place). And then, while still a few yards from the tree, she stopped, stretched out her trunk, and seemed

to feel about in the grass. A moment later a tiny calf, which had been lying, all unknown to us, almost under the tree, rose and went to her—she nuzzled it for a moment, and then, to my unspeakable relief, mother and calf turned right about and disappeared into the bush.

Crawford and I were both very glad to get down from that tree. At the bottom we found Matungwa, still a slaty-grey kind of colour, but seemingly in better spirits. He told us that while we had been aloft a couple of bulls had passed some distance off on our right, making for the little clearing where we had seen the first cow; so, after a few minutes to collect ourselves, off we went again in the direction which he indicated.

We were not long in finding them. There were two bulls and a cow—the best bull, whose tusks really seemed quite an average size, was standing nearest to us, offering a broadside shot—while his brother, a little farther off, was end-on, and the cow was away to the left. So we held another hurried consultation. The whole question was whether the ivory was worth shooting. As far as I was concerned, I was quite prepared to be satisfied with average ivory; if we let this herd go, it was probable that we should not easily find another, and the time at the disposal of both Crawford and myself was limited. We had examined the animals pretty thoroughly, having by now spent well over an hour in amongst them, and there did not seem to be anything more valuable available. So we decided to try our

luck with these—Crawford to take first shot at the shoulder of the large bull, and I to rake the smaller one end on.

We took up our positions ; Crawford was about twenty yards from his animal, and I within thirty of mine, and about ten from my companion. A moment later there was a crack from the 9 mm., followed by the heavier report of my .404.

And then came pandemonium—a sound as of hell let loose. A string of cows tore past us with a sound of rushing waters, and vanished in the forest. Crawford's bull ran some fifty yards and went over with a dull thud ; mine came to his knees a little further on, then rose again and staggered another few yards, only to sink once more on his knees, for the last time. Meantime, thinking I had missed my shot, I had fired again at what I thought was my bull, but which proved afterwards to be a cow which had evidently crossed him at the crucial moment, and she had dropped dead about two hundred yards into the bush. So there were three elephants to our credit, and the rest of the herd had vanished as if they had never been.

I sent a runner back to tell Beryl to come on with the men, and then we went up and examined our spoil. Crawford's bullet had gone clean through the shoulder and the lungs, being embedded under the skin on the farther side. The tusks were long but rather thin, and, as it turned out afterwards, very hollow. My raking shot had been quite successful, having ploughed its way up from under the tail into the lungs ; the tusks of



this bull were smaller than those of the other, but seemed thicker—although it transpired later that they were extremely light. But the greatest shock of all awaited us when we reached the cow, which I had shot unintentionally with the idea of polishing off the bull. The shot was a good one in the shoulder, delivered as she charged away towards my left—and on looking at her tusks I saw that they were very much like those of the small bull, which, no doubt, had led me to mistake her for him. But the crowning horror was to find that one tusk was perfectly rotten, and the core eaten away, thus reducing the weight of ivory by nearly a half, while standing over her in pathetic attitude of expectancy was a calf about the size of a St. Bernard dog.

All this meant a bag of trouble—item, shooting a cow with immature tusks; item, shooting a cow with a calf. Neither Crawford nor I had seen the calf, owing to the long grass, and here was the little beggar hanging about waiting for his mother to wake up.

He was a game little chap, too. As soon as the gunboy approached with the idea of cutting off the tail of the cow—always the first thought—the calf charged him and knocked him head over heels. The boy picked himself up and flew round the dead body of the cow, hotly pursued by the infuriated little wretch; on his second round he tripped over the trunk and came down with the calf on top of him. Crawford and I, helpless from laughter, then joined in, with the idea of securing the little animal so that we could take its



photograph. But we had reckoned without due knowledge of the strength of a baby elephant. Crawford seized it by the tail, and in a moment was skating gaily away over the slippery grass; I grabbed his belt, and the gunboy clung round my waist, but it was no good—we had to go where the calf wanted, and the little beast proceeded to tow us at a good round pace through the thickest bush it could find. Finally, after I had lost most of the skin off my elbows and shins, I surrendered, and Crawford did the same; when the calf stopped dead for a moment and looked round with a malicious gleam in its little eyes, then set off as hard as it could go upon the spoor of the herd—where, I trust, it found a foster-mother.

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So our first day after elephant has ended. We are all very tired and stiff, and the perfume in camp is not as pleasant as it might be, while the ground for yards around each carcase is a regular shambles. Beryl has been cooking trunk in an ant-heap after the approved method ever since we got into camp, and has just produced it with pride. It looks very nasty, and the two little tunnels are most suggestive. We each had a small piece, but it tasted uncommonly like shoe-leather, so we fell back upon the inevitable *kuku* (fowl) and sardines. I expect we shall all be in bed early to-night.

## JUNE

We leave Crawford—Game pits—Callousness of the native to human and animal pain—Treatment of fowls and other living things—How the native stands in regard to the white man's advent—The native view-point—The Colonial view-point—The local European view-point—Women—Beer—Stock—Dignity of labour—Book-learning—Education and religion—"Creating wants"—European dress—Low-class whites—Code of honour—Imitation—The strong man—Prestige—Personal bravery—Influence of married whites—Chimbemawe and the bicycle bell—Mporokoso—His good sense—He tours his district and discovers weak points—Awemba blood-royal—Changala—Beryl's grip of local conditions—The class of woman needed out here—Suffragettes at a discount—Nearing the White Fathers—Our leave is granted.

WE parted from Crawford to-day, as he has to strike south-west on his way down-country, and I must visit some villages on the way back to the station. The part where we now are is some three days from Malale, and the villagers, taking advantage of this fact, have been rather slack lately in paying up taxes. I am also told that there are a good many game-pits round about here, and the digging (and staking) of game-pits is a heinous offence. The barbarity of this method of slaughtering animals is only what one would

expect from a people who cannot be made to realise that any living thing, including man, feels pain—but, apart from this aspect of the matter, a pit ten feet deep and four in diameter, furnished with sharply pointed stakes and cunningly masked with grass or dead leaves, is a menace to the populace at large—especially when, as is so often the case, it is dug in close proximity to a well-frequented footpath.

I think that if I were called upon to indicate one characteristic of the native as being pre-eminent above all others, I should name that of utter callousness to the feelings, not only of animals, but of his fellow-creatures. His treatment of fowls, goats, and dogs is perfectly brutal; not, I am convinced, so much from any positive enjoyment of their sufferings, although that aspect cannot be altogether ignored, as from sheer indifference and lack of imagination.

A very ordinary sight upon *ulendo* is that of five or six wretched, skinny fowls tied tightly by the legs to a stick, swinging head downwards over their owner's shoulder, and travelling thus, not for a minute or two merely, but for hours on end, in blazing, broiling sunshine, without any shade or support whatever. And, arrived in camp, the stick is simply dropped beside the man's load; such an act of grace as the setting free of the captives so that they might stretch their poor, cramped legs and, haply, pick up some sustenance in the undergrowth, lies far beyond the mental horizon of the savage. Beryl and I, in common with every white man and woman in the country, have slaved and

stormed with, I am afraid, but little avail. For there exists a total lack of appreciation of facts which makes one's best efforts useless. I remember well how, on one occasion, our houseboys had caught an unfortunate baby hawk, and had tied it head downwards upon the fence by the kitchen, with the idea probably of putting it to death in some utterly barbarous fashion at their leisure—since the native hates a hawk as a cat hates water. Beryl happened to catch sight of the poor little wretch, and had it released and despatched mercifully; then, with the idea that the occasion was one upon which to point a moral, she suggested that it might be as well if the perpetrators of the outrage were themselves suspended head downwards for a while, so that they might realise the discomfort of the position. The suggestion was greeted with hilarious applause, the cook in particular rolling upon the ground in merriment; but as for appreciating the point of the remark, that was as far from them as ever.

It is just the same with goats and sheep: the only way to catch or lead them, according to the native, is by the leg, wrenching it sometimes nearly out of the socket. If a native is asked to catch hold of a dog, he will invariably make a dive for one of the paws, and swing it up by that, quite regardless of the dangers of dislocation. In the same way, much needless suffering is inflicted upon wounded game when a native is left to despatch it; there seems to be a peculiar pleasure in plunging in the spear and grinding it round and round.

Even the invaluable Bokosi, who has been with white men so long that he should by this time have assimilated some of their ideas, has very crude notions upon the subject of kindness to dumb creatures. Beryl one evening, after she had given orders for four fowls to be killed for dinner, happened to go out on to the back verandah, and there she discovered the old man, with a bland smile upon his face, in the very act of despatching the luckless birds. He held them in a row on the edge of the verandah, with their skinny necks side by side, and was sawing gaily when she arrived.

Callousness to the sufferings of their fellows is merely a side-aspect of the same question. I have seen natives shrieking with laughter at the contortions of a poor wretch who was suffering agony with a dislocated knee. I have watched the avidity with which a crowd of youths and boys listened to descriptions of the old-time tortures and mutilations, furnished by one who had taken a prominent share in them. I know by bitter experience how difficult it is to induce natives to carry in to the doctor a fellow-villager who has, let us say, been mauled by a lion. The lust of cruelty is engrained in their characters from childhood upward, and it is perfectly easy to conjure up in imagination the terrible atrocities which took place in the old, unregenerate days when the chiefs were in very sooth lords of their people and the national justice a rough and ready system of mutilation and torture, burning and bloodshed.

But, after all, this is but part of the great question

which has, sooner or later, to be solved in any young country where civilisation has been brought into conflict with the forces of a barbarous tradition. In this question, as in any other, there are two sides to be considered. It is only fair to look at it through native eyes as well as through our own; to ask how the native stands to fare from our advent.

And in Central Africa there are three distinct view-points from which we may consider such a question. The first is that of the native himself—the view-point of fatalistic philosophy. The second is that, almost purely pessimistic, of men who hold to the traditions of the Colonial-born. The third is that of the average European inhabitant—a view-point which is on the whole enthusiastically optimistic. First, then, for the native and his outlook. How does the average native of the Bantu tribes in Central Africa regard the presence in his country of the white stranger? For it is safe to assume that, to peoples who date back centuries previous to the advent of the Europeans, the comparatively recent white influx must still be something of a novelty.

For the most part he appears placid and contented enough. Indeed, upon the Tanganyika Plateau, he believes that the strangers will eventually pass westward and leave him in peace.

In Central Africa there have always been dominant tribes. For the moment we represent them. If we evacuated the country to-morrow—or, for that matter, in five hundred years—the original state of affairs would be very rapidly restored. Under the

rule of the tribal chiefs these dominant peoples had no doubt an exceedingly pleasant existence. They were under no necessity to till lands for sustenance; such tilling was the work of tributary races, and a shortage in the larders of the superior peoples meant merely the pleasurable excitement of a foray into the domains of the recalcitrant plebeians. Women, cattle, arms, fish, game, food, the wherewithal for clothing—all of these could be had merely by the right of the strong arm. It must be galling enough for such lords of the earth to realise that nowadays the King's peace acts as a bar to such innocent amusements as before relieved for them the monotony of the wilderness. For the young men, indeed, the only outlet is a journey to the Southern mines; a journey which, like those of the Crusaders of old, holds out the spice of an uncertain return, and the opportunity of garnering some grains of culture from among strange peoples.

Even to the weaker races the same applies. No longer can the tedium of the days—which, according to Mr. Wilson in his paper to the *Journal* of the African Society upon the people of Uganda, is a very real and very wearing tedium to the savage—be lightened by the mutilation of evildoers, by the smelling-out of wizards who have offended against the unwritten laws of the community, by the torture of ancient hags who might or might not have exercised occult and unlawful powers. They are certainly secure under our ægis from the periodical depredations of the dominant tribes; but, with the tendencies of children, are apt to forget their



benefits, and to brood upon the curtailment of their ancient privileges. A petty chief who in the old days had power, not only over life and death but over slow torture as well, must surely feel some of the pangs of one whose glory is departed when he realises that the Government has arrogated to itself his former powers.

On the other hand, the old men of the tribe are not so insensible to the benefits of our advent as are the bulk of the people. They realise that, whereas in the olden days it was impossible to cultivate in war-time at any distance from the village, now they can and do cultivate much more widely in absolute security. Formerly the chief could take to himself the wife of any commoner; now each man is safe, in this respect at least, in his married life. Beer is undoubtedly drunk more nowadays than formerly, since, whereas in olden times every youth was compelled to keep himself fit and ready for military service, now the young men who have not the pluck to go a-crusading to the mines sit at home and drink. Even from the point of view of work there was in the old days the chief's *mulasa*, or statute labour, to be considered—tree-cutting or the like, no less onerous than that which is now required to earn a three-shilling hut tax.

More, however, from the standpoint of the young and the middle-aged men let us consider whether the advent of the white man has brought in its train advantages which can in any way compensate for the loss of ancient glories and diversions. In the eyes of the Central African there are in this world

only a few things which can be considered as un-mixed blessings, notably food (of which meat ranks first), women, beer, idleness, and in some tribes the acquisition of stock. Taking these in order, what do we find?

In Central Africa the coming of the white man has perhaps brought with it some slight increase in the food supply available. Natives undoubtedly cultivate more than they did, and this is owing entirely to the sense of security which prevails. Meat, perhaps, is somewhat more plentiful than it was, owing to the advent of the European with weapons of precision; but there are always, from the native point of view, vexatious matters such as game and licence laws, which need attention, and which curtail their former privileges of snaring, trapping, and fishing.

As regards women the state of affairs is very similar. Officially, notwithstanding the blandishments of Exeter Hall, we have not hitherto brought pressure to bear in the matter of polygamy; but the missionary is at work in this direction. The matter is, of course, one which falls heaviest upon the former stronger tribes, since there is nowadays no question of their replenishing the supply of women by capture. And in the younger territories it has not yet been possible to institute effective marriage laws, so that a man is hardly more secure against adultery than he formerly was. Indeed, it may be said without exaggeration that his position is, if anything, rather less secure—except, of course, in reference to the chief—for whereas nowadays a

civil case resulting in some small compensation to the injured party will probably end the matter, in former days the guilty pair would very possibly have suffered the unpleasantness of "something lingering, with boiling oil in it."

Beer is more common than ever. Whatever regulations have been promulgated against liquor do not apply to the consumption of native beer; unless we argue—as it is, indeed, permissible to do—that the growing contempt of the woman for the authority of her husband, which is undoubtedly fostered by benevolent European laws for the relief and protection of womenkind, may result in her refusing to brew beer at all.

There is in Central Africa another time-honoured shibboleth yecept "The Dignity of Labour." In the eyes of the native labour has *no* dignity, and in this respect the barbarians and the upper classes of European civilisation may be said to join hands. When there is any work to be done the native willingly foregoes any dignity which might accrue, and instead, cheerfully turns it over to his womenkind, as being the inferior animal. For a native to work voluntarily for work's sake would be a thing unheard of, unprecedented.

The question of stock may be said to lie in the same category as that of food. We might, it is true, in isolated instances afford the native the opportunity of breeding from pedigree rams to improve his herd of goats; in the vast majority of cases he would have none of them. And whatever prestige we might derive from such a course we should inevitably lose again by the subsequent

introduction of such measures as dipping, the inoculation of stock, quarantine, and the like. On the other hand, such stock as is now in native hands is at least secure to the individual owner, which was certainly not the case when the chiefs and headmen were in power.

On the whole, as regards the five or six essential things seen through the eyes of the younger men (who are assuredly the ones to be considered, since their elders belong more to the sphere of ancient history than to that of present politics), it may safely be said that, according to his own idea, the native has derived but little benefit from the coming of the white man.

But what says the Colonial-born upon the matter? His view-point is interesting, although, possibly, prejudiced. *Imprimis*, we endeavour to educate the native—and, in Colonial eyes, this is the head and forefront of our offending. For, says he, can any reasonable being, laying his hand upon his heart, conscientiously aver that he believes education, upon the lines upon which it is nowadays conducted, to be beneficial to the utterly raw savage? At present, he is ecstatically, ideally happy in a condition of absolute and unrelieved ignorance. We proceed, therefore (still according to the Colonial), to upset his most cherished beliefs with a vandal hand; we set out to instil into him the rudiments of knowledge, preconvicted that he can never master sufficient of our science to benefit him in the very slightest, predetermined to withhold from him any semblance of social equality, no

matter how far he may eventually proceed along the thorny road of knowledge. And in support of the theory that wisdom (*id est*, book-learning) is good for the native, we point proudly to the alacrity with which the barbarian who lives within reach of a Mission-school proceeds to avail himself of the opportunities which lie before him; ignoring utterly that one attribute of vanity which is, in nine cases out of ten, the mainspring of the impulse. How many men realise the ineffable joy which is the heritage of that native who, in a circle of his more illiterate acquaintances, can move a black forefinger along the line of a printed page, and evolve from that page some semblance of the language which is in use among the white Bwanas? Where, in this connection, lies that elevation of the soul which we are accustomed to associate with the spread of knowledge?

In religion it is the same; except that here, instead of merely erecting a useless monument, we are at the same time casting down old beliefs. The religious intolerance of the Britisher is already a byword among the nations; nowhere, perhaps, is it more noticeable than in this very traffic with the followers of Mumbo-Jumbo. For, strange as it may seem, the native has a working religion of his own. It is a poor thing, perhaps—compact of fetishes, of superstitions which, to our enlightened twentieth-century culture, seem hardly credible. Nevertheless the native and his forebears have used this religion of theirs for countless generations. It is impossible to believe that they

will derive any particular benefit from the adoption of our religion until an almost equal number of generations shall have passed away—and, in the interval, what is to be the position of the renegade?

Besides education and religion, it has become an axiom of good government that we shall instil into the luckless savage the necessity of purchasing articles of civilised commerce. This we call “creating wants.” But why, in the name of common sense, should we disturb a contented people by dangling before their eyes articles which, up to the present, they have never desired? Is the savage the happier in the possession of a trade looking-glass or a trade blanket—does his constitution improve with the absorption of tinned sardines or meats? Are his womenkind more moral, more virtuous, because, instead of the hides of beasts, waterproof and more or less sanitary, they take to themselves gaudy calicoes from the looms of Birmingham? It would seem, indeed, that while the simple life, according to latter-day notions, is the only path of salvation for the complex European, the more complicated existence can be made for the simple savage the better. Truly an extraordinary thesis!

With the above reflection, we come to the matter of European dress—a theme which has, of late, become so hackneyed that it were but flogging a dead horse to dilate upon it here. Most people—in England, at least—believe that a native clothed after the white man’s standard is already within hailing distance of the white



man's heaven. It is certainly true that he is within easy reach of a heaven of some kind, since, by the unwonted covering up of his skin, he may very conceivably die of pneumonia; for there was never a native yet who, given a suit of European clothing, did not work in it by day and sleep in it by night, utterly heedless of possible hygienic complications. It is true, also, that new vistas will open before him; that he will inevitably begin to dream mistily of a time when he will employ other savages (perhaps, even, if the Ethiopians are to be believed, Europeans) to work for him. No matter—he has grasped the fundamental truth that a month's work means a month's pay, and a year's work the lap of luxury. This axiom grasped, he is considered to have attained to our level, and it is obviously time that he be given a vote.

So much for the outlook of the Colonial-born, and for that of the native himself. But what is the mean which lies between the two—the mean, that is, of rational and sober criticism?

There are, it must be remembered, two classes of Europeans in the country—those who come here with the avowed intention of influencing the native, either as missionaries or as Government officials, and those who are here without any such definite aim, the trader or the sportsman, whose influence for good or evil may be less sustained, but is none the less strong. But we are very fortunate in one respect—the lower-class European, the man who has never had another human being subject to his orders, who



errs perpetually between excess of severity on the one hand and excess of familiarity on the other—the man who has not the instincts of good breeding to show him the way, and who has neither the brains nor the perseverance to endeavour to master even the rudiments of the native tongue—this type of man, thanks be to Heaven, has not yet penetrated so far afield from the bars and the racecourses of the South as to constitute a definite menace to the country. In the nebulous future we may expect him—but, in the meantime, it is, perhaps, possible to prepare the native against his arrival. And, pending his coming, the problem of white influence is, necessarily, a different problem to that which exists in more advanced South Africa.

To whichever of the first two classes the European in the country may belong, it is noticeable that there is but one code of honour, that is, “Keep your word to the native.” Cases have been known of drunken, almost destitute Europeans denying themselves drink and provisions to pay off their native servants. As a result, the word of a white man is, here, sufficient security for any of the ordinary purposes of life. It does not, of course, follow that the influence of this fact is sufficient to make the native himself regard his word as his bond; indeed, but few natives can be brought to realise the sanctity of a contract; but it certainly simplifies intercourse between two races when one believes implicitly in the word of the other, even though that belief be not mutual. And although Mr.

Dudley Kidd in his "Kafir Socialism" may sneer at the idea of our "imported British justice," which, according to him, we force down the throat of the native against his will, taking a pride in the doing of it, it may be doubted whether, upon the Tanganyika Plateau, nine natives out of ten would not readily admit that the white man, be he official, trader, or missionary, is indubitably just, even judged by native standards. Still, the problems of the South are not the problems of the North—as, I trust, you have found out ere this.

Natives are instinctively imitative, and study, naturally, the character of the white man for whom they work. Though they do not all, perhaps, proceed to such lengths as did the carriers of the Italian nobleman, who painted white circles round their eyes to imitate the eyeglass of their employer, yet it is hardly too much to say that from the caravan which precedes a white man the character of that white man can be very accurately judged.

So long as a man *be* a man, in the true sense of the word, his influence for both good and evil will be tremendous. Personal courage, even though it may include the vices of ruthlessness and cruelty, will carry a man further in his intercourse with natives than any amount of sympathetic insight, for the simple reason that the native understands the former, but has had but little experience of the latter. It is likely that the sportsman, the hunter of big game, will be more *en rapport* with natives than he

who is crammed full of folk-lore and the unwritten customs of the tribes. A story is told of an official in a certain part where the hunting of elephants was forbidden, who, chancing one day when in a wild part of the country to come across fresh spoor, gave chase and killed an elephant, lest his men should think that he was afraid. On his return to his station, he fined himself fifty pounds—the maximum penalty—and considered the preservation of his prestige cheap at the price. Such an action may appear exaggerated to those who do not understand local conditions; but loss of prestige in dealing with natives is a serious matter, and it cannot be doubted that many men in this country take risks which, if alone, they would not take, simply and solely that the white man's reputation for personal bravery may be upheld. As a result the natives look upon the average European as a god from the machine, and will brave almost any danger in his company.

In generosity and courtesy the native has but little to learn from us, more especially in such matters as the distribution of food, drink, or tobacco. Indeed, continued service among white men seems to have the unfortunate effect of blunting his innate sense of courtesy towards both his equals and his superiors. He is quick, also, to realise his own shortcomings and those of his fellows; he has grasped the advantages of European antiseptics as compared with his own primitive and insanitary remedies; and native women who have lived in the vicinity of a married white man are not slow to claim from

their husbands the respect which is shown by the Bwana to his wife.

In regard to ethics, the truth of Earl Grey's dictum, that Africa cannot always rest upon the twin pillars of domestic slavery and polygamy, becomes only more pronounced upon closer study of the question. The influence of the many married whites in the country reacts against polygamy, especially in the case of educated natives, and the missionaries are, undoubtedly, right in making monogamy a *sine qua non*. On the other hand, the immorality of the bachelor, of any status, is often quoted; but it must be remembered that the native sees nothing extraordinary in the usual relationship between man and woman. He regards the woman as the bachelor's wife—and thus the evil done is by no means so incalculable as might be supposed. It would, unfortunately, be difficult to teach any native over ten years of age anything in immorality which he did not know, since most of them are, at that age, already past masters in vice.

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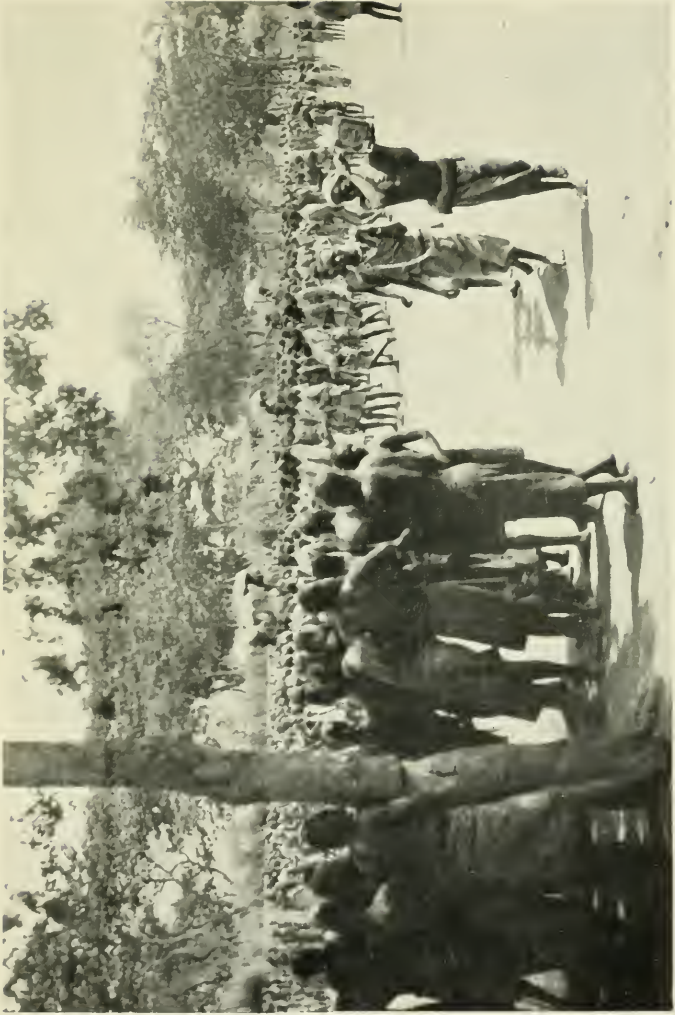
I had got as far as this when Beryl popped her head in through the back of the tent where I was writing, and looked over my shoulder. A second or two later she intimated that I was writing rather rot, and that Chimbemawe (a local headman) wanted to see me. So I heaved a sigh and gave it up—leaving, I am sure, a good many native problems still unsolved.

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Chimbemawe possesses, in my eyes, the supreme merit of originality, having evolved, in a land where tonsorial eccentricities are as prevalent as strikes in England under a Liberal Government, a unique and striking method of hairdressing. He leaves it to others to furrow their wool in diagonal or horizontal lines, to wind stray strands around matches, to shave mother-naked except for a tiny pen-wiper tuft; he himself believes, apparently, in the principle which induces gentle ladies in England to adopt the hair-pad, and has accordingly pressed the dome of an old bicycle-bell into service. There is a hole in the dome where formerly the striker passed; Chimbemawe cultivates a small wisp of hair, which is threaded lovingly through this hole and cemented firmly on the outside with a dollop of mud. And so, well aft on the star-board side of his cranium, there is a gleaming knob of metal which glistens in the sunshine, and, as the Diddybird put it the first time he saw him, makes one hanker to "ring him up" whenever one meets him.

He has, it seems, honoured me with this visit for the purpose of drawing his monthly subsidy of two shillings, which is paid to him as one of the superior village headmen under my old friend Mporokoso, the Pooh-Bah of these parts. Incidentally, he tells me that Mporokoso has quite recently lost two head of cattle from some mysterious disease, and is now upon the track of his ancestral spirits with a view to finding out the meaning of it.

I have a great admiration for old Mporokoso;



CHIEFS VISITING A STATION.





he is a chief after my own heart, a native gentleman, and a shrewd old law-giver, though I have no doubt that his past record, in the days when he consorted with Arab slavers and rapsSCALLIONS generally, contains many matters which would hardly bear investigation at the present time. I took a fancy to him as soon as I got to the division, although he is a prosy old customer, and loves nothing better than to arrive at my office in state early in the morning (of a mail-day for choice), and, wrapping his voluminous draperies around him, to discuss all and sundry matters with the true native disregard of the value of time. Still, I have learned a lot from these very séances—there is no other word for them. Last month, for instance, it occurred to him that it would be a good idea if he were to institute a village-to-village visitation among his people on the lines of that of the district official. He submitted the idea to me, and I strongly approved; so behold the old man—well over fifty, remember—setting out upon the round of his sixty odd villages, escorted by a hundred of his people, riding for the greater part of the way upon the shoulders of stalwart youngsters, and, on the whole, reviving in the minds of his subjects the now almost forgotten Royal progresses of the Wemba chieftains of the olden time.

When he got back to the station he sent word that he would like to discuss with me certain points of interest connected with his tour; and for a whole morning the old man and I hobnobbed in the office. His grip of things was

astonishing. In one or two villages, it seemed, the birth-rate was on the downward grade; goodness only knows how he had managed to calculate it out, but I found that my official statistics bore him out triumphantly. This, said Mporokoso, was a serious matter, and I agreed with him. In other villages it seemed there was, apparently, a rebellious tendency among the younger women, who were less inclined to obey their liege lords than formerly. He seemed to think that the only remedy lay in frequent application of corporal chastisement; and we discussed the matter at great length, though, unfortunately, I could not agree with him—officially. In other parts, again, the crops were backward, and he was ready with primitive schemes of irrigation; in fact, he had laid his finger with unerring accuracy upon the weak points of his district, and I found myself agreeing with him upon nearly every point that he raised. In the end (after a certain amount of encouragement, I must confess, since my lunch was a good hour overdue) he extricated himself from the debate and went home, leaving me with a higher opinion than before of the good sense of the native aristocrat. After all, men of his stamp administered their people for countless years prior to our advent, and did not do it at all badly.

It is curious to note how, even in primitive communities, blood-royal will out—how birth and breeding tell. Among the Awemba, the ruling dynasty is as easy to recognise, from physical characteristics, as is any one of the higher Indian castes.

Tall, upstanding men, with clean-cut features and traces of Arab blood, it would be impossible, meeting one by chance upon the path, to fail to perceive at once that he was of the select few—the Upper Ten of savagedom.

Beryl, I am afraid, does not take much stock of the *nuances* of pedigree; she is apt to base her classification of the native upon a standard of smelliness or unsmelliness, or of those who are suitable for housework and those who are not; or, as I have hinted before, of those who are willing to sell her eggs and those who prefer to hatch out young families. And this attitude is, no doubt, a fairly characteristic one among those who do not deal with the native either in his spiritual capacity, as do the missionaries, or his political capacity, as do the servants of the Government. But even Beryl took a fancy to Changala, another of the Wemba chiefs, whom we visited soon after we arrived in the country. He came to meet us, I remember, two good miles outside his village, with a huge retinue and the clamour of rattle and drum, riding upon the shoulders of a six-foot youth, his sharp, fierce eyes and beaky nose protruding from beneath his head-dress of scarlet parrot's feathers in the most appropriate fashion. And since then Changala has stood to Beryl as the type, *par excellence*, of the savage chieftain.

Which reminds me that, though she may not view these quaint heathen of ours with quite the same measure of appreciation as do we who are more intimately connected with them, none the

less Beryl has a very fair idea of the problems and conundrums which beset the Native Commissioner from January to December. Her estimate of character is very nearly always correct—I have colloqued with her more than once upon some knotty point; her level-headedness is not invariably confined to questions of menus or household stores. Possibly this is an aspect of the great question of the usefulness of woman which has not, as yet, presented itself to the great community of shrieking sisters who, in comfortable England, are howling for the franchise. If so, I should be glad to recommend it to their consideration. For there is many a niche in England overseas which is waiting to be filled by the right kind of woman, which offers opportunities for the vindication of her sex more obviously useful than those which culminate in the knocking off of the helmets of inoffensive policemen, the breaking of expensive windows, and the heckling of Cabinet Ministers. I submit as a general proposition that the young country which possesses the greatest number of suitably married settlers—even though its centres may lie five hundred miles from the nearest railway station—is the one with the rosiest prospects. With us, most certainly, a woman who can be trusted to buy several dozen eggs from natives without being saddled with an undue proportion of “wrong-uns,” who will submit to being bundled into a *machila* at a moment’s notice and unearthed therefrom, say, six hours later, some twenty miles further on; who can act either as a trained nurse or a

*cordon bleu*, should the necessity arise, and who is moderately cheerful through it all—such a woman, I can assure you, is worth many a militant suffragette!

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Perhaps it is time to remind you that we have not been stationary all this time—since we slew the elephants and said goodbye to Crawford, that is. Far from it. Since then we have visited exactly nineteen villages, I have decided seven criminal cases and ten civil ones, have made six women happy by divorcing them from their husbands and four men miserable by refusing to do so, and have collected about fifteen pounds in hard cash on account of taxes. In other words, it is just a week since we struck the elephant camp, and we are within a few miles of the station of the White Fathers at Katere's, where, with average luck, we hope to arrive to-morrow. To-day is the thirtieth, and as I have arranged to meet the Diddybird on the seventh of next month, with the idea of touring with him, it behoves us to get back to the station as quickly as possible. Meantime, the mail runner came into camp to-night, and I received advice from headquarters that my application for leave in November has been approved. *En avant* for the fleshpots! for the tubes and the taxis and the theatres of London Town!

## JULY

White Fathers' Mission—The Father Superior—Hospitality—Loyalty—View from the verandah—Dinner—Père Babillaud—Frère Jacques—Culture—Complin—A native organist—Mother Cécile—Her pluck and journeyings—News of recruits for the mines—A hard day's work—Native cases—The feminine litigant—A gentle witch-doctor—Back at Malale—Ponya—Station news—A bush fire—A mad mailman—Two prisoners nearly cooked—Arrival of the Diddybird—Routine of the miners—A disheartening job—Visitors—Dinner—The cook *par excellence*—A new exotic—The intolerance of stay-at-homes.

ONE sees a good many unexpected things, from time to time, in this part of Africa, but I am willing to wager that the most unexpected, for a man new to the country, would be that which met Beryl's eyes and mine just after midday this afternoon. I say, advisedly, for one who was new to the country; to us the sight is of course familiar.

Imagine, then, a narrow, tangled path, some eighteen inches broad, winding, it would seem, interminably through bracken and brushwood towards the purple hills which lie upon the skyline. To all intents and purposes the country

around is just the same as it has been at any particular point during the last week's travelling; you would not say that there was a white man's dwelling within a hundred miles, although, had you an observant eye, you might deduce, from the multitudinous cross-paths that intersect your own at frequent intervals, that you were perhaps approaching a village of exceptional size and importance.

Very well, then! Next moment you will, no doubt, be surprised to find that your path twists even more abruptly than usual, and that, instead of leading as hitherto through the interminable tangle of bush, it debouches suddenly into a trimly-kept grove of glorious, spreading orange-trees, dark, rounded mangoes and peaches, the clean, cool green of bananas spreading fanwise along never-ending rows of seed beds and well-irrigated furrows where cabbages, carrots, and every vegetable which ever delighted the heart of a greengrocer flourish exceedingly.

Framed in the vista of the orange grove are glimpses of a truly colossal building, designed, it seems, upon the plans of Northern Africa, of Tunis and Algiers. But of this more anon, since in the middle distance is a picturesque figure, in a white robe, with long, wide sleeves, a broad white felt hat, with a black umbrella and nut-brown rosary, whereof the great cross stands out, distinctly enough, against the dazzling stuff in the clear African sunlight. The garden is that of the Mission of the White Fathers at Katere; the building of which we caught a glimpse is their



church; the figure is that of the Father Superior (who has evidently just thought of an exceptionally good story, since he chuckles as he advances to greet us); and the *mise-en-scène*, instead of being, as you would think, within half-an-hour of the Mediterranean, is just about five hundred miles from anywhere in the heart of Central Africa.

Père Gallipaux has not forgotten the courtesies of the Frenchman, although he has not seen France for twenty years at least. Off comes the wide white hat with a flourish, as he bends over Beryl's hand with the bow of a true cavalier. And the white teeth flash out in the depths of the long dark beard, and the little brown eyes twinkle in their sunburnt sockets as Père Gallipaux expresses his astonishment and delight at this unexpected meeting. As a matter of fact, the dear old man knew at least a week ago that I was on my way to visit the station, and, I make no doubt, has been sedulously exhorting his flock to be ready with their taxes against my arrival, ever since he received my note. None the less, it is a pleasant fiction, and makes for a cheery, welcoming atmosphere.

I know of no place where this atmosphere is so pronounced. One may arrive, really unexpectedly, at four o'clock in the morning, smashed up by an accident and needing the ministrations of all the Fathers and all the Sisters; it will make no difference to the cordiality of one's reception. I have tried it, and I know. Little official differences may have taken place during the last six

months ; there may be a whole pile of correspondence upon vexed points lying in my office box at the present moment, which will have to be argued out piecemeal before I leave ; but even if it be so, Père Gallipaux will not abate one jot of his *bonhomie*. He is the soul of hospitality ; the Mission has its traditions to maintain, and of these traditions the first and foremost must, I think, be that enjoining kindness to the stranger within the gates.

So Beryl and Père Gallipaux and I saunter up the orange avenue, pausing now and again to admire the contents of this wonder-garden, while a little black figure—the Father Superior's aide-de-camp—speeds in front of us with, I feel it, instructions to the Father in charge of the commissariat to make due preparation for the arrival of monsieur and madame.

Last time we came the community had just benefited by the arrival from Europe, via the *Maison Carrée* in Algiers, of a lay brother who had formerly been a pastrycook. And at tea that evening we were regaled with a marvellous cake coated with red and white sugar, in which were the most gorgeous designs of Prince of Wales's feathers, the arms of Great Britain, and the most loyal of mottoes. For the good Fathers believe most emphatically in supporting the cause of the country of their adoption, and His Majesty has no more loyal subjects than these good Frenchmen of Central Africa who teach the younger generations of savages to read and write in the English tongue.

To-day, it seemed, we were to have another surprise. As we came to the huge, open courtyard which, encircled by high walls of mellow brick, lies between the church and the house of the Fathers, we saw that it was black (literally) with the children of the villages round about. And hardly had we climbed up the steep, uneven brick steps which lead from the courtyard to the verandah than Père Gallipaux held up his hand and the strains of "God Save the King," rendered into a Chiwemba version, came to us from the massed crowd of children below. A Gallic touch, perhaps, but a sincere one, I am sure. For it is my first visit to the station since the death of King Edward the Seventh, and it is only through the medium of one of the humblest of his servants that these good Fathers can express their sentiments of sincere loyalty to King George, his successor.

From the verandah, which stands a good fifteen feet above the level of the courtyard, one gets a glorious view not only of the Mission estate and the six or seven little red-brown villages which nestle upon it, but also of the surrounding country. Away over there, hidden now by a pastel-blue haze, is the wide stretch of bushland through which Beryl and I have been travelling for the past week. Farther to the east, behind a smooth sugar-loaf hill, lies the valley in which we killed the elephants. To the west, just under the sun, which is sinking now, a fiery crimson ball, half shrouded in the delicate veil of smoke from an early bush-fire, lies Malale, two days' journey, alas! And due northward, a mere thread amid

the dark green of the forest, is the Lofu River, which winds for many a mile until it empties itself at last into the silent, magic waters of Tanganyika, not far from the very spot whence David Livingstone first gazed upon this mighty lake. It is a fair country indeed, but a wide and a treacherous one. And an open view such as this is apt to make one realise how many thousands of miles lie between oneself and the nearest cab-rank.

Dinner—a Gargantuan meal, wherein the real *pot-au-feu*, so rarely met with outside France, competes with delicate tangerines and smooth mangoes from the Mission garden—brings us once more into touch with other old friends. Père Babillaud, the hunter of the Mission, the slayer of lions (he shot two one night and wounded a third, just two days before I arrived on my last visit), is on one side of Beryl, and on the other jolly little Frère Jacques, whose especial charge is usually the kitchen-garden, but just now the brick-kilns, since new schoolrooms are to be built in the near future. I am between the Superior and a newly arrived Father Bonpré, who was given a gramophone just before he left France, and is perpetually jumping up from his seat during the meal to turn it on and off. There are all kinds of cunning liqueurs on tap, manufactured from guavas, wild honey, and Heaven knows what besides, as well as some Algerian wine, sweet and syrupy, but uncommonly good for all that. And the talk is by no means all of local topics, for we read the literature of the day, I can assure you, even though it be three months old—*Figaro*

and *Le Matin* and the *Revue de Paris*—while Brother Jacques, who is by birth a Dutchman and has been educated in Bremen, provides us now and again with quotations from *Die Woche*.

It is astonishing, indeed, to note how this little community of simple-minded men manages to keep abreast of the times. There is not a political question of European importance, not a recent invention nor literary occurrence, of which they do not know at least something. And it is the more astonishing from the fact that while some of them are no doubt of the *vieille noblesse*, others are but Breton or Alsatian peasants. In England, men of the standard of these latter would content themselves with the universal adjective and the latest Cup ties; here, in Central Africa, standards seem to be different.

It is amusing to note the almost reverential awe with which they regard Beryl. When she told them that she had been up to elephants, the Father Superior held up a lean brown hand and muttered "*Mais ces femmes anglaises!*" under his breath. After dinner, on the verandah, she presented one of my cigarettes to Père Babillaud—poor, good man, he usually smokes a peculiarly villainous brand of native tobacco, and there is a pathetic gleam in his eye when anything more smokable comes his way—and, lighting one herself, proceeded to discuss with him the iniquities of the hobble skirt. I must confess that he seemed almost as *au fait* with this subject as with those of more political significance which had come up for review in the refectory.

So we sat and smoked and drank weakish tea, which, in deference to our supposed British susceptibilities, had replaced the usual excellent coffee, and watched the moon rising behind the great pile of the church opposite. Away on the hills there was the glimmer of bush-fires, for the country is burning earlier than usual this year, and I am in hopes that there will be passable shooting in a week or two. And then—in all too short a time, it seemed—the bell began to ring for Compline, and singularly sweet and homelike it sounded here among the hills and forests of savagedom.

Beryl and I went to church. It is seldom enough that one gets the chance in these latitudes. The organ, an uncommonly good instrument, was played divinely by a native, Jean Baptiste, who was rescued from Arab slavers by the early missionaries in Zanzibar, taken to France and educated at the Mother House in Paris. And after Compline Beryl nodded to an old friend of hers, a Mother Cécile, who, it seems, is back again from one of her periodical excursions into the Belgian Congo, German East Africa, and goodness knows where.

She is a wonderful woman, Mother Cécile, the visiting superintendent of the Sisters who are affiliated to the Pères Blancs. For nine months out of twelve she is travelling from one station to another, and her "beat," as I have said, extends many hundreds of miles north, east, and west of Katere. She crosses Tanganyika in dug-out or dhow almost as often as the City man travels by tube; she has been bitten time and again by



*Glossina palpalis*, but has, so far, escaped Sleeping Sickness; her retinue on the march consists usually of six or seven carriers and a diminutive and grossly incompetent cook. Three months ago she passed through Malale on one of her everlasting peregrinations. When she was leaving next morning Beryl happened to ask her if she had a rifle. "*Mais certainement!*" replied Mother Cécile—rather huffily, indeed! On inspection the rifle proved to be an ancient Snider, minus a foresight, and presumably far more dangerous to the firer than to the object aimed at. "Have you any cartridges?" continued Beryl, in a reprehensible spirit of curiosity. "*Ah! ça, c'est autre chose!*" replied the Mother with a smile. There were none. She believed far more implicitly in the *Bon Dieu*—and who shall say that she was wrong? After all, the proof of the pudding is in the eating; she has spent over twenty years in Africa, and is as well-preserved, wholesome-looking a woman as you would meet in a day's march at Home.

And so to bed, as the immortal Samuel would say. Our apartment consists of two large, airy rooms opening off the verandah. In the rafters of the first, which serves as my dressing-room, are stored bags and bags of grain, and I have no doubt that we shall hear rats in the night. But both Beryl and I are far too sleepy to mind. To-morrow I shall spend a strenuous day censusing the various villages which we saw from the verandah this evening, pitching my tent in the courtyard for the purpose; and after tea Père Babillaud has promised to show me a bushbuck in the *musito*



down by the river. While Beryl, no doubt, will spend her day in the entertaining company of the good Sisters and of Mother Cécile.

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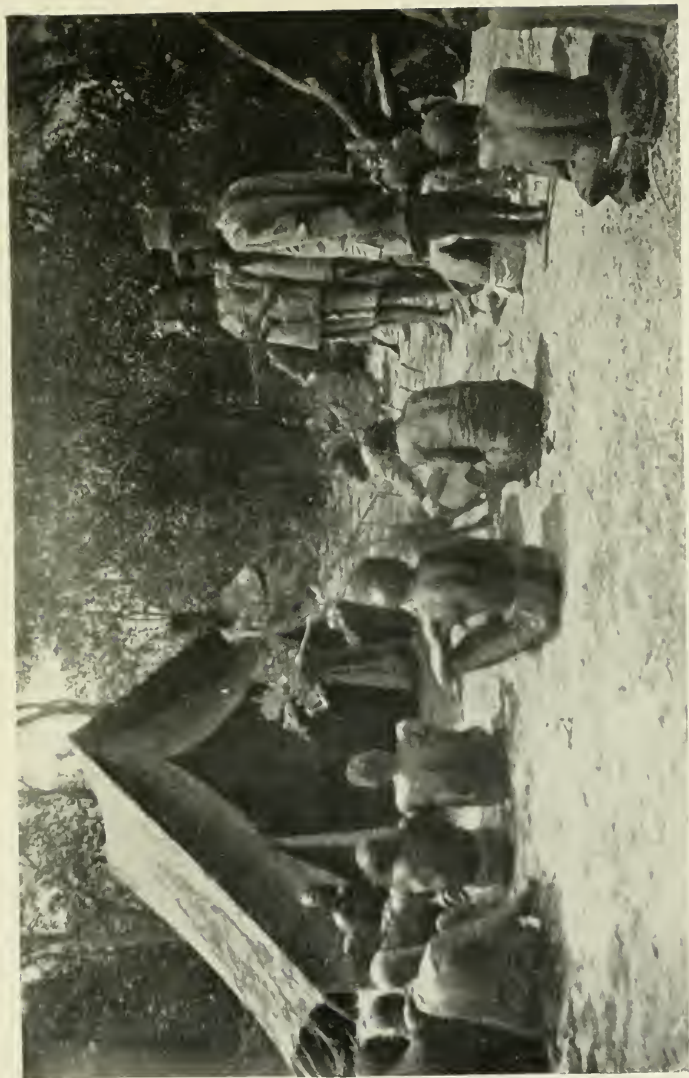
The excellent Ponya, my native clerk, has just sent me a message to the effect that there is a gang of nearly a hundred would-be recruits for the Southern mines on the way to the station. They are, it seems, coming from the villages to the north-west, having been recruited by the Diddy-bird's messengers, and are expected to arrive in two or three days. This means Work with a capital letter, for they must be dealt with without undue delay and sent forward before we leave on our next trip. So I have been hard at the censusing of the Katere villages ever since seven o'clock this morning, and only finished at six-thirty this evening, with an interval of half-an-hour for lunch. Père Babillaud's bushbuck will have to make another appointment with me at some future date, I am afraid.

There is a certain sense of stimulation in confronting a black and seething mass of natives in the early morning and gradually working through them until, as the dusk falls, only two or three are left to be dealt with. After a little practice at the game one becomes able to foretell at a glance the approximate number of "cases" which are in store for one, since each "case" usually consists of a little family party—the wife, the husbands *in esse* and *in posse*, the mother-in-law, and, probably, an old man or two in support. I

hope that I can lay claim to a certain amount of sympathy with litigants of this description, but, nevertheless, I must confess that my heart is apt to retire to my boots when I see, let us say, seven or eight such cases waiting on the outskirts of the main crowd at the very commencement of a heavy day.

The female witness is bad enough in the courts at Home; she has a reputation for irrelevant loquacity and for sheer inability to stick to the point. But her black sister is infinitely worse. Keenly conscious of the importance of her position as the interesting heroine of the drama, blessed—or cursed—with histrionic capacity of no mean order, and having, usually, a voice like a squeaking slate-pencil, it is quite impossible to stem the torrent of her eloquence once she has got well started. The matter of her discourse is, for the most part, quite unconnected with the points at issue; she is far too prone to waste valuable time in a minute description of what she gave her husband for supper the night before he tried to silence her permanently with a jagged fish-spear, and it is fatal to interrupt her, since it merely has the effect of causing her to lose the thread of her discourse and commence *da capo*—from the bitter beginning all over again.

What does it matter to her that her wretched official has been sitting in the same chair for over four hours, listening to similar stories and smoking far too many pipes the while? What is it to her that, even while she is piping forth her wrongs, a dense throng of newly arrived villagers



“THE WIFE, THE HUSBANDS *IN ESSE* AND *IN POSSE*, THE MOTHER-IN-LAW, AND AN OLD MAN OR TWO IN SUPPORT.”



has joined the outskirts of the squatting hundreds round about her, and that there is, now, not the slightest chance of a lull in the day's work until the day itself has gone to swell the years of the past? Not the very slightest do these matters affect her: she gave Bulaya monkey-nuts and caterpillars for supper—which certainly was dainty enough fare for such a *shenzi* (barbarian) as he—and his only recognition was to jab her with a fish-spear! Surely such ingratitude was never known before! They may mince her into small pieces, but she will never live with him again; and there was a little matter of hoes and calico which her mother was to have received and did not. . . . No! This really is the limit, it being the fifteenth time that she has reverted to these hoes and this calico, which seem to increase in quantity and value at every repetition. She may have her divorce—in fact, I rather agree with her that a husband who utilises a fish-spear to enforce his objections to her housekeeping is hardly a congenial partner at board and bed—but enter into the question of those hoes and that calico again I will not. Next, please!

The next case, as it happens, is a mere *réchauffé* of the stock conundrum among people who live in the vicinity of Mission stations—what is to happen to a woman who, married in accordance with the laws of the Church, asks for a divorce which is permitted by the laws of the tribe? There is a stock formula for these cases, thank goodness—and we can pass on.

Follows a gentle witch-doctor, whose hair would

be appreciably the better for a little trimming, and whose stock-in-trade, consisting for the most part of very dirty little bundles of sticks, bird's heads, lizard skins, iron bells, clay dolls, and bits of buckhorn—the whole garnished with insects unspeakable—is emptied ruthlessly upon the ground beside my table and covers a space about 2 feet square. He is a cheery-looking old fossil, this, and quite candid about his profession, which he seems to regard as being rather meritorious than otherwise. Did he throw the bones at Bulaka's village some three months ago, and as a sequel proclaim Bulaka himself a wizard? Why, most certainly! According to his exposition of the facts it follows as the night the day that Bulaka *must* be a wizard, since he collected the clippings of his mother-in-law's finger-nails about seven years ago, and they were recently found in the eaves of his hut. "Now I ask you," says the prisoner, with a cheerful assumption of taking the Court into his confidence, "of what possible use can bits of finger-nail—especially of a mother-in-law—be to any one, unless he goes in for black magic? Besides, the woman died two years later, so there is nothing more to be said."

Quite logically he retires into his shell at this stage and says nothing more. But I am afraid he will find himself on a chain in a day or two, since one cannot allow this sort of thing, even if it is so painfully obvious.

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Back at Malale, thank the pigs! There is no

place like home, even when a domesticated rat has nested in your drawing-room, and the litter of puppies which you left behind helpless little atoms have, in the interval, grown up and destroyed most of your flower-beds.

Ponya is fatter than ever. I begin to think the rarefied air of the Plateau must suit him better than that of Nyasaland, since he has been swelling visibly ever since he first came to me. Owing, no doubt, to this, he has now discarded the neat white uniform which is supplied to him by Government, and appears in a kaleidoscopic loin-cloth, far exceeding the glories of the lilies of the field. I told him that he looked like a well-nourished rainbow, which he did not understand; and when I explained that it was a thing which appeared in the sky occasionally, he corrected me with the suave respectfulness of a family butler and suggested that, no doubt, I meant the firmament. No word of less than three syllables is of the slightest use to a native who has been brought up on the Bible.

The wife of the sergeant of police has a new baby. There seem to be grave doubts as to whether the sergeant is the father, but, apparently, it does not matter very much, and every one is immensely pleased. My second table-boy, whom I left behind to look after the house, has been merrymaking in the village, and, after gouging out the eye of his father-in-law as a sequel to some dispute during the festivities, was gaoled by the police in safe keeping until my return. This, possibly, accounts for the rat's nest in the draw-



ing-room, and for the general air of neglect about the house and garden.

The Bishop—whose see is some seven hundred miles south, and who has recently been touring his diocese—called and left his card during our absence. And this, I think, really completes all the news of any interest connected with our home-coming.

It is quite true about the gang of men for the mines being on its way here, since I was met to-day by a very small and depressed headman, who wished to lay a complaint against some of the gang who had levied toll upon his fowls *en route* through his village. It is a curious fact, and one provocative of many *milandu* (law-cases), that a native, so soon as he enters the employment of a white man, or even when he is in a fair way to doing so, at once assumes proprietary airs in regard to all chattels which he may happen to come across.

It is well worth going away for a month or so to appreciate the comparative luxury of one's return. Fresh milk, for one thing, after nothing but tinned—although I am bound to say that there is precious little of it, as there is no good pasture just now, and the cows are milking badly in consequence. But the table-boy (up to the time that he removed the eye of his father-in-law) had been religiously setting the cream, with the result that we have quite a considerable amount of fresh butter. Fruit, too, after a month's abstinence, is refreshing; Beryl and I finished a paw-paw and a pineapple at tea-time, and, I have no doubt, we

shall be extremely ill to-morrow. And as for the luxury of removing all the stains of travel, and garbing oneself once more in the purple and fine linen of civilisation (comparatively speaking), why, it beggars description. Beryl, who, on *ulendo*, lives for the most part in a tweed skirt which would bring a blush to the cheeks of a ballet-dancer, is now gliding about sedately in a beautifully starched linen costume; while as for myself, the "shorts" and puttees of the bush, grimed with woodash and the blood of game, have given place to a decent tweed suit and a real shirt with a stiff collar. There will be linen sheets and a hair mattress to sleep on to-night, and we shall have a nice little five-course dinner, and play at being lady and gentleman once again.

The inevitable, however, of course happened. Something always does happen to mar the serenity of one's return; last time, I remember, the mailman, after a prolonged course of *bhang*-smoking, elected to go suddenly off his head, and danced into the station at twilight in a state of nature, waving in one hand his scarlet uniform and in the other his rifle and mailbag. The rifle, incidentally, was loaded, and it took some little time to induce him to surrender it and submit to be decently handcuffed until I had leisure to attend to him.

This afternoon, as a counterpart, a tremendous bush-fire blew up from the south-east, and, just as I had got passably clean, and was waiting for Beryl to begin tea, the corporal on guard came up to the house and suggested that it would be

advisable to turn out all the police and prisoners, as the station buildings were right in the line of the approaching flames. So out I had to go—and in less than five minutes I was far dirtier than I had been at the beginning of the afternoon.

It was certainly a whacking big fire. The frontage of flame must have been well over three hundred yards in length, and the tremendous gale which, as usual, it had engendered swept it forward at a terrific pace. The only thing to be done, if we were to save the station, was to beat down a safety belt between ourselves and the flames, and all the prisoners were taken to the scene of action at the double. There was no time to unlock the gang-chains, so, taking one party myself, and putting Ponya and the station *capitao* in charge of the other, we worked at a feverish pace for some ten minutes.

Then things got too hot for us. The safety-zone was almost clear, but, clear or not, the fire would have to take its course. I yelled to Ponya to get his prisoners out of it, and, after seeing his men doubling to the rear, turned to my gang.

There were three chains of them—and two of the chains had got well away from the fire. But the third—on which were two doddering old witch-doctors—had lost either its head or its way. Instead of retreating down a path which was clear and open, the silly old fools had plunged headlong into the bush, with the result that, when I caught sight of them, each was going different ways round a large tree, and gradually winding themselves and the chain into an inextricable knot.

And the flames were only twenty yards away, hissing and roaring like a locomotive yard.

I made one bound for that tree and, grabbing each ancient by the neck in turn, just managed to unwind them in time and kick them into safety. But it was a near thing; and a spark had already burned a hole in the loin-cloth of the hindermost in a very conspicuous part.

However, the station was saved, which was the great thing; the fire divided and roared by, and in half an hour was eating its way up the slopes to the northward, leaving the whole place as black and as bare as a poodle dog.

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The Diddybird was up to time to-day, he and his prospective miners coming in from different directions just after breakfast. His bicycle punctured, as usual, some fifteen miles out, so he has been walking since about six and is, not unnaturally, hungry. From now onwards we shall have to work double tides to get the gang through.

There is really a tremendous lot of work in connection with getting these very valuable recruits off to the Southern labour markets, which is not lessened by the number of hands through which they must pass. For instance, to begin with, the Diddybird engages them. According to the custom of the native they proceed, almost invariably, to give him a fictitious name. I wonder what the fascination of this habit can be—why they have so rooted an objection to undertaking a term of service under their own

names. But the fact remains that they have. If a man is shown as Bulaya, let us say, in the official census-books, he is morally certain to sign on as Mwanakasoma or Kapalakashya, or something of that kind—the result being that, unless the fact is discovered before he leaves, it will be impossible to credit him with his current hut tax (which is usually advanced to him by the Labour Bureau at the time of his engagement) or, in the event of his death, to pay out his estate to his relatives.

So, after the Diddybird has inscribed the names of his recruits in his books, they are handed over to me, and I spend weary hours extracting their right names, the names of their villages, and the names of their kith and kin.

Then comes the turn of the doctor. For every recruit must be medically examined and passed as fit for service before he is allowed to proceed. Usually a few are rejected—the balance then come before me again for the final polish to be put upon their agreement. That is to say, the contract has to be read over and explained in detail; each man must be asked, individually, if he wishes to sign on for a year, eighteen months or two years; and a lecture is then read to them collectively as to their behaviour on the road down to the railway, in which they are exhorted to save their *poso* or food-cloth against the famine-belt, and not to squander it upon beer or riotous living; to clean their teeth daily, lest they be rejected as medically unfit on re-examination; to cook their food decently, and consume it with

due regard to the calls of their digestions, for the same reason; not to spend their wages recklessly, but to endeavour to bring back some proportion of it for wise investment in their own country, and so on and so forth. I am afraid, after some considerable experience of this kind of thing, that a good bit of the seed is sown upon stony ground; still, one has one's duty to do—and it is something, at least, to feel that every native, on his departure to work in what will inevitably be quite unknown conditions, has been at least presented with excellent advice.

After this, the gangs troop back to the Diddy-bird for more substantial encouragement, in the shape of a thick woollen jersey and a really excellent blanket apiece. These, being intended for the cold weather of the South, are naturally assumed *instanter*; it is almost like a transformation scene in a pantomime, and in a couple of days the clothing is grubby and unrecognisable, while by the time he arrives in the South, the native is so accustomed to his new attire that he promptly begins to suffer severely from the cold.

Disheartening, no doubt; but then the whole career of attending to the wants of the heathen and endeavouring to do the best one can for him is a disheartening affair. The only consolation is that someone, in several decades, will probably benefit by the spade-work, and that in the meantime it is, as a profession, distinctly more engrossing than, let us say, polishing the top of a City stool or commanding a lift on the Tube.

And, after all, the intricacy of the organisation,



tedious though it may be, at times, to carry out, is of undoubted benefit to the native labourers. The story of the labour-recruiter, in another part of Africa, who happened to refer to his profession as "blackbirding" and was called to order by a serious-minded friend with the remark that it might, perhaps, be more suitably referred to as "blackburying," has long ceased to have any point. Nowadays every individual native, while proceeding to his labours, while engaged there and upon the journey home, is treated with almost as much tenderness as if he were Royalty. A native labourer in South Africa is about as valuable as a Crown Jewel, and is treated accordingly.

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To-day the doctor arrived—not altogether unexpectedly, as the Diddybird told me when he came that he imagined that the doctor would be along in a day or two to examine the miners. And with him came Mr. and Mrs. Magistrate from the Metropolis, who are on a tour of inspection. So Beryl promptly sent off dinner invitations to the Mission, and, after she had been closeted with the cook for the best part of the afternoon, we sat down eight to dinner, which constitutes a record in the annals of Malale.

That cook is a marvel; a new kind of exotic who, I am afraid, is too good for this sinful world. Beryl says he is slim and graceful—personally, I should call him rather a weed; he has a genius for languages, as he can already



speaking six, including English and Kiswahili, and a head which would not be out of place in a Board School. I found him the other day, stretched languidly upon his stomach in the back-yard, conning the *Badminton Magazine* with every appearance of interest—the article was on “Curling,” and he seemed to be enjoying it. Beryl gives him the number of the recipe when she orders dinner, and he concocts it at a graceful angle over the stove, holding the cookery book in one hand and negligently waving a spoon in the other. He can make five kinds of cake, including Genoa and Madeira, some of which he ices; he understands the difference between brains and tripe, which is a subtlety above the heads of most of his countrymen, and is the owner of a remarkably clean and neat-handed wife, who, I am sure, will be ignominiously taken from him one of these days by a better-nourished and more truculent savage. If he does not succumb to the attractions of higher wages elsewhere or die suddenly of brain-fever, Beryl will be in clover for the rest of her term out here.

To-night, I must say, he surpassed himself, sending up the most attractive little dinner it would be possible to conceive. It remains in my memory as a mere dream, which it were hopeless to attempt to reduce to material description—but I remember that there was a cauliflower (*au gratin*, and measuring nearly a foot in diameter) which would have driven the average French *chef* to premature suicide.

There is to be a return dinner at the Mission the day after to-morrow. As there is an excellent moon, we shall attend in six *machilas*, which ought to make an excellent foil to the evening dress of civilisation. Beryl and I were so taken with the idea that we induced our guests to draw fancy portraits of their respectable relatives setting out to dine in that type of conveyance—some of the results were excruciatingly funny. Africa is certainly a humorous country; I am convinced that even the middle-aged acquire a lighthearted disregard of the *convenances* which would be absolutely terrifying to the staid and proper citizen in England. One dear old soul told me, the last time that I was at Home, that she considered it positively indecent for a man of my age—and married—to go gallivanting about the country with bare knees and a shirt open at the chest! And so, no doubt, it is—but needs must when the devil of Africa drives, and, for my part, I prefer the possible incorrectness of the costume to almost inevitable heat-apoplexy.

## AUGUST

Tanganyika—Its glamour still a reality—Even more lonely now than in Livingstone's time—The pathos of vessels high and dry—A trip round the shore—*Palpalis* and *morsitans*—The *Thunderer* again—A cruise after hippo—Lake scenery—The last stronghold of the primæval—The doctor leaves us—In the thick of the shooting—*Chitemene*—A pernicious custom—Influence of the native women—*Mitanda*—Man-eating lions—Native apathy—A *chisanguka*—Temporary precautions—Wily beasts—A mad expedition—After hippo by night—A sportsman's paradise—The lechwe swamp—A day in a canoe—Good bags—Lost in the swamps—Venice by night.

DOES, I wonder, the fourth-form boy still invest the name of Tanganyika with the same glamour as in the days when I was in the fourth-form myself? Does it still stand to him for the Ultima Thule of African exploration, whispering of Stanley and of Livingstone, of the long, winding caravans of Arabs from Zanzibar and the North, of elephant that wandered along its reedy shores, of crocodiles that basked sullenly, snout above the ripples of the sluggish current, like rugged logs or lumps of wreckage?

If he still thinks of it in this light, still measures

its fascinating possibilities by these standards, I can, in all truth, hasten to assure him that he is justified of his imagination—that this is no fantastic picture of the story-books which he has drawn unto himself, but a very real and a very truthful presentment. For as Lake Tanganyika was twenty years ago, so it is now; in fact, so far as the bustle and the glamour of commerce are concerned, it is more truly wrapped in mystery and in silence now than it was in the days of Livingstone and Stanley. Even so recently as 1908, Tanganyika was a waterway for the native tribes, a centre for the fishermen and the boatmen of these parts. There were busy villages all along its shores, and its blue waters were dotted with canoes, while farther out, over the fathomless depths, great dhows hung poised in the shimmering waters like so many gaunt grey bats, ready, one would say, to swoop away in circling flight at the slightest breath of wind from the rugged, cliff-shut shores.

And now, so far as our own shores are concerned, it might be a lake of the dead. Ever and again a canoe steals across the wide bays, well out from land, bound from German East to the Congo side. They do not court publicity, these canoes, since for the most part their crews intend, at an earlier or later stage of their journey, as the case may be, to juggle with the laws of our Administration either in regard to revenue or Sleeping Sickness. Now and again—very seldom, really, as the grey hairs of the Malale official testify—does a caravan complete the land journey across the forbidden

territory. For the Sleeping Sickness has made it necessary to decree that this formerly thickly-populated stretch of seaboard should be rigorously guarded from intrusion—that the fisher-villages which used to line the bays should be moved inland, that all possible points of contact with the dreaded *Glossina palpalis* should be jealously guarded, strenuously quarantined. And so, as I have said, the lake shore is a country of the dead—save for a border patrol now and again, it is the undisputed realm of the crocodile and the lion, the ape and the bushbuck, and the tsetse fly.

It is pathetic, somehow, this decadence of a great waterway—more pathetic when one thinks of the hulks of the vessels which were to have played so great a part in the opening-up of trade—of the *Cecil Rhodes* and the *Morning Star* and the *Good News*—each of them high and dry under a crazy canopy of grass, open, endways on, to the winds of heaven, their plates showing the ragged stains of rust which might also be their heart's blood, their fittings stripped from them, their decks littered with hornets' nests and the dust of the years. There is, perhaps, nothing more sad than the sight of a crippled ship, motionless, powerless, within very view of the waters for which she was made.

Last time I was in London I met at a dance a girl who had been present at the despatch of the *Cecil Rhodes*, which was sent forth, with no little ceremony, to be put together by the lake shore, and to open up the waterway in British interests. When I told her of the present plight of the little

steamer, she nearly cried. So, unexpectedly, I learned of the romance which can cling to rusted plates and slabs of old iron—for the boat is but little more.

I am, just now, deeply imbued with the beauties of Tanganyika, since for the past week Beryl, the doctor, the Diddybird, and I have been touring its shores. That is to say, we have been visiting the villages which lie within easy reach of it, although, as practically all are now on the highlands, we have not been actually upon the shores for more than a very small proportion of the time. But now and again we have had to trend towards the water; now and again, leaving Beryl and the Diddybird out of the reach of the “fly,” the doctor and I have spent an hour or two prospecting the banks, and sometimes the watercourses themselves, with the object of ascertaining the precise distribution of the wretched little *palpalis*, which is at the root of all the mischief.

This *palpalis* is an insignificant little insect—dirty-grey, slightly larger than a house-fly, with crossed wings and—the best test of all as differentiating him from his brother the *morsitans*, whose especial department is the infecting of cattle with *nagana*—black stockings which reach to the knee, instead of (as in the *morsitans*) black socks just coming up to the ankle-joint. He has cost the Administration a good deal of money, has this little beast of an insect—and in Uganda has wiped out many a native village. But, for the moment (let us trust for ever), we seem to have checked his depredations in this part of the map.

However, he needs continual watching, and by no means the least important part of the campaign against him consists in the periodical and systematic inspection of all the villages in the area. And so, at every village, the doctor and I go through a settled programme, which, after a day or two, begins to grow somewhat monotonous.

Imagine us, then, seated at the door of a tent—let us say on a slight rise facing the lake. Where we are it is shady enough; but out in front the heat haze dances merrily along the ground and the blue waters in the distance are hidden in mist; for it is between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, and quite the hottest time of the day.

Under another tree, a little distance off, the Diddybird (who is, as usual, on the prowl after recruits) and Beryl are engaged in a hand of poker patience. It seems to be amusing, and in the intervals of business they fling us information concerning the scores, while we condole with each other upon the heat, and the doctor polishes up his microscope and grunts sympathetically.

But there are not many intervals. For the whole population, amounting to well over a hundred souls, has to be dealt with before we can call a halt and adjourn for a minute or two for tea; there are one or two other villages due which will have to be examined before dark, so that we may move on again to-morrow.

So the work goes on. I call a name—a tall, slouching native saunters up, followed by two or three wives and twice as many children; the



doctor lays his hands upon them, feeling carefully the glands at the base of the neck, where suspicious signs may be expected. If they are not swollen the subject is dismissed at a grunt from the doctor, a tick is made against his or her name in the register, and the next name is called. If the case is suspicious, the subject is set aside, under the eye of a native messenger, for further examination. Up they all come—toddling babes, who shriek like young furies and cling to their mothers' tasselled skin aprons, doddering grey-beards, toothless widows palsied and rheumy-eyed—until all have crossed from the unexamined group to that of the examined and there only remain the suspects for closer scrutiny.

For some of these a mere prick of the finger is enough; the doctor settles down to his microscope and peers through it at the slide. For others it is necessary to puncture the gland itself and subject the glandular fluid to microscopical examination. But the result is always the same—whatever "plus" or "minus" hieroglyphics the doctor may jot down in his notebook there is never, in the end, a "case." It all seems a waste of time; but, as a matter of fact, it is anything but that, since we are able, at the end of such a tour as this, to report positively that the dread disease has made no headway since the last tour.

When all have been examined the doctor, stretching himself, joins the poker patience group for tea. Afterwards, probably, if he is near a "fly-free" stretch of shore, he will launch the *Thunderer* and fish. There are good fish in Tanganyika

—whoppers, some of them—and they include a species with an unpronounceable native name and a bright orange “tummy,” which, for want of a better label, we have christened “The Bile Bean.” I shudder to think how many “bile beans” we four have consumed in the last week!

She is a dandy little craft, this *Thunderer*. The reader made her acquaintance in June on the little lake near the Metropolis. Now, packed upon the heads of two men, she has arrived upon Tanganyika. Two days ago we utilised her for a hippo hunt on a wide (and deep) lagoon. It was a foolish thing to do, as a really angry hippo would have made short work of her, and there were one or two crocodiles cruising about. Speaking for myself, I embarked in fear and trembling, for there was a stiffish breeze blowing, resulting in a distinctly choppy sea, and the always attenuated freeboard was reduced to its minimum. However, we all untied our bootlaces and said our prayers, and, in the end, returned safe and dry, having, most fortunately, met no hippo at all.

This evening the doctor, having struck work, is off with the Diddybird in quest of bushbuck. Alas! my task is only beginning—for I have now to approach these good savages of mine from the official instead of the medical standpoint, and having been satisfied by the district surgeon that they are free from Sleeping Sickness, must now satisfy myself that they have discharged their tax liabilities and that their domestic and parochial affairs are in order.

Still, one must earn one's salary, and, whatever

the trials and troubles of the trip, they are more than compensated for by the glorious scenery through which we have been moving for the past week.

Beryl, who considers that it is indescribable, has endeavoured to persuade me not to attempt the description of it. But it seems to me that to fail in, at least, attempting this, would be to shirk an obvious duty—although, mind you, I quite agree with her that the task is one which needs a far more powerful pen than my own. Unfortunately, the men who really can write and who could do more or less justice to this part of the world cannot or will not place so great a distance between themselves and their editors and publishers, so that the job has to be left to comparative amateurs.

To begin with, the waters of the lake are bluer than those of any sea which has been known or dreamed of within the memory of man. All the colours are more vivid than I have ever seen elsewhere—the green of the reedy lagoons, the steely dome of the sky, the dazzling, blinding whiteness of those rare stretches of sandy beach where the sedges part and let the little, white-tipped waves creep in towards the high, sullen headlands. Shells lie on those beaches beside which, surely, the glories of any shells must fade and pale—amethyst, sapphire, gold and delicate pink, all the shades that were ever known to painters are there, sparkling and glistening beneath the fierce round ball of the sun. Behind lie stretches of bushland, a darker, more restful green—a break,

as it were, designed by kindly Nature to rest the tired eyes which, sated with all this glory, have further glories yet to grasp. For the cliffs rise up behind, fit sentinels of this enchanted sea; not the pale chalk-cliffs of Old England (sweet though they be to the sons of England, doubly sweet after this riot of colour which in Africa blinds the eyes and wearies the heart until one longs for sleep without a wakening), but gorgeous, flaming cliffs of salmon-pink sandstone, shot with gullies of mulberry-colour, scarred with streaks of orange and almost mauve, crisscrossed here and there with belts of green, studded with patches of smooth, black rock which have been polished by the winds and the waves of everlasting Time.

Gorgeous, flamboyant, and, in a way, terrifying in its very exuberance of colour, it is as if giant hands had seized upon earth and sea, and, finding there a vacant palette, had lavished tints with all the bluff recklessness of drunken gods. It might, indeed, be some studio of the underworld, where men of the black races are tolerated much as rats or mice might be in some human *atelier*, but where those who have souls and know somewhat of the uses of them are stricken into dumb, almost grovelling abasement.

And the very cliffs which bound this playground of the gods are fittingly equipped. For there are awful chasms and yawning gulfs—bald depths overhanging dark pools where the soul of man faints at the sheer immensity of these spaces which lie below; countless miles of tangled *mateshi* bush, gloomy, sharp-thorned, impenetrable, the

haunts of buffalo and elephant and the other sullen animals which feed and mate and live and die within sight of the deep blue waters of the lake. The man who would reach Tanganyika from its southern environs needs a steady head and sturdy legs, for he must climb uphill and down, must wade morasses and clamber over fallen tree-trunks that straddle across foaming rivers, must plough through mile after mile of matted, tangled undergrowth ere he comes at last to the narrow levels which lie about the water's edge.

And, after all, it is but fitting that this should be so. For Tanganyika lies at the very heart of Africa; civilisation is groping towards it from the north and from the south, from the east and from the west. It is the last stronghold of the primæval; in all the world, perhaps, there is no more remote a backwater. But of the secrets of the future which lie hidden amid the grim hills, upon the slopes of the encircling amphitheatre, in the placid bosom of the lake itself, who shall speak?—for who can know?

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The doctor left us to-day. We parted on the summit of the high cliffs, he eastwards towards the Metropolis, we—that is, Beryl, the Diddybird, and I—westwards upon a tour which may last for ten days or a fortnight.

It is good shooting weather. The fires are almost over, although last night, camped down below the cliffs in the valley of the Lofu River, we saw some two thousand feet of hill-side clothed

in flame, and the sight, even to such as ourselves, to whom every dry season brings the self-same gorgeousness, was almost oppressive in its grandeur. For the whole wall of cliff seemed ablaze, and the radiance of the flames shone out over the lake in competition with a gorgeous moon, and festoons of fiery serpents hung poised between earth and sea, while a fringe of glory hung above the sheer face of the headland like a molten veil.

But it is almost the last. The land is blackened from end to end, covered with a fine powder, impalpable as dust and black as ink. The *vitemene* patches have been fired from north to south, and where before were high-piled branches are now naught but patches of rich ash waiting the first rains for the planting of crops.

It is interesting to speculate whence and when came this knowledge, almost universal throughout these parts, of the efficacy of wood and leaf ash as a manure. For there can be no doubt that it is, in its way, efficacious. Hoeing, of course, is far more so, but, then, with all these northern tribes hoeing is the *métier* of the women, and the women very wisely prefer a system of cultivation which ensures that the mere man shall take at least some share in it.

That, no doubt—the stolid obstinacy of the native woman (and, after all, who shall blame her, realising how many and varied are her existing responsibilities?)—is at the root of the determination of the natives to abide by the old-fashioned tradition of *chitemene* as opposed to hoeing. The official may talk himself black in the face anent



the disadvantages of *chitemene* and the benefits of hoeing; may point out that as *vitemene* invariably lie at some distance from the villages the system necessitates the women and the children being left unguarded from dawn to sundown, to say nothing of the waste of valuable time lost in going to and from work; may calculate to a nicety the yearly cases of crippledom resulting directly from falls out of trees while the branches are being lopped (as often as not in a spirit of drunken emulation, since most of the work is performed in a sudden spasm of energy engendered by *bwalwa* (native beer) at tree-cutting gatherings in a neighbour's gardens); may dilate upon the evils of deforestation—may, in short, quote any or all of the hundred and one arguments in favour of the legitimate turning over of soil in sweat of the brow, but the native will take no heed. For the native woman—who is not by any means the downtrodden worm African writers would fain have us believe—stubbornly refuses to allow her men-folk to swerve from the time-honoured paths of tradition. And the men just as stubbornly refuse to exchange the axe of the male for the hoe of the female.

A critic once, in reviewing some of my writing wherein I laid stress on the importance of suppressing this all-prevalent *chitemene*, took some pains to criticise the usual prohibition of building temporary huts in the bush (*mitanda*, as they are called) on the ground that it was an instance of mere grandmotherly legislation, that there was no reason for the prohibition of this “harmless”



custom except for the inconvenience caused to the inspecting official.

Such a criticism rather goes to prove the truth of the adage concerning "a little knowledge." For *mitanda* are a direct result of *chitemene*, and *chitemene*, as I have striven to point out above, is a pernicious method of culture which yields an inferior and unsatisfying crop, is responsible for much crippledom and often death, and is gradually ensuring the ultimate deforestation of the country, all of which effects are surely to be avoided more in the interests of the native himself than of the official who is responsible for him.

However, it has one advantage, and that is that it burns the country as bare as the palm of one's hand. So that this trip I have no doubt that we shall get some excellent shooting, which would have been impossible in a grass-covered region.

The Diddybird and I have a particular ambition on this tour, and that is the destruction of one or more of a gang of man-eating lions whose especial habitat is the strip of country which we are now entering. That strip lies between two largish rivers—a strip some eighty miles long by twenty broad—and it contains about a dozen villages, out of which I have been losing natives with distressing regularity at the rate of two a month ever since the beginning of the dry season.

Of course, the natives themselves are mostly to blame. They seem to lack entirely the faculty of concentration and sustained effort, even in cases like the present, where their very lives are at stake. When I first came to Malale, nearly six

months ago, one of the first matters with which I had to deal was an application from the headman of one of these very villages to be allowed to build a stockade round his village to foil the man-eaters. I not only assented cordially to the idea, but pointed out to the headman in question that it was his bounden duty to protect the lives of his people by any method which might occur to him. Only a fortnight ago a messenger who had been visiting these parts told me that the stockade was in exactly the same condition as it had been on my arrival, and that when he had urged the headman to finish the work the latter had merely smiled and said that, as the man-eaters were evidently *visanguka*—*i.e.*, reincarnations of departed chiefs—the labour of stockade building was a mere waste of time. Now, what *is* one to do with people like that?

They are always taken at the same time—sundown or a little after; nearly always in the same place—gardens lying between the village and the river; and nearly always do the victims belong to the same category—old women or young children. One would think that an obvious solution of the difficulty would be to prevent old women and young children from going to the gardens by the river at or after sundown. But when I suggested this to the headman he merely smiled pityingly, and gave me to understand that such precautions also would be a waste of time, since if the lion were a *chisanguka* it was obviously impossible to get the better of him, and if he were not he would be most certainly killed sooner or later!

I imagine it will be later, but it is a matter for personal initiative on the part of the natives, since there are, as I have said, a dozen or more villages in the same plight, each exhibiting the same lack of interest in the matter. I certainly have not enough messengers to station one in each village, and I have other matters to attend to besides myself protecting a set of people who apparently don't care whether they are eaten by lions or not. However, now that we are touring these parts I sincerely hope that the Diddybird and I may have some luck.

I have heard a good many people query the existence of man-eating lions, their theory being that they are merely game-lions, which, for some purely fortuitous reason, happen to kill man, as it were, in the ordinary day's work. With this theory I disagree *in toto*. Only two years ago one particular lion was responsible for over fifty deaths in eight months near Lake Mweru. He became such a local celebrity that the natives christened him "Charlie," and on the day when he was finally killed (having resisted traps and such-like blandishments for a considerable time) the whole countryside celebrated the occasion by becoming very drunk indeed. Other individual lions, or, for that matter, families of lions, have an almost equally bad record. And really, considering that the reputation of the Bengal tiger as a man-eater has been fully established, I see no reason why any of the larger cats should not be credited with similar evil propensities. A fine fat Muwemba in the prime of life is almost as satisfying and quite as

tasty as a puku, let us say, and he is certainly easier to stalk. While in the case of old women and children I should say that it would be as easy as falling off a log.

Of course, to a certain extent, *experientia docet*. For instance, at our camp to-night the usual gathering of the women with the camp water was a most imposing performance. The damsels, each with her gleaming waterpot, lined up in the light of the moon, which was dimmed by that of about ten torches carried by police, native messengers, personal boys, and the like, armed with rifles, spears, axes, and, in one case, an old umbrella; and under convoy they proceeded to the river and back, a matter of about fifty yards, amid deafening shouting and singing. But I shrewdly suspect that the procession was formed more with the idea of impressing me with the precautions that were being taken than for any deeper reason. To-morrow night, no doubt, when my *ulendo* is twenty miles away, some wretched old woman will go down to the bank by herself about ten o'clock and there will be another funeral next day.

For really the man-eaters seem gifted with super-human cunning. I heard to-day that they killed yesterday at a village just ahead of us; the night we sleep there they will kill here. One may sit up till cockerow—indeed, the Diddybird and I have every intention of doing it—but it will be useless. A lion—and more noticeably a man-eater, who is, as a rule, far better educated than the common herd—seems to know instinctively when white

men are travelling in his vicinity and does his best to avoid them.

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For the last three days we have been in a very Paradise—from the sporting point of view, at least, although it is possible that, hygienically, it is not quite so desirable a locality. Since leaving the cliffs of Tanganyika, on their southern side, over a week ago, we have been descending gradually towards the confluence of the Luangwa and the Kalungwisi Rivers—and to-night we are camped just in the fork, not more than 4,000 feet above the sea—that is, just 1,000 feet lower than this day last week. Fortunately, it is just the proper time of year to enjoy the lower levels, since August is practically the end of the cold weather. A month from now it will be impossible to breathe in these sheltered valleys; but to-night, with a gentle breeze from the south-east, the air is balmy enough after the piercing winds of the highlands.

And the game! ye gods! the Diddybird and I have seen enough during the last three days to stock the parks and pleasure-grounds of the civilised world fifty times over! Eland, roan, waterbuck, puku, hartebeeste, reedbuck, warthog, duiker, zebra—their spoor is everywhere, sharply and distinctly impressed in the fine grass-ash which lies like an impalpable pall upon the whole face of the country.

I regret to say that we have both been shooting badly; though, as we have this evening discovered

the reason, which is that the stocks of our '303 rifles have warped owing to the want of moisture in the air and have worked loose upon their screws, I am in hopes that we shall do better from now onwards. To-day, indeed, Beryl did better than any of us, as she stalked and brought down in really first-class style, upon open *nyika*, three good puku rams and a fine fat doe.

This is all the more surprising from the fact that we spent one of the maddest of evenings last night, and were not in bed until nearly two o'clock this morning in consequence; taking which fact into consideration, bad shooting on her part would have been at least excusable.

It was like this. There was an excellent moon last night, and we had all day been following a river which has the reputation of being well-stocked with hippo. Bearing this in mind, we had kept our eyes and ears open all day, and had certainly both seen fresh spoor and heard the animals blowing in the sheltered and inaccessible reaches. But as for getting a shot at them—no such luck!

About nine o'clock, therefore, while we were sitting over the fire thinking of turning in, Beryl—probably affected by the moon—suddenly suggested that we should try the river-bank by moonlight, on the off-chance of coming across a hippo or two grazing by the bank. It was a startling proposition, and, to begin with, I vetoed it uncompromisingly. For the banks of an African river at night are usually only too well-furnished with live stock of all kinds—from



mosquitoes to lions—to make them really congenial.

However, it was certainly a new idea; and we were all very anxious to secure a hippo, Beryl especially, having an eye to soap and dripping; while the wide, open plains which flanked the river seemed to offer an ideal grazing ground for these shy creatures, which only feed by night, employing their time in snoozing and mixed bathing during the daylight hours.

So, of course, we decided in favour of the expedition. The moon would be at its best at about half-past ten, and at that hour we set off, taking a *machila* for Beryl, in case the going should prove too rough.

The camp lay some four hundred yards from the river, and as we left the cheerful fires behind us and went down the slope towards the water, I, for one, sincerely envied the carriers, who were warm and snug in their little grass shelters, chatting and smoking over the evening meal. The wretched men with us shivered and crossed their hands upon their shoulders after the fashion of the native who is too cold to have any interest in life; while as for the two unfortunates whom I had detailed to proceed up-stream alongside of us in a canoe, in case we should sight hippo on the opposite bank and wish to cross, their abject misery was only too evident. However, all who went with us were volunteers, lured by the hopes of hippo chunks in the near future, so that we did not feel called upon to sympathise with them to any alarming extent.



Indeed, we were soon deeply enough engaged upon our own discomforts. Arrived at the trampled, muddy patch of shore which served the villagers as a landing-stage, we swung right-handed, and were up to our waists (I had almost said our necks) in densely matted growth, before we had realised that we were no longer upon the narrow but comparatively straightforward path.

The place was absolutely honeycombed with old hippo spoor—great ruts and hollows, with, here and there, a tunnel leading down into darkness and the river. Mosquitoes buzzed about us in their myriads, and the tall grasses which flapped in our faces, wrapped themselves around our legs, tripped us up at every stride, and tickled the napes of our necks, were dripping wet with the dews of the night.

After a while we came out upon somewhat more level ground, and could see, far away on our right, the dark fringe of bush which lined the *nyika*. Betwixt us and it, like great gaunt ghosts, stood out clumps of palm, stunted trees, patches of brambles and tufts of tall, swaying grasses; in the uncertain light of the moon, each and all of these might have been the forms of some primæval beasts, of the very hippo which we had come to seek. Indeed, we halted now and again, hushing our breath, fingers to lips, certain for the moment that we were within range of our prey; only to move on again, a moment or two later, as some fitful breeze from the river swayed a branch here and there and showed us that what we were watching were not animals but trees.

The hippo must, I think, have been feeding that night upon the opposite bank—just across the wide stretch of silver water which glinted to our left under the moon. Once, indeed, I caught sight of a shadowy form out in mid-stream, and hastily turned to point it out to the Diddybird, who was just behind me—but his eyes were keener than mine, and he whispered back that it was only the canoe, with its two passengers, who were obeying my instructions and keeping level with us. It was just as well that we should find out the mistake before we opened fire!

We went nearly two miles across that accurséd plain, and my joints ache still at the thought of it! Beryl assures me that her nightmares, to this very day, partake of the nature of yet another trip of that description. How it was that we did not all contract rheumatic fever or, at the very least, ordinary malaria, is utterly beyond my comprehension—certainly I can offer this description of the experience, and a sworn statement that we did *not* get fever, to any would-be settler in the country as an additional proof of the efficacy of regular doses of quinine. And, in the end, the little jaunt ended, tamely enough, in our right-about-facing, and returning to camp, which we reached, stiff, cold, cross and thirsty, at about one in the morning. The whole thing had been utterly futile, disappointing, idiotic—and the worst of it was that we all thoroughly deserved what we got. Nevertheless we can afford to laugh at it in retrospect.

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If you are wise, and have a sufficient balance at your bankers, you will, after reading what I have to tell you about the swamps on the Kalungwisi River, proceed there at once by the quickest route. You will take a .303 rifle and a double-barrelled twelve-bore, with unlimited ammunition for both — a complete outfit for skinning and stuffing wild fowl, plenty of quinine, and enough provisions to stay there for at least a month. For, if you are your own master and the least interested in shooting, I prophesy that you will spend a considerable time in that delectable locality.

I feel convinced that there is nothing like it elsewhere. The swamps round about Bangweolo, which are rediscovered about twice a year by enterprising foreigners, are, they tell me, somewhat similar; but they must be, from all description, too vast and too uncomfortable altogether. This particular hunting-ground is a kind of cross between Venice and the Wild West at Olympia — a comfortable, friendly place where one has all the shooting one needs, together with the most glorious scenery and the knowledge that there are plenty of snug little villages dotted around the outskirts of the swamps, where one may obtain canoes in almost unlimited numbers, cheery guides who are half-amphibious, fowls, eggs, and, in fact, all the amenities of Central African existence.

This, of course, is merely my own opinion; you, for example, might come away with the idea that it was most uninteresting and beastly

damp. As for the Diddybird and Beryl, their enthusiasm exceeds even my own; the former, who in his heart of hearts loves gun-shooting better than that with the rifle, vows that he is coming here to stay for a month or two. As soon as he mastered the question of balance—which he did some ten minutes after going on board—he squatted down gaily in the bows of his canoe, and placidly blazed away at duck, teal, mallard and the like for the next six hours, until his craft was in imminent danger of sinking from overloading. While Beryl, who managed to get soaking wet in the first quarter of an hour and was never properly dry afterwards, thoroughly enjoyed herself.

However, random description of this sort will never do anything like justice to the subject. Let us settle down and analyse the day in detail; since it has been, assuredly, one of the most enjoyable that I have spent for some considerable time.

At seven this morning precisely we embarked, at the village where we camped last night, and which is upon the Kalungwisi River, in the craziest dug-out I have yet seen. We should, properly, have got on board at seven o'clock, but, it seemed, there were all sorts of preparations to be made first of all, of which the greater part consisted in plastering huge slabs of damp mud over yawning crevices in the body of the canoe. Caulking, I suppose one would call it—but it was, certainly, caulking upon the grand scale! Sometimes it was done not with mud,

but with strips of fibre from a water-weed, which were laid wholesale in the gaping cracks, and pressed in until they swelled and were held in place by the mere action of the water.

For nearly an hour we rushed along a slim reach of the river, between flat banks backed by stretches of bushland. I say "rushed" advisedly, for our much bedaubed canoe proved herself a regular racer, and we easily outstripped the Diddybird, much to his disgust, in the first few minutes. It is astonishing what pace can be got out of these frail craft—some 12 feet long, and about 18 inches in the beam, with a free-board of, at most, 2 inches—when they are poled or paddled, as the case may be, by a sinewy native in rear. But after the first half-hour, though the dreamy, gliding motion was distinctly pleasant, it began to be rather monotonous; the only break being when Beryl was suddenly attacked by biting ants, and, being unable to adjust matters on board from fear of an upset, had to be put ashore for a moment or two to make investigations.

A few moments after resuming, we came to a kind of weir; in reality, a fishing-dam stretched across the river from bank to bank. The Diddybird, who had caught us up during the delay caused by Beryl's searchings, managed, acrobatically, to pass the obstacle without leaving his canoe, and Beryl, fired by emulation, essayed to do the same. But she had reckoned either without the restrictions of a skirt or else without calculating upon the pace of the canoe, and very nearly

landed us all in the water. As it was, she came down with a bump in the middle of the boat and my shot-gun was within an ace of going overboard.

After this, nothing happened for a time beyond the fact that we saw a huge crocodile stalking a goose, which was sitting on an overhanging branch about a foot out of the water—which goose (an uncommonly fat one it was) I am delighted to say he missed; and, from the snap of his jaws, which we could hear some hundred yards away, I should imagine that he suffered from toothache later in the day. I took a flying shot at him with the rifle as the canoe went by, but, very naturally, missed. Incidentally, the Diddybird took the goose on the wing as he flapped past, and added him to the bag; he had not seen the incident, and very much regretted the mishap when I told him afterwards of the goose's previous escape. When we ate the bird—which proved excellent, though tough, as was only natural in one so experienced—we apologised contritely to its unfortunate ghost.

After this, things began to happen. Barely a quarter of a mile past the crocodile, the banks opened out, and the character of the river-side began to change. The line of bush receded gradually, until, at half-past eight, we found ourselves drifting along a narrow waterway, overgrown with reeds and sedge, in the midst of a huge open plain. Far away in the distance, like the rim of a great saucer, rose a circle of blackish-purple hills; but except for them, so far as the eye could see was nothing but the expanse of swamp.



Evidently we were now "on the ground," and might expect to see red lechwe—the object of the expedition—at any moment. Canoes—springing, apparently, from nowhere—had joined us by degrees, and we were now about ten or twelve craft—quite a respectable little fleet, in fact. And then, a tall native in a boat ahead stooped suddenly and pointed away to our left.

I raised myself cautiously in the flimsy craft and, shading my eyes, looked out over the green spaces. There, hardly fifty paces from us, a herd of perhaps two hundred lechwe grazed peacefully: here a bunch of cows; there, on the outskirts, a knot of half-a-dozen bachelors, tossing their delicate horns and now and again lifting their soft muzzles to snuff the breeze—which, thank goodness, was in our favour.

The canoe shot swiftly to the bank, and, leaving Beryl on board, the Diddybird and I sprang ashore, promptly sinking almost waist-deep in unstable reed. But we clambered out of it, dripping wet, and made for a tuft of reeds which would screen us from the herd. It was curious "going"—the whole swamp seemed to quake beneath us like some great jelly, or rather, like some carpet of green which hung suspended by its corners over an incalculable depth of waters, and sagged as we moved across it.

Ten mortal minutes we took to reach the shelter of the reeds—ten minutes of floundering and of forcing our way. And then, when we at last raised our heads and felt for our field-glasses, the herd was gone! Eight hundred yards away,



if an inch, stood one old bull, in an attitude of defiance; I could see his horns through the glasses and they were thirty-inchers at least; while away beyond him was a mass of mingled white and red, the fleeing pack.

Even as we watched, a sudden sheet of spray shot up out of the green, and a flying red shape arched itself and soared in the air, and then another and another, till the full two hundred had leaped the rivulet which barred their way. Evidently it was a broad one, too wide at least to take in one spring; they seemed to spring in the air, descend in mid-stream with a mighty splash which shot the glittering spray high up to heaven, and, taking off again in some inexplicable manner on the very face of the waters, soar up again towards the further bank. It was a wonderful sight, and though we grew more or less accustomed to it before the close of the day, neither of us regretted in the slightest the fickleness of the wind which had, evidently, betrayed our presence after we had left the canoe.

So we returned, empty-handed, to Beryl and the boats. But in less than half-an-hour we had each killed our buck—one of them a real old patriarch, with first-class horns—and from then onwards we had the best of sport. As each buck was killed he was shipped upon one of the canoes that followed us—until, when evening fell, we had a perfect fleet of these “butcher-boats” stringing out behind us. But it was not easy work, and there were on the whole more disappointments than successes. Each herd meant from five to ten minutes stalk across

the treacherous green carpet—a stalk which tried the nerves and tired the muscles, while the sun beat down pitilessly upon our backs and the water beneath was icy cold and swarmed with leeches and all manner of unpleasant things. Now and again the monotony would be varied by a flight of teal—fat little pink and green fellows, who would rise in a perfect cloud from some silent reach ahead. Or, perhaps, drifting silently along, we would round some curve where, beside a rickety shanty of grass, some silent family of Bena-Chisinga—the people of these swamps—would be spearing or clubbing fish. Not a word did they speak, these taciturn people; but, kneeling simultaneously, clapped their hands in salutation, and, I am afraid, scared more than one herd in the doing of it.

So the sun sank lower and lower, until, close upon six o'clock, I told my canoeman to make for our destination—a village to which we had sent our loads in the early morning.

He turned a fishy and uncomprehending eye upon me; it seemed that he did not know the way. Summoning the Diddybird, who was some lengths ahead, we found that his boatman was equally ignorant. And it was nearly dark, and very chilly.

Then arose a heated discussion between the owners of the various craft. According to some, the village was quite near; others said that it would be impossible to reach it that night. A suggestion which was mooted, to the effect that we should leave the canoes and strike overland, was at once vetoed by the Diddybird and myself, since

it would have meant abandoning all our spoil—and, as we had shot some very decent heads, this solution was out of the question. No one seemed very clear as to the direction of the camp—until, turning my head, I caught sight of a faint glimmer which I was sure could be nothing but the glow of our camp-fire.

And then, fortunately for us, a canoe forged alongside out of the darkness and a voice hailed us. There was a rapid colloquy, and our canoes, swinging round, filed into a tiny channel on our right which we had disregarded in coming, thinking that it was too narrow to lead to anywhere.

It took us nearly two hours to reach the edge of the swamp—two hours of zigzagging through reed-screened channels, bending low in the canoes so that we might pass under the seemingly impenetrable arches of greenery. All the time we could see the lights of the camp, tantalisingly near, yet divided from us by a stretch of impassable morass; after the first hour, we could distinguish the words of a song which was being sung in the village, and could hear the confused murmur of drums blending from the different settlements and fishing camps along the shore. There was something fascinating in the slow gliding through the dark, over the silent waters, amid the dusky shadows of the water-lanes, while the fireflies in countless myriads lit our way, and the hum of voices from the canoes ahead and astern drifted to us up and down the river. But it was infernally cold; and I was delighted to find, on investigation, that there were three good tots of whisky left in my flask.

It was nearly eight when we came at last to the landing-stage, feeling almost as travellers from Scotland feel when they see the lights of the terminus. The place was a Venice in miniature—everywhere lay canoes, anchored in narrow inlets, with here a paddle and there a fish-spear, cast aside until the morrow. Evidently in these parts one fears nothing from thieves.

On the bank by the landing-stage a huge fire had been lighted, and we found there our *machila* men, anxiously awaiting us. Bokosi the Faithful and the rest of the Whist Quartette were there, and seemed really relieved to see us. Ten minutes later we were in camp, enjoying hot baths and hot drinks, and reading the mail, which had just come in, after one of the most strenuous, yet most delightful, days which I have ever spent. If I were a millionaire, I think I should build a log-cabin on the shore of the swamp, and divide my days in shooting and fishing among these pleasant people of the mist. But I expect pneumonia would result very shortly!

## SEPTEMBER

“ Hotting-up ”—Force of the sun—A disreputable photograph  
—The humours of animals—Wart-hog—Hippo—Elephant  
—The lure of camp life—Mporokoso’s again—Improving  
his village—A new store—Killing a snake—The picannin  
and the porcupine—A cat taken by a leopard—Storms  
brewing—Our gardens—Mwanakatwe’s family—Ma-  
konde—The Swahili again—A native killed—Ninety  
miles in forty-eight hours—A night in the bush.

It is “ hotting up,” as we say out here, with a vengeance. And the change in temperature either really occurs more rapidly than in non-tropical latitudes or else, after the biting winds and crisp, sharp cold of the preceding months, impresses upon one more forcibly the alteration in the season. Anyway, it has been quite impossible, during the last week, to travel later than ten in the morning; and even then the heat, upon stony hill-sides or across open, dusty plains, has often been positively appalling.

Yet, I suppose, the actual sun-temperature has never been excessive; the whole question is merely one of the verticality of the sun’s rays. I can remember well a certain station to which I was posted in the South where, at this time of year, we

often had to put up with 106 degrees in the shade. It was grilling hot; but, for all that, I used often to pop out of the office at midday without a hat. Up here, where the temperature in the shade rarely rises above 98, one would go down like a stone if one tried tricks of that sort, and be in bed inside of half an hour with sunstroke.

Beryl—from motives either of vanity, or of convenience connected in subtle way with the question of hatpins, I have never yet been quite able to determine which—eschews a sun-helmet and has appropriated an old double Terai of mine. Certainly I have exercised my authority to the extent of insisting upon her lining the crown with red flannel; even so, I cannot understand why she doesn't get sunstroke. But I suppose her hair has something to do with it, and also the fact that she spends quite half her time in the *machila*. Very wisely, she does not appreciate the logic of keeping a dog and barking herself, and, as a team of *machila* men has to be paid, sees to it that they shall earn their wages—which I am bound to confess they do.

This afternoon I developed a photograph which I took of Beryl and Diddybird and myself at lunch a few days ago. It would be impossible, I venture to say, to find anywhere a more ruffianly-looking trio. We had, I remember, been hunting over charred plains that morning, and what with the grass-ash and sunburn, the Diddybird and I came out black as regards our arms and legs. My boots, which hold a prominent position in the photograph and are hopelessly

out of focus, are very much in need of repair. One of them is tied up with string. Beryl, in a short tweed skirt, high boots and one of my shooting-coats, with her (or rather my) hat jammed well down over her eyes, might very easily be eighty; she looks rather as if she belonged to a gipsy caravan and told fortunes for a livelihood. The Diddybird has on a large green shooting-coat, which had seen many years of service at Home before ever he donned it in Africa, and he, also, is weak in the boot-line, since he is wearing a pair, recently purchased from Barney Moikart before referred to, which gape so much round the ankles that the space between them and his legs makes an excellent receptacle for a box of matches—a use to which it has been put on the present occasion. Indeed, the only respectable people in the photograph are the boy (who religiously dons his *kansu*, or white robe, and his blue zouave jacket for every meal, even on *ulendo*), and Jack, the dog, who sits up by Beryl's side looking shaggy, indeed, but as correct and staid as a country pew-opener.

In the foreground is the luncheon-basket, a pile of plates, and a dish upon which reclines the dejected carcase of a skinny fowl. Among the tall trees in the background can be dimly discerned the shadowy form of the faithful Bokosi, brandishing Beryl's vanity-bag in one hand and her sunshade in the other, evidently rather bored with the proceedings, and only anxious for the button to be pressed and the word given to move on.



Three months from now, I suppose, Beryl and I will be once more clothed and in our right minds according to the conventions of London, and shall blush to look upon this picture-proof of disreputable days. But, for all that, I should dearly like to conduct an African *ulendo* down Piccadilly about four o'clock one afternoon—though, I suppose, the County Council would object in the interests of public decency!

We met a wart-hog to-day who was rather amusing. At the time, as it happened, the three of us were intently watching a herd of eland grazing on a small plain below a little rise on which we were standing. And suddenly, without any warning whatever, the wart-hog trotted out of the bush hardly twenty yards from us, stopped dead, and gazed contemplatively out over the landscape. He had his back to us and, evidently, had not got our wind. Standing there, squat and tubby, in an attitude of expectancy, with his ridiculous little tufted tail cocked straight up on end, he looked for all the world like a fat and pompous old gentleman hailing a cab from the kerb.

The Diddybird and I glanced at each other. Evidently the same thought struck us simultaneously, for when he gave expression to his idea with a muttered "Keb, sir?" Beryl and I burst out laughing. Whereat the wart-hog sprang into the air as if he had been shot, spun round on his hind legs, looked at us for a moment in a reproachfully scared fashion, as one who should say, "Really, you should remember that my heart

is not so strong as it might be!" and then fled into the bush. In less than two seconds he and his tail were out of sight.

I have never yet shot a wart-hog; and really I believe that it is because I nearly always laugh at the critical moment. Not a fortnight ago I met a couple, toddling along one on each side of a winding path, and looking exactly like two school-children on a Sunday afternoon. I missed them because I stood gazing for a moment to make sure that they were not holding hands. A sense of humour is a fatal thing out shooting; the Diddybird missed his first hippo through seeing some fancied resemblance to a raw beefsteak as the great head rose slowly out of the water, and fired wide through laughing. And there is something irresistibly funny in the hind-view of an elephant going off in a hurry.

Back again to-morrow to Malale; this time, please the pigs, to a little rest and peaceful station life again. Most of my district touring is over now for the year, and another trip next month ought to put the final polish to it before I hand over to my successor and go Home. To my mind the chief charm of this country is the possibility of ringing the changes between the camp and the court-room. I suppose the average official spends at least four months of his year out in the bush; he certainly walks very nearly 1,000 miles per annum, quite exclusive of the ground which he covers in hunting after the work of the day is finished. But for all that "the rains"—which this year Beryl and I shall be lucky enough to miss—is

a trying time. Unless there comes an urgent call to some remote corner, to inquire into a murder case, let us say, or for some similar reason—one does not, as a rule, leave the station much between November and March, except it be for a week-end shoot. And as the long, moist months go on, one begins to count the days until the dry weather shall have set in again, and the old bustle and movement of the camping season shall have come once more.

No! the camping days are the days upon which Beryl and I shall look back with the greatest pleasure; they are the days, no doubt, by the standard of which we shall judge this life of ours when we are once again enmeshed in the coils of the great city. Memories will come to us, amid the roar and the rattle of "tubes" and motor-buses, of green forest spaces roofed in with great grey trees; of nights when the camp fire was red in the darkness and the moon pale green above; nights when the stars looked forth from a setting of purple velvet, and the fireflies hovered and swept over silent wastes of swamp.

One talks of many things around the fire, and, in the end, each item of the whole goes to swell a vast mosaic, as it were, whereon the whole picture of one's life is drawn. For instance, when the time comes for casting up the sum, the pictures that will remain with us will be, I fancy, not so much of the dark bush at midday where Crawford and I killed the elephants, not so much of the molten sun blazing down upon the lechwe swamps, or of the hot, afternoon hours when the Diddybird

and I sat upon the banks of a great river and watched the hippo rising and sinking, as of the hours in which, peaceful and happily tired, we lazed round the crackling logs and reduced our scattered impressions to rational sequence in the talking over of each event. It is, indeed, at evening, when the day's work is done and the voices of the taxpayer and the would-be divorcée are stilled—when another day of duties and of the open life is ended, that one weaves the materials of the sunlit hours into a precious patchwork of memories. And I, for one, am quite content to hold these hours as a record of the past.

For, on *ulendo*, one lives poignantly each moment of the waking hours. It is no more blissful to untie the tapes of the tent, stiff with night dews, in the dawn and to lean out into the freshness and the vigour of a new day, than to retie those same tapes at nightfall and stretch oneself upon a bed which might be hard under less happy circumstances, but which, to the man who has trekked all day, is softer than thistle-down.

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Old Mporokoso greeted me to-day on my return with a new scheme. It seems that he is rather taken with the orderly way in which my station village (thanks to my predecessor) is laid out, and would like his own village of some 600 huts to be reduced to the same sort of pattern.

I quite agree with him. His present settlement is a disgrace to any self-respecting chief, being

a regular rabbit-warren of a place, absolutely devoid of any pretence at order or symmetry. People have built their huts wherever they liked, governed merely by the instincts of relationships. It is true that the old Awemba custom of *vitente*, or quarters of the village, each under its responsible headman, has been adhered to to a certain extent, but there is not the slightest attempt at uniformity in the shape or size of the buildings, and with garden patches sandwiched in between the huts here and there and everywhere, it can be guessed that the sanitation of the place is not so perfect as it might be.

I have long been craving for reform in this direction, but it was a matter in which the initiative had to be taken by the natives themselves. One cannot very well issue an edict that every man shall, in a given time, build himself a new hut in a certain definite line, for the building of a new hut means practically a month's work, to say nothing of the fact that quite half of the dwellings are owned by old and decrepit widows who could not be expected to build for themselves. But, once the natives realise that it is time for the old order to change, matters simplify themselves immensely. However, it will mean a lot of work to get the new village pegged out before I go—and, by the time it is actually built, I am afraid that the present babes and sucklings of the village will be tottering greybeards. Still, the suggestion goes to prove that there is some idea of progress in the native mind—and that is always something to be thankful for.

The station is, it seems, to be enriched by the addition of a new store. Wilson, an enterprising Scotchman with a little capital of his own, turned up a few days ago, and has already pitched a tent as a temporary sales-room while the permanent wattle-and-daub structure is being built. From my verandah, as it happens, a good view of the tent (which is a good mile away, down a long, straight road) can be obtained through the glasses, and Wilson spent the morning to-day in one of my deck-chairs gauging the trade which was being done by his *capitao*. It was difficult, he told me, to distinguish the smaller purchases, such as needles and copper-wire (I should think so, at a mile off, even through glasses!), but he told me that he could "spot" looking-glasses, which sparkled in the sun, and a particular line of red blankets. I have noticed, certainly, that the "girls" are looking uncommonly smart in new and very gaudy cloths, so I have every reason to believe that he is doing a good business. Native storekeeping is a fairly lucrative profession in a country like this, although, of course, the big firms, backed with almost unlimited capital, can usually "kill" the small man in under a month, if they really give their minds to it. But competition is an excellent thing, and affords the native a chance of getting an article at something within measurable distance of cost price.

Beryl and I had quite an adventure this afternoon. We were, as usual, going down towards the vegetable garden for the daily inspection of young brussels sprouts—which, I am sorry to say, are



not doing as well as they might be—when she caught sight of something bobbing down a hole in the middle of the path, just in front of us.

“I believe that’s a snake,” she said, coming slowly back to the path out of the grass into which she had sprung in the excitement of the moment. “Let’s go and see.” So we went up very cautiously and looked down the hole.

Just below the surface was the wickedest little face I have yet seen. Two bright, beady eyes twinkled out of an evil, puffy head, where the brown, creased skin was slashed with green and orange; not a doubt but that it was the old, original serpent reincarnated—a puff-adder, as I judged, waiting to strike. Quickly I drew Beryl to one side of the path, and, telling her not to go near the hole, but to watch until I came back, I ran back to the house for a shot-gun.

Beryl was waiting for me with her eyes still intently fixed upon the hole. “It’s a snake, right enough,” she said. “I saw its horrid little eyes quite plainly just now, and poor old Jack nearly got bitten.”

Very deliberately I fired both barrels in succession at the hole, having loaded with No. 4, while Beryl kept a tight hold on the collar of the dog, who had run up while I was getting the gun. There was a shower of loose soil and dust, and a small mound covered the spot where the hole had been. And then, at Beryl’s suggestion, we dug the snake out. When we finally got him to the surface he turned out to be a very small frog—still in





“FROM MY VERANDAH A GOOD VIEW CAN BE OBTAINED DOWN A LONG STRAIGHT ROAD.”



his boyhood, I should say—who had evidently died of fright, as he was perfectly intact.

That's the worst of this country—you have to take precautions, and can never tell when you are being badly had. I well remember an incident which happened last year, when Beryl and I were at the Metropolis. Our own house was being done up at the time, and we were living in a small tin, three-roomed shanty next door to that of Mr. and Mrs. Magistrate. It must have been about half-past ten in the evening; I was writing in one room and Beryl was sitting in another, when suddenly the silence of the night was broken by the most blood-curdling yells and groans. Then they ceased, and all was absolutely still once more, save for the distant sound of drumming in the station village over across the river.

Beryl came into my room the next minute with a scared, white face. "Did you hear that?" she said. "It seemed—I thought—wasn't it just like a native being taken by something?"

That was just what it had sounded like to me. I was quite convinced in my own mind that, not ten paces from our door, a lion was at that very moment engaged in devouring his victim. We had, as it happened, been very much worried by the brutes lately, and hardly a night had gone by without their having put in an appearance; only two nights before, four of them had strolled across the tennis-court in the moonlight, leaving "spoor" plain for all the world to see the next morning. While a week previous we had found the massive wooden doors of the cattle-shed scored

and scratched with the claws of the great beasts. However, hitherto there had been no casualties among the native population, and, indeed, the natives themselves believed that the animals were benevolent "spirit-lions," who merely took the air o' nights without any evil intentions.

Still, under the circumstances, blood-curdling yells at 10.30 p.m. were not reassuring. So I took down a shot-gun, loaded it carefully with S.S.G., and, lighting a lantern, went out cautiously onto the verandah. It was pitch-dark, and there was nothing to be seen, while the uncanny sounds had by this time absolutely ceased.

Going back into the drawing-room, I told Beryl that I should have to go up to the Magistrate's house and organise a search, while she had better stay where she was. But this she flatly refused to do, saying that anything was better than being left in the house by herself. So, after considerable argument on the point, we both went up to the house together, in fear and trembling, swinging the lantern wildly as we went and starting at our own shadows.

The doctor, as it happened, was dining up there, and, having left Beryl with Mrs. Magistrate, we three men started off on a tour of investigation. We were accompanied by a native policeman and by a small "piccanin," whom I noticed at the time, rather admiring his pluck. He was, it seemed, the doctor's boy, charged with carrying the latter's lantern and slippers.

I should say that we were out quite half an hour. Before starting, we explained affairs to the

policeman and the piccanin, telling them that we had heard blood-curdling yells shortly before, and thought that a native must have been taken. Round we went, prying into every patch of shadows, probing behind every bush, looking into the pigsty and the cattle-shed for traces of spoor, but all to no avail. So we gave it up, still convinced that some one had been taken, but thinking that the lion must have dragged his prey away into the thick bush which lies between the station and the little lake, where it would be useless to search until daylight.

We had drinks, I remember, after we got back to the house, and the magistrate disappeared for a minute or two. When he came back he was almost doubled up with suppressed laughter, and for a minute or two could not speak. But eventually he managed to explain that, on getting in, he had questioned the doctor's piccanin anent his views on the subject of the cries and groans, and had been told by the latter, quite calmly and nonchalantly, that he, the piccanin, had given vent to the groans himself. It seemed that, hurrying up through the garden with the doctor's lantern, he had suddenly run full tilt into Mrs. Magistrate's tame porcupine, which was accustomed to ramble about by itself at night, and, being pricked by its spikes and badly frightened as well, had simply yelled for all he was worth.

It took us some considerable time to forgive the little wretch for having allowed us to wander round the garden in the dark in search of a mythical lion, knowing full well that he himself was at the bottom of the whole affair.

But, unfortunately, one cannot always attribute such nocturnal sounds to frightened piccanins. Only the night before last, while Beryl, a visitor, and I were playing poker patience about nine o'clock, we heard a sudden scuffle on the verandah. We rushed out and searched all round the house for spoor, but could find nothing. Next morning, however, Beryl's little white cat was missing, and was found later on in the day in a terribly mangled condition at some distance from the house. She had evidently been pounced upon by a leopard and had managed to escape, but she was terribly mauled, poor little beast, and although we tried at first to save her, we found in the end that it would be more merciful to put her out of her misery at once.

So that, although one may mistake frogs for snakes and porcupines for lions, one has nevertheless to mind ones *p*'s and *q*'s in this part of the world.

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It smells like thunder to-night, and if we don't have a big "breaking storm" in a day or two, I shall be very much surprised. Anyway, I told the native clerk to get the rain-gauge out to-day, so that we are prepared.

Poor Beryl hates storms, and, for that matter, so do I. They are no joke out in this country, either; it is only three years since a poor fellow, only just out from England, was killed by lightning on the verandah of the magistrate's house, and last year, while a friend of mine and his wife



were out camping near Katere's Mission, huts on each side of their tents were struck and burned to cinders. Here, at Malale, I don't think we run any particular risks, as the station lies beneath the ridge of the hills in a kind of saucer; but it is irritating when a storm begins at about eleven in the morning, as it has a knack of doing, and runs round and round the rim of the saucer for two or three hours. Besides, natives simply will not come into the Boma in the rains, and one rather loses touch with them for that reason.

One can hardly blame them. Even if I wanted a divorce rather badly I very much doubt if I should feel prepared to sit in a draughty *nsaka*, which leaked like a sieve, for possibly several hours, to get it; and I am perfectly certain that I should not tramp sixty miles in the pelting rain, with nothing more substantial on than a strip of calico round my loins, for the sole purpose of paying a three-shilling tax to the Government. So really the people who do pay their taxes during the wet season—and there are many of them—are rather to be admired.

However, this year we shall miss most of the rains, as, except for occasional showers, they do not set in with any real persistence until January, by which time, I trust, we shall be snug in London. It will be an infernal nuisance if we are caught on the way down country; but still, when one has no official work to do *en route*, it is comparatively easy to keep dry and to fit in marches for the dry time of day.

And, in a way, the rains are rather a relief.



Towards September, when the "hotting-up" season has really begun, it is impossible not to begin to wish for the sizzle and the pelt of the tropical downpour once again; impossible, rather, not to hate the black nakedness of the burned-up country, or to long for the soft, velvety green of the new grass to be more widely distributed. And, too, if we had no wet season we should have no gardens; and life out here without a garden would be absolute Hades.

We have two gardens, by the way—an upper and a lower—and I don't think I have described either. Just at present there is nothing much in them. The *dhoub* of the lawns outside the house is shrivelled and yellow, while the flower-beds are empty, and even the leaves of the *mitawa* trees along the avenues have dried up and twisted sideways in the biting winds. As for the lower or vegetable garden down by the *musito*, it is really pitiable to see the condition into which it has got; there is practically nothing in it now beyond some abortive cabbages and lettuces, which ran to seed long ago.

But in mid-rains it is very, very different. Then the *musito* garden is a perfect blaze of colour—a tapestry of flaming reds and yellows and purples woven upon a background of dark green foliage, of palms and tree-ferns, feathery bananas, and the waving mealies of native gardens which line the river-bed. Last year, I remember, Beryl planted a long, narrow bed full of nothing but salpiglossis; the result was simply dazzling in its gorgeousness. For each flower grew, I am sure, twice as big as it

would have done in England, and the riot of colour, each bloom soft with velvet pollen, shot through and through with threads of gold, lent a light to the soft shadows of the quiet grove as if the place had been splashed by some fairy painter.

Mwanakatwe of the Squeezed Face is the guardian of these shades. He works here early and late, and, I must say, seems to revel in it. He has built himself a tiny grass shelter beside the gate which leads through the rough fence, and on arriving at work somewhere in the dim and dewy hours deposits therein his last-born—a chubby, squealing infant of three. Later in the day Mrs. Mwanakatwe usually joins them; no doubt when she has completed her household tasks, and seen to the due distribution among her lady-friends of all the other little Mwanakatwes, of which there are some four or five. She is a comely person—little more than a girl—and, affecting as she does a flamingo-coloured cloth that drapes her from head to foot, she shows up picturesquely enough against the dark green and grey of the river bank. Towards evening, after he has put Beryl's fowls to bed, the faithful Bokosi will saunter down to chat, or Makonde, the station *capitao*, with one of his numerous wives. He is a taciturn person—Makonde—as befits a man who was badly mauled by a lion some years ago in, unhappily, a futile attempt to save his master from the attack of four of the brutes when he was out on a district tour. The white man, after having made a gallant fight, reloading with one maimed hand from his pocket

while the other was actually in the lion's jaws, lived for fifteen days, only to die in the end of blood-poisoning; while Makonde, who stood by him to the last, was clawed deeply across the back and loins, and suffers from it to this day in recurrent attacks of pneumonia.

But this is a grim subject to dally with in Beryl's garden. Let us rather speak of the trim, graceful women in their gaudy cloths, who come, each with her ebony-black pot trimly balanced upon her dainty head, to draw water from the stream; or of the children who have set snares for partridges and small birds in the comparative seclusion of the winding paths. It is a restful place, and one which Beryl loves more than any other part of the station, not even excepting the neat lawns above, in front of the house, where later on roses, chrysanthemums, violets, and geraniums will bloom under the shade of gnarled old trees, the haunt of sleepy owls and swooping, long-winged night-jars.

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My friends the Swahili are at it again. Somewhere round about six o'clock, three nights ago, a runner came lolloping into Malale at the usual jog-trot of the urgent messenger. He had been jog-trotting for practically twenty-four hours, and to all intents and purposes was quite capable of keeping it up for another three weeks or so. His news was upsetting, and to the effect that a big caravan of some hundred men had two nights before passed along the lake shore from the Congo,

bound eastwards to German territory; that they had with them several large tusks, one of which was a two-man load, and about forty loads of rubber; that their right to pass had been challenged by Makota, a rather sporting headman of my acquaintance, whose village lies near their ordinary route, and who has always shown himself loyal to the Government; and that, as a net result, there had been a running fight lasting two days, in which one of my natives had been killed.

When European nations go to war there is more business than talk, once the preliminaries have been arranged. It is just the opposite with native races; I believe, if the truth were known, one would find that even in the days of the good old tribal rows very few casualties occurred. Anyway, this was not a war, nor anything remotely like it, being merely a natural reluctance on the part of the smugglers to part with any of their treasures to natives belonging to an intermediate territory. They—the smugglers, that is—came from the Congo and were bound to German East; apparently they could not, or did not, see the force of being interfered with upon the grounds that in passing through the Malale district they were bumping up against our Sleeping Sickness Regulations. Anyway, they stuck to their point, and in the end, as I have said, one of my natives was killed, being shot at about five yards' range.

In life he had been an amiable old ass of some fifty years, who was, moreover, closely connected with the reigning royal family of the Alungu tribe, and who would eventually have succeeded

to some kind of minor chieftainship. From what I could learn he had lost his life in being foolish enough to fall into a remarkably transparent trap which the Swahili had set for him and his friends. For, being surrounded in a narrow valley, they, the smugglers, had feinted to break away down the gorge, and having returned secretly and concealed themselves, had scattered a few worthless rhino horns and half a hundred balls of rubber upon a little open plateau within range of their guns as they lay among the bushes. Chipata, the dead man, and a few of his friends had lusted for the possession of these worthless odds and ends, and had fallen upon them gleefully, fighting and squabbling, no doubt, among themselves for the lion's share. And in a moment the antiquated Tower muskets of the hidden Swahili had spoken, and old Chipata had been unlucky enough to get a ball in the ribs.

Well, it was all very annoying. All this had happened a good forty-eight hours back, and by this time, no doubt, the caravan was laughing up its collective sleeves in German territory, forty miles away. Moreover, my sporting missionary friend Saunders had, I learned, been early on the scene (since the fight had taken place within five miles of his station), and after having examined the body of the dead man, had followed the fugitives hot-foot, without food or bedding, until far into the night. So that beyond the mere impression to be conveyed to the native mind it seemed futile enough to turn out.

However, in dealing with natives it is just that

impression which is sometimes the most important matter to consider. After all, Chipata had been killed in attempting to prevent a breach of the Sleeping Sickness Regulations and in a loyal attempt to support the Government, although I have no doubt that the prospect of loot had also had something to do with it. The least I could do was to turn out at once and get along to the scene of the conflict with as little delay as possible. There might be a stray Swahili or two still hanging round, or some valuable piece of evidence might possibly have been overlooked by Saunders, though I did not much expect to find it.

Anyway, I left at eight that evening with a largish body of police. There was no time to collect carriers, so that I had to requisition the station workers as far as the first village—only seven miles out, fortunately. Arrived there, I dug out the headman, who had already retired to bed, and explained the circumstances to him; and in under a quarter of an hour I was able to replace the workers with between twenty and thirty volunteer carriers. Every man-Jack of them seemed quite anxious to have a go at the smugglers, and I have no doubt that most of them were promising themselves the payment of long-owed grudges. However that may have been, they were enthusiastic enough to cheer up my own rather drooping spirits, and we set off about half-past ten, by the light of a young and somewhat watery moon, to trudge the sixteen miles down towards Tanganyika.

It was dreary, dismal going, and I wondered



several times how long my boots would hold out over the sharp, jagged stones. Somewhere about half-past one we ran into a herd of wart-hog, and the corporal of police, who was walking just in front of me, jumped about six feet in the air, evidently thinking they were lions. Twice in the darkness we lost the path, difficult enough to follow among the high grass and deserted gardens even in the daytime, and it was past four when we came at last to Mwanakasoma's village, still some four miles from the lake. Here, after a hasty bite, I turned in "all-standing," and slept soundly enough until half past six.

Mwanakasoma's people were keen to come on with me, so I there and then organised a *machila* team to save time, and wrote on extra carriers in order to lighten the loads. With this assistance we were able to press on rapidly, for we had still some thirty miles to go, and every moment might be of value. The route during that day lay around the lake shore, and it was stiff going. Every few miles a rugged cliff barred our way, which it was necessary to circumvent; and even when we were on the flat the grass was so high that it was with great difficulty that we could get through at all. For it must be remembered that all this part of the world had, for the last few years, been closed to traffic—the villages had been moved back owing to Sleeping Sickness Regulations—and, as a natural consequence, the paths formerly in use had become overgrown, and fire, that cleanser and destroyer of the ordinary bush, had been wanting.



However, I had chosen the route purposely, instead of the more easy one inland, since it was the one used by smugglers, and it was just on the cards that we might, at any bend in the track, run into some of the murderers of the deceased Chipata. Therefore I threw out an advance guard of police and kept my own rifle loaded—for the Congo Swahili is a gentleman who, accustomed to the gentle methods of Tippoo-Tib, Rumaliza, and the other freebooting gentry of the past, has but few scruples, and manages to suppress those that he has very effectually.

But the day passed without incident; the lake shore was a country of the dead. Halting for half an hour at midday and again at four o'clock (this time on the deserted site of the African Transcontinental Telegraph station at Kasakalawe, now overgrown, with only the piles of telegraph poles and coils of wire innumerable to bear witness to the past), we pushed on steadily until, by seven in the evening, we were under the frowning steeps of the Spirit Mountain of the Alungu, having done nearly thirty miles since sunrise.

The men were still game, but done up. So we halted until eleven that night, since there was a stiffish climb before us, and it was as well to wait for the moon.

It was an eerie spot for a camp. The line of hills towered above us, and behind, not two hundred yards away, lay Tanganyika, peaceful enough in the cold, keen light. Between us and the cliffs the country seemed easy enough to

negotiate; it was not until we started again that we found a succession of dips and chasms, dense dark brushwood, and stretches of weird cane-bush—indeed, the whole stretch reminded me of nothing so much as that dark country which lay about the Dark Tower to which Childe Roland came. Here and there were traces of smuggling camps—burned-out embers, charred logs, the skeletons of grass-shelters, and the like. It was a fitting place for them—and I should have liked to meet the Swahili there and to have discussed, once for all, the questions which were at issue between us.

But it was not to be. For two hours after we started we climbed steadily upwards, until at last the summit of the cliffs was reached, and the lake lay stretched at our feet like a sheet of glass glistening in the moonlight. Thereafter we travelled for some six or seven miles upon the flat until, dead beat and uncertain of our way, we camped at about two in the morning upon a patch of bush standing at the very edge of a swamp.

I have known intense heat often enough, but never such piercing cold as was my lot that night. The men with the loads were far behind, for the two hours' climb had beaten them altogether, and, as luck would have it, my thick shooting-coat was behind with them. So that I had to lie down as I was, in thin khaki "shorts" and a shooting-shirt, without covering of any kind, and, what was much worse, without anything to eat or drink.

I was sorry for the men—but, in some ways, they were better off than I—since they had with

them each the skin bag, tied at the ends with strips of bark, without which the native never moves outside his village, and out of which he can conjure, on occasion, the ingredients for a substantial meal. Indeed, it was merely what they were used to. In half an hour they had chopped down branches, built shelters, cooked their food and were sound asleep; while I sat huddled over the fire and waited for the dawn. The piercing wind, which is worst at the end of the dry season, came hurtling over the high plateau—turn as one might, it seemed utterly impossible to be warm on both sides at once; I cursed myself for a fool for having allowed myself to be parted from my coat and my flask, and heartily wished the Swahili at the bottom of Tanganyika.

At four in the morning, just before dawn, the loads came up, and I managed to get something to eat and gradually thawed again. Once more we set out—and, before we had gone six miles, met natives from the scene of the fight. They told us that the Swahili had vanished utterly, and that our trouble had been for nothing. And so—after pushing on to the actual gully where the murder had been committed, and where there was nothing more interesting to be seen than a large stain of blood where poor old Chipata had leaned against a tree just before he died—I gave the order to turn towards home. By dint of travelling all day along the inland route, where the road was hoed and clear, we made Malale at seven in the evening, having covered ninety miles in forty-eight hours.

It was good going—especially for some of the older men, who had carried their twenty and thirty pound loads uncomplainingly up and down the faces of cliffs, through fifteen-foot grass and dense thorn. And it was, for all intents and purposes, useless, since we had seen no more trace of a Swahili than one does of angels and their wings in Piccadilly. But, at least, we had lost no time, and given the natives to understand that, after committing a crime in the white man's country, it is as well to adjourn without undue loss of time.

## OCTOBER

Arrival in "Germany"—The German colonial officer—His army—Blinkenburg—Its defences—Its natives—Banyans—Unofficial meetings with old friends—The Boma—Our hosts—We sleep in the Commandant's office—Early morning—The heat—The *Hedwig von Wissmann*—Waterspouts—German methods of combating Sleeping Sickness—Their views on civil cases—And on tax-collecting—A wily headman—German colonisation—Tanga—Dar-es-Salaam—The Tabora-Ujiji Railway—"Darkest Africa" of the future.

WE arrived in "Germany" to-day. Even in the glare of the terrible tropical sun there exists a distinctly Teutonic atmosphere; the very palms seem to be dressed in ranks with military precision, and one could not imagine even a crocodile moving out of the lake onto the trim green banks except between stated hours, or without going through the recognised formalities as to leaving his name and address.

Shortly after eleven in the morning, Beryl, the magistrate, and I crossed the Anglo-German frontier (which is only eighteen miles from our Metropolis), and thereafter, descending an almost vertical precipice of several hundred feet, arrived at the Imperial District Office of Blinkenburg in

time for lunch. Our visit is an unofficial one, and of courtesy pure and simple; for we are nothing if not cosmopolitan up here on our little plateau, and infinitely enjoy the interchange of the ordinary civilities of life with our Belgian and German neighbours.

Without exception the German officer whose fates have brought him into the Colonial Service, and thereby, ultimately, to Blinkenburg—a military station of some considerable strategic importance—is a polished and agreeable man of the world. He is still a German officer, and could not by any possible flight of fancy be mistaken for aught else, but he has left behind him in Germany the somewhat overpowering rigidity of his caste, and can on occasion prove himself a most agreeable companion.

His colonising methods are, however, very different from our own. Where we employ twenty civil police he scatters Soudanese soldiers broadcast over the landscape. He provides the said soldiers with boots which, while undoubtedly expensive, and possibly picturesque, cannot, one would think, add much to the value of their owners as fighting units. He also furnishes a certain percentage of flimsy calico *tentes-d'abris* to every company, and shrouds his fighting men in unpleasing puttees, ponderous khaki uniforms and unprepossessing caps with neck-flaps to protect them from their own well-beloved sun. On the other hand, he sees to it that every man of his black fighting force has an up-to-date rifle and is taught to use it by constant practice on the

ranges with which every station is equipped ; while, by dint of unremitting route-marches and incessant parades, he ensures that his army shall understand at least the rudimentary notions of automatic discipline and soldierly endurance.

If, on this particular morning, one were to turn one's back upon the broad blue waters of Tanganyika—for Blinkenburg, besides being a garrison town, is also a harbour of no mean importance—and gaze merely over the bleak barrack-square, it would be easy enough to imagine that one was back again in the trim, methodical Fatherland. For in the geometric centre of the parade ground, flanked on either side by lines of whitewashed stones of equal sizes, rises the familiar black, white and red flagstaff, from the summit of which the Imperial Eagle droops languidly in the calm of the sweltering afternoon. There, on each side of the massive arched gateway, are the familiar zebra-coloured sentry-boxes, a business-like black sentry standing outside each ; while in the background the trim quarters of the soldiers are drawn up row upon row, and the ground itself is swept and garnished until one shudders at the sight of an unsuspecting beetle crawling nonchalantly, all heedless of his doom when the outraged sentry shall presently, with the butt of his rifle, grind him into the glittering sand which he has desecrated.

Everything except the blazing blue of the lake or the equally aggressive green of vegetation is stark, uncompromising white. For your Teuton believes implicitly in the sanitary properties of



limewash, and bespatters his stations with it liberally, heedless of the effect upon the eyesight of the unfortunate English traveller—who, certainly, comes so rarely that he has no claim to consideration.

After all, the place is a fortress, and is intended to be used as such should necessity arise in the shape of native disturbances. From a strategic point of view I should say—although I cannot claim even the most trivial acquaintance with the laws of fortification—that it is quite impregnable to native attack. For it is built upon a neck of land running out into the lake, surrounded upon three sides by water, backed, on the land side, by a well-built wall of solid masonry more than high enough to resist any attack except by heavy guns, and so loopholed and otherwise protected as to be capable of a very strenuous defence.

North of the citadel proper—which contains naturally, the official quarters and offices, barracks stables, storehouses and arsenal—lies the harbour, properly equipped with a masonry quay and the usual appurtenances of an anchorage. And away beyond it is the native town—a veritable town, beside which our congeries of huts, no matter how vast, are mere rabbit warrens.

For, in passing over our British border, we have come among a new class of people. The majority of the natives who have collected round about Blinkenburg are Swahili from the North; shrewd semi-Arabs, with a genius for trading and a knowledge of the minor luxuries of life. Instead of the purely barbaric chieftain, with his head-

gear of scarlet parrots' feathers, his yelling mob of adherents, his tribal drum, and his family medicine-man, we have here suave, sedate patriarchs, clothed in flowing white robes and little white skull-caps of finely embroidered linen, who live in spacious, square houses, drink tea, and are learned in the prices of ivory and rubber or the points of a sea-going dhow. Their fathers, no doubt, plied their trade in human flesh upon the great caravan route between Ujiji and Zanzibar, or stole coastwise in slave ships up and down the Indian Ocean, venturing now and again, it may be, as far eastwards as the nearer Indian ports. Their mothers were, in many cases, slave-girls from our own primitive tribes, but sometimes, perhaps, the superior type from coastal settlements. All the men have guns and gun-powder—very few of them would lay claim to any particular sanctity, either in commerce or in morals. They are, in short, kittle cattle with which to deal; and one cannot altogether blame the Germans if they do not achieve quite the same results in their colonising as do we ourselves.

Another difficulty—and by no means a trivial one—must centre in the extensive Banyan population. For, as a general rule, where the Banyan goes trouble follows. He fastens upon the local population like a peculiarly adhesive leech, and sucks it dry; he is not above perjury or false swearing; his morals are not always all that might be desired, and once he has taken root it is almost impossible to get rid of him.

Here in Blinkenburg, and for that matter everywhere in the North, he flourishes, but, for the present, we are spared his presence upon our plateau. As a general rule he can "go one better" than even the astute Swahili, and as a result he holds complete control over the primitive financial interests of the community. I have no doubt that he lends money to all and sundry, for it is his nature to do so; and having once lent it, I am equally sure that he never loses upon the deal from mere squeamishness or kindness of heart! Be that as it may, he has his finger upon the commercial pulse of the community of Blinkenburg, and is usually at the back of any little speculation, such as the running of a consignment of rubber from the Congo or the equipment of an expedition to trade, unlawfully, in British territory.

So much for life outside the walls of the citadel. It interested me, I must confess, vastly; for here, strolling about the dusty roads of the town, or lolling at ease in the shade of overhanging thatched roofs, was many a native whom I had heard of by repute, and even, upon occasion, met with officially in the course of some long-drawn out case based upon the smuggling of rubber or ivory or the breach of Sleeping Sickness Regulations. This time, we met unofficially—for they knew as well as I that we were, for the time, upon neutral ground—and so merely glanced at each other and passed on. But I should have liked to know more about them; to have had *carte-blanche* to go through those

silent, square houses of theirs, to search for tusks which, I am morally certain, had been shot across the border without a licence, to weigh the bales of rubber which I knew lay concealed there, and which had come from our forests. I should have liked an hour or two spent in the casting up and auditing of Banyan account-books—it would have been time well spent, time which would have thrown considerable light, maybe, upon the origin of hundreds of fancy cloths and leather belts and such-like trumpery with which my own division has of late been flooded.

But all such investigations were impossible. We were the guests of courteous officials of another nation, and were visiting in plain clothes; it would have been rank insult to have pried too closely into the secrets of their subjects. So I carefully averted my eyes from a caravan which passed me, in broad daylight, bearing five elephant tusks that I am certain had, only that very day, been brought across the border from my own division, and were probably being exhibited in sheer bravado, and we went on to the Boma, where the Commandant was awaiting us.

It was an imposing-looking building of stone, whitewashed, and glaring in the sunshine, but with lofty, cool rooms within. Under the high portico we were met by the Commandant, a senior lieutenant of the German Colonial Troops, who bears one of the historic names of Germany, and, with him, a cheery little Russian Pole, who turned out to be the civil surgeon. There was no lack of cordiality in their greeting; they

ushered us into the wide, cool messroom, which looked out over the blue waters of the lake, not fifty yards away, and in five minutes we were drinking the first lager-beer, of the true Münchener Bräu, that I had tasted for nearly three years.

Indeed, they seemed truly delighted to see us. The present Commandant was comparatively a new-comer, having been transferred from the headquarters at Dar-es-Salaam only some three months before; but his predecessor in office had recently visited our Metropolis, and the civil surgeon had foregathered with our own doctor not so long before in a kind of semi-official conference of two upon Sleeping Sickness methods and remedies. So that we had plenty to discuss in common, which we did in bad German on my part, and moderately good English on the part of the surgeon. The Commandant was not much of a linguist, but he beamed genially behind gold-rimmed pince-nez, waved his chubby white fingers, and pressed us to more beer at frequent intervals.

Ten minutes later came an addition to the company in the shape of a tall, pale young civilian paymaster, who had a good flow of English, and devoted himself to Beryl, a stoutish, genial major of the Army Medical, just down from Ujiji upon a special Sleeping Sickness Commission, who at once engaged in strenuous "shop" with our magistrate, and a younger officer, a charming person who added considerably to the gaiety of the meeting.

So we sat and smoked and consumed weak tea and *küchen*, which followed the beer, and discussed all manner of subjects, from the organisation of concentration camps to the merits of tennis and big-game shooting. There were some good "heads" in the messroom, and I gathered that our Teutonic neighbours were quite as keen sportsmen as ourselves. Certainly they had far better opportunities, for at Lake Rukwa, in their territory, not more than four days' march away, were rhino and giraffe, elephant, oryx, and all kinds of delightful animals in wanton profusion.

Thereafter, in the evening cool, we sauntered once again through the town, visited the shops of the Banyans, and laid in stores of candles and paraffin, and a peculiarly villainous kind of tobacco, to replenish our own larders, which had long been depleted by a cessation of supplies in the local stores.

The town, like the Boma and barracks, is certainly a miracle of neatness and solid, painstaking care. Down by the harbour a wide, firm road has been cut out of the mountain-side, and the outer slope banked with stone; across the sluggish estuary of the lake, which is the main water-supply of the place, lying as it does between the official and the native quarters, is a massive, well-built bridge; the vegetable garden, which lies back in a valley running between two tall cliffs, is well tended and generously stocked; and out in the bay is a tight little twin-screw steamer which plies up and down and across the



lake, keeping control over the commerce of the German and the Belgian shores. We are to visit her to-morrow; the next day she starts northward again, bearing the major and his assistant upon a protracted tour of the principal Sleeping Sickness localities.

Meanwhile, dinner—a quaint conglomeration of British food, cooked in our honour, and *würsten* and *delicatessen* (which I much prefer), furnished in their own; good wines and excellent cigars, friendly chatter, and whiskies and sodas after the approved English fashion out on the terrace in the moonlight. It was very late before we finally said good-night and adjourned to our quarters. Beryl and I have been put into the Commandant's office—a great double-roomed barn of a place, looking out, on the one side, over the lake, and on the other into the square which lies between the officers' quarters and the guard-room. There are copies of the penal code printed on sheets of cardboard and hung up all over the walls; I have studied them with considerable interest, and find that they approximate very much to our own. Also, there hangs on a nail, almost over my bed, a brown-paper file which, from its label, evidently contains a register of inland caravans and dhow-sailings from Blinkenburg for the past year. Being between covers, it would not, I suppose, be "cricket" to read it—but I should very much like to do so, since I am convinced that it would probably contain a good many names familiar to me, and acquaint me with the movements of certain native friends



of mine in whom, for some considerable time past, I have taken a fatherly interest. It is extremely tantalising!

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This morning, Beryl and I were awakened at an unearthly hour by the roll of drums on the changing of the night-guard at the gates. Un-suspectingly, we rose and dressed, to find that breakfast would not occur for at least two hours. However, it was beautifully cool out in the garden overlooking the lake, and we were entertained by the gambols of the station donkeys and of a young zebra colt, which, apparently, took their exercise at this hour without let or hindrance. They were excessively skittish, and flung their long young legs in all directions over the trimly-clipped grass.

Out at the back, beyond the gates, the army was on parade—and very smart and business-like it was. Further up the hill the perpetual crack of rifles told us that musketry was going on. I should say that these Soudanese troops were made of the right stuff and trained in the right way. They have, perhaps, somewhat too keen a sense of their own importance—but then, that is the inevitable result of importing an expensive and superior class of native into a country where the local social standard is so extremely primitive.

It began to get hot almost directly after breakfast, which was served at half-past eight. This, by the way, is not by any means the hottest season; what Blinkenburg can possibly be like

in, say, two months from now, just before the heavy rains set in, is utterly beyond my powers of imagination! Even now, it is simply appalling out on the bare, dusty square; the rays of the sun seem almost violet, so blinding are they, and they leap at one from the dazzling white walls like veritable devils of the pit. None the less, the officers of the garrison have not yet taken to the pith helmet which, I presume, they wear in the real hot weather, and saunter gaily about beneath a crushing sun in the thinnest of grey-blue peaked forage-caps. It makes one perfectly giddy to look at them—but they don't seem to mind.

It was a trifle cooler on board the steamer—the *Hedwig von Wissmann*—when Beryl and I visited her in the course of the morning. I do not know that I should care to undertake the four days' trip up the coast in her, especially in rough weather, or in the event of meeting one of the tremendous waterspouts which are a special feature of Tanganyika navigation. Even now, with only a mild sea running, she was bobbing about like a cork, and both Beryl and I, after three years on dry land, began to be anxious.

The *personnel* consisted of the German skipper—a rotund, cheery person who takes extremely good stereoscopic photographs, which he showed to us with considerable gusto—and four or five black sailors, looking very smart in loose “blouses” (I have forgotten the technical term) and “shorts” of khaki drill with red sailor-collars and the

regulation flat caps. These men seemed to know practically all there is to know about engines, the steering apparatus and so forth, and I have no doubt that in the event of sudden indisposition of the captain, the head bosun, or whatever they call him, would be quite capable of piloting the vessel into harbour.

I asked her tonnage, but have forgotten it; anyway, it was something ridiculously small. The captain is a small man—lengthways, that is—and I make no doubt that he was partly chosen to fit the boat, as there certainly would not have been room for a tall man. I asked him what happened when he met a waterspout, and he merely smiled, shrugged his shoulders, and explained that he ran away out of its course. Probably he always manages to get plenty of warning; but I have heard harrowing tales, which I know to be true, of big canoes whirled aloft with ten and twenty men aboard, to be dashed down again broadcast on the seething waters. The natives regard such waterspouts as manifestations of the Spirit of the Lake, and are, for this reason, more or less fatalistic on the matter.

No! I apologise to the *Hedwig von Wissmann* for having spoken jestingly of her tonnage. She is a plucky little craft, and must be invaluable to the Germans in preserving their share of the trade of Tanganyika, now that we have temporarily retired from business owing to the Sleeping Sickness. Of course, it remains to be seen whether or not they are wise to run the

risk of spreading infection from north to south of their territory, as one would fancy they most certainly must. But then their whole outlook upon the Sleeping Sickness question is very different from our own. Quite recently the captain of this very vessel contracted the disease on one of his runs down the coast. He went home for treatment, and is said to have returned cured, and to be now in Dar-es-Salaam, though I cannot vouch for this. One would imagine that the Government would have laid the vessel up for a while after this—but not a bit of it.

Probably the whole crux of the question lies in the fact that insufficient funds are available to undertake the problem as it should be undertaken to ensure success. Wholesale movement of infected villages away from the lake shore, such as have been carried out in British territory, would be utterly impossible across the German border; the employment of innumerable border guards to watch the danger areas is out of the question. It may be doubted, also, whether the officials themselves are sufficiently in sympathy with their people to be able to carry out any really important measures of the kind; at present their tenure of the country is more in the nature of an armed occupation than of definite colonisation.

The paymaster, to whom I was chatting as we walked up towards the Boma after leaving the vessel, was rather interesting upon these and kindred points. I remember asking him whether adultery among natives was treated civilly or

criminally. "Bless you, we don't treat it at all!" he replied.

"Well then—divorce—civil cases regarding property—anything of that sort—what do you do?"

"Do?—nothing! I believe the Wali settles those cases, but they certainly don't bring them to the Boma."

"And who is the Wali?"

His explanation of the Wali was rather difficult to follow, being couched in severely technical terms, but I gathered that this individual, who must have had the rosiest of all possible times, was an Arab who had made his pilgrimage to Mecca and acted as the Commandant's deputy and general right-hand man. Apparently he sat on every case before it reached the Commandant, and was then present in Court when the formal sentence or decision was pronounced, having put the official "up to the ropes," so to speak, in the interval. Having grasped the elements of his position, I felt perfectly sure that he and no other settled anything in the nature of civil or matrimonial disputes; such an extensive jurisdiction would be a very Tom Tiddler's Ground for a native, and far too profitable to allow any external meddling.

The registration of huts and the collection of taxes seemed also to be conducted upon somewhat happy-go-lucky lines. There was, I gathered, no census of the population, but each village was taxed upon the apparent estimated population.

Rather a good story, in this connection, was told me by an American who had spent some time in

German territory. I believe it is true—if not, it ought to be. It seemed that a year or two ago, before the present tax papers, on the lines of our own, were introduced, the receipts given to each native were merely slips of paper with the German flag upon them, and without any number, date, or details. The collecting of revenue was at that time in the hands of the district headmen, the only check upon their honesty being the periodical visit of a white official, who went from village to village counting the slips. One district headman, somewhat in advance of his time, hit upon the simple expedient of using the same set of slips over and over again. The official came to the village, checked the slips, entered the total, and retired for a siesta. Meantime the headman, on the pretext that the slips were required to be entered up, collected them and despatched them by a swift runner to the next village on the list—where, in due course, they were again checked, and the programme repeated. And the headman took good care to explain to the natives that the curious coloured papers were *not* receipts for taxes paid, but certificates of exemption, which had been obtained by his good offices at headquarters, and for which good offices a substantial subscription among the exempted villages would be only fitting!

But, these minor details notwithstanding, Germany has certainly justified her claim to a “place in the sun.” The national genius is somewhat of the sledge-hammer variety; colonisation, when she undertakes it, partakes of the nature of



compressing the spirit of tropical peoples into a hard and fast groove, and her methods are perhaps too strongly flavoured with the atmosphere of the barrack and the police-court—but for the objects which she wishes to attain they seem sufficiently well adapted. At least she develops her commercial interests in these far-off East African countries. Her fleets range far and wide down the whole length of the coast, from Guardafui to Beira and beyond; she has captured the bulk of the sea-borne trade in these parts; German firms have established themselves firmly enough both in the cities and in the townships of the interior; Tanganyika is, for all practical purposes, her waterway, and her finger is upon the pulse of what still remains of the old caravan trade from east to west.

At Tanga, on the East Coast, there exists the most marvellous native band in the world—forty to fifty musicians, each as black as your hat, perform with absolute precision, and no little genuine artistic sense, upon wind and string instruments, under the guidance of a white *Kapelmester*. At Dar-es-Salaam there is a gigantic Post Office, with uniformed officials and tessellated pavements, which would not disgrace Berlin itself. There are also numerous beer-halls, a huge floating dock, red-spired churches, and a general air of Teutonic well-being. Whether or not Germany will eventually succeed in impressing her ideals upon the light-hearted son of the soil remains to be seen. Personally, I should say that the African native was quite the last person in the



world to assimilate the rigid disciplinarian outlook of the Teuton—but in all probability I am absolutely wrong, and we shall find, in the years to come, that Central Africa has been transformed into a vaster Prussia, with green-uniformed Customs officials and stringent municipal regulations anent the unauthorised playing of musical instruments after scheduled hours.

At present we are in the ascendant. We have a reputation for being capable of intelligent and successful colonisation. Maybe in the future it will appear that the sledge-hammer policy is the better of the two, and the German Central African of the twenty-first century may find that his only chance of not being improved altogether off the face of the globe will lie in attending Gymnasia and Real Schüle, and embracing the principle of compulsory and universal military service. But, in any case, it won't matter very much to either Beryl or myself!

The only question which really does affect us is the prospect of the Dar-es-Salaam-Ujiji Railway being completed in the near future. It is already at Tabora, and has been authorised as far as the lake itself, which it will, in all probability, reach before our next leave is due. From our Metropolis to Ujiji is a trifling matter of four days up Tanganyika by steamer. Thence, say, three days by rail to the coast, some twenty days to Naples and two days Home—less than a month, at any rate, from door to door. Think of it! a clear saving of a month—a complete elimination of the three weeks' caravan journey to Railhead—and a

direct route instead of the present crawl around two complete sides of a triangle, instead of the existing ridiculous necessity to go to Cape Town, 33 degrees South, in order, eventually, to arrive at London, 51 degrees North. I am, I trust, as patriotic as the average Englishman, but I shall certainly patronise the German railways and steamship lines after 1915!

It will be intensely interesting to observe the effect of this railway upon our own little corner of Central Africa. There can be no doubt that it will give a tremendous impetus to the Mahommedan movement, which has already taken firm root in the southernmost portions of German East Africa, and is rapidly spreading west and south. Arab and Indian traders from Zanzibar, the East Coast ports, and even from India, will not lose much time in planting themselves upon the new territory which will thus be placed within reach. Probably the German Administration will be reorganised, in view of the fact that their most remote stations will thus be placed within easy access from headquarters. Mail routes will have to be amended—trade will begin to enter the country from the north-east instead of, as hitherto, from the south-west. Big-game hunters will commence to arrive; it may become possible to grow and export such tropical produce as cotton, rubber, fibres and the like at a profit; while, if only a gold mine or a copper deposit happens to be found within reach of the railway, there is no saying what may not happen. But, for the moment, it all

lies upon the knees of the gods; and, so long as our local natives do not have their heads turned by a sudden influx of civilisation, there is really not very much to worry about. Already Belgium is discussing wireless connection between her African possessions and Europe: in a few years, no doubt, we shall be inundated with aeroplane mail-services and motor-transport routes, so that, really, such prosaic matters as new railways ought not to disturb us much. Darkest Africa has been under the glare of the searchlight for some little time now, and the day is not so far distant when the "*semper aliquid novi*" tag will have lost most of its meaning. In the meantime, we have to get back to the Metropolis, and, what is more, to perform the journey in the archaic fashion, with all our worldly possessions upon the heads of toiling carriers, and ourselves upon our own weary feet. It is all the more irritating to descend to such patriarchal methods after indulging in mental pictures of the future. Beryl is longing for the Tube—and I am inclined to agree with her.

## NOVEMBER

Handing over and packing up—*Salamu*—Hunger on the main road—Our disreputable luggage—A Central African and a Cook's agent—A day after buffalo—And a narrow escape—The result of a sneeze—Hunger prospects—Sable—Improvidence of the native—A German rival—We reach the Belgian Boma—A night march—Plucky carriers—Saved by *masuku*—Nearing civilisation—The railway line—And in to Railhead.

I FINISHED handing over to-day, and we leave to-morrow. It seems curious ; probably, in a way, one's imagination becomes atrophied out here, and it is practically impossible to readjust one's outlook to that of the civilised world. In two months' time—provided, that is, that we are not eaten by lions on the way down country, or contract blackwater, or the train runs off the line, or the boat goes down—if none of these, or other eventualities, then, occur, in two months' time Beryl and I will be in England again. Yet, for the present, it seems exactly like any ordinary *ulendo* that we are starting on, except for the fact that I am taking no office-box and no police.

Packing up has been a horrible nuisance. It is easy enough to pack away boxes, cupboards and the like ; but when it comes to dismembering

a family of nine dogs, a flock of pigeons, half a dozen ducks, goats, sheep, and a donkey, it is somewhat too much like drawing off one's heart's blood, pint by pint, and storing it away in bottles.

For the last two days Beryl has had continually to interrupt her packing for the purpose of interviewing some disconsolate female on the back verandah—the wife of a policeman, or a messenger, or one of the houseboys, or some similar retainer—and to accept, with every semblance of profound grief, the *salamu* or parting-gift—usually a wire bracelet, of which she now has some fifteen or twenty threaded upon her wrists. The sergeant of police to-day produced a fowl and two eggs as a *salamu*—he is a fat, cheery person, and I have no doubt that he was thinking of our creature comforts on the road down, since, from all reports, we shall be passing through very hungry country as we near the railway.

That, by the way, is a point to bear in mind. Within the last two years—ever since Railhead reached Ndola—a constant stream of carriers, *ulendos* and so forth has been passing up and down that particular road. The natives of those parts were never very enterprising. Such an opportunity for trade would have appealed to the veriest village idiot among the white races; he would have bought up all the grain, fowls, small stock, sweet potatoes, monkey-nuts and the like within a radius of a thousand miles, and have retired, in six months, a multi-millionaire. But the native has other views. All he can see in

such a situation is that the constant traffic is interfering with the privacy of his home life and becoming an infernal nuisance. He therefore deals with the crisis simply by gathering up his family and his household gods and retreating into the bush before the onward march of civilisation, leaving, as a natural consequence, the main trade route of the country practically depleted of villages, and consequently of all food-stuffs. In the few cases in which he remains, he refuses point-blank to sell anything at all, on the plea that he requires his food for himself, and is in no need of either cash or trade goods: so that, for commissariat purposes, he might just as well not be there.

Now, with a caravan of forty or fifty men, food is an important matter. If they could carry it with them, things would be simple enough; unfortunately, they have each to carry some fifty-six pounds of our baggage, which does not leave much margin for a larder. The only solution seems to lie in the shooting of a considerable quantity of meat on the way down, since meat is extremely valuable in proportion to its bulk, and can usually be trusted to elicit from reluctant villagers a pound or two, at least, of grain, when every other inducement has failed. Fortunately it is still full early in the season, and game, I hear, is plentiful—so, with decent luck, we should pull through.

There remains, however, the question of fowls and eggs for our own consumption. Yesterday Beryl showed me, with pride, an enormous kind of

crate, made of strips of bark, which, apparently, has been occupying the excellent Bokosi for the best part of the past week. In it, I understand, we are to carry our emergency ration of fowls—Beryl tells me she has now twenty-three, and expects half a dozen more to-day. It will certainly be a two-man load, but it seems an excellent idea. And in the storeroom there is a large box which, opening casually to-day, I took to be full of salt. Beryl snatched it out of my hands with a horrified expression, and—almost—hissed at me that it contained pickled eggs—between sixty and seventy. We very nearly dropped it between us; I shudder to think of the tragical mess so narrowly averted!

As for the luggage, it is in a condition of appalling untidiness. We marshalled our available trunks the other day, and had to retire hand in hand, overcome for the moment by the sight which met our eyes.

I do not really know which are the worst, Beryl's or mine. Perhaps hers, since they were good once, especially a green canvas and leather thing, which has had its corners bent inwards, its handles wrenched outwards, and its leather bindings eaten in various places by white ants. Then, too, she has a gigantic "ball-basket," as I believe the trunkmakers call them, which has someone else's name upon it, is minus straps, and oozes its internal stuffing and wicker-work in half a dozen places.

Mine are tin uniform cases. Two of them have been bought cheap up here, and profess to belong



to somebody else; all the locks have been hampered at one time or another and are fastened either with string or bootlaces (Beryl affects dried bark, as she says it is a product of the country, and nothing to be ashamed of), while the original paint is hardly recognisable. What on earth the stewards on board will say I cannot imagine!

Still, they are honourable scars, and we must make the best of them. The trunks will, at any rate, match our clothes, so that we shall not make them feel in any way out of keeping, poor dears.

It is said up here that one goes Home with plenty of money and no clothes, and returns with plenty of clothes and no money. I wish the plenitude of our money equalled the paucity of our clothes in this particular instance!

The other day a friend of mine went Home after five or six years out here. He is by way of being a bit of a "dog," and has rather a neat taste in dress. The morning of his arrival, as he was walking up St. James's Street, a Cook's agent offered his services.

My friend looked at him more in sorrow than in anger. "I know I look like it," he said sadly. "As a matter of fact, I was born within a hundred yards of here, but I don't expect you to believe it!"

That, probably, is what will happen to us—unless they refuse to allow us to land, as undesirable aliens.

Anyway, the packing is, as I have said, finished. Beryl and I and the Dabchick—who is going part of the way with us to get some shooting—dined

this evening off a packing-case, perching ourselves upon separate little pyramids of luggage. The house has been absolutely dismantled—the furniture has been placed in charge of various friends for safe keeping until we return; there are no curtains on the windows, and I know much more about the habits of white ants than I did a few days ago, as all the mats have been taken up and it is easy to trace the course of their peregrinations. On the whole, I am rather glad we are leaving, before we fall through the floor.

To-morrow we do a short “trek”—some six miles to break the men in and get some shooting. After that I expect it will be hard travelling for some days until we get into buffalo country.

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If there is an animal in Africa which I detest, with a whole-souled detestation, it is a buffalo. There are a good many unpleasant creatures about, too—I object to the lion for personal reasons, and, besides, I never did care much for cats, so that he and the leopard would be barred from my regards even if nothing more tangible had occurred to authorise my hatred. The crocodile is another objectionable beast; he lies about in nasty, damp places, obtains his prey by wholly illegitimate methods, and his habit of setting aside his dinner to “rise” before he will condescend to eat it is, alone, sufficient to debar him from the society of gentlemen.

But all the above are angels of light compared

with the buffalo. Of all the cantankerous, sullen, crafty, unpleasant beasts he is, I think, the most cantankerous, sullen, crafty, and unpleasant. And he is, also, infernally subtle. What other animal, when followed, would conceive the ungentlemanly idea of pretending to vanish straight ahead when as a matter of fact he had, in reality, turned off short and was waiting for you round the next patch of bush? What other wounded animal would take the trouble to get even with you that is taken by the buffalo? What other animal would spend his time wandering up and down some twenty miles of steep hill-side on the off-chance of treeing a respectable old headman, like the buffalo to whom I introduced you some months back? No! the buffalo was born with a bee in his bonnet, and woe betide the human being who attempts to force his society upon him! He is essentially misanthropic, and—it is only fair to say—avoids the beaten track as much as he can. When he is, so to speak, prodded out of his retreat, his manners leave a good deal to be desired.

I am probably taking a jaundiced view of his character to-night, since I have spent the day in a futile attempt to add the head of a remarkably fine bull to my collection. Yesterday afternoon, about two, we came on fresh spoor, and, instead of pressing on, as we ought to have done, we pitched camp there and then. So we lost a good ten miles yesterday to begin with. The Dabchick and I wandered over hill and dale until long past sundown, looking for the brutes but not finding them. Shortly after five it began to rain and

thunder like mad, and when we got back at about 6.30, we found Beryl in the last stage of nervous collapse.

This morning, instead of making the best of a bad job, off we started on the spoor again—in different directions this time. The Dabchick is not yet in, so I cannot say what kind of a day he had, but mine, in addition to being extremely wearing, was futile to a degree. From soon after six until nearly ten o'clock I followed that spoor, which for the most part led along the beds of rivers, under banks from twenty to thirty feet high, covered with dense bush, pitch-dark, and well-nigh impenetrable. I can sympathise, now, with the men whose daily round takes them into the London sewers; they probably have to spend their lives going about doubled up just as I did, and I suppose, at close quarters, there is not much to choose between a buffalo and an angry sewer rat.

Shortly after ten I got my first chance—and chucked it away. We had, by that time, got out of the underworld, and were following a low belt of bush, when suddenly my gunboy and I stopped simultaneously. Ahead, barely twenty yards from us, a herd of ten or twelve buffalo was lying down in a patch of thick bracken. When we first caught sight of them, one or two heads and tails were visible above the bracken; but by the time I had selected a good firing-point and had worked down to it, everything had disappeared except a dark patch about thirty yards away, which I knew belonged to a buffalo, and that was all.

Which end was it? that was the point. I thought it was the neck; the gunboy was equally positive that it was the stern. What I ought to have done, of course, was to cough, or break a stick or something, so as to get them all on their feet, and then pick a shot; but I was afraid that they would not give me time to shoot, and that I should have had all my trouble for nothing. So I took as careful an aim as was possible, and let fly.

Whatever the black patch was I missed it; my bullet knocked a flake of bark off a tree beyond. And for one tremendous moment the whole world seemed full of buffaloes. The next, the wood was empty, and the boy and I looked at each other in blank, idiotic dismay.

After such an exhibition of ineptitude there was nothing to do but follow on again to the bitter end; though, as a matter of fact, having had such a fright as that, no buffalo was in the least likely to allow us to get up to him a second time. However, off we went, and for the next five hours continued the motion.

Between two and three we came to a dense patch of bush. It was not quite a *musito*, being on high ground, but very nearly as dense. The buffalo had certainly gone into it, and that not so very long before, as there were quite fresh droppings outside. Whether they were still there remained to be seen.

In we went, on all fours; and in the next few yards the question was settled without a doubt, as we heard the brutes feeding not forty yards ahead.

"They are eating," said my gunboy placidly.

"They certainly are," said I—and felt inclined to add that, without a doubt, they would be eating us within the next few minutes. Had it been possible, I should have turned tail and fled out of that evil place with the greatest possible speed. But to turn round, to make even the slightest movement, would most assuredly have brought the herd out upon us; and, seeing that it was the second time they had been disturbed that day, I felt that they would not be pleased to see us. So we lay as still as we could and waited developments.

And then, of course, the silly ass of a boy must needs sneeze. Not even the ordinary, moderate sneeze of a Christian man, but a weird war-whoop of a sneeze, a kind of strangled, whistling scream which reverberated through and through that coppice like a factory siren.

As a matter of fact I only heard half of it, for the next moment the herd came straight for us, and the rush of their hoofs, the crackle of snapping brushwood, drowned his efforts most effectively. Through the screen of bushes and saplings I caught glimpses of rushing black forms, heads down, tails streaming behind, while the hoofs pounded past and great horns seemed to flash around us. And then, for the second time that day, there was silence.

Why or how we emerged alive I am unable to say. Providence, apparently, had other uses for us, and so the herd had fanned out on either side, and, leaving a narrow lane not more than six feet



broad, with ourselves in the middle of it, had torn past out into the open. The stampede can only have lasted a second or two—when we emerged, there was not a buffalo in sight, and the boy was just opening his mouth and screwing up his eyes preparatory to sneezing again. He did not, however—I saw to that!

It was clearly useless to do anything but get back to camp as quickly as might be. Two escapes in six hours are all that the cautious hunter should allow himself; and that charge had been so realistic that I found myself patting my ribs and back to make sure that no bones had been broken after all. So, without more ado, we made for camp.

Probably you will not believe what follows. I didn't at the time, but I can assure you it is perfectly true. We had taken a path in exactly the opposite direction to the buffalo, and I had handed my rifle to the boy, when, not ten minutes later, we came on the buffalo again. It was the chance of a lifetime. For I stood on a rocky ledge, some twenty feet above a small, open plain. And there were those infernal buffalo—twenty-two of them in all, including a couple of calves—sauntering past below me in single file, as if no one had ever fired at them, or sneezed at them, in their lives.

The bush was not far off, and, though they were moving quietly, there was no time to be lost. Not daring to take my eyes off the old bull who was leading, and who was, by now, only ten yards or so from cover, I stretched out my hand behind me



for the rifle. It did not arrive—and in due course the old bull disappeared.

When I did, at last, turn round, seven buffalo had gone into the bush, and the beast of a boy was not in sight. I turned back again towards the buffalo—more than half were gone; back again, and there was the imbecile sauntering towards me down the path, puffing away at the pipe which, evidently, he had stopped behind to light. Certainly, he quickened his pace when he saw me—I suppose there was something compelling in my expression—but it was too late. I snatched the rifle from him, spun round, and flung it up to my shoulder just in time to get a snapshot at the tail of the last cow—which, very naturally, I missed.

That, perhaps, is why I feel so particularly bitter against buffalo to-night. And I don't think the boy likes them either—he feels, I think, that they bring him bad luck. Beryl, of course, told me that it served me jolly well right, and that, having wasted a day and a half, we should very likely miss our train. Probably she is right; when one has to walk three weeks to catch a train, it is quite possible to miss it—but I don't think, somehow, that the remark exemplified her usual tact.

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The Dabchick left us to-day. He is returning by another route, on which he should find good shooting. We ourselves have another ten days or a fortnight, and shall be in "hunger-country"

next week. However, we have, on the whole, had excellent sport up to date, and the men have now a good supply of meat to carry them through, so that, providing there is any food to be bought ahead, we should not have much difficulty in trading it.

We are travelling through, from here, as quickly as possible, partly to economise stores and meal, partly because our unlucky waste of two days after the buffalo has sadly cut down our margin of time. The mail train only leaves Railhead once a week, and, if we miss that, we shall have to choose between remaining at that place for seven days or taking our chance upon a goods train, which is a course not to be recommended, as the journey from there to Livingstone lasts two days, and there is no restaurant-car until one reaches the Victoria Falls. "Messing oneself" is bad enough in a comfortably equipped sleeping-car; to cook and eat and sleep and live in an ordinary van is an experience which, even after three years of life in the wilds, is very irksome.

I was lucky to-night in coming across sable antelope for the first time since I came to the country. These beautiful animals are, perhaps, the commonest species of buck farther south, where they replace the roan antelope with which our plateau abounds; but north of Lake Bangweolo they are very rare indeed, except around Lake Mweru in the extreme north-west.

The herd which I came up with was a small one, and was feeding within five minutes of the

camp. They must, I think, have been all cows, as I could not pick out anything big enough to be a bull. I shot two, both of which were cows, and the head of one went some  $37\frac{1}{2}$  inches, which, although some inches short of the record cow, is none so bad for a first animal of the kind.

For some extraordinary reason—probably because I had no idea that there were any sable in the vicinity, had never seen one, and was expecting nothing less than to come upon a herd of them—I went out under the impression that they were waterbuck, sighted them, stalked them for some twenty minutes, and finally fired upon them, under the same impression. Even when I eventually came up to my big cow and stood gazing at her horns, my feeling was simply one of pride at having shot what I thought was a record waterbuck; which, by the way, it certainly would have been. And yet the curve of a sable goes in exactly the opposite direction to that taken by the horns of a waterbuck—back from the forehead over the withers, instead of forward. My gunboy, I am sure, thought me mad, as I stood over the animal and proudly murmured that it was an exceptionally good chuswe (waterbuck)—but it was sheer absence of mind, and not insanity. In a way, the two animals are not unlike, as they are both dark and “stocky”—but, of course, to confuse the two was unpardonable.

However, both cows were most useful, merely from the commissariat point of view, and the skins, which are extremely soft and flexible, came

in handy for covering a couple of boxes that had, hitherto, been inadequately protected in the event of our meeting with rain—which, by the way, cannot hold off much longer. If we do get to Railhead without a ducking, we shall be extremely lucky.

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Hunger-country with a vengeance! I have not been able to buy a single pound of meal or grain for the last two days; and we still have nearly a week to go. At a village some forty miles back the headman brought me a microscopic basket containing, perhaps, two and a half pounds, with one pathetic egg perched on top; it hardly represented food for the *sukampika* (scullion) for twenty-four hours, but I gave it to him with my blessing, as being the youngest member of the caravan. The men have, of course, eaten all their reserve rations. It is absolutely impossible to instil ideas of economy in food into a native. So long as food is there it must be eaten—time enough to consider the possibility of famine when famine is actually upon one.

The worst of it all is that even the reserves of meat are useless, as there is literally no grain to buy; the villagers themselves are living, and have been for some weeks, upon roots, caterpillars, and the like. It happens every year in some localities, and, somehow, when he has nothing to do but starve, the native manages to come through the ordeal in some marvellous fashion of his own; but it is a different thing to have to starve and carry a fifty-pound load at the same time!

I have been distributing the remnants of our own potatoes and rice to-day. They will be finished to-morrow. Most of the men are not actually hungry yet, as they have been existing upon their meat reserves; but a meat diet alone is almost as hopeless for a native—especially when he is doing hard work—as nothing at all.

It is a horrible feeling, to know that one's carriers are hungry, if not absolutely starving, when one's own provision boxes are full to bursting—and, in consequence, extremely heavy! Of course, really and truly it is their own fault. Beryl and I calculated to-night that each carrier in the caravan has been presented, since we started, with half a beast, ranging from roan weighing five hundred pounds to reedbuck of two hundred and fifty—say, allowing for bone, skin, and internals, from sixty to one hundred pounds of meat per head. Had they exercised even ordinary economy, they could easily have traded sufficient grain or meal before getting into hunger-country to have seen them through on half rations, at least. But they have eaten it—and are now feeling the pinch.

Beryl and I go out each morning now with the "wallet-eye"—that is to say, we carefully scrutinise every little bundle of calico, every goat-skin bag, and calculate how much meal there is left in the caravan. I have still, in reserve, two loads of meal, which I bought for meat a week ago and engaged two special carriers to carry—but it will have to be kept as an absolutely last resource.

However, let us hope that there will be a chance



of buying meal either at the Luapula River or at the Congo station just over the other side. But reports are not hopeful. Every day, now, we pass gangs of carriers returning with loads from the railway, on their way up country; they all say the same thing—no food ahead, and the prospect grows steadily worse.

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We have done over sixty miles in the last forty-eight hours; which is not so bad for half-starved carriers with fifty-pound loads! It came about in this wise. Yesterday morning, about half-past seven, we overtook a traveller, a German, who had been shooting around Lake Bangweolo and is now on his way down country. He was in the same plight as ourselves—short of food, and relying upon being able to replenish at Kalonga, the Congo post. As he has over forty men with him, it is clearly in our interests to get ahead and purchase what food there may be in front. So we breakfasted with him, and then pushed ahead for all we were worth to the Luapula—a matter of some twenty-two miles from last night's camp.

It is a glorious river, fully a quarter of a mile broad, and sheltered upon either bank by green, rounded hills clothed in lacy brushwood. But I, for one, would gladly have dispensed with mere scenic beauty, seeing that it took us nearly three hours to cross all the loads, long before the end of which time our German friend had caught us up. We arrived at the Belgian Boma, therefore, neck

and neck—only to find that there was not a pound of food available for either of us!

It was then about three in the afternoon. The Belgians—extremely hospitable and courteous they were—took it for granted that we should remain the night, and we pitched our tents with every intention of doing so. Escorted by the *Chef de Poste*, we made the round of the station—which did not take long, as it consisted merely of four huts perched on top of a conical hill overlooking a long reach of the Luapula, performed what Customs formalities were necessary, broached a bottle of (my) whisky, and, in general, drank to the success and prosperity of our respective nations, our native subjects, and any one else who occurred to us. And then we retired to change for dinner.

On the way over to the tents I was smitten with an idea. The men, clearly, were extremely hungry; they had said as much that afternoon. As it now seemed impossible to increase the supply of food, the only solution seemed to lie in decreasing the length of time over which that supply must be made to last.

We were, at the moment, some sixty miles from Railhead—two forced marches of thirty miles each would do it, and I knew that, on arrival, the men would be able to get food at once. Compulsion, of course, was out of the question—it was their own *mulandu* (business), to settle as pleased them best. But they had been so plucky hitherto, carrying their loads day after day without a murmur, often twenty-five miles, sometimes more, that I



felt it would be hard for them to be beaten on the post.

Beryl and I discussed the matter at length, and we both agreed that, if the men would do it, to push on would be the best thing. So I called up the caravan and put the proposition to them. With one accord they voted for a night march, to start as soon as the moon was well up, which I reckoned would be about ten, and to finish whenever water or my wish should indicate a halt. This, mind you, after having already done twenty-two miles that day, and having had, to my certain knowledge, nothing whatever to eat for over thirty hours. From what I know of the plateau tribes, I very much doubt whether any but Awemba, who are notoriously "well-plucked," would have done it.

The *Chef de Poste* subsided helplessly in his chair and poured himself out a generous tot of my whisky when he heard the suggestion. It was impossible! it was ludicrous! it was all that there was of the most foolhardy! And Madame—but no, it was but the *blague*—a "choke" was it not? There were lions in the hills, and leopards, and buffaloes of the most ferocious description—their spoor had been seen only that day week crossing the road.

I assured him that it was anything but a "choke," and that I should be infinitely obliged if he would put dinner forward if possible, provided he could do it without any great inconvenience, as Madame and I were anxious not to miss more of the moon than we could help. As for the buffalo, the fact

of their spoor having been seen a week ago was a fairly good guarantee that it would not be seen again to-morrow morning ; lions and leopards we would chance, seeing that we were over sixty souls in the caravan.

His attitude of despair would have been absurd had it not been pathetic. I am convinced that he thought I wished to be rid of Beryl, and was bent upon luring her out into the Congo Free State by night and there severing her jugular and leaving her by the roadside. The fat Customs officer hovered about us (hovered, perhaps, is an incongruous word, but he was, really, extremely light on his feet), and helped us to (our) whisky with the touching assiduity which, I am sure, the gaoler lavishes upon his prisoner the night before he is hanged. Conversation lagged at dinner—what little there was consisted in rolling the eyes, until the Assistant Comptroller, succumbing to the effects of the whisky, began to talk rather incoherently about a dog. And, at ten precisely, we formed up the caravan and walked out of the post into the Congo State.

I think the officials were genuinely perturbed, for they accompanied us on our way for a good mile, and they had no arms with them, not even a lantern. What would have happened had they met a lion on the way back I am unable to imagine. However, for that mile the track was good, and we parted comparatively cheerfully at the point where the bush path leaves the main road.

For an hour and a half Beryl and I trudged along. It was very pleasant, really, cool and

fresh, while the moon was quite sufficiently high to give us all the light we needed. Neither of us had put much faith in the dismal prognostications of the *Chef de Poste* anent the fearsome buffalo; and, as it turned out, we were right. For forty-eight hours during which we were scurrying through the strip of Congo which here partitions North-East from North-West Rhodesia we saw no spoor of anything larger than a field-mouse!

The men, however, were not so optimistic, and kept close to me as being the gun-bearer of the party. This, in its way, was just as well, since we could not afford straggling. I kept firmly in the rear, and halted as soon as any carrier fell out of the ranks—which, in the beginning, they did fairly frequently—since I had no desire for any of the men to get lost or eaten by a lion in a foreign State, with the inevitable result of loss of luggage as well.

However, we moved along at a swinging pace. The few hours' rest at the post had evidently worked wonders—one would have said that the men were just starting out from their villages, instead of being very nearly at the end of a five-hundred-mile walk, and that on short rations.

The country through which we passed was monotonous in the extreme. In the first hour we climbed three or four small hills; after that, having arrived, apparently, on top of an extensive plateau, we kept absolutely on the level, beneath tall, gloomy trees which almost obscured the feeble moonlight. And so on we went—through the darkness—and nearer and nearer

came the railway, with its promise of civilisation and the outside world.

I foresaw difficulty with the water supply. The Belgians had told us that the nearest supply was ten miles out of their station, and that it would be impossible to obtain any farther on for another fifteen miles or so. However, I had with me a native who had only just returned from the Southern mines and professed to know the road well, having traversed it at just this season the year before. He assured me that after the ten-mile water we should find another stream still running five miles beyond, and that, also, there was a village there where we might possibly obtain some food for the men.

His prophecy turned out to be half correct. At 2.30 in the morning we reached the fifteen-mile water—such as it was. But, where had formerly been a village were now only the ruins of huts—evidently the inhabitants had moved some eight or ten months back. Still, we had knocked off a quarter of the distance between the post and the railway, and, not having expected to find food, the men were not unduly disappointed. Beryl, who had been sleeping peacefully in her *machila* for the last three hours, crawled out, still half asleep; we had the small tent hastily pitched, swallowed a cup of cocoa and some biscuits, and, turning in, slept until eight next morning; having, overnight, registered a solemn vow to be on the move by five at latest! However, I did not regret the delay—the men had been doing splendidly during the night, and had fully earned the few hours' extra sleep.

That day was the hardest of the lot. There were long stretches without water; it was infernally hot; about midday we got off the track, with the consequence that the *machila* men did two or three miles more than they need have done, although, fortunately, the carriers kept the direct road. And it was not until nearly six in the evening that we reached the largish village which is the last Belgian settlement going South, having come twenty-eight miles since eight o'clock, and having still another seventeen to do to reach our final destination. However, we had had a slice of luck during the day, for the carriers had, for some two hours, passed through *masuku* country—*masuku* being a kind of native plum, which is extremely sustaining and much prized—and had been able to get something inside their belts and also to carry on a store for the morrow. Had it not been for this fortunate occurrence, I do not quite know how we should have managed; but I am quite convinced that our Awemba would have got us down somehow, at whatever cost to themselves.

The traffic on the road all day had been incessant; we must have passed at least three hundred carriers, all going North with loads, most of which were bound for Mweru and the Congo. From them we learned that a police officer, going North, was camping that night at the village to which we were bound, and that another Bwana (white man) and a lady were some twenty miles ahead of us, with a big caravan and a horse, pushing on for all they were worth. They evidently were

bent on catching the same train South as ourselves—and probably the fact of their being ahead with so large a party had had something to do with the shortage of food *en route*. I had heard of them as having been shooting around Lake Bangweolo, but had not known that they were actually in the neighbourhood.

Sure enough, on reaching camp we found the police officer installed, introduced ourselves, and were promptly invited to dinner—an invitation which we gladly accepted. He was not, it seemed, particularly well off for food for his men, and I am afraid the picture which we drew of the prospect ahead of him cannot have cheered him up to any great extent. However, he determined to push through rather than delay by sending back to Railhead for more, and I trust he arrived all right. There was also an agent of one of the large trading companies in the village, while it seemed that a Portuguese policeman had fled through on a bicycle during the afternoon—so that we were evidently getting into civilisation at last.

Next morning we were up and away betimes. It was the last day of the trek—the end of all things for the men, and, for ourselves, the beginning of a totally new existence. We felt somewhat as I imagine the ticket-of-leave man must feel when the warder brings him his “mufti” suit, and tells him that he will be discharged that day.

That day's march seemed longer than any we had yet done. It was supposed to be seventeen



miles; I will take my oath it was nearer twenty-five, and tough going at that. We halted for lunch about midday at a village, or rather, a collection of five huts with one inhabitant, just over the British border and ten miles from the railway. Here we waited for over two hours for the luncheon basket—but in vain. Evidently the wretched carrier of it had come to the end of his tether—small blame to him!—and so, just after two o'clock, on we moved again for the final stage, very hungry and not in the best of tempers.

Even then, our troubles were not over; for in about an hour's time we came to a vast swamp, which, I was told, extended from there to our destination. And so, in good sooth, it did. Floundering, wading, stumbling, we got half way across, only to find that we were on the brink of a very deep and treacherous kind of stream which meandered through the swamp. However, somehow or other, we managed to struggle across, or rather through it, and plunged doggedly on, our only hope for the time being to get once more upon dry land. Away to our left front—very, very far off it seemed—was a low, conical hill, and I was assured that the Boma lay just behind it. I pointed it out to Beryl. She merely shook a very draggled head at me, set her lips, and plodded onwards.

Fortunately the *machila* men had found more treasure-trove that day in the shape of *masuku* trees—otherwise they must inevitably have collapsed. As it was, they struggled on stolidly, munching away with distended cheeks and, appar-



ently, perfectly happy. After crossing the stream in the middle of the swamp I relapsed into a kind of dream; and was only aroused from it by stumbling over a bright, hard substance, which, on closer investigation, proved to be a railway-line.

It was the first we had seen for nearly four years, so I may, perhaps, be forgiven for having bent down and patted it affectionately. Had I been alone I should certainly have taken off my hat and bowed—and, for that matter, I don't suppose the natives would have thought me more than uncommon mad had I done so, seeing that they certainly regard the line and all that appertains to the *sitima* (engine or railway carriage) as a most particular kind of *ju-ju*, to borrow the language of the West Coast.

After that, all went merry as a marriage-bell. The men began to sing, we climbed into our *machilas*, and proceeded for the next mile in an atmosphere of hilarious and unbridled Bedlam—so much so, indeed, that I began to be afraid that we should be run over by the down goods train, which, I knew, was due about that time, it being then nearly five o'clock.

At last, just round a curve of the line, up against the high, iron water-tank, I caught sight of a little group of white men and native police. Two minutes later we were shaking hands with the assistant magistrate and the sergeant of police, who, it seemed, were waiting to send down a gang of prisoners and witnesses for the forthcoming High Court Sessions at Livingstone.

And at 5.15 to the tick in came the down goods!

I cannot remember ever having been so impressed in my life. The huge black engine seemed really a most awe-inspiring thing to my unaccustomed eyes, as she whistled shrilly and long, and came sliding round the curve. Beryl and I held hands and backed to the very edge of the embankment; I don't believe that either of us could have said a word.

Then she thought of Bokosi. The old man was standing close beside us, with his eyes half out of his head—for him, too, it was the one moment of his forty odd years. As we watched him, with an inarticulate cry of *Nsofu! Nsofu!* (elephant), down he flopped on his knees and clapped out a wild salutation.

Ten minutes later we sat in the extremely comfortable drawing-room of the assistant magistrate's house and consumed tea, cake, whisky and cigarettes at an alarming pace, after having arranged for a supply of food to be cooked for the carriers, who, I reckoned, would begin to stagger in in two or three hours' time. So it was that we came to our own again, after over three and a half years in the wilds.

## DECEMBER

A record trip—Life at Railhead—We make our own railway station—And board the train—The last of the faithful Bokosi—First impressions—Bwana Mkubwa—The familiar labour recruits—Home-going and home-coming—Climbing on to the lap of luxury—Cape Town—Its abundance of “local colour”—The boat—The docks—The train—Waterloo—And the end.

THERE was no room in the magistrate's house—or, for that matter, in any other. For the station was a new one, and the present buildings had only been standing a few months; indeed, the workmen were, at the time of our arrival, busy putting the finishing touches to the medical officer's quarters. So we pitched our tents in the compound, and had hardly got the loads under cover before, with a whistling roar, the worst storm of the season came upon us.

Beryl and I ran like rabbits up to the house, and arrived on the verandah in the midst of a tremendous flash of lightning. We were lucky, indeed, to arrive on the day we did; had we been travelling that day, a good many loads would have been absolutely ruined. As it was, we had



"THE MEN ALL TURNED UP NEXT DAY, SMILING, FAT, AND GLOSSY."



come our five hundred miles without a drop of rain, and were extremely grateful to the Powers That Be.

Our final flight through the Congo had put a nice little polish to what would, in any case, have been something like a record for the trip. Calculating out the journey, I found that we had covered 473 miles, irrespective of shooting, in twenty-one travelling days—an average of  $22\frac{1}{2}$  miles a day—and had beaten the mail by four days. The men all turned up on a parade next day, smiling, fat and glossy—they had evidently been making use of their time to the best advantage since their arrival. Apparently they were quite ready to start back at once, but I strongly advised them to rest for awhile—at any rate until we ourselves had left, which could not be for three days.

I used to fancy that it would be charming, in every way, to be stationed upon the railway, but in the last few days I have considerably modified my opinion. An assistant magistrate at Railhead—especially when (as in this case at Bwana Mkubwa) there is a flourishing mine within six miles—does not by any means spend his life upon a bed of roses. Undesirables of every known white, black, and brown race are constantly passing to and fro, from South to North and back again. The sergeant of police, who here acts as Public Prosecutor, has his hands perpetually full of minor police-court cases wherein the parties are usually white men. Breaches of the Immigration Regulations, Liquor Regulations, Sleeping Sick-

ness Rules, petty thefts, oppression of natives, and so on and so forth, occupy all the time of the court several days a week. And when, in addition, it is remembered that there is a large amount of transport work to be done, the forwarding of innumerable Government and private loads up country, to say nothing of the needs of a large and widely scattered native district, the average man, if he were given his choice, would, I think, request to be removed as far as possible from so cyclonic a centre of activity.

However, every one on the station seemed to have time to be extremely hospitable to Beryl and myself: the assistant magistrate and his assistant saw that my men received their rations daily; the doctor disinfected my trophies; Beryl went to tea once or twice with the wife of the sergeant and duly admired the baby, who was an extremely jovial and go-ahead youngster; and the greatest living authority upon the Bantu languages of Northern Rhodesia, who happened to be staying on the station, completing a Chi-something-or-other grammar, was especially charming and courteous. So that, on the whole, the three days passed all too quickly, and it was with genuine regret that Beryl and I made our preparations for boarding the five o'clock passenger train, which was to take us on the next stage of our journey.

Railway travelling, in this part of the world, is comfort itself once you are on board. But, as it happened, there is no recognised station at this particular Boma, the nearest being Bwana



Mkubwa mine, six miles lower down the line. There is not even a siding—merely the tank where the engine takes in water. Officials, porters, trucks and the like there are none. Somewhere about the scheduled time one hears a whistle round the curve, and a few seconds later the train comes in view. The time of her stopping is regulated simply and solely by the amount of water which the engine requires; woe betide the wretched passenger whose luggage is not already deposited at that spot, measured beforehand with feverish accuracy from the tank, opposite which the luggage van is likely to draw up. He will have scant shrift; will, in fact, be hustled on board in much the same way as he is requested to “step lively” on the London Tubes.

Beryl and I had been warned of this—and, as it was looking uncommonly like rain, and we did not wish our trunks to get drenched “on the post” after having brought them scatheless for five hundred miles, we decided to erect our own station for the occasion. This is one of the things one can do in Central Africa without irritating official formalities. In our case, it simply meant that I sent down a gang of men, headed by Bokosi and Mwanamwazi—who were both on the verge of tears—and pitched the tent at the mystic spot, thereafter stowing inside it all our miscellaneous baggage. And then, after a final cup of tea, we sauntered down to the “station” at our ease, accompanied by the white population in force.

The train came in to time. Bokosi and I

bundled in the boxes—the poor old chap was really cut up, and refused to look at Beryl, his especial favourite, at all; but, so soon as all the baggage was on board, hid behind the tent on the pretext of striking it. And in less than three minutes from her coming in, off puffed the train again, this time with ourselves on board. At that moment I am convinced that neither of us was quite sure whether we really wanted to be going Home or not!

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Once upon the train one develops again into a mere globe-trotter of the baser sort. Nowadays, nine men out of ten whom one meets—and very nearly the same proportion of the women—have been either to Uganda or the Victoria Falls; so that, really, it would be waste of time to describe either the railway or the sea journey at any great length.

Indeed, Beryl and I both began to feel rather lost from the commencement of the train trip. At first, it was extremely pleasant to see the bush rush by on either hand, to flash past clearing and *musito*, ant-heap and open *nyika*—to catch a glimpse, here and there, of a narrow, winding path, or even, perhaps, the hut-tops of some tiny village, and to think that neither our own feet nor the everlasting *machila* were the methods of our progression.

Everything seemed a little wonderful—for the first half-hour. The folding table in the carriage—the maps and views of Cape Colony upon the partitions—the devices of the sleeping-berths

which let down and of the pillows which came up, all upon the touching of a spring—even the very taps in the lavatory, were of the deepest interest to us, debarred as we had been for so many moons from the mere sight or touch of anything mechanical, labour-saving, or conducing to comfort. But this sense of satisfaction very soon began to pall. By the time we reached Bwana Mkubwa—which was only a quarter of an hour after we had started—we had become *blasés* to a degree, and looked out of window upon the stir and bustle of the little platform as if we had never known the silences which lay northwards and beyond.

There must have been at least twenty white men upon the platform—most of them miners—more, probably, than we had seen altogether in the last twelvemonth. There were, also, small and unprepossessing Belgians in very baggy knickers and wonderful green hunting-shirts, who, I presume, were returning to Belgium after having amassed a fortune in the mysterious Katanga. There were one or two bronzed images, with shirts open at the neck, tattered continuations and inadequate boots, who looked rather like distressed British subjects—I noticed that the immaculate white sergeant of police, who was on the platform in his capacity of Immigration Officer, kept them more or less under his eye. There was even a station-master in uniform.

But I am afraid that what pleased Beryl and me best of all were the labour recruits—three hundred of them at least, mostly Awemba, burst-

ing with their own importance, fighting their way into the already crowded native carriages, tearing the jerseys and blankets from one another's backs, deadly afraid of losing the train, and yet utterly and absolutely happy, in spite of everything, at the prospect of getting abroad into a new and wonderful world.

They would be sick enough of the train, no doubt, long before they reached Bulawayo—would be longing, in a perfect spasm of home-sickness, to be back again in their comparatively peaceful villages up among the Great Lakes. But, for the moment, they were drinking deeply of the cup of life, were storing up a fund of experiences which would be increased rather than diminished by the drawing upon it hereafter in the sight and hearing of those unsophisticated relatives whom they had left behind.

It was a breath of home—with a small letter, as distinct from that spelled with a capital, to which Beryl and I were even then on our way. Many of the men, no doubt, were from my own district. I had been greeted by several, and had recognised one or two. No sooner were they safely entrained than they struck up the tribal songs of their people, and, indeed, the train moved out of the little station into the inky darkness of the African night to the very strains which had so often, in the past years, cheered our way along the bush paths of the North.

So, as the train gathered way and fled into the gloom with a shrill, insistent whistle, Beryl and I lay back upon the cool, wicker-covered seats

and strove to adjust our focus to the new life which lay before us for six months or so. And by the time that the trim young conductor, in his smart uniform and white-topped cap, came to examine our tickets and see to our comfort generally, we had both decided that, while Home-going was good, home-coming would, no doubt, be better still.

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That train went on for seven mortal days. As a matter of fact it was not the same train; we changed, at Livingstone, into a quite superior kind of vehicle with a restaurant-car, white stewards, and all manner of plated fittings, while at Bulawayo we were treated to a new engine. It was high time, too, for the old one had given ominous indications of being past its prime, and had almost stopped dead in the middle of the bridge over the Falls. But for all practical purposes the alteration of trains made but little difference—except, indeed, at Kimberley, three days later, where they cut off the carriage next forward of our own, in which had been an extremely comfortable bathroom. This dastardly trick was performed in the dead of night, while we were asleep, and when, next morning, I went out to my bath, I found myself next to the engine and nearly fell into the tender.

The last link with the old life was snapped at Livingstone. It was there that we took on the restaurant-car, and, thenceforth, it was unnecessary to send a boy sprinting up to the engine for a

kettleful of hot water every time we halted and wanted tea. After that, we climbed upon the lap of luxury and remained there.

Nevertheless the days seemed like years. The dust came in through the chinks and crevices until I could barely see Beryl across the carriage, and would not have recognised her if I had. The sun came in also, unless we pulled down the blinds, and, if we did so, it at once became too stuffy to breathe. There were points of interest to observe outside the windows—the Falls, and Wankies with its colliery, and the haunting scenery of the Hex Mountains, the Karroo, equipped with tame ostriches and ruined block-houses—plenty, in fact, to vary the monotony. But we had already sunk back again into the peevish discontent of the experienced traveller, and were only too glad when, at long last, on a fresh, cool morning, our train sped through dainty outlying suburbs, and drew up, at length, in the terminus of the Cape to Cairo Line, right under the shadow of Table Mountain. We had completed the penultimate stage of our journey from savagery to civilisation.

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I am sorry to say that I do not like Cape Town. Most people do, and therefore, no doubt, it is well able to exist without my admiration, the lack of which is probably due entirely to my own want of taste. Let me, at any rate, be candid, and admit at once that I have seen nothing of the city except what may be seen by the traveller



who disembarks from his liner, wanders disconnectedly between the Docks, the Mount Nelson Hotel and the Railway Station, and, four, or it maybe six hours later, speeds away to the North. I have never slept in Cape Town, have never climbed Table Mountain, know nothing of Wynberg or of any other suburb, and therefore have not the slightest right to air any opinion whatever concerning these points of interest.

But in regard to the town proper there is, in my humble opinion, altogether too much "local colour." Probably, if one's fate decrees that one shall live altogether in such a place, one's susceptibilities become blunted in regard to such matters with the mere passage of the years; one learns, no doubt, to look upon "buck-niggers" in patent boots, glossy collars and ready-made garments, half-caste women of a delicate lemon shade in gorgeous handkerchiefs, blouses and skirts, depressed-looking Malays, truculent Cape Boys, and the like, as being necessary and unremarkable features in the scenery. But I must confess that it jars; more especially when one is straight from those Northern lands where the native still thinks that the white man is, in some ways, superior to himself. It is irritating, for instance, to have to keep perpetually on the *qui vive* lest your wife be jostled off the pavement by an ebony bully in Christy Minstrel costume; still more irritating to know that, if you clumped such an one across the head, the act would be followed with all the ordinary penalties of assault.

Of course, such an attitude is entirely unreason-



able. God made the native, and his fellow-creatures gave him the vote; the superiority of the white is, in the Cape Peninsula, an archaic and wholly ridiculous doctrine. For the benighted European who still, in defiance of progress, looks for some measure of respect from the native, there remain merely the barbarous outposts of the North: let him betake himself thither with what speed he may, and refrain from sowing his pernicious doctrines broadcast among a respectable and multi-coloured people.

Well, thank God, the North *is* still free from the corrosion of civilisation; our womenkind are still safe from the assaults of brutal animal-men; the white man is still respected, in many cases loved, by those who look to him to hold the scales of justice true—and Ethiopia has not, as yet, spread its poisonous doctrines abroad. To feel at a disadvantage in Cape Town is, surely, but a small price to pay for such inestimable privileges. But it seems a pity, somehow, that, after three or four years of absolute happiness among a heathen people, one's last recollections of Africa should be tainted with the sordid flavour of raciality.

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The voyage was exactly the same as a hundred other voyages. Beryl and I rose as late as we dared, in view of the mute reproaches in our steward's eye—ate at frequently recurring intervals from dawn to dusk and after, with the result that we put on weight in a most shameless fashion—and lost quite a considerable amount

over the daily "sweep." At first the voyage seemed as if it would never end—at last, it seemed as if we never wished it to. After what appeared to be a year measured by shore clocks, we cast anchor in Madeira roadstead, and, going ashore, satiated ourselves for an hour or two with the scent and the sight of flowers. And then, crawling imperceptibly out of sunlight into shadow, we came up into the grey cold of the Bay, the cheerless waste of North Atlantic waters. Until, one day, it was time to pack for the shore.

We drew alongside the Docks at Southampton at three o'clock of a pitilessly bleak December morning. Beryl and I, afraid of oversleeping ourselves, crept on deck—to find that they were off-loading the mails and that every other passenger was still below. So we retired again—a trifle damped, perhaps—and slept fitfully until six.

Even then, day had not begun to break. We breakfasted by the electric light in the saloon, and it was bitterly, biting cold. And at 7.30 to the minute the special left for Waterloo.

I must here put on record my intense disgust at finding that the carriages of this train were not built upon the corridor plan, but were exactly the same in pattern as those which had brought us down to Southampton nearly four years before. From the newspapers which had reached us at fitful intervals at Malale, I had gathered certain impressions anent the tremendous progress being made in locomotion. I doubt if either of us would have been surprised had we been requested to

take our seats in an aeroplane for conveyance to Waterloo. The cramped, stuffy, and comparatively sluggish reality was vastly depressing. One felt that, so far as thrills were concerned, one might really almost as well have remained in the wilds.

There always seems to me to be an extraordinary finality about London; a kind of atmospheric sense that, once one has arrived here, it is the end, and that it would be impossible to go further. Passing out from under the great glass roof of Waterloo into the crowded, rushing swelter of humanity, the memories of the silent forests, of the swift rivers, of peaceful, shady villages merge, as it were, into the half-recalled figments of a dream. It seems impossible that life has ever been, can ever be, compact of aught but the roar and the turmoil of the city.

As the taxi swayed and swerved in its—fortunately successful—efforts to avoid a brewer's dray, I glanced at Beryl. Evidently her thought was the same as mine.

"It's all true!" she said. "We *have* been out there—and, please the pigs, not for the last time. I should be absolutely and perfectly happy if only I could be sure that the cook will come back to us when we go out in April!"

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