

THROUGH THE HEART OF THE AFRICAN JUNGLE

Experiences and Adventures That Must Needs Befall Roosevelt When He Leaves the Lines of Communication and Strikes Across Africa With His Train of Porters

BANDA OF THE SAFARI WITH THE CHURCHILL EXPEDITION

In this article, Winston Churchill deals with adventures and experiences that must needs befall Colonel Roosevelt in great measure, on the African trip which will be between the source of the Victoria Nile, Lake Tsetse, and the wonderful Murchison Falls, over which the river leaps as through a noise, into Lake Albert Nyanza, and from there flows northward as the White Nile. It is a wild narrative of travel in the heart of Africa on foot through big game and diamond-studded jungles, and down the Nile and across a lake in the east of Africa.

BY THE REVEREND WINSTON CHURCHILL, Former Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies of Great Britain, now President of the Board of Trade.

EVERYWHERE great pathways are being cut into Africa. We have followed for nearly 1000 miles one leading from the east toward the center, from Mombasa to the source of the Nile at Ripon Falls. Far away from the north another line has been thrust forward by British efforts in peace and war. From Alexandria to Cairo, from Cairo to Khartoum, from Khartoum to Gondokoro, on the Nile and the Sudan frontier, over a distance of nearly 3000 miles, stretches an uninterrupted service of trains and steamers. But between the landing stage at Jinja, where the Nile is born, and the landing stage at Gondokoro, there opens a wide gulf of yet unbridged, unexplored wilderness and jungle, across which and through which the traveler must crawl painfully and at a snail's pace, always amid difficulty and never without danger. It is this gulf which we are now to traverse by marches through the forest around the Nile rapids, and in canoes and steel sailing boats, towed by a launch, along the navigable portions of the Nile and across Lake Choga to the Sudan steamer at Gondokoro—about 500 miles in 20 days.

Traveling by marches from camp to camp plays a regular part in the life of the average Central African officer. He goes "on safari," as the Boer "on trek." It is a recognized state of being, which often lasts for weeks, and sometimes for months. He learns to think of ten days' safari as a Philadelphia trip of going to New York City, and 20 days' safari as if it were less than the journey from New York to Buffalo.

Safari is itself a Swahili word of Arabic origin, meaning an expedition and all that pertains to it. It comprises yourself and everybody and everything you take with you—food, tents, rifles, clothing, cook, servants, escort, porters—but especially porters. Out of the range of steam the porter is the prime factor. This ragged figure, tottering along under his load, is the unit of locomotion and the limit of possibility. Without porters you cannot move. With them you move ten or 12 miles a day, if all is well. Every morning the porters are divided into batches of about 20, each under its headman. The loads, which are supposed to average about 65 pounds, are also roughly parceled out. As each batch starts off, the next rushes up to the succeeding heap of loads, and there is a quarter of an hour of screaming and pushing, the strongest man making a beeline for the lightest looking bundle. The headmen, beaten off by the grim but voluble head man, the weakest weeping feebly beside a mountainous pile, till a distribution has been achieved with rough justice, and the troop in its turn marches off with indescribable ululations, testifying and ministering to the spirit in which they mean to accomplish the day's journey.

Plunging Into the Jungle.

With a final look at Ripon Falls, gleaming and resounding below, climb the slopes of the river bank and walk off into the forest. I had traveled through tropical forests in Cuba and in India, and had often before admired their enchanting yet sinister luxuriance. But the forests of Uganda, for magnificence, for variety of form and color, for profusion of brilliant life—plant, bird, insect, reptile, beast—for the vast scale of awful fecundity of the natural processes that are held at work, eclipsed and, indeed, effaced all previous impressions.

One becomes, not without a secret sense of aversion, the spectator of an intense convulsion of life and death. Reproduction and decay are locked struggling in infinite embraces. In this glittering equatorial alium huge trees jostle one another for room to live; slender growths stretch upward, as it seems in agony—toward sunlight and life. The soil bursts with irrepressible vegetation. Every victor, trampling on the rotting mold of exterminated antagonists, soars aloft only to encounter another host of aerial rivals, to be burdened with masses of parasitic foliage, smothered in the glorious blossoms of creepers, laced and bound and interwoven with interminable tangles of vines and trailers. Birds are as big as butterflies; butterflies are as big as birds. The air hums with flying creatures; the earth crawls beneath your feet.

As we advanced, continually rising or falling with the waves of the land, and moving in rapid alternations from a blazing patch of sunshine into a cloistered dimness, every now and then the path became smooth, broad and of firm sandstone. And here one could watch the columns of marching soldier ants.

Perhaps in 100 yards the road would be opened four times by these fierce

WINSTON CHURCHILL, IN LONDON WITH JOHN MORLEY ON THE RIGHT

armies. They move in regular array and upon purpose at once insurmountable and unswerving. A brown band, perhaps two inches broad and an inch and a half deep is drawn across your track. Its ends are lost in the recesses of the forest. It moves unceasingly and with a multiplied rapidity, for each ant runs swiftly forward, whether upon the ground or upon the backs of his already swiftly moving comrades, carrying a load of food or a small insect. About a yard away, on each side of the main column, are the screening lines of the flank guards, and for five yards beyond this every inch is searched, every object is examined by fireless and fearless reconnoitering patrols. Won to the enemy who is over his size or nature, he is attacked at once by an ever-increasing number of assailants, each one of whom, upon remorseless instinct, plunges his strong mandibles in the flesh, and will have his head pulled off his shoulders rather than let go.

These ant armies fascinated me. I could not resist interfering with them. With my walking stick I gently broke the column and pushed the swarming rope off its line of march. Their surprise, their confusion, their indignation were extreme. But not for an instant did they pause. In a second the scouts were running all over my boots eagerly seeking an entry, and when I looked back from this to the walking stick, I held it was already alive. With a gasp I saw it was already alive. With a gasp I saw it was already alive. With a gasp I saw it was already alive.

Never were seen such flying fairies—butterflies. They flaunted their splendid liveries in inconceivable varieties of color and pattern in our faces at every step. Swallow tails, fritillaries, admirals, tortoise shells, peacocks, orange tips—all executed in at least a dozen novel and contrasted styles, with many even more beautiful—flitted in the sunshine from flower to flower, glinted in the shadow of great trees or clustered on the path, suck the moisture from any swampy patch. The butterfly is a dirty feeder, and if ever some piece of putrescent filth lay odorously on the ground, be sure it would be covered with a cloud of these greedy insects, soot in such gaudy attire to eat such sorry meat. I found them something like intoxicated with feasting that I could pick them up quite gently in my fingers without the need of any net at all.

Making Camp at the End of the Day.

Our first march was 14 miles, and as we had not started till the hot hours of the day were upon it, it was enough, and I spare, so far as I was concerned, and I had for some time been hoping to see the camp around every corner, when at last we reached it. It consisted of two rows of green tents and a large "banda," or rest house, as big as a large barn, standing in a nice trim clearing. The "bandas" are a great feature of African travel, and the dutiful chief had taken pains to make them on the most elaborate scale.

The house he had prepared for us was a built of bamboo framework, supported upon a central row of Y-shaped tree stems, with a high pitched roof, heavily thatched with elephant grass and walls of wattle reeds. The floors of African "bandas" when newly made are beautiful green rushes, and strewn with cunningly divided into various apart-

ments, and the main building is connected with kitchen and offices of the same substantial texture by veranda-shaded passages. The natives make the walls almost incredible rapidly from the vegetation of the surrounding jungle; and the sensation of entering one of these lustrous, cool and spacious interiors and shuffling into the soft rush-bed of the floor, with something to drink, which is, at any rate, not tepid, well repays the slight severities of a march under an equatorial sun.

The "banda," however, is a luxury of which the traveler should beware, for it has stood for more than a week it becomes the home of innumerable insects, many of approved malvolence and venom, and spritful fever is almost invariably caught from sleeping in old shelters or on disused camping grounds.

Very early in the morning the bugle sounded reveille. Every one dresses hurriedly by candle light, eats a dim breakfast, while dawn approaches, tents collapse and porters struggle off with their burdens. Then the march begins.

Through Jungle on Bicycle.

The obvious thing is to walk. There is no surer way of keeping well in Uganda than to walk 12 or 14 miles a day. But if the traveler will not make the effort there are alternatives. There is the litter, carried on the heads of six porters of different sizes, and shifted every now and then, with a disheartening jerk, to their shoulders and back again—this is quite as uncomfortable as it sounds.

But the best of all methods of progression in Central Africa—however astonishing it may seem—is the bicycle. In the dry season the paths through the forest, smoothed by the feet of natives, afford an excellent surface. Even when the track is only two feet wide, and when the densest forest above the head of the bicycle skims along, swishing through the grass and brushing the encroaching bushes at a fine pace, and although at every few hundred yards sharp rocks, loose stones, a water course or a steep hill compel dismounting, a good seven miles an hour can usually be maintained.

But the march, however performed, has its terminations; and if, as is recommended, you stop for breakfast and rest upon the way, the new camp will be almost ready upon arrival. During the heat of the day every one retires to his tent or to the more effective shelter of the "banda," to read and sleep until evening. Then as the sun gets low, we emerge to smoke and talk, and there is, perhaps, but time for the cigarette to pursue an antelope, or shoot a few Guinea fowl or pigeons.

With the approach of twilight comes the mosquito, strident-voiced and fever-bearing; and the most thorough precautions have to be taken against him and other insect dangers. We dine in a large mosquito house made entirely of fine gauze. The bedding, which should if possible be packed in the boxes, is unrolled during the day and carefully protected by mosquito nets well tucked in against all forms of vermin. Every one puts on mosquito-boots—long, soft, leather leggings reaching to the hips. You are recommended not to sit on cane-bottomed chairs without putting a newspaper or a cushion on them, to wear a cap, a scarf and possibly gloves, and to carry a comparatively secure amid a chorus of ferocious buzzings.

Three days were spent in a small steam launch and two or three dug-out canoes, scooped out of tree trunks, cruising down the Victoria Nile until it flows into

Choga, and then traversing the smooth, lustrous expanse of that lake. Every evening we landed at camp prepared by the Busoga chiefs, pitched our tents, lighted our fires and erected our mosquito houses, while dusk drew on, and thunder storms wheeled in vivid splendor about the dark horizon.

All through the hot hours of the day one lay at the bottom of massive canoes, sheltered from the sun by an improvised roof of rushes and wet grass. From time to time the strange birds, or better still, the rumor of a hippopotamus, just peeping above the water—enlivened the slow and sultry passage of the hours; and one great rock, crowded with enormous crocodiles, all of whom—a score at least—leaped together into the water at the first shot, afforded at least one really striking spectacle.

As the Victoria Nile approaches Lake Choga, it broadens out into wide lagoons, and the sloping banks of forest and jungle give place to unbroken walls of papyrus reeds, behind which the flat, surrounding country is invisible. The lake itself is about 20 miles long from east to west, and 11 broad, but its area and perimeter are greatly extended by a long series of arms stretching out in every direction. All these arms, and even a great part of the center of the lake, are filled with reeds, grass and water plants, and when the storms have swept the northern shore, numerous papyrus tangled islands, complete with their population of birds and animals, are detached and swim erratically about the lake to block unaccustomed channels and puzzle the pilot.

For one long day our little palpitating launch, towing its flotilla of canoes, splashed through this curious region, at times winding through a glade in the papyrus forest, scarcely a dozen yards across, then presently emerging into wide floods, stopping often to clear our progress from tangles of accumulating greenery. All this while we must carefully avoid the northern and particularly the northwestern shore, for the natives are altogether unamiable, and nearly all the tribes are hostile. To pursue the forbidden precincts, is impossible; to land for food or fuel would be dangerous, and even to approach might draw a shower of musketry or a shower of spears.

Another 40 miles of steaming and we reached Mru. Mru is a representative African village. All that meets the eye are a score of funnel-shaped grass huts, surrounded by dismal swamps and labyrinthine of weeds, over which clouds of mosquitoes danced feverishly. A long wretched pier had been built from terra firma

to navigable water, but the channel by which it could be approached had been wholly blocked. Boasting little of this had to be towed painfully out of the way before we could land. Here we were met by a fresh escort of King's African Rifles, by a mob of fresh porters, and lastly by the only friendly tribe from the northern bank of the river, and while tents were pitched, baggage landed and cooking fires began to glow, these 400 wild apemen, casting aside their leopard skins, danced naked in the dusk.

Into the Heart of a Wild World.

We had intended, on leaving the Nile where it turns northward at Mru, to march directly across to the Albert Lake. But tales of the beauty and wonder of the Murchison Falls had captivated my mind, a new plan had been evolved, and thither we were now to proceed by five marches, two to Masindi (25 miles from Mru) and three more turning northward to the Nile to the foot of the Murchison Falls at Pajon.

The first day's march from Masindi was a long one, and our porters painted and started an hour before sunrise, and by 5 o'clock had climbed to the saddle of the day. It was not till the afternoon that the main body came into camp, and swaggers trickled through into the dusk. Meanwhile, the local natives built under our eyes, with extraordinary speed and cleverness, a spacious dining-hall and two or three excellent bedrooms from the surrounding elephant grass and bamboo groves; and we were as comfortably in these two humble dwellings as if we dwelt in king's palaces.

The forest was a little thinner on the second day, although the jungle was of the same dense and tangled fertility. We started an hour before sunrise, and by 5 o'clock had climbed to the saddle of the valley, the Victoria Nile. From this elevated position we looked down into the general level of the plain, a comprehensive view of the landscape was for the first time possible.

In every direction spread a wide sea of foliage, thinning here into bush, darkening there into forest, rising and falling with the waves of the land, and broken only by occasional peaks of rock. Far away to the northwest a long silver gleam, just discernible through the haze of the horizon, revealed to our eyes the distant prospect of Lake Albert Nyanza. The camera cannot do justice to such a panorama. In photographs these vast expanses look like more scrubby country, inhospitable and monotonous to the eye, melancholy to the soul. One has to remember that here are botanical and zoological gardens combined on an unlimited scale; that Nature's central production laboratory is here working night and day at full blast; and that the surging sea of the future is really a fairy-complex of a quarter of a mile in any direction expose the wanderer? To withdraw from

Nozzle Through which the Nile Leaps.

We had scarce proceeded for an hour on our third march when, just as it grew daylight, a low, vibrant murmur began to be perceptible in the air. Now it was the valley, now it broke even more strongly on the ear as we reached the summit of some ascent—the sound of the Nile plunging down the Murchison Falls, and by 5 o'clock, when we were still about 10 miles off, a loud, faintest and increasing hum had developed.

Three falls are certainly the most remarkable in the whole course of the Nile. At Fawera (halfway on the Nile between Lake Choga and the falls) the navigable river reaches stretching from Lake Choga a reach stretching in foam and rapids down a gradual but continuous stairway, encircled by rocky walls, but still a broad flood. Two miles above Pajon these walls contract suddenly till they are not six yards apart, and through this straggling portal, as from the mouth of a hose, the whole tremendous river is shot in one single jetty down an abyss of 100 feet. Arrived at the verge of this descent, the falls themselves were

indeed, invisible, concealed behind a crested bluff, but their roaring left no doubt of their presence. Below us a zigzag path led down by long descents to the water's edge, and on an open meadow a row of tents and grass houses had already been set up. Pajon as a native town was no more. At hardly any point in Uganda has the sleeping sickness made such frightful ravages. At least 400 persons had perished in two years. Almost the whole population had been swept away. Scarcely enough remained to form the deputation, who, in their white robes, could be distinguished at the entrance to the cleared area of the camping ground. And this cleared area was of itself of the utmost importance, for all around it the powers of evil were strong. The groves which fringed and overhung the river swarmed with terrible flies of newly replenished venom and approved malignity, and no man could enter there except at a risk.

After pausing for a few minutes to watch a troop of baboons who were leaping about from tree to tree, and who seemed as big as men, I climbed down the zigzag, photographed the deputation, and shook hands with the chief. All new smiles and bows and greetings of mutual gratification. The district officer, who had traveled with me, explained that the chief had had the path up to the top of the falls improved and that he proposed, after we had lunch and rested, to guide us along it in the very edge of the abyss, but that the forest along the river bank was so dangerous because of the terrors that we should in prudence wear veils and gloves before entering it. With all this I made no quarrel.

Disturbing a Thousand Crocodiles.

We began our climb to the summit of the fall in the blazing heat of the day. First the path led through the deadly grove. Here, of course, the most beautiful butterflies—some five inches across

JUNGLE FOOTPATH NEAR SOURCE OF THE NILE

land of glades and vistas. Through which an army of 100,000 men might march without the slightest of a hazard or even the dust of an artillery column betraying their presence to the watcher on the bank.

Our camp this night lay in a tiny patch cleared in the heart of this wild world. The cluster of tents under a canopy of palm fronds, illumined by the watch-fires, bright with lanterns and busy with the moving figures of men and the hum of human activity, seemed at a hundred yards' distance an island of society amid a waste of nature. To what strange and perilous apart altogether from the certainty of losing your way—would a walk of the night be so smuggled in the savage condition of prehistoric times. Advance, and the telegraph wire would tell you the latest quotations of the London market. The figures of the nearest by-election. An odd sensation!

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