CHAPTER XXIV

ACROSS THE KAISOOT DESERT

Even if I had decided to return to Nairobi immediately after the tragedy, instead of going on to Marsabit to finish my work, the mutiny of the safari rendered this course of action absolutely impossible.

I felt that henceforward I was entirely responsible for the safety of Mrs. B., and if at this critical moment I had yielded to the mutineers and allowed them to dictate to me as to where I was to go and where not to go, my authority would have entirely vanished, and I could no longer have been answerable for what might happen.

Of course I kept all knowledge of the mutiny from my companion, as she had already enough and more than enough trouble to bear, and it was not until the tin roofs of Nairobi were in sight that I told her of the peril we had been in at Lersamis.

She was naturally anxious to return to Nairobi at once, but I told her that I must first go on to
Marsabit, which was only one long march ahead, to complete my work and get fresh camels for the return journey. This would only delay her a day or two longer, and then I would go back as quickly as we could travel.

As she was of course in a very dazed and grief-stricken condition, I thought it advisable for her sake to get away from this ill-fated spot as soon as possible. Accordingly about two o'clock in the afternoon of the 21st March, 1908, exactly two months since we left Nairobi, we set out on a most dismal and mournful journey across the sterile and waterless Kaisoot Desert. The dreary landscape added to the depression of our spirits, and never shall I forget the wretchedness of that march. I tried hard to talk but failed miserably, so we rode along in gloomy silence, our minds full of the sad event of the morning.

At about six o'clock I halted the safari for an hour on the edge of a bit of bush, and when we had gathered some dry wood we lighted a fire, and soon had a kettle boiling.

I felt I had to rouse my companion out of her despondency, and used all my powers of persuasion to induce her to drink a little tea and eat a biscuit, as she had had practically no food all day. Meanwhile the safari rested and refreshed themselves for the next spell of desert march.
At seven we pushed on again across the sandy wilderness, under the guidance of Papai. After a while the moon came out and shed a weird light on our dismal and silent surroundings. Nothing was in view save the long line of men, horses, camels, mules, and donkeys—the rear part stretching away out of sight, hidden by the lava dust which lay here soft and thick under foot.

Now and again the line would get broken, and the rear would lose touch with the front of the caravan. Then there would be a halt and cries of "Upesi, upesi, simba wabaya hapa" ("Hurry up, hurry up, the lions are bad here"), the warning cry of the askaris being made more realistic as the roar of one of these monarchs of the wilds resounded across the desert.

Occasionally we heard the crash of some ponderous beast as it lumbered off into the gloom, startled by our sudden and strange appearance in that silent waste.

In this way we journeyed on until about midnight, when I called a halt for a few hours' rest. Of course no tents were pitched, as we only intended to make a short stay. I made a bed of rugs for Mrs. B., on which she lay and snatched a couple of hours' uneasy slumber, waking up from time to time with a cry of distress. Meanwhile, I sat on a box close by, with my back against a tree stump, and
my rifle across my knee, doing all I could, when she started up, to pacify and soothe her sorely-tried nerves.

At 4 a.m., after distributing water to the *safari* and drinking a hasty cup of coffee, we set off again, and had a very long and trying day's march across the burning desert. The fierce rays of the sun beat down relentlessly, and there was no shade of any kind to be found. Men and beasts suffered greatly, save only the camels, and they appeared to enjoy crossing this desolate waste. The whole district is parched and sterile, and covered with red lava ash, which rose in clouds of dust as we marched along.
penetrating into everything. All round us stretched a sun-scorched, arid plain, and the only thing that cheered our eyes was the view of the cloud-covered mountains of Marsabit, which stood out boldly on the sky-line.

While the safari was struggling along listlessly and more or less exhausted by the great heat, every man was suddenly electrified into energy by the cry of "Fow! Fow!" ("Rhino! Rhino!") There was an instant's hesitation as to which side they should fly to for safety, and then the dreaded beast was discovered to the left of the track under the shade of a thorn tree, where he had evidently been sleeping until roused to action by the sound of the passing safari. He now advanced at a brisk trot, and at sight of him loads were pitched down in all directions, and men fled for safety to any bit of scrub they could find.

I hurried Mrs. B. off to the shelter of the largest tree at hand, and in a few minutes its branches were absolutely black with a swarm of porters.

I then walked out with a heavy rifle so as to intercept the brute if he charged any of the porters, for there were still many of the men straggling up, quite unaware of their danger.

The old rhino advanced with determination for about fifty yards, then suddenly came to a standstill, looked at us for some time with great
curiosity, apparently mingled with malicious joy at having caused so much terror, and in the end turned disdainfully round and trotted off in the opposite direction.

Odd as it may sound, this little adventure cheered us all up wonderfully, and the men, having once more picked up their loads, stepped forward with renewed energy.

It was not until about five o’clock in the afternoon that we finally straggled in to our camping place on the edge of the valley of El Deerim, which in bygone ages must have been a vast crater. There was a waterhole not far off in the bed of a ravine at a place called Reti, which is on the outskirts of the district of Marsabit.

The men were all thoroughly done-up, and as they came in one by one, threw down their loads with a sigh of relief, and made as quickly as possible for the waterhole to quench their burning thirst.

Here I was roused to indignation by the heartless and selfish conduct of my syce Jerogi. I had seen him on the march craving a drink from a comrade whose water-bottle he drained of its last drop without the slightest compunction, although the man tried to get it away from his mouth before he had quite finished it; and now to make the matter still worse, I saw him calmly pull out a large lime-juice bottle filled with water which he had had all the time
concealed under his ragged coat. He proceeded to regale himself with a long drink from this while the others struggled off to the muddy waterhole.

On asking him if he were not ashamed of his despicable conduct, he replied with a grin "Hapana" ("No").

As my unfortunate companion was in a most pitiful state and greatly fatigued after all she had come through, I decided to remain at this place for a day, so that she might recover somewhat before we resumed our journey.

In any case this was necessary, as the march through the Kaisoot had proved too much for the donkeys. When darkness fell neither they nor the Headman had turned up and I was very anxious as to their fate out in the desert.

Luckily the night was fine, for the men were so worn-out and tired that I had no tents pitched, Mrs. B. sleeping as on the previous night on a bed of rugs under a rough shelter, while I kept guard close by.

Now that she was left in such a forlorn condition, I feared to let her out of my sight for a moment, lest any catastrophe should overtake her too, and I be left to wend my way back to civilisation alone with such a terrible tale of misfortune to unfold.

With my mind full of these distressing thoughts, I fell into a doze as I sat on a box within a pace or
two of her rude couch of grass and rugs. I do not remember how long I had slept when I was suddenly awakened by a loud cry from Mrs. B. and a mad rush of frenzied ponies and mules tearing past us, not half a dozen yards away.

In a moment the askaris added to the panic by discharging their rifles recklessly under the impression that they were aiming at a couple of rhino which had charged the camp and stampeded the animals. I very nearly shot one of the ponies myself before I was quite awake, taking it to be a beast of prey of some kind as it dashed past. Luckily the rhinos were soon driven off, and no harm was done to man or beast. It took some time to round up the ponies and mules, and I almost feared that we had lost them altogether, but in the end all were collected and safely tied up in camp again. It was very nerve-shaking, however, for poor Mrs. B., who had already been so sorely tried.

During the night I had a great fire made on the top of a small hill close to our bivouac to guide Munyakai and the donkeys to our resting-place, but when morning came there was still no sign of them. I therefore sent out a relief party with water to search for them in the desert and kept a pillar of smoke going up from the hill-top to serve as a guide, and at last, late in the afternoon, they succeeded in reaching us in safety. Munyakai then
told me all about the anxious and thrilling time he had had. When he found that the donkeys were too done-up to go on any further he made a *boma* for them. They were attacked in this hastily-made enclosure by a lion, who was most persistent in his attempts to break through. Two or three times he was driven away, but at last, towards morning, made bolder by his great hunger, he would not be denied, and succeeded in seizing one of the poor brutes, which he dragged off and devoured.

During the confusion and alarm which followed, a couple of hyænas made a dash at the elephant’s feet, which had been carried on a donkey’s back, and dragged them away to some secret lair where, of course, it was impossible to recover them.

In addition to the donkey killed by the lion, two more died of exhaustion during the march; Munyakai cut off their tails and brought them to me, to prove that the animals really had died, and not strayed away and got lost owing to carelessness.
CHAPTER XXV

AT MARSABIT

When men and beasts had had a good night's rest we pushed on again early in the morning for Crater Lake, which was the point in Marsabit I wished to reach.

This time our journey was a much more interesting one, as it was through a mountainous, forest-clad country, which afforded an absolute contrast to the dreary desert we had just crossed.

We again began to see game. A great herd of giraffe trooped off to the westward of our route; a couple of rhino, one or two bushbuck, a few oryx, and some female greater and lesser kudu, made the country look a paradise after the desolate and inhospitable tract we had just passed over. We had to scramble through thickets, down the steep sides of ravines, and make our way across valleys, over hills, and along the precipitous edges of extinct craters, such as Kurmarasan and Lonkero. The
latter was especially remarkable for its size and depth. The walls of the crater were practically perpendicular, and were covered over with dense undergrowth, bush and trees, while at the bottom were some waterholes. The natives told me that these were very deep, and that enormous serpents were to be found in them.

It would have been most interesting to explore the bed of this crater, but under the circumstances I was anxious to push on as quickly as possible. My health, too, was beginning to trouble me; so, somewhat reluctantly, I left this crater to our right and marched on between it and El Donyo Guas, which is a very curious-looking, conical hill, the whole of one side from base to summit being grass, while the other side is forest.

Papai was now leading us to a lake, which he called Angara Sabuk, and for the last four miles or so before reaching it our track wound through a thick forest of most beautiful straight lofty trees, many of which were from 100 to 150 feet high, with trunks almost as smooth and upright as the masts of a ship.

It was most delightful riding along under their cool shade after having endured the hot sun for so many days. There were fresh tracks of elephants in all directions, but we saw nothing of the beasts themselves. All at once we came out of the forest and found ourselves in a little glade, and there,
spread out before us, lay the beautiful waters of Angara Sabuk, glistening like a sheet of burnished gold in the brilliant sunshine. At the point where we approached the water the ground sloped gently down to the edge of the lake, which filled up a hollow basin, some 800 yards in diameter, that had

"THE BEAUTIFUL WATERS OF ANGARA SABUK."

once been the crater of a vast volcano. It is for this reason that Europeans call this sheet of water Crater Lake, while the Samburu know it as Angara Sabuk or "Great Water." On every side of the lake save where we stood frowned perpendicular walls of hard, black lava, some 100 feet high or more, clothed in places with verdure of the deepest green.
It was a most beautiful and refreshing sight, and one to be remembered with pleasure after all the hardships and trials of the burning desert.

I was called away from the contemplation of this charming scene by the voice of my Headman, who wanted to know where I would camp. As no tents had been pitched since we left Lersamis, I now had to consider what arrangements I should make for the safety and comfort of the unfortunate lady who had been so tragically left in my care. It was quite out of the question that she should again use the tent that was associated with such painful memories, and in any case part of it had been destroyed. It was also unthinkable that she should be left isolated in the midst of wild men and wild beasts, especially after the shock she had just had. I was full of anxiety about her at this time, and constantly dreaded that an accident of some kind might happen to her while we were in the wilds, where at every turn one is liable to run upon an unexpected peril. I felt that I was responsible for her safety, and should always be close at hand to protect her in case of need.

I therefore decided that the best thing to do was to have my own tent, which was, fortunately, quite large enough for the purpose, divided into two compartments. Accordingly I had a partition put up along the centre of it, which made it into
two tents, each with a separate doorway. Outside mine I always had a sentry posted, with instructions to call me on the slightest alarm, as I always lay down in my clothes with a rifle ready to hand in case of need.

I would have given Mrs. B. the whole tent to herself, only that on the day we got to Marsabit I most unluckily fell seriously ill with an attack of fever and dysentery. Rain also began to fall, as it usually does here every day during the forenoon at this season of the year. It was therefore absolutely necessary that I should not only have shelter, but also most careful nursing and attention, as dysentery is no light malady, and if neglected may prove fatal in a few days, especially to one who has had an attack before.

It is impossible for me to express my gratitude to Mrs. B. for the care she took of me during my illness, while she herself was still in the throes of a great misfortune. If I had during these days been left to the tender mercies of my servant, it is more than probable that I should, not have been alive to write this account of my expedition, as for some time it was touch-and-go whether the fever and dysentery could be brought under or not. Fortunately I had brought with me some tins of powdered milk, which was quite a new invention, and had been kindly given to me by Mrs. S. during our
expedition to the Kitui district. This was now prepared for me by Mrs. B., and to it, and to her careful watching and attention, I feel that I owe my recovery.

I knew that it would be a very serious matter if anything were to happen to me at this particular time, as in that case my unfortunate companion would be left utterly alone and unprotected in this savage land. The thought of what she might have to endure helped me to fight against my illness and to keep all knowledge of it as far as possible from the men of the *safari*, lest they should think I was now a negligible quantity and break out in mutiny again.

Day by day, therefore, I used to show myself at my tent door, where I sat and gave the usual orders about the daily routine, although the internal agonies I was suffering at the time were such as I hope never to experience again.

It was perhaps a mercy that Mrs. B. was taken out of herself by having to turn her attention to nursing at this period of her distress. The very fact that she had to begin anxious work so soon after the tragedy had a good effect on her, as it helped to divert her thoughts and roused her a little out of her despondency.

In a few days' time the fever and dysentery abated, so, as soon as I was at all fit, I called Papai the guide to me and questioned him about the
country to the north. He told me that from a hill near our camp I could see the Urray range of mountains standing out boldly some 50 miles away; I knew therefore that they must be on the edge of the Reserve, as I was now about that distance from its northern border.

Although I gathered that the hill from whence I could spy out the country was only some six or eight miles distant, I felt that in my weak state it would be impossible for me to go there and return between sunrise and sunset, so, as soon as I could move, we took six or eight porters to carry what was absolutely necessary for twenty-four hours, and set out with Papai, leaving the Headman in charge of our camp by Crater Lake. The morning was foggy, and the march was a painful one to me and prolonged on account of the many rests I had to take; but at the end of it, when we got clear of the mist, it was gratifying to find that the highest peak of the Urray range was plainly visible. I lost no time in taking its bearing, as well as those of some other prominent features of the country round about, and these I sketched in on my map, thus completing and linking up the whole chain of mountains and hills which I considered suitable to form a good natural eastern boundary to the Reserve.
CHAPTER XXVI

SOUTHWARD ONCE MORE

Before setting out from Nairobi I had intended, as I have already explained, to mark out, not only the eastern, but also the northern boundary of the Reserve. Circumstances were, however, against this, and my health alone made it impossible to consider any further extension of the journey.

The principal object of my expedition having now been attained, it was with a feeling of great satisfaction that I headed the safari southward and marched towards civilisation.

On reaching Noumbah, a Samburu encampment a few miles from Crater Lake, I hired twelve camels from the local chief, who was named Ledemishi, to enable us to cross the inhospitable desert. He also brought me some sheep and goats, for all of which I paid him with amerikani, wire, beads, &c. We got some cows' milk from him, too, which was most acceptable.
From Noumbah we marched to Reti, where there was now, for some reason or other, but a small quantity of muddy liquid in the waterhole. On the way I halted the caravan for half an hour in order to give a rhino which stood in our way a chance to clear off, but eventually I had to shoot it to ensure the safety of the safari as it passed. I was afraid to drink the water at Reti lest it should bring back my illness, but it is not altogether bad when not too freely mixed with mud. For Mrs. B.'s sake I was anxious to avoid Lersamis on the way back, as I did not wish her to go through the ordeal of returning to the scene of the tragedy so soon after the event. Neither was it necessary to retrace our steps that way, for I was informed that an encampment of Rendile and a water supply might be found at some little distance to the west of Lersamis, at the foot of the great mountain of Serramba, which rises abruptly out of the plain.

Accordingly I headed the safari south-westward for this mountain, and as the Kaisoot Desert stretched between, it had to be faced once more. It took us two days to cross it, and in my weak state I found the march an exceedingly trying and exhausting one. The vertical rays of a tropical sun beat down on us fiercely, and no shade was to be obtained anywhere. The water which we had
brought with us on the camels was used up long before the journey was completed, and when we at last reached the Rendile encampment at Serramba, fourteen of the porters and boys had given up the struggle in despair, and, overcome by the heat and thirst, had fallen by the way.

Munyakai bin Diwani now showed the metal that he was made of, for, collecting half a dozen of the more able porters and getting from the Rendile a couple of camels loaded with jars of water, he started back along the route, and by his prompt action managed to rescue ten of the exhausted men, who were lying stretched out on the path almost at the last stage of death from thirst. They revived somewhat when they had drunk a little of the water which he gave them, and as soon as they were able to move he sent them on to camp without their loads, which were brought in by other men later on. One of the unfortunate porters and three boys could not be found anywhere, and what their fate was, to this day I know not. I sent out search parties, lit fires, fired rifles, and promised the Rendile rewards, but without result. Two of the donkeys also died during the march from want of water. It may be remembered that I had set out from Nairobi with fifty tins to hold water, but these had been subjected to such rough usage on the road that not more than half a dozen were capable of holding anything.
I did not see much game in the desert, as was to be expected, but came across a large turtle wandering about in stolid indifference to its surroundings. The sight of it aroused superstitious fears in some of the men, who at once broke off a few brambles from the scrub and covered it up, I suppose with the object of averting evil.

We found the Rendile at Serramba very kind and hospitable, and although there was after all no spring at this place, and they themselves were compelled to bring water daily from a distance in jars on their camels, yet they freely gave us from the stock which they held in reserve.

Next morning we left our kind hosts and continued our journey towards the Guaso Nyiro, reaching Nayssoe about mid-day. Lemerlene was much pleased to see us again, and brought me some sheep and goats, for which of course I paid him with amerikani and beads. I also asked him to waive his objection to crossing the Samburu country and hire me eight camels to take us to the Guaso Nyiro, as some of the camel men who came with us from Marsabit wished to return to their home from this place.

The old chief, to my surprise, made no difficulty about lending the camels, probably because he had been so liberally paid for those which I had hired for the journey to Marsabit.
Knowing his weakness for sweet coffee, I had a good supply made, which he drank with great gusto, sitting on his skinny and sun-cracked heels at my tent door. While sipping his fifth or sixth cup he asked me through an interpreter if I remembered his warning about the man-eating lion. "Yes," I replied, "as he very nearly got one of us, and would probably have succeeded if we had not been put on our guard by you." The old chief then shook his head very gravely, smacked his lips two or three times, and said that the lion had since then become very bad indeed, and we must be more careful than ever, as everyone in his manyatta was terrified of him, and only a couple of nights previously he had carried off a leading elder in the tribe out of his hut, which was only about 200 yards from the place where our tent was pitched.

When I asked for further details of this tragic affair, he told me the following story.

The manyatta, it appeared, had been closed as usual, and all the cows, sheep, and goats were safely kraaled inside it; the warriors and elders and young women and children were all asleep, while three or four old women, as is the custom, kept watch over the flocks, sitting beside the embers of a fire. From time to time there came to them the distant roar of a lion, reverberating from the
high granite rocks which hereabouts dot the arid plain. They could hear him as he came closer and closer, making his way towards the manyatta along the sandy bed of the Guaso Merele under the gloomy shade of the trees which line its banks. They thought little of this at the time, as there was nothing unusual in the occurrence. He often serenaded the manyatta without attempting to break in, but on this night he was apparently hungrier, and therefore more savage, than usual. After a time the roars ceased and there was complete silence. The old crones sitting by the fireside were dozing off to sleep, when suddenly they and the whole encampment were aroused by the noise and uproar caused by the man-eater springing on to one of the flimsy huts which encircled the wall of the manyatta, and crashing through on to the terrified sleepers beneath.

Terrified screams rent the air, and the next moment the brute was seen emerging through the low doorway of the hut, with the writhing elder-gripped firmly in his vice-like jaws. He quickly disappeared with him through the bush-filled opening of the boma, among the stampeding cattle and amid the terrified yells of the Rendile tribesmen. It was a great piece of misfortune that the lion should have chosen an old and rickety roof to jump on.
as otherwise the huts are made quite strong enough to have kept him out.  

When the old chief had finished his story, he swallowed the rest of the coffee, looked round nervously at the gathering gloom, and quickly took himself off to his manyatta before darkness closed in. It was very evident that he was in great dread of the man-eater.

Our scanty meal was rather late that evening, and I well remember the anxious glances we cast into the gloomy thicket as we sat at dinner with our rifles on our knees, listening to the ominous grunts and purrs of that self-same lion. The brute prowled round us all night, but made no attack, as I kept big fires going, and had watchers in pairs on the move round the camp until dawn appeared.

1 The Rendile often use a rude kind of tent when on the move, but build huts here and there when settled.
CHAPTER XXVII

BACK TO THE GUASO NYIRO

It was with great thankfulness that we shook the dust of Nayssoe from our feet when we set out on the following morning for our next camping-place at Lungaya. I left some of my men behind to load up and bring on the camels under the guidance of Karogi, who knew the country thoroughly. All went well on our march, except that a huge rhino charged the safari and vented his rage upon a water-can which a porter hastily threw down in escaping out of his way.

The man who had been carrying the tin told me that what actually happened was this. While walking along with the water-can on his head, a rhino burst out from a thicket immediately behind him. To avoid the charge, he made a frantic bound forward, which of course threw the tin backwards from his head. Just as it fell the rhino made a lunge, caught it on the tip of his
horns, and with this unusual trophy vanished into the bush! I laughingly told him that it was the best excuse I had ever heard for getting rid of an uncomfortable load, but that he must now return and bring in the tin. On this he loudly asserted that his tale was true, and brought forward a couple of witnesses to bear him out.

Everyone turned up safely in camp during the afternoon, but there was no sign of the camels. When night came on and they had not put in an appearance, I began to feel anxious, for they were carrying the greater part of the foodstuffs for the safari, as well as several other important loads. We did not want any water carried on this march, as we knew we should find it at Lungaya, so to rest the men I had loaded up the camels with many of their burdens.

Early in the morning I sent an askari and one of my guides back to Nayssoe to find out what had happened, telling them to follow me to Kavai, where I intended to go at once with the safari.

On our way to this place we saw numbers of giraffe, rhino, gerenuk, Grévy zebra, and oryx, also fresh tracks of elephant. I half hoped that when we reached Kavai we should find the camels already there before us, as it was possible that Karogi might have known a shorter way and so missed us, but there was no sign of them anywhere on our arrival.
Next day my messengers arrived from Nayssoë, having covered some forty miles in two days. They brought me news that the camels had left Nayssoë soon after the safari, but were nowhere to be seen along the road. This was very disconcerting, as we wanted food badly, and I began to fear that Karogi had been up to some rascality, and had led them astray purposely so that he might steal the loads and disappear into the wilds. It was also possible that he had struck out for the Guaso Nyiro by some different way, and might even now be at Serah, the next camp, having marched there by some other route known only to himself. I therefore despatched Papai and a Masai called Saiba to see if by any chance this was what had happened. These two had already marched twelve miles in the morning, and it was another twelve on to Serah, but they went very cheerfully, and returned at 6 p.m. in the evening, having covered at least thirty-six miles that day. They bore the disappointing news that the camels were not there, and to prove that they had really been to Serah, brought back a stick from our old boma at that place.

I now feared that some villainy was afoot and that we might be attacked at any moment. I therefore had a boma made, and later on sent the Headman, with three askaris and a dozen porters, back to Nayssoë with orders to find out definitely where
the camels had gone, and who had taken them. As we were in an exceedingly wild and uncivilised part of the country, I feared that the Samburu had attacked and captured them, and that the next thing I might expect would be a midnight attack on our camp. This made me most anxious on Mrs. B.'s account. She, however, was full of pluck, and when I mentioned to her that I might possibly have to return to rescue the camels from the Samburu, she seemed rather pleased than otherwise at the prospect of a fight and did not appear to realise the gravity of the situation, for which I was thankful.

I remained on the alert all night, and spent a very anxious time straining my ears to catch any unusual sound. About midnight, when the camp had settled down into absolute quiet, without stir or noise of any kind, we were suddenly startled by a terrific and unearthly yelling and howling of a most uncanny kind. Instantly the whole camp leaped to its feet and everyone seized a weapon of some sort. On investigation, we found that the alarm was created by the weird howling of a pack of twenty or more hyænas, who had come down close to our camp and, evidently at the signal of a leader, howled together in unison. This was repeated time after time; and was probably meant either to frighten us away, or as a reproach to us for having pitched our camp so
close to the only waterhole for miles round in the neighbourhood.

I felt that to a certain extent we deserved this rebuke, for on our first night at Kavai, numbers of wild animals of all kinds came round our boma on their way to the waterhole, but were so startled by our appearance that they went away again. On this second evening they had come again, evidently very thirsty, and seeing us still there, had to retire once more without drinking. I felt exceedingly sorry for them, as I knew they must be suffering considerably by this time, and if it had been safe to do so, I should certainly have moved the camp some distance from the water, so as to give them a chance to drink; but I feared to do this in case of an attack by the natives.

Soon after this alarm, at about one o'clock in the morning, Munyakai returned, shouting out to us from afar off so that we might know who he was. He brought us the glad news that the camels were following close behind and that all was well. His appearance was greeted with loud cheers by the safuri, as it meant that their posho was at hand.

It appeared, from what Munyakai told me, though I never quite fathomed the whole story, that the villain Karogi, as soon as we had marched off from Nayssoe, tried to get for himself
some sheep and goats from the Rendile, and as they resented this, they kept back the camels hoping that I would come in quest of them, punish Karogi, and return the sheep. However, the rascal managed to square the matter with them somehow, and they released the camels before the Headman got to Nayssoe.

Munyaakai’s account seemed to show that the askari and guide whom I had sent back from Kavai had never gone to Nayssoe at all, as they had brought the false report that the camels had left Nayssoe soon after ourselves.

There was not much sleep for any of us during the remainder of this night, as a terrific storm of wind, rain, thunder and lightning now came on and lasted until morning. These tropical storms are very different from those we have at home, and come on with most startling suddenness. All at once a fierce blast of wind strikes the tents, nearly knocking them over. Then the heavens are lighted up almost continuously by flash after flash of blinding lightning, while the roar and crash of the thunder are deafening, and the rain comes down in sheets.

The storm was so bad that the camels were unable to travel, but one of the camel men came in and said they would follow us to the next camp and we need not wait for them. It was not until about nine o’clock in the morning that this heavy rain
ceased, and we were able at last to set out for Serah, which we reached safely, early in the afternoon. We heard lions roaring round the camp at night, and a sudden gale of wind nearly carried away the tent.

Early next day the long-expected camels turned up at last, and I was very glad indeed to see them, as food was badly needed for the safari, and we had been obliged to shoot meat for them every day. Fortunately the camels arrived just in time to take us across the waterless tract of country which lies between Serah and the Guaso Nyiro; so, when food had been distributed, we started off at once, and before darkness fell had covered a good stretch of that inhospitable desert.

Soon after we had set out on the following morning, as I was riding slowly and painfully along, I saw some vultures on the track just ahead of us. Had I been well enough I would undoubtedly have jumped off my pony and stalked the spot carefully, for I felt sure there would be a kill, and probably lions on it. As it was, I felt little or no interest in anything, and so rode on without making any attempt to come upon them unawares. When we approached the spot we saw, as I quite expected, two lions well out in the open, feeding on an impala which they had killed. On seeing us they left what little remained of their feast and made off
the direction in which we were travelling. Instantly Abbudi, grasping his spear and with joy dancing in his eyes, started off in pursuit. He had not run very far when he came up unexpectedly with one of them that had merely gone behind the nearest bush to take cover. Having not the least idea that the beast was so close, the youth approached at full speed and very nearly ran into him; as he did so the lion opened his jaws wide and gave a fierce growl. Instantly Abbudi threw himself back, poised his spear for a thrust, expecting the brute to spring on him, but luckily the lion had just enjoyed a good meal and was in no humour for a fight, so, much to the Masai’s relief, he turned aside, and made off into the jungle.

Abbudi’s expression was very amusing, when a few minutes later he reacted the whole of this scene most dramatically, as the Masai love to do. His face was full of exulting pride, and it was evident that he considered it no small thing to have stood up to the lion without having shown any fear or attempted to run away.

I felt much pleased as we approached the Guaso Nyiro, for I knew that when once it was reached, the worst part of our journey would be over, and no matter what happened to me after that, Mrs. B., at any rate, would be comparatively safe, and within reasonable reach of civilisation.
It was extremely hot during the latter part of the march, and but for the fact that the porters were cheered at the prospect of reaching the plentiful waters of the river some time in the afternoon, there would have been much discontent and falling out by the way. The moment the feathery tops of the palm trees that grow here and there along the river were seen, a great shout of joy ran along the line, and every man seemed to shake his fatigue from him as he stepped briskly onward. My heart was often moved with pity for the poor fellows, when I watched them drearily drag one weary foot after another on these hot and exhausting marches, carrying a load of some sixty pounds in weight on their heads day after day. I was very glad for their sakes that the worst part of the journey was now over, and we were again entering a well-watered country, where shorter marches could be made.

On reaching the river the men threw down their loads, and rushed eagerly into the cool flowing stream, to drink their fill of the sweet water.

After an hour's rest I began to look for a ford, for I wished to cross and camp on the south bank as quickly as possible, in case a flood should come and detain me on the wrong side.

We now required the camels no longer, so, to reward the drivers, I had a large pot of coffee made for them, which they thoroughly enjoyed.
they paid them liberally for having accompanied me through the desert, and on the following morning they returned to their own land, heaping showers of blessings on my head.

While we were crossing the river one of the boys, a lazy, worthless rascal, whom I had often to punish, was nearly drowned, as he was carried off his legs and swept away by the force of the stream, and but for a timely rescue it is probable that a crocodile would have seized him among the rocks a little lower down, where these hideous brutes abounded. It was an odd chance that a photograph was being taken of the scene just as this accident occurred.
The relief which I experienced on getting into camp on the southern side of the Guaso Nyiro is indescribable. I slept more peacefully that night than I had done for the past fortnight, and I fervently hoped that the remainder of our journey would be free from further accident or adventure. We were, however, by no means yet out of the grip of the nyika.
CHAPTER XXVIII

WE REACH THE MERAU COUNTRY

As I was very anxious to get back to Nairobi as quickly as possible, I determined to march due south through the fertile Meru and Embu country to the east of Mount Kenya, which was much the shortest route, instead of going all the way round by Rumuruti, through a sterile tract where no food could be obtained for the safari.

It was absolutely essential that supplies should be forthcoming, as I had only four days' food left for the men, and it was no small worry to me at times to know that I had about a hundred hungry mouths to fill daily for another three or four weeks.

I was aware that the tribesmen of the territory I intended to traverse were considered by certain officials to be both hostile and treacherous, and that no Europeans were allowed to enter the country for that reason; but I have always found that if one knows how to deal diplomatically with the natives...
there is hardly ever any trouble with them. At the same time I had heard that the last party that went through this district, not so very long before, had had sixteen men killed in a fight; I must admit, therefore, that I was by no means free from anxiety, as these tribes have undoubtedly from time immemorial suffered from the depredations of passing *safaris*, and might therefore treat us as hostile visitors and give us a very warm reception. After much consideration of all the pros and cons I came to the conclusion that it was necessary to take the risk and go by this route, as I was practically certain, by so doing, of obtaining food supplies for the men.

Luckily, on the very morning after crossing the Guaso Nyiro, while our commissariat was in this low state, I was fortunate in obtaining, from an over-inquisitive giraffe, a couple of days' supply of meat. The unlucky creature came rather close to our camp to breakfast off the green tree tops, and as I was not well enough to stalk it, I requested my companion to do so; although she was naturally loath to shoot one of these beautiful and harmless animals, yet the needs of the *safari* had to be considered and so, all unwillingly, she laid the giraffe low with one merciful bullet.

Before striking south we first made our way to the Samburu village ruled over by Legurchalań.
from whom we had engaged some camels on our way northwards. To reach this village we had to go along a very rough and lava-strewn path beside the Guaso Nyiro. In order to avoid the boulders and fissures in the lava, we tried for part of the march to make our way along that part of the bed of the river, which was now dry. For a time we got along fairly easily, and found plenty to interest us. The river here has precipitous sides of black lava rock some 60 feet high, in which great natural caverns have been hollowed out by the action of the water, some of them extending for over a hundred feet back from the face. These are
evidently used by the Samburu or Wandorobo as dwelling-places and cattle kraals at certain seasons of the year.

In one of the caves we discovered the lair of a lion with freshly-gnawed bones strewn about it. I must say that I approached the spot with the greatest caution, as I had no ambition to call on the lion in this gloomy place if he should be at home.

After travelling thus for a few miles along the river bed we all at once came to a narrow gorge through which the river ran swiftly, filling it from bank to bank so that it was impossible to go up-stream any further. We did not want to retrace our steps after having come so far, and it was not possible to climb up the precipitous sides, so we were rather in a difficulty; fortunately those who had continued to march along the top heard us shout, and lowered ropes to pull us up. These, however, proved too short, so Asa Ram, the Indian syce, took off his puggari, which was enormous and very strong, and when this was knotted to the rope it just reached to the bottom. By this means some two dozen of us were hauled up the perpendicular face of the rock and landed safely on the top.

Next day, April 13th, we reached Legurchalan's village on the banks of the Mara stream, and found the old Samburu chief delighted to see us. I heard
from him that one of the camels which belonged to Lalla Rookh had died on the return journey from Serah. As I did not wish this handsome young warrior to be put to any loss on my account I sent for him, and very much to his surprise and delight paid him the full value of the beast. He himself protested that he was not in any way entitled to be recompensed for it, as I was clearly not responsible for anything that happened to the camel after it left my safari. He was quite a nice youth, and I was glad to be able to make him amends for his misfortune.

Here I discharged my two faithful Sambaru guides, Papai and Olasegedidi, paying them off with bales of amerikani, brass and copper wire, and beads. I first offered them rupees, but these they laughingly declined, saying that they would be of no use to them in their tribe except to serve as toys for their children. They were delighted with their reward and left me with many hearty handshakes and good wishes for a safe journey.

On leaving Legurchalan's manyatta we marched south to a place called Ongata Mariri, where we camped on the banks of a small stream called the Ooloooga.

Between the Sambaru and Meru districts there is a tract that is quite deserted by natives, both nations being afraid to inhabit it. This neutral
zone is beautiful, well watered and grassed, and is an ideal country either for agricultural or grazing purposes. It is fairly well wooded too in places, and will, I am sure, when the Protectorate is more settled, become inhabited by a thriving population.

It was through this savannah-like belt of country, known as the Jombini plains, that we now made our way, and at our first camping-place by the Ooldooga stream I saw a good deal of game, including a herd of about 200 eland, also herds of oryx, Grant’s gazelle, some gerenuk, and a few rhino. Here also were great numbers of both Grévy’s and Burchell’s zebra, the two races meeting on this plain, but herding and feeding quite separately.

I noticed one oryx in particular which I should have been glad to bag, as it had horns about half as long again as any in the herd, and they must have been many inches more than the best previous records for East Africa. I was, however, not well enough to undertake an arduous stalk.

There were thousands of guinea-fowl about, so that there was no lack of sport of all kinds. It is altogether an ideal hunting country, which I have recommended should be thrown open to both sportsmen and explorers.

From the Ooldooga we pushed on to a stream called Leilabah, where again game abounded;
numbers of the beautiful crested cranes were much in evidence, while the ubiquitous guinea fowl could be flushed out of every bush.

The following day we reached the outskirts of the Meru country, and apparently took all the people by surprise. We were at once looked upon as a hostile raiding party and there was a tremendous commotion raised, war-drums being sounded, and shouts exchanged from village to village, these being built very close together in this populous country. All the cattle were instantly driven off to places of concealment in the forest, and in an incredibly short time we were surrounded by a howling
band of some three hundred spearmen, under their various chiefs, all brandishing their weapons.

Things looked very serious, and I must admit I felt somewhat alarmed. I therefore placed the safari in a safe position on a rise overlooking a village, and walked out towards the yelling crowd of practically naked savages, making my way to a spot where I saw a group of elders congregated, evidently discussing the situation. I made the usual peaceable salutation, and we shook hands. I then explained in Swahili, which one or two of the elders understood, that I only wanted to pass through their country peaceably, and so long as I was not
molested I would not interfere with them in any way whatever.

They seemed much impressed by the fact that I went out to them alone and unarmed, and took it at once as an explicit sign of my good intentions. As soon as they fully realised this, they shouted to the warriors to retire and lay aside their arms, as we were friends and had come on a friendly mission.

The howling army then disbanded and dispersed as quickly as it had made its appearance, and we were shown a pretty site for our camp at a place called Athinga, close beside the village of the chief,
who was called Dominuki. Here in the course of an hour we were surrounded by hundreds of eager and curious savages. We had apparently arrived at an opportune moment, because a short time previously Dominuki had been attacked by a combination of two tribes, the Kanjai and the Munyezu. Of course Dominuki was anxious to enlist me and my half-dozen rifles on his side so that we might make a combined attack on his enemies, and to this end he sent us presents of cattle, sheep, goats, milk, honey, eggs, etc., for which I duly returned presents of equal value. The old chief himself was exceedingly
ill with fever and ulcers, for which I treated him to the best of my ability.

He now organised a tremendous ingoma (native dance) in our honour. All the warriors in the locality, to the number of about 500, turned up in their war-paint and gathered in a field close by, where apparently all such ceremonies were held.

To begin with, the old Witch Doctor took a small gourd filled with banana beer into the centre of the circle of warriors, and made a most impassioned speech, which was listened to with rapt attention and punctuated every now and again with a chorus of approval from the audience. At the conclusion of the speech a piece of turf was dug up from the field, the beer was placed in the hollow, and the Witch Doctor, with a final peroration, smashed it to atoms with his club, then jumped and stamped on it, finally covering it over with the turf. The whole of this performance, I presume, denoted death and extinction to all enemies of the tribe.

The dance then commenced, and was a most weird and wild affair. The Witch Doctor first took the precaution of placing a guard around us, so that none of the excited warriors might do us an injury while in their half-frenzied state. The warriors, decked out in their semi-Masaï garb, and painted hideously, then formed up in two companies in front of us, one to our right and the other to our left.
Groups of from four to six advanced from each side, and with savage shouts and yells dashed at each other, bounding into the air with great leaps, and making their spears quiver in their hands. They circled round in front of us, feigning to attack each other and making fierce passes in the air, leaping and yelling all the time, until one party retired, pursued by the other.

This was repeated time after time, until the whole of the company had in turn taken part in the display, after which the two companies united and went round us in a great circle, springing and bounding and hurling defiant words at their absent enemy—in this case the warriors of a chief called Thularia, whose district adjoined.

During all the time that this war-dance was going on the women of the tribe kept away at a discreet distance, not daring to come near. Now, however, on its conclusion they approached, decked out in all the finery of the Meru belles, and each with a broad smile on her face, without any bashfulness or timidity, selected a favourite warrior, and a peace ingoma commenced. In this the performers made a ring, the men on the outside and the women on the inside, facing each other. Then, with hands on each other’s shoulders, they commenced an up-and-down motion, raising themselves on their toes and then sinking down again on their heels, accompanied,
by a monotonous chant which was weirdly interrupted now and then by the beating of the war drum, or the savage yell of an excited warrior.

The festivities were kept up throughout the day, nor did they cease at nightfall, as while I lay awake, far into the night, I could plainly hear the fiendish sounds of the heathen revelry.
CHAPTER XXIX

THROUGH THE MERU COUNTRY

Next morning we started off with an escort of about 100 of Dominuki's warriors and made for a place called Kamuru, which was ruled over by Thularia, the chief of Dominuki's enemies.

We had to march through forest and thick jungle, and I was not at all easy in my mind about the safety of the safari in such an enclosed country, where we were liable at any moment to be surprised. I therefore threw out my escort of warriors as an advance and flank guard to prevent any sudden attack on the caravan.

On reaching Kamuru we found that Thularia was very diffident about coming out of his fortified boma, as he feared I should take him prisoner for his share in the fighting with Dominuki. However, he eventually appeared, escorted by his Prime Minister and Umbrella Bearer, and a party of warriors. First there was the usual exchange of presents, and then
commenced the shauri for the release of the prisoners he had captured from Dominuki. It was a very long one, but I eventually succeeded in making him come to terms which were just and equitable to both parties. Apparently in the first instance some of his men had been treacherously killed by Dominuki's warriors, and for every man so killed Thulalaria demanded 10 cows, the usual fine in the Meru country for a life taken. Nothing was demanded by either chief for the warriors killed in battle, as a fine is never inflicted when a man is killed in a fight with his spear in his hand.

When the terms were settled and the shauri over, I sent back word to Dominuki that as soon as he paid the fine of cows, imposed according to custom, his prisoners would be released.

After this a market was opened, and I was able,
with the help of the chief, to procure a good supply of food-stuffs, flour, beans, and bananas, of which I was sadly in need.

We then took our departure from Kamuru and proceeded to Munyezu, still through a very thickly enclosed country and through vast plantations of banana trees. On the way we saw by the side of the path the scalp of one of Dominuki’s men, who had been treacherously speared while attempting to retrieve some stolen cattle.

The chief of this district, whose name was Pymwezu, met us in quite a friendly way. He promised us food galore, but his people were not so
hospitably inclined. They seemed very suspicious of the *safari*, and paid no attention to his orders, so that we got practically nothing here—in fact, the only good thing that Pymwezu did was to bring us a basketful of most delicious tomatoes, which was the greatest possible treat he could have given us after our long and much-felt lack of fresh fruit and vegetables.

I was so anxious to make these last as long as possible, that I gave them into the special charge of my most reliable donkey-boy. I was much surprised, therefore, when I did not see them on the table next day, and on asking Paul, the cook, where they were, he calmly told me that there were none. "But," I said, "I gave the donkey-boy a basketful this morning." "Ndio," answered honest Paul, "lakini shauri ya Hamesi" ("Yes, but Hamesi knows all about it"). I called up the donkey-boy, and asked him what he had done with them, when he gravely informed me that while he was busy repacking a load a donkey had eaten them! I remarked that I greatly feared the donkey in question was a two-legged one—whereupon the rogue hung his head. Such are some of the little trials and tribulations to be expected on *safari*, but when one gets to know the character of the native, one can sympatise with these children of the wilds, and even smile at the want of ingenuity which they display when they wish to
concoct a convincing tale to cover some little delinquency.

I made no delay at Munyezu, and continued the march to a place called Surah, where I was met by another chief named Mithari, who seemed to be a man of considerable importance in these parts. Here, at the request of all the chiefs concerned, I held a big shauri and arranged terms of peace between the three tribes which had recently been warring with each other. Mithari represented Dominiuki's interests, while the other chiefs present were Thularia, Kizitu, and Mundu wa Weru.

Pymwezu did not turn up, as he was evidently alarmed about his share in the fight, but he sent Kizitu in his place.

This man brought with him as interpreter a young and good-looking wife, who spoke fluent Swahili and was loaded down with brass and copper wire and many rows of beads. She was evidently a lady of importance, and one who knew how to make herself respected—a thing most unusual in the wilds of Africa, where a woman is considered a mere chattel. In this case, her good lord himself carried an easy camp chair about for her, in which she sat in great state interpreting throughout the shauri.

By a remarkable coincidence this good-looking wife was an old dito (sweetheart) of my boy Mbusonye, who was a Masai, and it was very amusing to watch
him, for as soon as he caught sight of her, he instantly divested himself of his coat and all other civilised attire which he wore when in attendance upon me, and, borrowing Abbudi's spear, went and made salutation to the lady, and hung over the back of her chair in a most lover-like way. They held a long conversation, but what it was about I know not. The result, however, was that my boy came to me later on and asked me to let him have a month's wages (15 rupees) in brass and copper wire, so that he might deck out his old sweetheart with it.

The shauri with the chiefs lasted for a considerable time, but finally the terms of peace which I proposed were agreed to by all as fair and just. Mithari accepted the terms provisionally on Dominiuki's behalf, so I hope things are more peaceable in that part of the country now. The whole district is an exceedingly beautiful and fruitful one, and it is a great pity that it should be torn by these tribal dissensions.

Quite a brisk market was now opened, and good trade done between the safari and the people in the locality. Mithari provided us with sheep, goat's milk, and food, for which we paid him with brass and copper wire and amerikani. He remained in our camp as a guarantee for our safety, and kept with him, as a messenger, a quaint-looking youth clothed in banana leaves.
Rain came down in torrents during the night, which made matters very unpleasant, especially for the porters who had to carry the tents, etc., next day, as their loads weighed nearly twice as much when wet as when dry.

Our next march took us to a place called Myeru, and from thence we pushed on to Mackinduni through a thickly-populated and well-cultivated piece of country. We had to cross a very deep ravine, at the bottom of which ran a stream. Here Mithari took leave of us, for he said he dare not cross, as the people on the other side were his enemies and would kill him on his return journey if he went with us through their country. I gave him a handsome present of copper wire and amerikani, and he departed quite pleased with the gift.

Meanwhile the safari had been crossing the river by means of the hollowed-out trunk of a great tree which formed a rude bridge. All passed over in safety, with the exception of one pony that slipped over the side. The poor beast fell heavily on to a smooth rock, some eight feet below, and then tumbled
down into the turbulent stream. I thought his back must be broken and gave him up for lost, as I saw him borne swiftly away towards the rapids lower down. Here, however, Jeroji, the syce, redeemed his reputation, for without any hesitation he dived in, seized the reins, and swam with the pony safely to shore. Strange to say, the animal was quite unharmed by the accident.

As soon as we crossed the ravine, the people fled from our path, and at a safe distance lined the tops of their village stockades to watch us while we passed. As they sat thus clustered together in black rows, they looked for all the world like vultures. Soon we came to a solitary hut, and from it heard the unmistakable cackle of a hen—a sound we had not heard for months, for the Masai, Samburu, and Rendile consider it incompatible with their dignity to have hens in their manyattas. Thinking that we might be able to buy a few eggs, I sent a man who could talk the local language to make a purchase with some beads. The owner of the hut was completely taken by surprise and was so terrified at the sight of a stranger that, snatching up his spear, he fled for his life, leaving everything behind him, including a wife and new-born baby!

We halted for breakfast close to this hut, as there was a little clearing there, and we could not be surprised by a rush of the savages if they had any
idea of attacking us. In a short time four old men cautiously approached, to find out our intentions and reasons for traversing their country. On hearing that we were quite a peaceable safari, merely passing through, they seemed greatly re-

"A COUPLE OF YOUNG FOWLS . . . WERE PERCHED ON A DONKEY."

lied and brought a grateful present of eggs and a couple of young fowls. As these were alive, they were perched on a donkey, and so rode along daily until Paul wanted them for the pot.

In this neighbourhood we came upon a woolly-headed and much wrinkled old native busily engaged, with all the zest of a schoolboy, in setting a cunningly-made bird trap, in which Mrs. B. took
great interest, with a view to reproducing it for the amusement of her little son when she returned to England. I am indebted to her for the detailed description which is given in the Appendix. It shows the ingenuity and cleverness of the native, who constructs the entire trap with a few sticks and a string made out of the fibre plant.

As we approached our next camping-place, I had a practical illustration of the state of savagery in which these tribes dwell. I was attracted by the loud wailing of a poor woman by the wayside and discovered that she was weeping for her husband, who had been killed on the previous day merely because he had attempted to penetrate into the neighbouring district. It was no wonder that I had failed in my efforts to secure a runner to take letters on to Nairobi. For some time past I had tried to get a messenger, but although I offered a handsome reward, I could find no one willing to undertake the task, all protesting that they would be set upon and killed by the other tribes on the way.

We reached Makinduni late in the afternoon of the 22nd April, and camped under the shade of some spreading trees. The guide went off to a stockaded village about half a mile away, and brought back the local chief, who promised with much vehemence that we should have lots of food
for the men. Luckily, we were not in great need of it, as we got nothing. The natives here were inclined to be hostile, so much so that I feared an attack; I therefore thought it advisable to keep the chief in camp all night, though he was rather loath to remain. There was very great excitement among the tribe, who gathered in great numbers all round our camp as night came on, and yelled and howled in a most threatening manner.

I had in my safari a man who had been born and bred in this part of the country, and, as I could hear from my tent the noisy yellings of another war party at a little distance, evidently holding a meeting of some sort, I sent him to find out what it was all about. After a couple of hours he returned, and told me there had been a big shauri of warriors and elders, who had been called together to decide whether they should allow us to pass through their country in peace or fall upon us during the night, wipe out the safari, and loot all our goods. The younger and more fiery warriors were for declaring war; the elders, however, refused to agree to this proposal, as they said that the solitary white man would never come through their country with a white lady unless he possessed some very powerful medicine with which he would be able to annihilate the warriors if attacked. The Witch Doctor said that they had never seen a white lady before, and it might bring great misfortune if any harm
were to befall her. Finally, after long and hot arguments on both sides, it was agreed that the safari should be allowed to go through unmolested.

The disappointed warriors vented their animosity in howls and yells round our camp. I therefore sat up all night long outside the tent door, with a rifle across my knee, never knowing what moment they might change their minds and attack us. From time to time I let off a rocket, which seemed to have a tremendous effect upon the howling warriors, for the shouting would cease for a little while and all would be quiet.

I was exceedingly thankful when at last dawn appeared, and I was able to get the safari away from these hostile people. This was the only occasion upon which I was at all anxious about the attitude of the natives, whom I had found most friendly and hospitable throughout the expedition. It is more than probable that this particular tribe, living on the outskirts of the Meru country, had had to bear the brunt of many raids by Arab and Swahili caravans, and hence resented the intrusion of the safari into their territory.

Before the chief of these truculent people was released he procured me a quaint-looking guide named Mukera, who vowed that he knew the road to the Tana river as well as the palm of his hand. So, telling him to lead the way, we marched off.
CHAPTER XXX

BACK TO NAIROBI

Following our new guide through forest and glade we were soon beyond the southern border of the Meru country, and, continuing our march, found ourselves in an uninhabited and park-like tract of country, where, as evening closed in, we camped at a place which our guide called Komongera. We began again to see game here, and it was a pleasure to startle out of the long grass a reedbuck, or perhaps a steinbuck, and watch them bound away to safety. Now and again, in a stony part, we might perhaps surprise a shy little klipspringer.

At Komongera our guide informed us that the Tana was not far away, and that he could lead us to a native bridge which spanned it. I knew there were scores of rivers and streamlets running into the Tana from Mount Kenya, while there would be practically none flowing into it on the other
side, so that if we could get across we should be able to march much more rapidly. I therefore gave him directions to lead us by the most direct route to this bridge.

Mukera, however, must have been rather vague as to its position, for, according to his story, we were always just coming to it, but we never seemed to get any closer, either to the Tana or to the bridge, all the time he was with us.

From Komongera we pushed on through a deserted and somewhat hilly country with fine trees dotted here and there over the landscape. Our path
took us under some of these, and the branches being low, one had to be on the alert to avoid a collision. I was riding quietly along as usual, just ahead of Mrs. B., when I heard a crash behind me, and looking round saw that she had been dragged off her pony by an overhanging bough, while, to make matters worse, her foot was entangled in the stirrup. Luckily, the pony stood perfectly still, and she was quickly released from her perilous position, none the worse for her heavy fall.

Soon after this incident we made our way along the bed of a stream called the Kichenev, and af
last, late in the evening, arrived at a place called Kubwaney, which is inhabited by the Tharaka tribe, whom we found to be quite friendly. These people speak a different language to that used in the Meru country, and they struck me as being somewhat like

the Wakamba in appearance. The women wear beautifully-worked goat-skins, all covered over most artistically with little shells and beads. We noticed some cattle here, and a great number of goats, but the shambas (plantations) were very poor and badly cultivated.

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NOT EXCHANGEABLE AND NOT SALABLE.
Our next march was a particularly difficult one, through tangled vegetation and across numerous ravines and rivers. As we emerged from some dense tropical growth, we unexpectedly found our-

"THE WOMEN WEAR BEAUTIFULLY-WORKED GOAT-SKINS."

selves on the bank of a swiftly flowing stream, which the guide told me was called the Mutonga. I saw that the crossing would be a difficult one, so called for a man who could swim well to go over.
with one end of a long rope. Mukera instantly volunteered and proved himself most useful; without any hesitation, he seized the rope, plunged into the torrent and, swimming like a duck, struggled bravely with his heavy burden to the other side, where he secured it firmly to a stout tree. We then pulled the rope taut and fastened it to another convenient tree on our side. Holding on to this
support, the men were able to cross one by one with their loads on their heads. We had, however, great trouble with the donkeys and cattle, and it was with much difficulty that we prevented some of the former from being carried away and drowned. I got the \textit{safari} to line the rope from one side to the other, and the donkeys were then passed over one by one on the up-stream side of the rope, and thus kept from being washed away.

I had Mrs. B. carried across on the shoulders of four of the sturdiest men in the \textit{safari}, who would not easily be swept away by the turbulent and dangerous stream. Even so, she very nearly had a dip in the river, as at one time they were almost carried off their feet by the current. She herself wished to walk over holding on to the rope, but this I would not agree to, as I feared she might take a chill and get fever.

When the Mutonga had been safely cleared, the donkeys were loaded up again, and we had barely proceeded another couple of miles and were just beginning to get dry, when we reached another river called the Mara, also in flood, and even more difficult to cross than the Mutonga. The same manoeuvres had to be gone through again, and it gave us four hours' hard work before all had crossed over and we could pitch camp at a place known as Kairunya, on the south bank of the river. We
found this particular strip of country a most troublesome and tiresome one to traverse, for we were constantly coming upon unexpected obstacles in the shape of great ravines, streams, and rivers, which made our progress very slow. The prospect was also a cheerless one, as hardly a living thing was to be seen.

At our next camp, at a place called Kangono,
we were visited by the local chief, named Njerōo, arrayed in a gorgeous headdress made of the black and white long-haired skin of the collabbus monkey. He was of a crafty and cunning-looking type, and

his appearance gave one the impression that treachery and rascality were inborn in him; but of course one cannot always judge by looks, and he may have been a very decent fellow.
He was accompanied by a rather fine-looking savage, who carried a beautifully-made Masai spear; this man told me he often went to the Government station at Embu, and was, in fact, going there the following day. As I wished to send an official letter to the officer in charge, I asked him to call for it in the morning before he started. He promised me faithfully that he would do this, but as I did not quite trust him I requested him to leave his spear as a pledge. This he readily agreed to do, driving it into the ground at my tent door. Instead, however, of coming in the morning, he crept into the camp in the darkness of the night, cautiously took his spear from under the nose of the askari on sentry, and I never saw him again.

At this same place another wily native tried to play a trick on us, but unfortunately for himself it failed. He was an avaricious-looking villain, and as he prowled round the camp he caught sight of some coils of copper wire which he greatly coveted. Paul, the cook, happened to pass by as he was gazing over the wire, and told him he could have a coil if he brought a dozen eggs in exchange. On hearing this his face lit up with joy, and off he went, returning in a little while with the eggs. When he was questioned as to their freshness, he asserted many times that they were quite "new laid." To
make sure, however, Paul tested them by putting them into a bucket of water, when he found that every one of them floated. They must have been months old! The cook was highly indignant that a

_"ON THE WAY WE HAD TO CROSS SEVERAL MORE RIVERS."_

shenzi (savage) should try to get the better of him in this way, so calling for the assistance of a few men of the safari, he caught the rogue and broke the whole reeking dozen over his unfortunate head.
to the huge delight of the onlookers, including a good number of his own tribe, who seemed immensely amused at the punishment inflicted.

From Kangono we struck south-eastward, and on the way we had to cross several more rivers, which gave us a great deal of trouble and delayed us for hours.

On this march the pony called "The Mule" died. He had been suffering for several days from some internal disease, and although he was being led carefully along by the syce, the rivers and ravines which he had to get over proved too much for him, and he suddenly collapsed.

Notwithstanding the fact that we had been on the move practically all day, yet when evening found us pitching our tents at a place called Uriyeree, we could not have been more than half a dozen miles, as the crow flies, from our last camp.

At Uriyeree the guide came to my tent and with much gesticulation informed me that the long promised bridge over the Tana was now quite close, and that we should reach it at the end of the next day's march. By this time I had very little faith in Mukera's reliability, but I had of course to be guided, more or less, by what he said, as I was absolutely in the dark regarding the geography of the country, maps of which did not exist.

From Uriyeree we pushed on next morning
towards the Tana, and as I rode along at the head of the **safari**, I was much surprised to see a white man with an escort of natives in war dress coming along towards me. On approaching nearer, I discovered that he was an old acquaintance of mine whom I had met at Fort Hall a couple of years previously. He had heard news at his **boma** at Embu that a European was coming down, and he had sallied out in hot haste to see who it was who had broken the local taboo by marching through this dangerous country.

He told me that my guide was mistaken as to the bridge over the Tana, as none existed to his knowledge, and that the nearest way to Nairobi from our present position was through his **boma** at Embu.

When Mukera discovered that he was found out, he disappeared off into the jungle without asking for any reward for his services. I have often wondered what his game was in misleading us as he did. I can only imagine that he was told by his people to guide us beyond the borders of their district and then decamp on the first opportunity.

Next day, after a march of fifteen miles, we reached Embu, and as we dined that evening with a pleasant party under the hospitable roof of the District Commissioner, I felt more relieved than I can express to realise that we were back once more within reach of civilisation.
My health, too, improved considerably now that the great strain was over, so it was with a comparatively easy mind that I set out next day towards Fort Hall, which is two short marches from the Embu boyia. Before starting we received many warnings from our kind host to beware of the rhino and buffalo which infested the track. The timely caution was indeed very necessary, for our adventures were not yet over, and disaster nearly overtook us just as we were almost out of the toils of the nyika.

It happened that our camping-place was on a little rise on the edge of a great papyrus swamp, and while sitting on a chair overlooking it, I saw plainly, with
the naked eye, the black backs of a large herd of buffalo grazing peacefully at no great distance. I thought it would be most interesting and quite safe to walk over and take a closer view, and, if possible, get a photograph of them. From where I stood I thought this might easily be done by stalking along under cover of a ridge and some long grass which extended almost up to the beasts. Accordingly we set out and walked carefully along under cover, until we suddenly found ourselves close to a single bull standing apart from the rest of the herd. He did not see us at first, but a treacherous gust of wind told him of our presence, and he came straight towards us at a gallop. I was surprised at this, as, unless molested, a buffalo as a rule clears off on scenting danger, but I found out afterwards that these beasts had lately been attacked by several parties, and were therefore very vicious. I was much alarmed at his sudden onset, and having no desire to see the brute vent his rage on one of us, I covered him with my rifle, at the same time asking Mrs. B. to fire, as I intended to wait until he was quite close so as to make a sure shot. The next thing I saw was the great bull taking a header while still in full career, stopped by my companion's timely and well-placed bullet.

I was naturally delighted, but the next second my joy was turned into the gravest anxiety, for lo!
over the rise and thundering along through the long grass came the whole herd, of about 150, making straight as a die for us at a steady gallop, the charge being headed by a bull with huge horns. It was an impressive and awe-inspiring sight to watch the great herd come on at a determined pace, with horns lowered and tails up, looking the very embodiment of savage power.

The moment was a very critical one, and the dangerous situation in which we now found ourselves had developed with startling suddenness. I knew that our only chance was to shoot the leader, as the whole herd would then probably turn aside and not trample us to death; so, saying to my companion "We must drop the leading bull or we're done," we both let drive.

When they got within about thirty yards of us, the leader fell with a crash. On seeing this the whole herd halted and stood looking at us as we lay quietly on the ground in front of them, partly concealed by the grass. The situation was so alarming that the askaris lost their heads and opened fire. Luckily they forgot in their terror to take any aim, and their bullets ploughed into the ground, not ten yards ahead. Had they gone into the herd, they would have infuriated the beasts, and we should inevitably have been trampled to death. The noise and smoke from the black powder made by the
askaris' Martini rifles had the effect of turning them off a little to our right, where they again halted and stood looking at us, undecided what to do now that their leader was gone. Finally, to my intense relief, they galloped off and disappeared into the depths of the papyrus swamp.

It was a providential escape from what might have been a dire calamity, and I made a mental vow that nothing whatever would induce me to leave the beaten track again while on this expedition.

The solitary bull which Mrs. B. had first fired at lay stretched out upon the ground, while the great leader of the herd had again got on his legs and managed to reach the shelter of the papyrus in a very tottery condition.

I felt convinced that he would die there and that we should get him next morning, as of course it was out of the question to do anything further just then, and indeed my only anxiety was to get back to camp as speedily as possible.

When all the excitement was over I asked Mrs. B. what her sensations were when the herd was galloping at us, and she replied: "Something like what I suppose an infantry soldier feels when he is resisting a charge of cavalry—a case of beat them off or get trampled"—which I considered a very cool summing up, considering the grave
peril she had just gone through without flinching in the least.

Thus ended the last of our adventures on this eventful journey, and I was very glad of it as I was not in a fit state of health to cope with them, and had no desire that any further catastrophe should befall us now that we were within 100 miles of Nairobi.

When we struck camp on the following morning I left a gun-bearer and askari behind to search for the body of the great bull. They found it, as I expected, at the edge of the papyrus, and brought his fine
head safely after us to Nairobi, where on measuring it I found the spread of the horns to be just a shade over 48 inches.

The following afternoon we at last reached the

"CAUTIOUSLY SPYING ON THE SAFARI."

Tana, and as I approached the boat ferry which crosses it, I suddenly came upon a native with a bow in his hand and a well-stocked quiver at his back, cautiously spying on the safari from the
cover of a large tree. On seeing me with my camera levelled at him, he dived off into the thicket with a startled yell.

I intended to have camped at Fort Hall at the end of this march, but, as we had to cross the river by relays in one little boat, and the mules and donkeys showed a strong objection to being towed at the stern, it was nearly 9 o'clock in the evening before the whole safari got over. I was compelled, therefore, to remain by the river, although I was anxious to see the doctor at Fort Hall at the earliest possible moment.

During the crossing of the Tana, the mule which I rode after the death of Aladdin was very nearly drowned. It had been hauled across the river with much pains by means of ropes, but no sooner was it released on the bank than it deliberately plunged into the swollen torrent to rejoin the other mule that was still on the far side awaiting his turn to be pulled over. Luckily, there was an island in mid-stream just below where the mule jumped in, and on this he was flung by the flood, so after a great deal of trouble we eventually managed to rescue him from his awkward position and bring him safely to the bank.

On the following morning I looked long at the Tana river, which rolled at my feet, and beyond at the giant peak of Mount Kenya, which glistened in
the morning sunshine. It was with a sigh of relief that I turned away to contemplate the view to the south which showed me that we were almost at our journey's end.

On arriving at Fort Hall an hour or so later, I went immediately to see the Medical Officer, Dr. Lindsay, and was lucky enough to find him at home. His advice was most helpful, and I am much indebted to him for his kindness and attention.

A few more uneventful marches brought us to Nairobi, which I was exceedingly glad to reach. It was an intense relief to feel that I need have no further anxiety on Mrs. B.'s account, and to know
that, although sad calamities had overtaken us, we were now at last safely out of the grip of the nyika.

Unfortunately the illness from which I had suffered more or less throughout the return journey had reduced me almost to a skeleton, and I was in such a low state of health that when the Principal Medical Officer of the Protectorate saw me on the following morning, he sent me before a Medical Board who ordered my immediate return to England.

I said good-bye to Abbudi at the railway station, while Munyakai bin Diwani and one or two others came with me as far as Mombasa. All wished me a good recovery and a speedy return for another safari, so that we might again journey together through the East African wilds.