ACROSS THE CONGO

THE STORY OF
NORDEN'S PIONEER JOURNEY
IN 1923

BY

EDWARD LIVEING

WITH A FOREWORD BY

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FOREWORD

AFRICA today seethes with an unrest born in colonial domination and nurtured by the awakening nationalism of her peoples. Recurring political crisis, economic dislocation and social tension are mirrored in widespread human suffering, abject poverty and lack of education. These conditions bear tragic testimony to the wide disparity of living standards between primitive tribe and advanced modern society; that they should continue to exist in an age of sweeping social revolution poses a grave threat to world peace.

Nowhere have the consequences of the emotional ferment pulsing through the African heartland been more acutely felt than in Belgium's erstwhile colony—the Republic of the Congo. Long a symbol of mystery and adventure known only to the most daring few, this strange, once-forgotten land has spawned a breed of violence that has shocked the international community and embroiled the Great Powers on still another battlefield. Yet, as before, the Congo remains shrouded in superstition and legend, an enigma on the troubled world scene.

This book, based on my father's original published work, *Fresh Tracks in the Belgian Congo*, and other sources, recounts the story of his epic trek nearly four decades ago across the steaming jungles and sun-baked

plains of equatorial Africa. His astute personal observations are combined with a vivid description of his experiences as he mingled among the savage native tribes. The resulting impression of the wild character of this region serves to place the dramatic events of our times into a framework of historical perspective.

Inevitably, any real understanding of the present situation—whether in the Congo or elsewhere throughout the strife-torn continent—must revert to the basic ethnology and heritage of the African peoples. For Africa has fundamentally changed but little over the years, and it is precisely this retarded sociological development which underlies the multitude of problems that confront the emerging new nations.

My father once wrote: "All things must pass, but nothing wholly passes." And so, in many ways, his "tracks" are as pertinent and "fresh" now as they were in 1923 when he undertook his adventurous journey.

NEW YORK, 1962 ELFRIDA NORDEN

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We are indebted to Mr. Rolf M. Augustin, Jr. for the Lukemba photograph on Plate VII and to Inforcongo for permission to include in this book the reproduction of photographs made available to us by that organisation.

INTRODUCTION

THE eyes of the world are turned towards Africa and the new communities emerging into independence throughout that vast continent. Among these communities the former Belgian Congo has inevitably attracted more recent attention than any other because of a too hasty granting of independence or, expressed in other words, because the political and social education of its diverse peoples had been insufficiently planned and carried forward during the decades before independence was so suddenly offered. The results have been disastrous and tragic to the Congolese themselves and dangerous in their implications to the world at large.

The Congo and its inhabitants have been described in a fairly considerable number of books, mostly sociological. But first-hand accounts by travellers have been infrequent and there is one particular record of a journey across this enormous basin of Africa that deserves reviving at this present time.

So far as the records show, no explorer since Stanley had accomplished the feat of crossing equatorial Africa until Hermann Norden made his successful attempt in 1923—forty-six years later. Norden started his journey at Mombasa on the Indian Ocean and finished it at Banana, where the Congo flows into the Atlantic. The two expedi-

tions are an interesting study in contrast, and especially in relation to the crossing of the Congo. Both entered that vast territory from the Tanganyika area and both headed for the Congo River's tributary, the Lualaba. From there onwards, however, Norden took an entirely different course. Whereas Stanley's expedition worked down the Lualaba to its confluence with the Congo, Norden marched almost due westward through the Katanga and Kasai provinces, a far more southerly route.

The remarkable feature of Norden's journey was that he walked much of the way and was unaccompanied by any other European. And even if one takes into account that he was able to stop and take on fresh bearers at scattered European settlements *en route*, it is a tribute to a man then in his fifties that he crossed the Congo in little over five months, traversing country much of which was scarcely known to the white man at that time.

This feat was typical of Norden, with his vibrant personality and his attractively eccentric and courageous character, who made a name for himself as a traveller in the less frequented and remoter parts of the earth after an earlier career spent in building up a highly successful business.

Of German-Dutch extraction, Norden spent his childhood on the banks of the River Ems. In 1886, at the age of sixteen, he went to the United States and started to work in his uncle's cotton-broking firm, learning his trade in the hard way by labouring in the cotton-fields of Carolina. He developed a remarkable aptitude for the cotton business, eventually took over the firm in New

York, and so successfully developed it that he was able to retire in 1911. By then he had been married for ten years and had two daughters. But the urge to travel was upon him. After a preliminary trip around the world, he undertook his first expedition—to Malaya and the Far East. On a ship returning to San Francisco from the South Sea Islands he met Somerset Maugham, who read his diary and urged him to write for publication. The result was his first book, *From Golden Gate to Golden Sun*.

His second venture took him to Africa, where he obtained the material for two more volumes: *White and Black in East Africa* and *Fresh Tracks in the Belgian Congo*. It is on this latter book—describing the exploits for which he was subsequently honoured by being one of the first Americans elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society—that the present narrative is founded. And here it should be explained that Norden's English publisher and his daughter Elfrida decided that the original text required much revision and condensation in order to appeal to modern readers. They invited me to undertake this task, which I have done with much helpful advice and information from herself and also from her sister, Vera Norden Forrester.

Norden's experiences and impressions of the Congo in 1923 would lack perspective without some brief history of the country up to that time.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to know the Congo. In 1482 Diego Cam sailed up the river as far as Matadi, learned of the existence of a kingdom of the Congo, and entered into relations with its king, Nzinga,

whose stronghold was in the mountains between the Congo and the Kwanga rivers—the district that is now San Salvador. Seven years later a deputation was sent by Nzinga to the court at Lisbon and returned accompanied by Franciscan missionaries. Within three years there is record of battles between the heathen and Christianised natives.

The next century was one of flux in the dark kingdom; Portuguese influence dominated. As early as 1530 a few young natives were sent to Lisbon to be educated. Traders came from Portugal and, also, from Italy, Spain and Germany. Dominican and Jesuit missionaries followed the Franciscans.

Three claimants competed for the throne when Nzinga died. The Portuguese became involved in the fight and a massacre of Europeans resulted. But when, in 1568, the Jazza (Zulu) tribe invaded and the king fled, his call to Portugal for help was answered by an army of six hundred, which drove the Jazza back and restored the kingdom to the fugitive. In recognition of this service, Portugal was given Angola. Christianity had lapsed after the massacre of the Europeans. At the close of the century Pope Clement VII sent an archbishop to the Congo, hoping to induce a fresh propagation of the faith. The errand failed.

During the next two centuries Europe's sole interest in Central Africa was as a source of labour. Africa supplied the world with slaves. Even the friendly Portuguese became recruiters and Loanda in Angola was the great port of embarkation. At the end of the eighteenth century Africans constituted one-fifth of Lisbon's population.

With the founding of the Africa Association at London in 1768 came the next great change in the history of Central Africa. There were expeditions to Tripoli, Nubia and Gambia. Explorations into the valley of the Niger, to the Sahara, and Libya and the Sudan, brought Europeans ever nearer to the immense basin of the Congo, which was entirely unknown; the Portuguese had gone no farther than the Yalala Falls near Matadi. Since the explorers were seeking the sources of the Nile they kept to one chief route, which started at Zanzibar and burrowed towards the lakes. The Mountains of the Moon were discovered in 1844. Burton and Speke in 1858 found Lake Tanganyika; Livingstone came and in 1854 reached the west coast, having crossed the Upper Kasai. In his later expeditions he touched the Congo at Nyangwe, and returned to Ujiji on Lake Tanganyika, where Stanley found him in 1874. There were other explorers; Cameron, who reached the Lomami, Pogge and Homeyer, Lux, Schweinfurth, Miami and Potagos.

From the west and north and east now came expeditions to procure ivory and natives—the riches of Central Africa. Banks were eager to advance money for this commerce which the Europeans undertook in conjunction with the Arabs, who in their eight years of establishment on the east coast had had much experience in the capturing and bringing out of slaves.

Tipu-Tib, the son of an Arab half-breed merchant and a full-blooded negress, was in 1874 the most powerful figure in Central Africa. He had gone into the interior with an army of one hundred and had terrorised the natives into

crowning him king. Nyangwe was headquarters of his empire. So matters stood in Central Africa when Stanley, sent by the *New York Herald*, went to find Livingstone.

Belgium became alert. In 1876 King Leopold II instigated and became president of the International African Association, composed of representatives from Belgium, England, France, Germany, Austria, Italy and Russia. The avowed object was a co-ordinated exploration and civilisation of Africa by the seven allied nations. Belgium at once established stations on the borders of Lake Tanganyika. The French opened a base at Gabon. The Germans settled south of Lake Nyasa and advanced as far as the Katanga.

The east coast was the base for a projected expedition to be sent by the International Association in 1877, but Stanley's arrival at Boma with the astounding news of an enormous waterway between Stanley Pool (Kinshasa) and Nyangwe changed all that. When in 1878 Stanley landed at Marseilles, he was met by emissaries of King Leopold soliciting his support in an ambitious project. Leopold proposed that Stanley should return to Africa, not to explore, but to build an empire by establishing posts along the Congo River and friendly relations with the natives. Stanley accepted the proposition. He had first tried to interest America, then England, in the vast land he had traversed.

In order to hide the real object of the expedition a group of Belgians formed a society called the Société d'Etudes du Haut Congo. It was capitalised at one million francs.

When all preparations were made and final instructions received, Stanley entered on his terrific adventure at Boma. He had thirteen companions to help in the conquest of Central Africa. They were four Belgians, three English, three Americans, two Danes and one Frenchman. Five small steamers were in his equipment. It took sixteen months to cover the three hundred and twelve miles between Boma and Stanley Pool, for cataracts made necessary the land transportation of steamers; the way through forests had to be made with axe and dynamite.

Meanwhile, King Leopold's ambitious project was in danger. De Brazza with a French expedition was trying to reach Stanley Pool from Gabon. Two Portuguese, Capello and Ivens, starting from San Paolo de Loanda, were exploring the Kwanga River. Stanley might easily have found either the flag of France or of Portugal planted when he arrived at Stanley Pool. But though De Brazza reached the river first, he had no means of crossing and could only plant his colours on the northern shore. Stanley, for King Leopold, took possession of the south. Leopoldville was established, and in 1881 two of the five steamers were launched and the beginning of the chain of stations to Stanley Falls was begun.

The explorers of other nations were busy. Thomson in 1880 found the sources of the Zambezi in the Upper Congo. Von Mechow explored the Kwanga; Wissman and Pogge the Kasai; Giraud, Boehm and Reichard sought out the riches of the great lakes, and Junker explored the Upper Uele and Aruwimi.

The time had come when the work of the Société

d'Etudes must be protected. On Stanley's return to Europe in 1882 the Société renamed itself as the International Association of the Congo, disclosed its political object, and thenceforth conducted itself as a state. It treated with the natives and obtained from them the rights of their lands. In five years five hundred treaties were made with native chiefs; forty stations were established between the mouth of the Congo and Stanley Falls and from Bangala to Luluabourg.

By now all Europe was awake. Portugal demanded the Lower Congo on the basis of her occupation from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. A Portuguese Province of the Congo was planned. France demanded sovereignty of the southern as well as the northern shores of the river. Great Britain stood with Portugal. The United States came to the aid of Belgium. On a report and resolution offered by Senator Morgan of Alabama in 1884, the government at Washington recognised the International Association of the Congo as a friendly government because, in the words of the resolution, "of the humane and generous aim that it pursued". By this act a new principle of international law was affirmed, acknowledging sovereignty and the title of State of an association of individuals constituting neither a nation nor a military force, since it bestowed a right which until then had never been granted except by arms, privilege of birth or international power.

At the Congress of Berlin, to which Bismarck invited all nations to send representatives for the purpose of settling the African question, Germany was the first European

power to recognise the sovereignty of the Association. The Independent Free State of the Congo resulted. On the 19th July, 1885, its constitution was proclaimed at Banana, and was followed by Leopold's announcement of his accession to the throne.

Slave trading had gone on through all the years. But by the Act of April, 1892, at the Brussels Anti-Slavery Conference, national laws were established against the trade. In the trouble that ensued through the attempt to end this profitable business the European anti-slave nations enlisted the aid of Tipu-Tib, making him Commander-in-Chief in the Congo. The Arab war resulted, in which the Belgians suffered considerable loss before their final victory.

The natives said: "What does it matter? The Arab goes, but the European comes. There is but a new oppressor."

Twenty years after the establishment of the Independent State of the Congo came the world's outcry against alleged atrocities in the exploitation of natives. The name of Leopold II was anathema. The result was the annexation of the state by Belgium, and the administration was given over to the Ministry of the Colonies.

After this annexation in 1908 the Belgians introduced a form of patriarchal government and also began to develop railways, roads and townships. The territorial results of the First World War consisted of certain modifications of the eastern borders of the colony, the most important of which was the mandation to Belgium of the mountainous belt of land to the east of Lake Kivu and of

the northern shores of Lake Tanganyika, now known as Ruanda-Urundi. The psychological effects of the fighting between Europeans and Africans on African soil went deeper. Norden noticed and shrewdly appraised them in these words:

"Everywhere is interest in the 'Africa for the Africans' movement. . . . The apprehension is significant. Should a real leader arise in the generations to come—a leader with vision and force such as the black race has never produced . . . then white supremacy in Africa will be for ever past.'

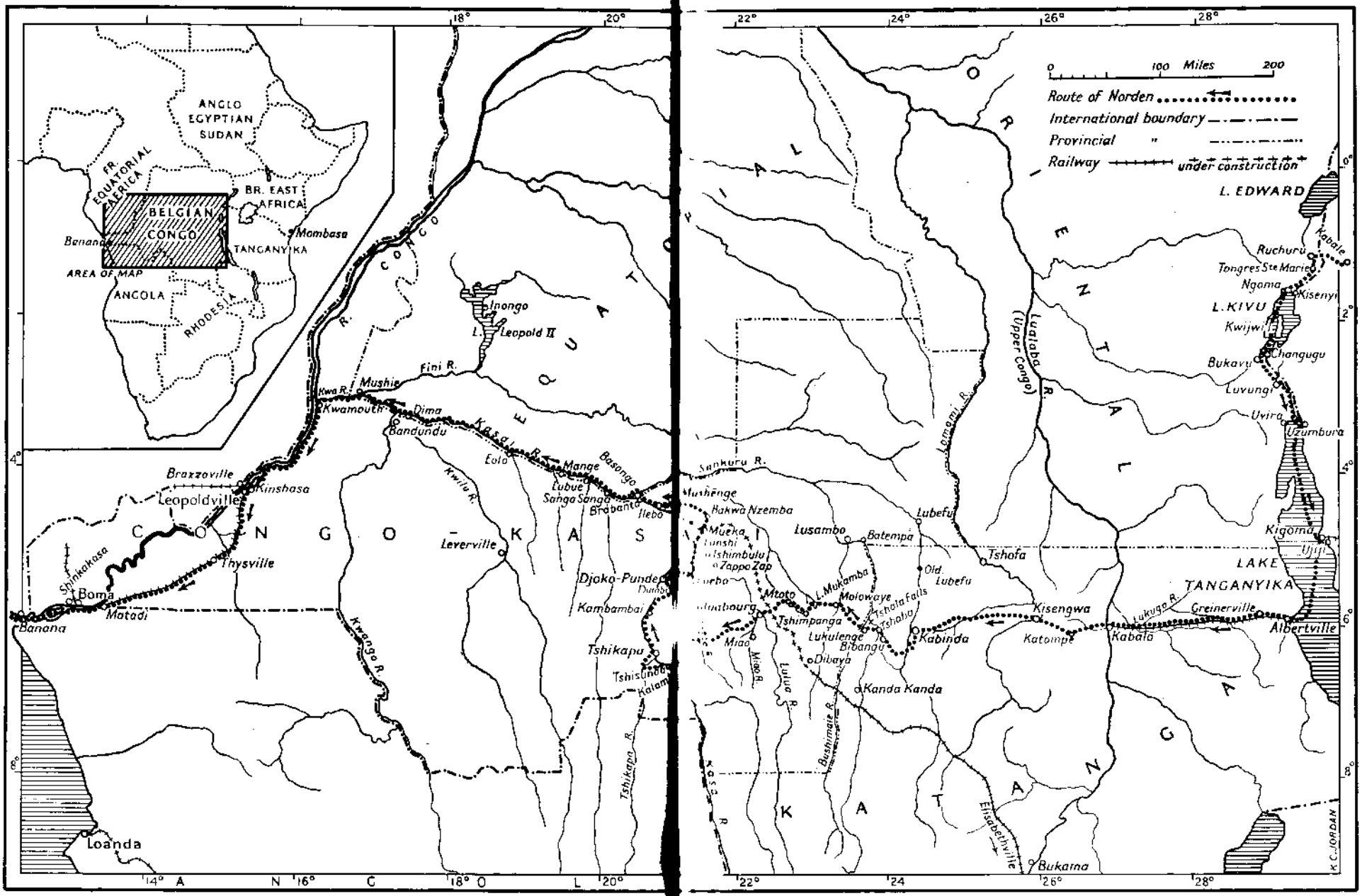
His other impression in 1923 was of the all-pervading Belgian trait of suspicion:

"Suspicion of course must occur in the great game of international relations. It is only wisdom that so sharp an eye is kept on Katanga, and that the development of the interior be delayed for the sake of the frontier. But the Belgian officials manifest wariness of each other; sometimes it is hard for the traveller to obtain information in one district about the adjacent one. The psychologist of peoples may be able to give a reason for this national characteristic which the Belgians themselves admit. It must prove a formidable handicap in the administration of the Congo. If Belgium fails with her colony the want of *esprit de corps* will be, I believe, the chief cause."

London, 1962

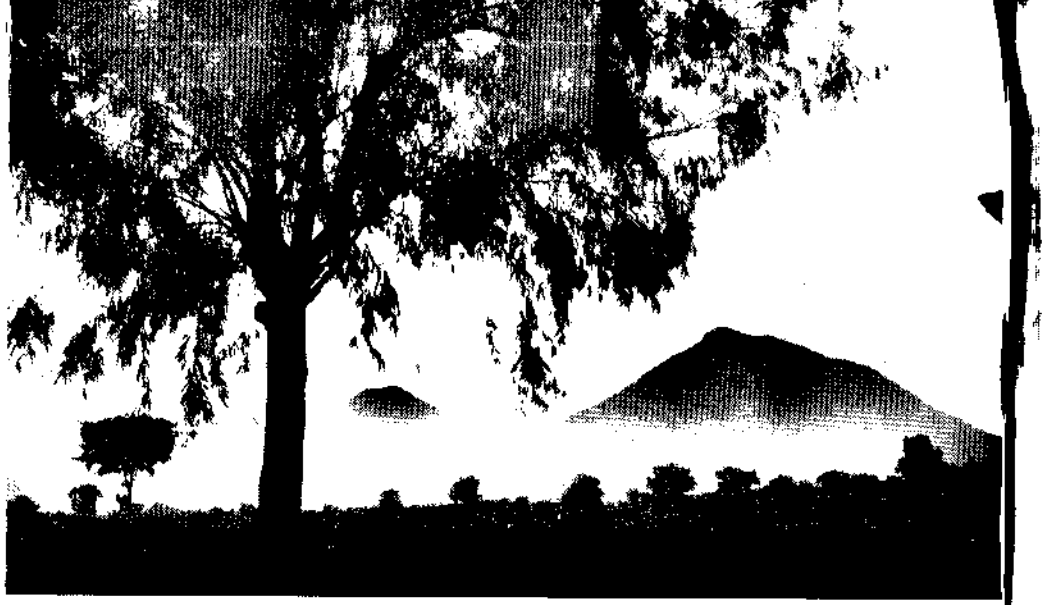
EDWARD LIVEING

Hermann Norden in 1923.



Prepared by F. C. Jordan and based on map in *Fresh Tracks in the Belgian Congo.*

Map showi Norden's Route



(Above) Volcanic mountains on Uganda—Ruanda frontier.

(Below) A *Pirogue* on the shore of Lake Kivu.

CHAPTER I

LEOPARD TRACK TO LAKE KIVU

It was five days since Norden and his *safari* of some forty natives had set out from Kabale, the last post in British East Africa. The rough road stretched westward in seemingly endless fashion across desolate country which differed very little from the landscape they had left behind them. Norden was finding it difficult to believe that they had entered into another region of the vast continent.

Sitting in his *machila*, he had almost fallen asleep, lulled by its monotonous jogging movement, when he was suddenly roused to consciousness by shrill voices shouting "Bonjour, monsieur".

The greeting came from some naked black children who had run out of the bush and were eyeing these newcomers from another country with excited curiosity. That they gave a greeting in French was evidence enough to Norden that he had reached the Belgian Congo. He halted the *safari* and questioned them,

"Where do you live? How much further is it to Ruchuru?"

At this they shook their black heads, having apparently exhausted the limits of their French vocabulary. For a

few more minutes they looked their fill and then dived back into the green thicket bordering the road.

Norden now raised his head and quickly realised that the scenery had changed quite dramatically. Before him lay a lava path leading through dense jungle. Beyond the jungle rose the dark green hills that lie between Lake Edward and Lake Kivu and, in the still further distance, the peaks of the great volcanic range known as the Roof of Africa.

Along the lava path Norden's *safari* soon reached Ruchuru—the eastern frontier post of the Belgian Congo—which at that time consisted of not more than half a dozen European houses in addition to some native huts. He was hospitably received by the *commissaire du district* and talked with him far into the night, gaining an insight into the future problems and excitements that lay ahead on the long trail across the heart of Africa to the far-distant Atlantic.

The next day Norden set out south-westwards in the direction of Lake Kivu. He was now *en route de caravan* and no longer on *safari*. The new term was a symbol of the complete change in custom and atmosphere from British East Africa. He had changed his bearers, taking on forty Congolese natives who bore on their heads all the equipment needed for the trek, including gun, camera, chair, cot and bedding, boxes of food, a phonograph, and a bath-tub.

Only one member of the *safari* through East Africa remained with him. This was his "boy", Barney, a middle-aged man who had accompanied him the whole

way from Mombasa. Barney, whose real name was Shabaani, was an altogether admirable and thoroughly reliable character. He was a Swahili, born in Zanzibar. His fez bore witness to his Moslem faith. His taciturnity did not handicap his diplomacy. He was an excellent intermediary when trouble arose among the porters. He managed his master's itinerant housekeeping with much skill, could cook a meal whenever cooks fell by the wayside or disappeared, and was an expert launderer and mender of clothes. Norden and Barney managed to communicate with each other through a curious mixture of Swahili and English—a kind of composite language which was sufficiently intelligible to both. The Congo was as new a world to Barney, the African from far-away Zanzibar in the Indian Ocean, as it was to Norden. It was the beginning of as great an adventure for him as for his master.

Norden's route brought him into a remarkable region—the borderland between the north-west outspan of the Rift Valley, which enfolds Lake Kivu and Lake Tanganyika, and the volcanic range to the west of this, the rampart between the basins of the Nile and the Congo. Dominating his route as he marched southward for the next six days were the peaks of Nya Mulagira, Karisimbi, Vitoki, Mikeno, and "God's Mountain"—Chaninangongo. Highest of them all was Virunga, rising to some 10,500 feet.

On the first day he and his party tramped along the lava land, following the first part of the route which bore the significant name of Leopard Road. Leopards in this area were numerous and their attacks on man were sudden and frequent. To guard against them Norden disposed his

caravan in such a way as to go ahead himself on foot with a few of his bearers, leaving Barney to bring up the rear, ready to prevent the remaining bearers dropping their loads and fleeing in the event of an attack.

The way led through valleys covered by luxuriant vegetation and long stretches of grass broken by immense rocks and lumps of charcoal. It was rough going, but Norden and his small vanguard made good headway and reached their first rest camp, Busingizi, well before nightfall. Not so the rest of his party which only started to straggle into the camp four hours later. These men were in an ugly mood when they arrived and Barney confided to Norden,

"They say they not care a damn for the *musungu*."

Alarmed, impatient and fearing that he might not reach Lake Kivu for weeks, Norden sent a message back to the *commissaire* at Ruchuru, requesting help and a military escort. At dawn he was awakened by a figure standing at the door of his tent, who thrust an answer into his hands.

"You cannot expect natives who are as little used to porterage as are these in this district to arrive at camp at the same time as yourself. Always expect them at least an hour later. The presence of a soldier will not help. On the contrary, these primitives—a good-natured people—live in fear of the soldiers and might run away if one accompanied you. I am convinced that to-morrow everything will go smoothly.

"I did not answer your letter immediately, because I

will not send out a native at night; the country is infested with beasts. I am sending you the head-man of a chief, with orders to watch over the good progress of your porters. If you are satisfied with his services, you will oblige me by giving him a remuneration of two francs. I am exceedingly sorry for the annoyance caused you. A pleasant journey, and success."

To Norden it was always to remain a mystery, mixed with tragedy, as to how this message reached him. It was not brought by the man he had sent, nor had the messenger obeyed instructions to wait till daylight before starting. His body, clawed and chewed, was found not far from his tent. After that event the bamboo leopard traps, baited with goats, that he saw along the way, had a terrible meaning for him.

However, the head-man turned out to be the perfect solution of a difficult problem. They made an early start next day and all went well. It was a lonely enough path and they saw only one or two natives until they came to a stream where they found some women and children dipping earthenware jars into the bubbling water. Norden identified the stream on his map as the Indata. He was delighted to have come upon it because it flowed into the Ruchuru River and could be considered as one of the sources of the Nile—the only one which he saw during his travels through Africa.

Some hours later they met up with a White Father bound in the opposite direction. He offered Norden the hospitality of his mission, a house called Tongres Sainte

Marie at Lukenga, and advised him to leave the main path for the time being and take another which seemed to lead through impenetrable jungle. After a time Norden began to wonder how long it would take to pass through the dense and gloomy mass of thickets, when he suddenly found himself in a clearing where a wedding party was in progress.

The marriage ceremony itself had already taken place, but he was in time to see a strange procession. The bride, wrapped in a mat, was being carried to the hut which would become her new home. She was held upright and was completely invisible in her wrappings. Strips of hide and many bracelets covered the men and women who surrounded her. These people, as Norden was told later by the White Fathers, belonged to the Banyaruanda tribe and were usually completely naked. It was only on a special occasion like this that they went to the trouble of dressing up.

They reached the mission house well before nightfall. It was built on the foot-hills lying between the volcanic peaks of Karisimbi and Mikeno, a district which at that time was a favourite haunt of gorillas.

Norden and his caravan resumed their journey early next morning along the Leopard Road. It took them into tropical forests through which they marched and camped during four days and nights. This was the Africa which Norden had long imagined, the Africa of his dreams, primeval and dark, silent in the day-time, noisy with the cries of innumerable beasts at night. The great trees, festooned with dense undergrowth, sheltered pigmies, who

sometimes ventured on to the path to eye the passing strangers. There were imprints of the feet of lions and leopards and elephants. And always within view, beyond and towering above the trees, was Nya Mulagira, streams of vapour swirling around it by day, its peak hooded by fire at night.

Through these forests they entered into Ruanda. Emerging at last into open country, they reached Kibati on the sixth day after they had left Ruchuru. There on a mountain plateau, 7,000 feet above sea-level, Norden looked southward and saw water shining in the distance. It was his first view of Kivu, a lake of such outstanding beauty that it had become a legend since it had first been seen by Europeans only thirty years before.

That night they made camp within the protection of a high bamboo fence. The site was on the former frontier between German East Africa and the Belgian Congo. Nearby stood a monument erected to the soldiers and porters who had fallen in the fighting during the recent war. That night and the next day brought evidence of how a European struggle had spread so far as the heart of Africa, resulting in tragedy and change. Norden's life had been spent in many countries. He was a singularly cosmopolitan character, but nevertheless he was German born. His mind underwent a conflict of emotions as he passed through this area, musing on the futility, as he saw it, of what had happened.

Wanting to be alone, he started out early the next morning, leaving his caravan to follow. It was a relief to hear only the sound of birds and not the constant chatter

of his bearers. The terrace-like road wound ever downwards to the lake, making a drop of over 2,000 feet. For miles it was an avenue lined with candelabra trees and banana groves. Later, it led through grassy plains and brush, and finally it trailed away into a narrow track climbing in and around the cliffs and rocks of a mountain rent asunder by that geological cataclysm which created the Rift Valley.

Suddenly this rocky lane opened out and Norden found himself standing on the northern shore of Lake Kivu. Leisurely waves, breaking into surf, lapped the shore, which was bordered with tropical verdure. At the southern end of the lake rose Mount Mabula, sixty miles away. The peace and beauty of this sight made an indelible impression on his memory.

Norden walked along the shore and came to the former customs station of Goma. Its four white huts built of lava rock were unoccupied. He continued his walk, keeping to the edge of the lake and crossing through what had been a wide and bloody no-man's-land a few years before. After an hour he reached Kisenyi, the one-time German frontier station. Half a dozen white houses in a ramshackle condition remained of what was once a thriving European settlement. A few huts and shacks housed some natives and Arab traders. It seemed to Norden that the Belgians had allowed the place to retrogress because it no longer marked a frontier. He found its climate, with its altitude and fresh breezes from the lake, delightful. His caravan soon caught up with him and he had his tent pitched on a stretch of grass.

In the afternoon the lake boat chugged up to the little harbour. The tent was taken down, the luggage put aboard and the porters paid off. Two hours after midnight, when the moon was high, the boat weighed anchor and Norden, accompanied by Barney, had set out on another stage of his journey.

CHAPTER II

THE BASHI KINGDOM AND THE ROAD TO TANGANYIKA

BEING nearly 5,000 feet above sea-level and exposed to sudden tropical storms, Lake Kivu could be as rough as the sea. But the weather remained calm and the boat reached the southern end of the lake in a day and a half. What particularly impressed Norden was the great size of Kwiji Island which they passed at some distance. The captain told him that it was a scene of constant warfare between its fifteen thousand natives ruled over by three separate chiefs. During the war there had been bitter fighting on the island between whites and blacks, for the Germans had a frontier post there.

They reached Bukavu at the end of the lake through a series of channels that twisted between small hills. The *délégué* of the district happened to be in the town and persuaded Norden to accompany him to the nearby township of Changugu in Ruanda territory. It was here that Norden had an opportunity of witnessing the dance of Ruanda.

Women take part in many of the tribal dances of Africa, but this dance was an entirely male affair. A hundred men and boys, carrying spears, came marching to the

scene, giving a war-cry punctuated by sharp calls. Their bodies, naked except for loin cloths, were lithe and beautiful. They wore a head-dress made of the fibre of the banana tree and Norden was struck by the ability of the dancers to keep this from falling off, since a recurrent feature of the dance was the twisting of necks forward and backward. The dance was directed by a man who wielded a whip of hippopotamus hide to lash his troop into mounting moods of frenzy.

After this experience Norden returned to Bukavu where he stayed for ten days with the captain of the lake boat and his wife. During his stay he wandered about the mountainous countryside lying to the west of the southern end of Lake Kivu and collected much information about the Bashi tribe and their kingdom, of which very little was known at that time. The Bashi had only been "subdued" quite recently. In other words they had accepted the white man's rule to the extent of paying taxes. There were still quite a number of "unsubdued" tribes in the Belgian Congo and the tax-collector on arriving in their villages would find huts deserted by everyone except very old people and a few children.

Two centuries earlier the hillsides and valleys of this area had been covered with bamboo forests in which the pigmies lived. But the forests and the pigmies had gone and the bare land was populated with the Bashi and Bulizi. Two chiefs ruled over them—the Kabare and Ngweshe. The Kabare, with nearly a quarter of a million subjects, was the greater power. He owned all the land in his domain and parcelled it out to his subjects.

Norden got to know the Kabare and his family quite well. He was intrigued at his first meeting with him by a small silver box fastened by a fillet to his forehead. The White Father missionaries told him that it was part of the brain tissue of his predecessor. Other persons he consulted declared that it was part of a genital organ. This theory seemed more reasonable, because the Bashi at that time were not sufficiently educated to recognise the brain as the seat of control of a man's body. Whatever it was, this fragment of a dead king's body was regarded as more than a symbol of power. It was its essence and had to be worn night and day.

The Kabare's power over his subjects was omnipotent. It was also hereditary, but not necessarily handed down from father to eldest son. In fact, the successor to the kingdom was chosen from the Kabare's sons by witch doctors. All heirs apparent had moreover to be born in the presence of two witch doctors because they could not be eligible to the throne unless they were born feet first. A son's chances of succession were also improved if he was born with teeth—two in the lower jaw and two in the upper.

So omnipotent was the Kabare that he held the lives of his people in his hands. Norden discovered that he had dealt out death even for the offence of the serving of bluish milk. He was at first appalled by the severity of such a penalty for an apparently trivial offence, but on probing deeper into Bashi folk-lore he found out the reason. The Bashi were cow worshippers. Milk to them was not merely a nourishing fluid. It was sacred. They

would not sell it to Europeans. Men of the tribe could drink it when gathered in conclave. Women were not allowed to drink it in any circumstances, nor were they permitted to eat cheese.

A quarter of every cow killed had to be given to the chief. Every part of it was used. The tail was given to the slave who had herded her. Scrapings from the hooves were worn round the neck as a charm against disease. The horns were cut into trumpets. Parts of the hide were made into drum heads and other parts into loin coverings for women.

Norden was impressed by the care which the Bashi bestowed on their cows. However dirty a hut might be, the cow was always kept clean and provided with fresh grass for her litter. Every cow was named and her pedigree recorded. The calves received better attention than the babies, and the mission doctors told Norden of instances when they had given iodine for use on a sick child, only to find that it had been subsequently applied to a cow's ear to keep the ticks away.

Adultery was a crime for a man and entailed a fine of three goats. A woman paid no penalty. The men of the tribe wore only loin cloths. Those of the sub-tribe, the Ntazi, wore short skirts twenty centimetres long—a badge of perversion. Funerals, except for the Kabare, were never celebrated. After death a body was simply thrown away to be eaten by scavenging animals.

The Bashi were unknown to Europeans until the Belgians arrived in the Kivu district in 1902. Five years later the tribe came down from the mountains and

attacked the whites under the command of a Captain Olsen. A truce took place and Olsen drank blood brotherhood with the Kabare. In that strange ceremony an incision was made in the arm or chest of the persons pledging friendship. Drops of blood were collected on leaves, then sprinkled on chicken livers which were eaten by the two men.

Norden paid a final call on the royal family before he left Bukavu. Within the high reed enclosure of the grounds walls within walls formed a maze of protection, with the Kabare's hut in the centre. A body-guard stood beside him during the audience, for the Kabare lived in constant fear of poisoning. The queen mother came from the large hut, wearing some beautiful ivory bracelets. Norden coveted them so much that he offered her a cow in exchange for them. She looked towards the Kabare. From him must come the decision; all property was his. A word and a gesture was conveyed to her, and Norden failed to get the bracelets.

The peaceful beauty of Lake Kivu was to be one of Norden's most treasured African memories. Flights of duck used to skim low across the water near his friend's house. One evening he brought down an eight-pounder to be cooked in claret, and he had a vision of the future when a *Hotel au Canard Royale* would stand on the banks of the lake and travellers would come there from many parts of the world. But he was grateful that his acquaintance with Kivu came while Bukavu was still a small village, with the friendly Bashi straggling down to it along their mountain trails and never a motor-car in sight.

With a new lot of bearers Norden set out again on his journey. He was still southward bound and his course lay along the new road then under construction between Lakes Kivu and Tanganyika. It was to be ninety miles long and part of it was being cut through the Kamaniola Mountains. He spent a night with the chief engineer of the undertaking in his temporary shack looking down from a height of several thousand feet on the Rusizi River, flowing between the two lakes. At a place called Mohogo he secured his next lot of bearers. They belonged to the Waflero tribe and turned out to be unaccustomed to carrying loads.

In addition to trouble with these men, he ran into groups of native soldiers as he neared Tanganyika. Their uniforms were in tatters, but they were arrogant and regarded themselves as masters of the countryside. This was an attitude resulting from the recent war during which they had been allowed to forage in the villages. Women were their chief victims, for women were the carriers on the road.

Norden became involved in an incident which vividly brought home to him their savage behaviour. His caravan was catching up with a woman who carried on her head a basket containing yams and cassava root and a calabash of palm wine—food and drink enough to last her probably for a week. Two soldiers attacked her, grabbed her basket and passed on. She stood looking after them, quite helpless. Enraged at their action, Norden shouted to them and made them wait. He knew that as soldiers they would have money and he forced each of them to give him a

franc. Then he gave the basket and the money to the woman and continued on his way. But his satisfaction at remedying an injustice was upset some days later when another European, whose caravan had followed his, told him that the soldiers had returned, taken back the woman's basket and money, and raped her.

The final approach to Usumbura at the north-east end of Lake Tanganyika was extremely unpleasant. Before reaching the Rusizi the caravan had to cross a vast swamp. They started before sunrise. For an hour they tramped through swarms of mosquitoes and blood-sucking insects that looked like bed-bugs, but whose bites burnt into the skin like red-hot needles. Even the bearers, whose skins were comparatively insensitive, were so affected by this painful irritation that in spite of the loads they started running at a break-neck speed. They did not stop till they reached the river bank where they dropped their burdens and plunged into the water.

Norden and his caravan crossed the river in two *pirogues* belonging to a local chief. As he stumbled onto land on the far side, he already heard a distant sound of breaking waves. Within half an hour he was standing on the shore of that great inland sea which is to the Congo what Victoria Nyanza is to the Nile.

CHAPTER III

AN INTERLUDE OF CIVILISATION

NORDEN reached Usumbura as the sun was setting over the lake. His caravan crawled slowly behind him up the hill on which the town stood. Usumbura had become the capital of Ruanda-Urundi when the mandate for that territory had been assigned to the Belgians four years earlier.

Arriving there out of the wild country through which he had been travelling for several days, Norden found it a haven of civilisation. Though the European population did not then exceed thirty—it was to grow to 2000 by the fifties it had electric lights and a golf course. In addition to the native inhabitants there was a large and long-established Arab quarter. The Swahili population was also considerable. In colour and features these Swahilis bore a closer resemblance to the Arabs than Norden had found elsewhere in Africa. Barney called them Arab Swahilis and though a Zanzibar Swahili himself he felt very much at home among them.

Norden was hospitably entertained as the guest of the territory's Chief of Finance and also dined at Government House with the *Commissaire Royale*, a direct appointee of King Albert. In these houses he had a curious feeling of

being suddenly transported from the depths of Africa to Paris or Brussels. The women at dinner parties dressed and talked like Parisiennes. And there were other travellers passing through Usumbura, such as an attractive Canadian woman taking a holiday from her business of raising silver foxes on Prince Edward's Island. Then, too, there was a French count, accompanied by his Australian wife *en route* to Lake Kivu. The count had apparently come to hunt gorillas and other animals. He made a profound impression on the small white colony with his large and magnificent equipment of guns until it was discovered that he did not know how to load or fire any of them.

It was at Usumbura that Norden made an important change of plan. He abandoned the idea of reaching the Atlantic along the course of the River Congo, already well-known to travellers, and decided to trek across the province of Kasai. This was a courageous decision which was to convert his crossing of the continent into a pioneering expedition of no little significance. The Kasai route had never hitherto been followed by an explorer for the sake of exploration. It meant journeying by caravan throughout and a long period in the sleeping sickness belt. It meant crossing innumerable rivers, for the Kasai rises in the mountains of Angola and together with the Sankuru, with which it joins to form the Kwa, gathers all the waters of the southern territory of the Congo and carries them into the Congo river itself.

The start of Norden's expedition into what was then one of the "darkest" regions of Africa was to be at Kabalo. To get there was a comparatively civilised process. He

took the steamer from Usumbura to Albertville and, like travellers before him, was deeply impressed by the beauty and vast size of Lake Tanganyika—380 miles long with an average width of nearly forty miles. Its constant movement and high waves gave him the illusion of being on an ocean. After a journey of four days and one stop *en route* he was put ashore at Albertville, half-way down the lake and on its western side.

At Albertville Norden was now in Katanga, the largest and richest province of the Belgian Congo. Since the granting of independence in 1960, Katanga has achieved fame through its struggle for secession from the government of the Congo. The fundamental causes of this development were well under way in 1923. Albertville itself was an outward and visible sign of what was happening. Only two years old it was already an important link between the mining areas in the centre and south of the province and the Indian Ocean. It was the lake port to which the tin and copper of these mines were brought, first by river to Kabalo and then by the recently constructed railway from Kabalo. At Albertville these products were being transhipped across the lake to Kigoma and from there by rail through Tanganyika territory to Dar es Salaam.

Katanga province, as it then was and still is, covered one quarter of the entire area of the Belgian Congo. Its capital, Elizabethville, had grown since 1910 from an isolated station in the bush, with a population of sixty Europeans, to a small city with sixteen hundred white inhabitants. Nearly all the European men were in the service of the Union Minière, which also employed twelve

thousand natives. At that time the Union Minière was already nearing an annual production of 100,000 tons of copper or one-tenth of the world's output. The company was also engaged in developing the province's resources of coal and uranium, the latter of which has become of great importance in connection with atomic energy. If one also takes into account the discovery of diamond fields and tin and the development since 1923 of railways connecting the Katanga with the Indian Ocean through Northern Rhodesia, as well as with Lourenco Marques and Cape Town, it needs no stretch of imagination to understand the desire of the Katanga people to be independent of the rest of the Congo and the readiness of the Belgians to encourage that desire since they liberated their former colony.

Norden travelled to Kabalo on the newly constructed railway, 170 miles long and then the farthest inland of any railway in Central Africa. The train passed through flat swampy country and followed the course of the Lualaba River so closely that it was never out of sight. Great floating pieces of mud, covered with grass and papyrus, looked like moving islands. For part of the way the track was bordered by borasses trees, hollow and worthless as timber, but beautiful to look at.

It was a pleasant enough journey except that Norden had a foretaste of dangers to come when swarms of flies beat against the screened windows of the train as it passed through the swamps. His companion on the train was a Belgian doctor who pointed out to him the varieties of the dreaded tsetse fly such as the *Glossina palpales* which

causes sleeping sickness in humans and the *Glossina morsitans* which attacks cattle.

Norden stayed in Kabalo no longer than was necessary to complete arrangements for his itinerary and to secure a fresh batch of porters, this time forty-three in number. Being on the banks of the Lualaba River, this small outpost was damp and its insect life prodigious. Tsetse flies were numerous, mosquitoes were a plague at night, and the place was alive with jiggers—those unpleasant creatures that abound, in greater or less degree, in most parts of Africa, burrowing into one's feet and laying their eggs under the skin—eggs which must be dug out at once to avoid an eventual loss of toes or even feet. But at last all was ready for his crossing of the Lualaba and his adventure into little known territory.

CHAPTER IV

TREK TO THE LOMAMI

CROSSING the river itself had its perils and problems. It was full of crocodiles liable to shoot out of the water and tear human beings from canoes. They were a constant terror and menace to the natives. Norden had secured the use of several dug-outs, forty-five feet long, and into them the porters lifted the loads they would carry on the long trek towards the Lomami.

All went well except for one particular incident in which figured a newcomer to the caravan. This was Punda who was to create amazement and curiosity wherever she went. Punda was a large donkey who had been purchased for one thousand francs and put on the train at a small place between Albertville and Kabalo. She was Abyssinian bred, fat, drowsy and hard to move. But Norden, against much well-meant advice, had decided that he wanted an occasional alternative to the *tjipoe*—that rather uncomfortable mobile chair suspended on poles and carried by bearers which, however, was essential to any white traveller or African chief, if he was to maintain his prestige. And so Punda became his property and his protégée throughout the rest of his journey across the continent.

Punda showed her character in the crossing of the Lualaba. She was manoeuvred into the strongest dug-out. Unfortunately, Norden had forgotten to tie her feet. As they pulled away from shore, she sprang into the water, almost upsetting the craft and pulling her rope out of Norden's hands. Straight back to the shore she swam and ran to the tree to which she had been tethered. Kabalo had become her home. Barney led her back to the beach, but could not prevail on her to enter the dug-out again. Finally, the help of the *administrateur* was sought, Punda lifted into a whale-boat and eight paddlers brought Norden and his charge across the river. Life with Punda, he began to think, would not be without its problems.

It was finally ten o'clock by the time that Norden joined his porters on the far bank. He found them squatting at a spot well back from the river—a wise precaution against visits by crocodiles. Soon the loads were on their heads and the caravan started on its way.

This was a moment in Norden's life that he was not likely to forget. The crossing of the Lualaba meant that he had put behind him all traces of European civilisation, except for very isolated posts ahead, and had entered into the African wilds. He felt exhilarated by this break and by the prospects of adventure and discovery. But he was the only white man in his party and he could not avoid an oppressive sense of loneliness.

This mood was not alleviated by the first stage of the march that day. The going was heavy. The caravan floundered through an immense swamp. The native bridges, which Norden had been told to look for, proved

to be only branches of trees thrown across foul-smelling, miasma-laden water. For two miles he pushed his way through matted undergrowth and frequently had to crawl on all fours through mud and slime. When at last he reached solid ground he was extremely exhausted and bedraggled. But greatly to his relief his bearers began to emerge from the swamp and even Punda, skilfully led by Barney, followed in the rear.

They now came into a country covered by low palm trees. Narrow paths led between huge mounds made by white ants. There was no sign of human habitation until they passed through a small village of some twenty huts with peaked roofs made of straw and looking not much larger than dolls' houses. Norden was surprised by the minuteness of these huts because the natives were full-sized and, as his caravan passed along, they were all out in the open watching the carving up of a buffalo which had been trapped.

For the rest of the journey on that day Norden took to his *tjipoe* and reached a village of about twenty huts before sundown. Here he was greeted by a local chief—an astonishing figure clad in a tattered campaign hat, a frock coat and plaid knickerbockers finished off with grey putties. His feet were bare except for iron rings on each toe. He was accompanied by two head-men who wore feathers in their hair and wide skirts that reached the ground.

Despite the greeting Norden had a feeling that the villagers were not very friendly. Their faces were sullen, and wood and water were slow in coming. Barney talked

with the chief and learned that the natives thereabouts had no fear of Europeans and were indifferent to them.

"No care a damn", was how he subsequently explained them to his master.

The chief and head-men withdrew to their group of huts shut away from the rest of the village by a high reed fence. Children left their play with snakes to come and stare with amazement at Punda. They had never seen such an animal before. Donkeys were practically unknown in Central Africa at that time and Punda was to make some strange impressions, as the expedition proceeded, varying from intense interest to absolute terror.

That night Norden spent in the centre of the village with his tent pitched under a roof of poles. But his discomfort from noise and the smells of native dwellings decided him to forego such a shelter in future.

They broke camp at six the next morning and two hours later reached a village where Norden called a halt. At the end of an hour he decided to go ahead once more. But not so his bearers who had found special attractions in the way of food and women. Norden had an intense dislike of force and violence, but he knew perfectly well that if he yielded, results on discipline would be disastrous and his trek to the Lomami would be seriously delayed. He handed his *kiboko* to Barney who used it vigorously and with magic effect. The bearers picked up their loads and started on. There was no further trouble.

In fact that day and on succeeding days the bearers started to regale themselves with their own music. This was music typical of the interior, a cheering noise and a

constant one. Beside the *likemba,* which consisted of a board fitted out with metal strips and carried over a bowl to give resonance, and which made a gay sound not unlike a zither, the bearers had a serviceable little drum consisting of a piece of hollowed tree covered with cow-hide. These two instruments were augmented by a gloriously noisy accompaniment produced by bunches of dried palm nuts, which made a fine rattle hung at the hips and ankles of the bearers—a tropical sleigh-bell effect.

To the noise of this mobile orchestra the men would sing real folk-music that grew out of the events of the day.

"The *musungu* has a bad gun, and so the natives have nothing to eat," would be a constant refrain on one day.

"Yesterday the *musungu* gave us francs, to-day he gives us beer."

They were feeling better disposed towards their master that day.

On the day when a young *bulamatari,* on a tax-collecting expedition, accompanied by twelve bearers and twelve soldiers with their women, caught up with them, they burst into topical song:

"We used to pay our taxes in rubber,
Now we must pay with money so we can get our tax medals."

The country through which Norden's and the Belgian tax-collector's caravans were passing was sparsely populated. The myriads of flies which beset them was the explanation. But the scenery was magnificent in its vastness. Plains stretched before them to the far horizon; they were broken only by an occasional mountain peak or the vague gleams of distant waters merging into the bluish green of the tropic landscape. Over all lay the skies of Africa with enormous white clouds billowing upwards into a blue serenity.

The plains were intersected by many rivers bordered by luxuriant vegetation. Between the rivers the land was dotted by numerous palm trees. Across the strange beauty of this country the cavalcade moved onwards to the strains of its own music. And the drums of unseen natives sent forward the word of its approach to each successive village:

"Two caravans. A *bulamatari* with twelve bearers and twelve soldiers and women. Another white man. Forty-two bearers. A Mahommedan head-boy and women. Goats, sheep, a pig."

Punda failed to be identified in these signals. The bush telegraph could think of no known name to describe her. Antelope, cow baby, elephant were some of the signals sent out. She may have been believed to be the dwarf elephant that exists in certain parts of the Congo. But she was already acquiring a kind of legendary fame. Feared in some places as though possessed of a devil, she was elsewhere venerated as a goddess.

At last the cavalcade began to approach Katompe, a large village with an important coffee plantation adjoining it. Eager to see the effect which its arrival would make on the inhabitants, Norden turned Punda over to his young Belgian companion and hurried forward along narrow

paths through fields of manioc to the palm-festooned gateways. Almost the entire population had turned out; the chief was there, his head-men and some members of his harem. This was a picture in itself, but the appearance of the approaching caravan was even more spectacular. First came the *bulamatari*, young, athletic, neatly dressed in white, and mounted on Punda. He looked abnormally pale in contrast with the shining black skins of those who followed. All in that long line of bearers were naked except for their loin cloths. Their burdens were on their heads. Some carried long sticks; others were twanging their *likembas*. After the bearers came the soldiers carrying rifles. Last of all were the women with the soldiers' loads on their heads and with babies on their backs. This was a scene never to be forgotten, grotesque yet delightful, laughable yet dignified, dramatic and colourful, and in its mingling of African and European influences producing a strange sense of mediaevalism.

After a short stay with the Belgian manager of the coffee plantation the *bulamatari* and Norden set out in different directions, Norden heading for Kisengwa—a trek which would take another five days of solid plodding. It was now late July and a message reached him from the *agent territorial* at Kisengwa that if he could get there by the 21st he would be able to witness a gathering of natives to celebrate the Belgian national fête day. Though this celebration was to be by official arrangement the message emphasised that the festivities would be purely African.

This was a prospect that should not be lost. To take

advantage of it there was only one course—to leave the main part of the caravan behind and to ride ahead on Punda, taking only a few porters to carry essentials. These were picked men, young and full of energy. They shouted and sang throughout the forced marches towards Kisengwa and, when Norden started to drowse off to sleep as he rode on the donkey, they would break into a refrain

"Bouke banana—Bouke banana—Don't go to sleep—Don't go to sleep."

Once on that march Norden heard a song that was not theirs. He was riding well ahead and climbing a hill when from behind him came the high, sweet voices of children.

"*Musungu—Bulaya—Punda*" were the only words he could distinguish in their singing. But they were sufficient to make him understand that their verses were a sort of incantation to the white man, to the remote country from which in their belief all white men came, and to the strange creature on which the white man rode. These children had followed the caravan the whole way from Katompe, but because their soft feet were noiseless on the path, he had been unaware of them until they began to sing.

The caravan came up to the bank of a river. It took Norden half an hour to push Punda into the water and even then he had to pull her across with a rope. On the far bank they were greeted by a group of natives shouting with excitement. Punda's fame had preceded her and these particular natives had no fear of her, but an unbounded admiration and interest. In their enthusiasm they led her along a side path into their village so that

those, who could not get down to the river, could view this wonder. This adulation had little effect on Punda. A horse would have arched his neck and pranced, but the eternal melancholy of a donkey is not lightened by so insignificant a thought as the admiration of human beings.

Most of the last day's march to Lomami led through virgin forests. The pathway was extremely narrow. The foliage was so dense that it was like making one's way through a low tunnel. The intense heat of the tropic sun filtered through the vast panoply of trees, but was sufficiently modified to let Norden take off his tropical helmet and give himself more freedom of movement. When they emerged from the forests, the sun was beginning to sink beyond the Lomami, turning the water into the colour of wine and throwing into sharp relief Kisengwa itself, perched on a hillside overlooking the river. From afar Norden saw the Belgian flag, fluttering in a slight breeze from the residency, and a military figure in white coming to meet him.

CHAPTER V

KISENGWA AND BEYOND

NORDEN dined that evening with the *agent territorial* in the residency. A chief approached the table and reported that the festivities were about to begin. He looked at least seven foot tall and Norden realised that he had reached the country of tall negroes.

A sudden roll of drums was succeeded by silence. The silence in its turn was broken by a sound of many voices.

"The chant of the manioc," the *agent* explained. "Their traditional song of the grain."

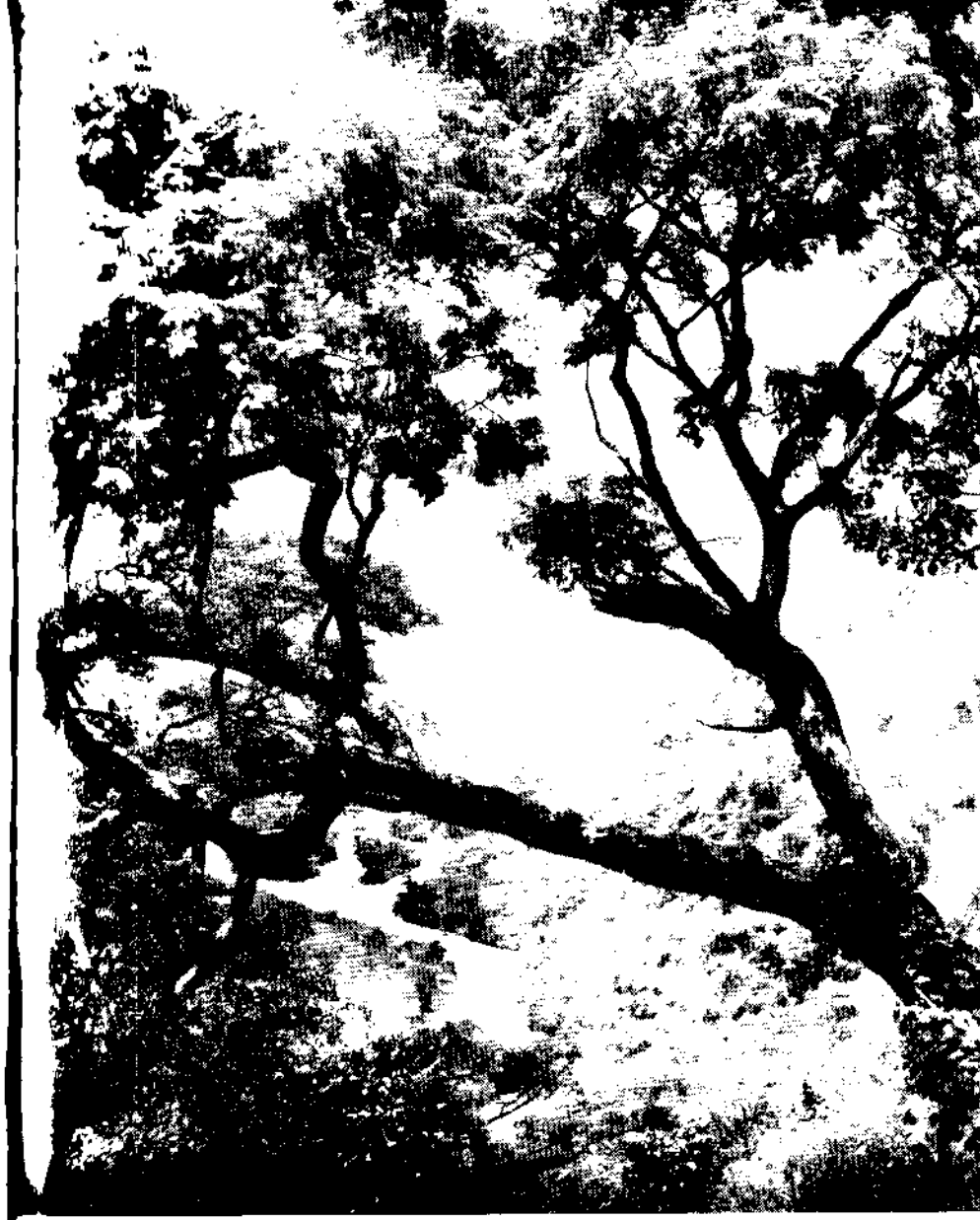
Primitive, impassioned, oriental, it reminded Norden of music heard in mosques or synagogues. It sent his imagination to far times and places; so might the Israelites have sung when they rejoiced and sorrowed in the wilderness. The chant began joyously, and told of the planting of the grain, the ripening, the harvest and the feasting. Then there came a dirge of the seasons when the grain does not grow nor ripen; a time when there is famine and the people die. The song swung back to joy. What did it matter that they sang of the witch-doctor and his power? It was belief in a power that could change famine into feasting; lamentations into rejoicing. A single voice,

like a cantor's, led the song, and throughout came the sound of drums and *likembas*.

Norden and the *agent* went into the porch and looked down on a spectacle equal to the moving beauty of the music. The full moon shone on a great crowd of black people. Young men with feathered head-dresses towered in the throng. There were mothers with naked babies on their backs, and girls, and old people and children. Except for scant loin coverings and savage ornaments their black bodies were bare; their faces as they sang were all lifted to the moonlight. It was more than a festival; it was a ceremony traditional through long generations. Their fathers and their fathers' fathers had so foregathered at the beginning of the planting season. It was supplication and rejoicing, and worship.

But the beauty faded and the magic fled when the dance began. In the interval they had drunk freely of the maize beer which the *agent* had given them in large pots, and in their overwrought state the *pombe* may well have had even more than its usual potency. A circle was formed, and to the music of drums and *likembas* they reeled and violently shook their hips and abdomens, and the women their huge breasts. There was no embracing; each individual danced alone, but with a display and an arrogance of sex revolting beyond words. Sometimes in the frenzy of the dance the women were entirely crowded out of the circle and the men had the reeling and the shaking quite to themselves.

Instead of a loin cloth some of the young men wore a small monkey skin. All carried something to wave to the



The Rusizi on Norden's route between Lakes Kivu and Tanganyika.

In the market of Usumbura, Lake Tanganyika.

rhythm of the music—a sword, or a stick with a tuft of the hair of some animal, or a small tomahawk, with the handle driven full of nails signifying strength to the possessor. Strange indeed in that savage assembly looked a chief who wore a black frock coat and a pongee skirt—concessions to Arab and Belgian custom.

A feast followed the dance; a buffalo had been killed for the occasion, and the heart had been pulverised and taken to make the voices strong. Then there was wilder dancing, and songs that had nothing to do with invocations.

"Highly indecent," said the *agent*, who understood the words. Not that the words were needed to make the meaning clear. They were primitives proclaiming their appetites; admitting the lust that civilisation pretends to forget. Ugly as was the orgy, it completed in fitting manner the epic ceremony of the grain. The night was one never to be forgotten.

After this exciting introduction to Kisengwa Norden spent several days there and also explored the surrounding country. He was still in Katanga province, but in its far north-west corner. Throughout this part of the province the natives were chiefly of the Basonge tribe, not related to the Baluba and speaking a different language. He became impressed by their history and customs and compiled a brief note on them which may be at least partially as applicable to-day as when it was recorded:

"The clan is estimated to have been in existence at least one hundred and forty years, for fourteen chiefs have

been traced, and the life term averages ten years. Kibassa was the original name, in honour of a chief, but was later changed to Bena (people) Kisengwa. When battle and hunger and leprosy had depleted the ranks the clan was called Bena Kisengwa Sala, The People of the Island of Famine.

"The Arabs invaded from across Lake Tanganyika, and established posts on both sides of the Lomami River. One was on the site of the present residency. During this period the Bena Kisengwa combined with enemy tribes against the Arabs, whose power was finally shattered by the Europeans, who penetrated by way of Lusambo. In the newcomers the Kisengwa saw fresh menace, and they fled to the forests, but they slowly returned and settled again on their lands.

"The Europeans found a well-developed political organisation. Fumu is the title of the highest chief, the equivalent of a king. He has four ministers, each with a title and special duties. In court cases the Fumu presides; the Kaminkinda represents the accused and states the evidence; the Kambwa interprets the facts. Last comes the Tshite who receives the Fumu's verdict, and then proposes the penalty. Fines are counted in terms of goats and chickens, and are given to the chiefs. The Arabs instituted a political chief of their own, who received half the fine.

"This system is fully described in the official archives. It still obtains, although most civil cases, especially divorces, now go to Europeans. In other matters the chiefs rarely turn wrongdoers over to governmental authority.

"A Fumu's election is the occasion of much graft. There is a fixed schedule of presents. To the Tshite the new Fumu must give three goats, ten chickens, one mat and one cat skin. To the Kaminkinda two goats, five chickens and one lance. To the Kambwa two goats. To the Kalala one goat and one lance. To each elder of each village five goats and five chickens.

"But, as in civilisation, the hideous expense of election is more than balanced by the perquisites of office. The Fumu is absolute monarch. King of the Leopard, and King of the Hunt, are titles bestowed upon him. Wearing a leopard skin for girdle he presides at the division of the meat after hunts, and of every animal killed he receives one quarter besides a leg, the breast and the kidneys. He must, however, give the breast to the Kalala, and the kidneys to the Kambwa. And he receives also a leg and the kidneys of every animal that is trapped. Each of his subjects must give him three days work a year, and each family must furnish him a pot of *malufa* (palm wine) every month."

The stay at Kisengwa was pleasant. Evening after evening the natives came with drums and *likembas* and played in the moonlight to the *agent* and Norden as they dined together. The *agent* had developed a taste for native dishes, one of which, the tongue of freshly killed buffalo, made a particular appeal to his guest.

At last a fresh lot of bearers was assembled—thirty-six members of the Basonge tribe, pleasant and friendly fellows, provided by a chief whose village Norden would

visit on the next part of his journey. Early one morning the caravan filed down the hill to the river and was carried across it in two long *pirogues*. On this occasion Punda behaved herself admirably and swam straight across to the other side.

Norden was now in the centre of the great continent and about half-way on his journey from east to west. Well over a hundred miles separated him from his main objective, Kabinda, and if his luck held he would reach it in ten days. Plains browned by the sun and broken only by palm trees stretched before him to the horizon. There was a feeling of desolation and loneliness about this seemingly endless and monotonous landscape shimmering in the intense heat. There was no likelihood of meeting up with Europeans during this long trek. Looking back at that particular phase in his crossing of the Congo, he recalled later how important it was to assume complete leadership in these surroundings. He was entirely responsible for the safety and happiness of his caravan as it marched through the wilderness. And as everyone took his mood from the leader, it was necessary to assume a constant spirit of cheerfulness and zest. This was not always easy, especially when his tent was pitched in a swamp or his sleep disturbed by an alarm about leopards or buffaloes.

The custom he had adopted was to get up an hour before sunrise, shave by the light of a lamp set on his camp table, and then call for Barney in a voice loud enough to wake the whole camp. After breakfast he would set out with his gun and his *tjipoe* bearers, with Punda

and a boy leading her, and Bobby, a dog whom he had picked up *en route,* while Barney stayed behind to start the rest of the caravan. It was as well to do one's shooting early and procure additional food before the long march of the day began.

The first village which they reached in this sparsely populated region was the one presided over by the chief who had provided Norden with his bearers. He was short, stout and bearded. His features indicated a strong admixture of Arab blood. He had a friendly disposition and had enthusiastically accepted Belgian rule. He led Norden to his hut, enclosed from the rest of the village by a wall of high reeds, and in the finest tradition of native hospitality offered him the choice between three of his wives.

Meanwhile, Barney had seen to the erection of the tent and Norden was able to receive a return visit from the chief. With him came four wives. His men brought buckets of rice, and one of rice and meal mixed, and a gourd of milk for Punda. That capricious animal drank the milk, but refused the accommodation which the villagers had prepared for her. They had set aside a special hut, but not even the efforts of twenty men and women to push her into it succeeded. Norden arranged for her to be tethered and guarded so that nobody need fear that she would enter his hut.

To Malemba, the chief, Norden offered a cup of whisky. This became a loving cup, passed to his wives, his children and his head-men. A dance was now presented in honour of the visitor. It turned out to be rather similar to the one at Kisengwa. Not nearly so wild, however,

because it was staged in daylight and these dancers never reached sheer frenzy even at night unless there was a moon. But the hands of the dancers were not empty. Some carried a hatchet; others some objects that looked like feather dusters; and others a stick or palm leaf. Some wore dusters stuck into belts at their backs, giving a barnyard effect.

Next day the long journey was resumed. The passage of the caravan through widely separated villages became increasingly a parade. It was led by Norden and his *tjipoe* bearers who enjoyed the drama of their entrance, waving their arms, running and singing at the top of their voices. In their excitement they were liable to spill Norden from his seat, but he did not have the heart to spoil their fun for so slight an accident. Outside each village the local chief would meet the caravan and accompany the white man to the entrance. The populace would join the procession—young and old, men, women and children—running six abreast alongside. The bearers would shout and sing, twang at their *likembas* and make music with flute-like instruments. Beyond each village Norden would leave his *tjipoe* and mount Punda. The singing and twanging would cease for a moment. It was an occasion for silence when the *musungu* mounted the back of his strange animal.

In severe contrast with these joyous arrivals in the villages was the extreme loneliness of the territory between them. It even began to weigh on Barney. Well travelled as he was—he had even made a journey to England in the service of a British officer—he had no idea of distance or

geography. One day he asked Norden whether they were near the coast they had started for. Norden did not tell him that it was still a four months' *safari* away and merely mentioned that the coast was still distant.

"Does our next stop belong to America?" Barney asked.

At last, however, the country started to take on a more civilised aspect. Cotton fields became a common sight. A considerable crop of this was already being grown in the Congo—not only in the Katanga and the Kasai provinces, but also in the Province Orientale. At that time the financial incentives offered to the native to plant, tend and carry his cotton seed to the nearest hand gin several miles away were very small. Women were the field-workers of this particular district. The men did nothing, but their rights to land were clearly determined. Each was entitled to the earnings of his patch after the share of the Fumu, who owned all the land, had been deducted.

The largest and one of the last villages on this trek was Kasonge-Mule. It made an impression on Norden for two reasons. One was the extraordinary appearance of its chief who wore red flowers behind his ears, a magnificent skirt of soft yellow *madiba*, made from raphia, round his loins, and a European frock-coat. The other was his sight of an albino, the first of many that he was now to see.

By now the caravan had left the plains behind and was climbing steadily upwards into higher country. Eventually it came to a wide road and in the distance stood Kabinda set on the summit of a hill.

CHAPTER VI

LAST LAP IN KATANGA

At Kabinda Norden paid off his bearers who had accompanied him on the trek from Kisengwa. He was sad to see them go. They were the best lot of men who had so far been with him. They had lightened his way with their gaiety and singing. They were gentle and honest. They did not pilfer from him. If his pipe or his pencil fell from his pocket when he slept on his *tjipoe*, it would be returned to him. Even a box of matches was brought back, and in those days such an object was a great treasure to a native. But they were on enemy soil, in Baluba territory, and anxious to return to their own kinsfolk.

Norden found his short stay at Kabinda a refreshing change after the loneliness and heat of his latest trek. The town stood about 2,800 feet above sea-level. To the east it overlooked the hills which he had climbed, to the west the blue contours of the Wissmann Mountains. Even then the small place was quite an important administrative centre. A dozen white bungalows housed the twenty-five Europeans included in a population of three thousand. Government buildings, two stores, a branch of the Banque du Congo Belge and a shed for cotton, brought

to market from the surrounding countryside, bordered the square in the town's centre.

The native bazaar was interesting and stocked with a great variety of products. It was an attraction to the women who could be seen walking about wearing nothing but a few strings of beads and painted red from head to foot with a dye compounded of powdered bark and palm oil. The reason for this gorgeous effect was a baby and if the baby was a boy, its mother would also wear a bell at her hip. These women wore their paint throughout the three years that they nursed their children and during that period husband and wife remained celibate.

Accompanied by the Belgian *administrateur* Norden made a brief visit to the kingdom of the Bakelebwa, an intelligent and warlike tribe inhabiting country to the east of Kabinda. Under their king, Lupungu, who had died four years earlier, they had conquered all the neighbouring tribes. Even Mulemba, the chief who had provided Norden with his Basonge bearers, still paid tribute in sheep and goats to the late king's son, Yakombu. One particularly interesting contribution to Lupungu's victories was a most unusual accomplishment of the tribe. It had a caste of notables who owed their position to their skill as blacksmiths. They were able to forge lances, hatchets and knives out of iron from a mine of their own.

Though warlike, Lupungu had been a man of wisdom and discretion. He never allowed unnecessary massacres of vanquished tribes and, in fact, reinstated his captured enemies in villages, making them grants of land and implements. At the outbreak of the Arab war he had

waited to join in while he took soundings. Then he sided with the Arabs, but as soon as the tide turned against them became an ally of Belgium.

On entering the royal village the *administrateur* and Norden went to look at the dead king's huts. Lupungu lay buried in the hut where he had died. His treasures and utensils were spread out on a high platform at the back of the tomb. Norden noticed the pans and dishes which had held his food, and an empty peppermint bottle of curious shape like two glass balls blown together. His spears, arrows, bows and an old musket stood in the corner. An iron trunk held most of his wardrobe, but his favourite shirt and coat hung on the walls near posters that advertised "Gladstone's Rum" and "Dr. Thompson's Savon en Poudre".

From this rather melancholy vigil they crossed a road to be received in state by the new king. He was a boy of twenty, tall and lank, dressed in the blue uniform of a Belgian admiral. Norden noted with inward amusement a wide array of taste and rank in the attire of his courtiers. Some wore only a loin cloth, some were dressed in tattered shirts and trousers, others in Arab shirts and jackets.

The young king seemed divided in his loyalties to the old and the new. Outside his reed enclosure he had built a European house where he lived when he was feeling well. But when indisposed or desiring the companionship of his harem, he would revert to his small house within the enclosure.

It was here that Yakombu ordered his chief eunuch to summon a few of his wives for inspection by his guests.

They were pretty girls wrapped about in brightly coloured garments. But they stood with their faces averted. They were not permitted to look at a free man, nor ever to go outside the enclosure. There was utter silence as they gazed at these women. Even the crown prince—three years old and dressed in nothing but a tam-o'-shanter—stopped his crying to stare at the white visitors.

After this occasion Norden set out once more on his travels. This time he was to be accompanied by a particularly well picked lot of men. The bearers were professionals. Norden had also added two new personalities to his entourage. One was a new *capitao* for Punda. His name was Musesa and he turned out to be one of the nicest boys Norden had with him on his crossing of Africa. He was a Moslem and a bit of an aristocrat, a brother of a Sultan. The other was a cook who rejoiced in the name of Pierre. About forty, and notwithstanding a moustache, he looked more like a woman than a man. His clothes were a never-ending source of amusement to Norden. He was his own milliner, had made his wide-brimmed hat out of raphia and draped it with a white cloth, probably the discarded shirt of some European. On occasions the hat was further decorated with the tail of a parrot or serval. Norden bought him a new shirt, but he clung to a ragged old one and always wore a yellow skirt with a blue flower design. But for all his exhibitionism Pierre, trained by six years of service with a *commissaire*, could cook like one inspired.

Norden was now on the last lap of his journey through Katanga, his objective being Lukulenge on the Bushmaie River, which forms part of the Kasai Province's eastern

border. First of all, however, it was necessary to reach Bibango, a four days' trek through difficult and little-known country.

Going on ahead with Punda, Musesa and a few porters, Norden had tramped for some three hours when he began to sense that something was wrong. They should have reached a village, but none was in sight. They trudged on for another two hours. Still no village. He decided to halt and wait for the rest of the caravan. A conference then took place between Pierre, Barney and Musesa and this revealed the unpleasant fact that they were off course. Instead of being on the way to Bibango, they were on a by-path to Kanda-Kanda.

Norden had no wish to go there. For one thing it would mean a considerable southerly diversion from his route. More than this, he had learned that it was in a district of unsubdued tribes whose hostility to the white man had recently been aggravated by an *agent territorial*. This misguided official had been censured for allowing his soldiers to confiscate the property of the natives who had fled at his approach to avoid paying taxes. He had even threatened to burn their huts and this was the sort of thing that natives never forget.

No, Kanda-Kanda was out of the question. It might be best to return to Kabinda and make a fresh start. On reflection he decided against this. They were certainly in the midst of a wild and desolate region. On the other hand it was a kind of plateau, some three thousand feet above sea-level, scantily covered by trees and vegetation and pleasant enough for walking. Perhaps they could find

their way back to the right track across this fairly open country? Norden decided to take a chance on this and the caravan changed direction to the north-west.

That afternoon he shot at guinea-fowl and brought down a twelve-pounder. Tracks of buck and antelope showed that there would be plenty of food even if they found no villages. But the bearers needed more than meat; they wanted their mealie meal as well. Besides, water was essential and they saw no streams. When they came to another path, Norden decided to take it, wherever it might lead. Luck was with them this time, for they soon heard the sound of the stamping of manioc.

But before they heard that sound, and many times in the days that followed, Norden knew suspense and alarm at their extremest pitch. To be lost for five days in the heart of darkest Africa was a nightmarish experience in itself. Add to this that he was the only white man among blacks and that his caravan was wandering aimlessly through an area of unsubdued and warlike tribes, who might easily take him for a *bulamatari*, and one can imagine how very dangerous his predicament appeared. He certainly had enough guns for protection against wild beasts, but what use would they be if he found himself in a battle between two clans?

On one of these days they tramped thirty miles in order to find food for the porters. Thirty miles in the rolling and wooded country they had now entered were too much for Norden's legs. Trunks of trees, felled by rot or lightning, lay across the path, roots caught at the feet, and heavy leafage hanging low from branches forced Norden

to walk with bent back. Wherever the country was open he mounted Punda.

They seemed to be irretrievably lost in the apparently desolate vastness. Norden called for a conference of his small immediate entourage. Musesa, who was supposed to have some knowledge of this country, suggested that he should go to a village—he was sure he could find it in two days at most—and bring natives to guide the caravan to the track for Bibango. Norden agreed to this, but sent Barney with him, for they were now in surroundings where it was unsafe for one man alone to undertake such a mission.

That night was the loneliest that he spent in Africa. His tent was not pitched. Though Pierre was an admirable cook and linguist, making camp was quite outside his ability. So Norden had his cot, well covered with mosquito netting, placed on one side of the nightly fire; on the other side lay the tired bearers in rows of a dozen each.

It had been arranged that the caravan should follow the tracks taken by Barney and Musesa and the next day they caught sight of a village ahead. Almost certainly it would be an unsubdued village and Norden sent salt ahead to ensure a friendly welcome. This had the desired result and, when he was attacked that night by red ants, the chief and his men came to his aid and helped him to move to other ground.

The days that followed were at least lightened by some humorous events. One of them was caused by Kabundje —always a thorn in Norden's side, for he talked louder

and more incessantly even than the rest of the bearers—who suddenly dropped his load while they were crossing perfectly level land. The earth became saturated with its contents and a delicious odour filled the air. This was too much for the cosmopolitan Pierre who had tasted absinthe and knew how good and scarce it was. In a rage he fell upon Kabundje to administer punishment.

At last Barney and Musesa rejoined the caravan, bringing a guide with them. In his joy their master increased the wages of Musesa and Pierre. And he even forgave Kabundje. But they were still in untravelled territory and among unsubdued tribes. It was an eerie experience to know that hostile natives lurked behind the bushes that bordered their route, to catch an occasional glimpse of malevolent eyes peering at them through the interstices of thick foliage. For once Norden blessed the tropical downpour of rain that now descended on them. Bow strings do not stretch when wet.

The hardest trek of all was during the forenoon before they reached Bibango. Their pathway took them down semi-precipitous cliffs that constantly succeeded each other until they finally came to the bottom of an abyss and a broad stream coloured by red clay. Crossing this stream was like wading through a river of blood. When at Bibango Norden described it, no one had heard of it and they all expressed regret that he had made no definite record of its location. Had he been less eager, he was to reflect in after years, to find his way back to civilisation, he might have given his name to this strange little river.

Gaining a ridge, they suddenly came out on to a road

of fair width—a road with a track of a motor-cycle on it. Norden sent a runner ahead and before long saw two white men approaching him. They were fellow-countrymen, Americans, and they could have been no more astonished than Norden himself at the tears of pleasure and relief which rolled involuntarily down his cheeks.

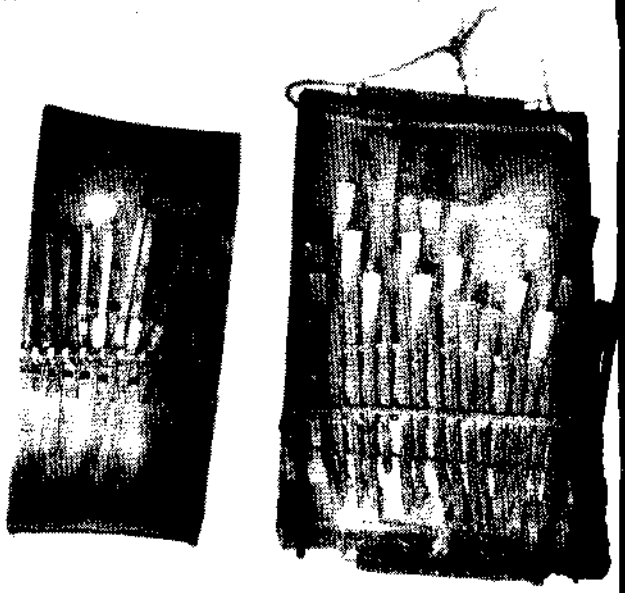
Bibango was the centre of an American Presbyterian Congo mission which was doing pioneer medical work among the native population of the area, especially in combating the prevalence of sleeping sickness. There Norden rested for a few days to recover from his recent ordeal.

He was soon on his way again and after a five-hour march from Bibango reached a small village called Tshaba where a Belgian company had established three years earlier a station for buying cotton. He had intended to stay one night, but remained a week. It will be recalled that he was a cotton broker and expert, and here he found himself in the centre of Africa in the extremely congenial company of another cotton man. It was a bachelor establishment and the two men talked to their hearts' content at the end of the day. The Belgian's conviviality exactly suited his guest's mood. They would start the evening with sundowners at five o'clock and it would be eleven before they called for a chop. On several nights they did not finish eating until an hour or so before sunrise.

The cause of these sumptuous repasts was close at hand. Tshaba lay on the banks of the Lubilash or Upper Sankuru River. Norden spent his days along its banks, hunting hippopotamus and shooting wild fowl. There was conse-

Young girl preparing Manioc—staple Congolese cereal.

(On right) Two types of *Lukemba*—a musical instrument played by some of Norden's bearers.



(Below) The *Madimba*—musical instrument of the Baluba.

quently a profusion of meat. His bearers also lived riotously on it, supplementing it with manioc from the fields and a vegetable out of the manager's garden which looked like spinach.

Downstream, some miles beyond the village, the Lubilash cascaded in a white foam of torrent between high rocks verdant with tropical bushes. Just below these falls at Ishala there was some really exciting fishing to be had. It was there that Norden made his first acquaintance with the binga, the only fish feared by crocodiles. It was a formidable creature with a jaw containing twenty teeth an inch long, but it made admirable eating.

Norden found it difficult to drag himself away from the day-time sport and the nocturnal conviviality of Tshaba, but Kasai Province was not far away now and the prospect of new landscape and new tribes to encounter made its inevitable appeal to him. In a day's march his caravan reached the Bushimaie River which marked the border between Katanga and Kasai. All through that day he was impressed by the changed appearance of the natives. They were more fully dressed, their faces were more lively, and they carried themselves with a spring in their gait. The villages, too, had an air of well-being.

This air of comparative prosperity was accounted for by the fact that they were entering the outskirts of the Congo's diamond belt, which had already been well developed since 1906. In that year King Leopold had initiated the Forminiére with the financial assistance of a group of American mining interests and the Société Générale, the Belgian bank. This organisation had estab-

lished its Congo headquarters much further west, at Tshikapa in Kasai, where the main diamond mining was being conducted. But at Lukulenge, which Norden reached that day, it was operating a small mine for the production of diamonds, mostly of industrial grade.

For a few days Norden stayed in the European quarter of Lukulenge, built on a bluff about a thousand feet above the Bushimaie. Then he moved on across the river into Kasai.

CHAPTER VII

THE WAY TO LULUABOURG

LULUABOURG, its capital, was Norden's first main objective in Kasai. He could have taken one of the roads which was fairly direct and passable except that it meant crossing a number of rivers. But he decided on a less direct route and one which would take him past the sacred lake of Mukamba. This was to prove a journey through wild, difficult and hostile country.

The caravan crossed the river without mishap except that two porters, who were afraid of the water and feigned sickness, had to be tied up in one of the *pirogues*. Once across, their return to health was astonishingly rapid.

Punda behaved herself perfectly until she reached the opposite side. That they had left behind the worst of the tsetse belt became apparent when they stopped at a farm to stock up with food. Grazing cattle, interspersed with horses, were to be seen everywhere. Unfortunately, Norden's survey of this peaceful scene was suddenly interrupted by the development of a passionate romance between the donkey and one of the stallions. Punda proved extremely obstinate when asked to forsake her new friend.

The result was a late start and the caravan had to travel through the heat of the day. About three o'clock it reached

a small village. Norden left the greater part of it there to rest and rode onwards to secure further stocks of food. The heat became rather less oppressive as the afternoon wore on and they climbed steadily into hilly country. It was interesting, too, to see the change in the racial appearance of the natives. Their features were less heavy, their skins almost the colour of *café au lait*, and in the villages quite a number of albinos appeared from the huts as his small cavalcade passed through.

Late that day Norden reached a village pleasantly situated on high ground and overlooking a profusion of lower hills and valleys silvered by streams. It rejoiced in the mellifluous name of Bombo Chimpagna, but its *sultani*, or chief, was anything but friendly. Norden had great difficulty in extracting supplies of food from him and they were only produced after he had given him a fierce shaking.

The need for larger quantities of provisions had arisen from the growing size of the caravan. It now comprised fifty-eight men, eight women, four babies, Punda, Bobby the dog, two goats and one pig. Like a rolling stone gathering moss, Norden was collecting an ever-increasing retinue as his tracks went forward across Africa. Alien objects caught and clung. They were mostly women. Pierre had acquired a woman as an "assistant cook", another as a "dishwasher". Musesa had found a wife who was supposed to cook for Punda and Bobby. Norden had been compelled to augment his bearers in order to transport a growing collection of trophies and specimens. In addition to more men taken on at Lukulenge, he still had two

dozen who had accompanied him the whole way from Kabinda. The further the bearers left their home behind them, the less likely were they to desert him. Many tribes in the Kasai were hostile to those of the Lomami. And cannibalism was still by no means uncommon. Already that year two Kasai chiefs had been put in the pot by their own tribes. Such news travelled fast. The men from Lomami had good reason to stick close to the caravan.

From Bombo Chimpagna the track went due north to Molowaie, a place where the Lubi River would have to be crossed. But before that there were many mountain streams to be waded through. Here in a region three thousand feet high between two rivers flowing northward the going was hard and the nights were chilly. At six in the morning the men would stand shivering round the remains of the camp fire and it was an effort to put the weird medley of human beings and animals into movement. But when the sun, a great red orb, rose over the eastern hills, the party was soon warm and childishly happy again. Though six men, unable to stand up to the change in conditions, had to be discharged at one village, they were replaced by another lot who turned out to be an admirable asset to morale. They at once introduced a marching song to the caravan which was spontaneously taken up by the men from the Lomami. So harmonious and so contagious was it that even Norden joined in the chorus:

"Pandugway pandugo pandugotela
Dangutela pandugo pandugway."

He never got to know the meaning of the words and, as he afterwards recorded, it was quite likely that he was helping to make those African hillsides resound with insults to himself.

At Molowaie, which turned out to be only a small village, there was more trouble about securing food and once again Norden had to compel the local *sultani* to supply it. They left the village early the next morning and crossed the Lubi River without difficulty. They now headed westward through a landscape very different from the one they had left behind. Vast barren plains stretched before them. They travelled along sandy paths. The sun beat down pitilessly on them out of a cloudless sky. There was no protection from it—no palm trees and very few villages where they could rest in the shade of huts. Long before they eventually reached a village they had run out of water brought from the Lubi.

The daily contest for food and water in this desolate region continued. In the widely separated villages they were met with sullen hostility and Norden had to threaten the chiefs with his revolver to obtain supplies. He was in no doubt about the dangerous position in which he stood as the result of having to take these threatening measures. At night he posted a strong guard round his tent, always selecting it from men not belonging to any tribes in the local territory.

He had a presentiment that sooner or later some act of tragedy would occur and this was confirmed when a *sultani,* who had been subdued, escorted him to the edge of his village. As he seated himself in his *tjipoe* and the

bearers started forward, an arrow whizzed past them. A second arrow grazed the neck of the rear bearer. It was a mere scratch, not even appearing to warrant the iodine which Norden carried to paint on small abrasions. But the boy was dead within four hours; the arrow had been poisoned. They buried his body in the hot sandy plain.

At last they reached Lake Mukamba lying fresh, cool and invitingly beautiful in a cradle of bare hills. The appearance of this stretch of water made such a strange contrast with its desolate surroundings that Norden realised the secret of its sacredness to the natives. The legends attached to it were numberless. A giant lay on his back at the bottom and, whenever he lifted his finger or breathed, the surface of the water broke into ripples. To venture on the lake in a boat was to court disaster; the giant would rise and tremendous waves would drown the invader. The forefathers of some of the local tribes were believed to have come from the bottom of the lake. Other legends told that Mukamba was created by a deluge which swallowed many villages and that the cattle and people now lived in its depths. The lake gave forth queer noises at night and no bird could fly over it without dropping into its waters. None of this legendary veneration was shared by Europeans who had studied Mukamba and its environment. Their opinion was that its waters drained into the Sankuru River; and they had only discovered one species of fish in it—the silure.

They broke camp on the shores of the lake next morning and resumed their monotonous trek westward across the shadeless plains. But they made good progress and

reached Mutoto, a station of the American Presbyterian Congo mission, some twenty-five miles away, by the late afternoon. Even before he had reached the Kasai border Norden had been living and moving among the Baluba and their sub-tribes. It was here, at Mutoto, that he at last found sufficient time on his hands to record some notes on their customs. These notes were mostly the result of information gathered along the route in conversations with Pierre, with his knowledge of the various dialects and his genius for making contacts.

"When a man dies," Norden recorded in these notes, "whatever he has owned passes to his eldest son, who must divide with his brothers and the brothers of his father. In this division the mother of the inheriting son must be given to a brother by another woman, or to an uncle, for a man may not possess his own mother. A father may inherit all of a dead son's property except the wives; a man may not possess women who have been wives to his son.

"At marriage, the syllable Ba is set before a woman's name. As a rule, women, themselves property, do not possess property, but there are exceptions. It sometimes happens that a chief wishes his daughter to become a *cheffesse*. He gives her slaves and goats, and she has a village of her own wherein she collects taxes and settles palavers. She does not marry, but calls to herself whatever man she desires. When a *cheffesse* dies her property returns to her father if he be living. If dead, her brothers inherit.

"Elaborate are the birth customs. An old woman acts as

midwife, and neighbouring women gather in the hut to which the young mother has gone; the child must not be delivered in her own hut. Pots of hot water await the coming of the baby; it is sprayed until it cries; the mother herself severs the umbilical cord. Then the baby is washed, powdered with earth, and wrapped in a banana leaf. It looks like a wax doll; the skin will not become black until the sun has worked its chemistry on the pigment.

"The husband may not come into the presence of the young mother for a month. He hedges her hut with palms. In eight days she may walk outside, but not be seen by passers-by. A few days after the birth she covers herself with red paint, and, if the child is a boy, dons the bell she wears at her hip. For three years she nurses the child; should she in that time nurse another woman's baby, her own would die. Banana trees are planted when a baby is born; a female tree for a girl, a male tree for a boy.

"A bit of ritual not to be omitted is the blowing into the ear of a newly born child, for thus intelligence is given it. A stupid grown-up is asked, "Did your mother not blow into your ears?"

"Twins are events of great importance. Two gifts instead of one must be made to the father; two chickens, two eggs. In meeting his friends he must twice say *moyo* (life) instead of once. Both the father and mother wear two loin cloths, and whiten their faces with clay.

"Rich children are given bracelets or anklets. And all, of whatever station, must have a string put about the waist, to be worn always, until death."

When he set out from Mutoto for Luluabourg, Norden left behind the arid plains and entered into hilly country covered by dense tropical jungle. He had a new lot of bearers, but Barney, Pierre, Musesa and their male and female helpers remained with him. He was now on the outskirts of the Zappo-Zap territory of which Luluabourg was the heart.

Zappo-Zap had become a famous name in the Congo. A member of the Basonge tribe, he had revolted against his tribal leader, Pania Mutambo, and with his warriors established a tribe of his own. As time went on, the wars of the new tribe against the neighbouring Baluba and other tribes became something more exciting than fighting for land. It was women who now came into the picture, for the Zappo-Zap women were renowned for their comeliness of face and body, and the men of the tribe fought ruthlessly to retain possession of these coveted creatures.

Norden's new caravan started off at a furious pace and it occurred to his mind that it was the prospect of these famous beauties that sent its members tearing along the track. He caught up with them at the steep bank of a river, the Moisengoma. It was not much wider than a street, but the native bridge thrown across it gave him some forebodings. Made of twigs and tendrils, it was suspended from trees on the opposing banks. Fortified by a few wobbly poles in the middle, it was nothing more than a swinging net with meshes a foot apart. The jungle gloom and a long drop to the rushing water did not increase Norden's confidence. A porter, carrying a coop of chickens and a lamp, missed his footing and had great

difficulty in extracting himself without losing hold of his precious burdens.

For Punda the bridge was impossible. The only course of action was to push her into the rapid current and trust to her ability to swim through it. Three of the bearers volunteered to swim alongside her. Others clung to the bridge and held on to the rope which Norden had tied round her neck. But near the far bank she became caught in the mud and tangle of growth under the water. Down she sank until Norden could only see her head with her eyes blinking pitifully. Her predicament seemed so hopeless that he got ready to end her misery with a bullet. But Barney excelled himself. Pulling and hauling, and shouting to the others to help, he managed at last to drag her out and she struggled on to land.

Next day the caravan had to cross a much wider river, the Lulua, but the *administrateur* provided *piroques* and efficient boatmen, so that no difficulty was experienced. On the farther side they were soon approaching Luluabourg and Norden was astonished by the appearance of the native population. These people looked to him amazingly different from any of the natives that he had so far seen since he entered the Belgian Congo. The men and women wore skirts of European make. Everyone looked happy. And every passer-by wore a hat which, as he subsequently noted down, was "something to make you open your eyes after months without seeing one hat per thousand heads".

CHAPTER VIII

SLAVES AND WOMEN

NORDEN found Luluabourg very much to his liking. The station was one of the first established in the Kasai and Norden came to regard it as one of the finest in the Congo. It was set in the same kind of highland scenery as that through which he had been passing and at a height of two thousand feet overlooking the Lulua River. The mornings were misty, the nights cool. The few streets were gay with the prettily dressed and comely Zappo-Zap women.

At the time of his stay there a wide boulevard leading into the town was being completed. The roadmakers were women and they worked with a gaiety that was pleasant to watch. They sang all day. Their wages took the form of a bucket of salt which they promptly sold by the teaspoonful in the bazaar, coining what was for them a considerable amount of money.

The *administrateur,* who lent Norden a brick house, was a *vieux Congolais* official of the kindliest type. He was like a father to his people and so engrossed in his work that he had not been back to Belgium for twelve years. The veranda of his house was his courtroom, and there at any time from early morning until

evening Norden would find a palaver under way.

"There is hardly a palaver that does not have to do with a woman," the *administrateur* remarked. "Or slaves," he added.

The procedure adopted for the palavers was more or less uniform. Natives with a grievance would choose the best talker among them to present their case to the *administrateur.* Complainant, defendant and witnesses would appear to be questioned. A pair of soldiers would keep back the interested crowd.

One morning Norden witnessed a case which led to the liberation of a handsome young slave-girl not more than seventeen. She was dressed in a white calico costume neatly tied round her waist with a coloured band and in a simple but elegantly adjusted turban—a costume which usually denoted a *menagère* or a soldier's wife. And it was because she wished to marry a soldier—a sergeant—that she was trying to win her freedom from the young chief, whose father had owned her parents, and to whom she in turn belonged. Already there had been much palaver between the *administrateur* and the chief, and the question of remuneration had been settled.

The chief was the first to arrive for this final palaver. He was very tall and his height was accentuated by a feathered head-dress. A chain of leopard teeth encircled his breast; he wore a short raphia skirt around his hips. He was followed by his head-men. Next came the girl, who walked up the steps of the veranda alone. Her future husband waited for her on the lawn. There was an interchange of grave words between the *administrateur*

and the chief. After this the girl and the chief signed a document with their thumb prints. Then the girl fell prostrate, kissing the young chief's garment and the ground before his feet.

On another occasion Norden saw on the *administrateur's* table a pair of suspenders, some pieces of *madiba*, and a pile of Saint Andrew's crosses—eight-inch pieces of copper worth seven francs in the currency of that time. The Congolese regarded these crosses as quite the most dependable currency. It was the only one that was never refused. After all, they argued to themselves, cloth could rot and cattle die, but neither of these fates could happen to copper.

"That's a dowry returned by a girl's father to her husband," explained the *administrateur*. "Another divorce."

"Are many of these dowries brought to you?" Norden asked.

"Many!" he replied, "you would be astonished at the number."

All this was symptomatic of changing ways nearly forty years ago in Central Africa and, in particular, a growing revolt among its young womenfolk against the slavish conditions imposed upon them through the centuries.

Elsewhere, Norden had witnessed a divorce case in which the husband had protested,

"The girl is my property. I have bought her."

"If she is beaten again, she will go back to him", the local chief had blithely remarked to the *commissaire*. "She is his property."

But the girl stood firm.

"Do with me what you like. I will not go back to him. He has too many wives and he beats me with a *kiboko*."

The desire for greater emancipation was not the only cause for divorces. At a later stage of his journey a Belgian official was to cite to Norden the case of a young woman who asked for release from her marriage because her husband liked eating an animal which was taboo to her tribe.

"How can I be wife to a man who eats bush-buck?" she asked.

It was a habit which struck at the heart of her religious faith.

Sexual relations and problems had constantly to be dealt with by Norden in the supervision of his own caravan. His bearers were liable to make love to women of villages through which they passed and palavers with their husbands would result. These delayed progress and so had to be avoided at all possible cost. On Pierre especially, whose interests in cooking and languages were more than equalled by his interests in women, Norden had always to keep a vigilant eye. On several occasions he prevented the addition of another woman by Pierre to the caravan. Eventually, Pierre concluded that his affairs must be arranged less informally and one day approached his master for fifty francs in advance on his wages.

"I want to buy a soldier's wife," he explained.

"But you have one wife with you already," Norden answered. "And a slave girl as well."

"But this is a Zappo-Zap girl," Pierre said smilingly.

"The soldier will sell her because she goes with other men."

As Norden well knew, these girls with their clear-cut features and sparkling eyes were irresistible to a connoisseur like Pierre. But he hardened his heart and refused the request because the tail of his caravan was already complicated enough. This tail had existed for some time before he became aware of it and its discovery was accidental. He had one day followed behind his bearers instead of preceding them and was astonished to find straggling along the trail a bevy of beauties who were obviously part of his caravan.

Norden was the last man to entertain puritanical ideas on these habits of sexuality. He merely kept them in reasonable check to prevent the slowing down of his expedition. He was by no means against the female additions to his equipage so long as it did not become too swollen. A tail to a caravan was the custom of the country. Soldiers were permitted to take their wives. Besides, the bright calico, which he frequently noticed after a European and his bearers had passed, told its own tale that the whites set no hard rule of chastity for themselves.

Sex relations, as Norden noted on this expedition across Africa, of European men and native women did not differ very much at that time between one colony and another. But though the status of the *menagère* in the Belgian Congo did not vary in essence from that of the native housekeeper elsewhere, with their floating populations of white men, he was astonished by a certain divergence in attitude. The relationship between the Belgian master

Baluba women near Kabinda decorating earthenware.

Waterfall on the Lulua, Kasai Province.

and his concubine was not only openly admitted, but almost embarrassingly advertised.

The *menagère* in this Belgian colony, as it then was, nearly always possessed not only superior looks, but also superior intelligence to other women in the vicinity. She would always dress in semi-European fashion, often in a brightly coloured blouse and skirt. She did little work, for she had a personal maid, called a *boyesse*, who in turn had her own maid, known as a *chi-chi-boy*—all three of them composing their white master's harem. The *menagère* supervised the household with skill and acted as an admirable ambassador between her master and the other servants. There was no delusion on the part of their Belgian owner that he was the women's only lover. He knew that his head boy and his cook and perhaps a dozen others were his fellows in a polyandrous brotherhood. The blood of men and women runs riotously passionate in the tropics.

Their association with white men conferred prestige on these native women. But half-caste children of these alliances were extremely rare despite the fact that European contraceptives were not used. The *menagères* seemed to overcome such problems with the help of witch-doctors. During the whole of his time in the Congo Norden only saw one half-caste child.

CHAPTER IX

DIAMOND COUNTRY

FROM Luluabourg Norden set out in a south-westerly direction towards the Kasai River nearly a hundred miles distant. Part of his caravan had been sent ahead and part was to catch up with him later. He and a few bearers crossed the Mido River, a few miles beyond Luluabourg, on *pirogues* lashed together with poles and vines.

After a night's stop at a village the whole caravan was assembled and proceeded onwards. They entered a country of great beauty. To Norden it appeared quite the most delectable region since he had left Lake Kivu. There were many palms and forests with shade so dense that he could walk long distances without a hat. The forests seemed to have some overwhelming effect on the bearers. Their shouting was stilled and they chanted harmoniously in low tones. Withered grey trees stood wearily among the young giants. The way was frequently blocked by other trees felled by lightning or decay. They forded through streams which tempted Norden to take off his boots, but the water was always so alive with snakes that he never took the risk. Everywhere were the song of birds and, flitting between the trees, the exquisite moving colour of numberless butterflies.

They passed through occasional villages which offered extraordinary studies in contrast. In one the flowering hedges round the huts told that a missionary had once lived there. The villagers were a gay lot who performed a spontaneous dance for the travellers. Norden was particularly interested in the music of an instrument, new to him in his journey across Africa, with a sound not unlike a xylophone. Its main construction consisted of four sticks, each a foot long, rising from the ground. On these were placed two semi-circular bits of wood to which were fastened ten hardwood slats with bladder-like objects suspended. The sound was produced by beating the slats with a well-tarred drum stick.

Beyond this village they came to another called Boomba Bwango. Here most of the men wore vests as well as loin cloths and the women European cloth of bright colours. Norden began to wonder if he might expect growing evidence of sophistication as they went forward into the heart of a region largely controlled by the Forminière. But he had his answer in the next village when he woke from a day-time nap to find himself surrounded by a crowd of women wearing straws in their pierced ears and noses. Barney explained to his master that they had seen white men so rarely that they wanted to regard one at close quarters. He managed to disperse the women, who belonged to a sub-tribe of the Luluas, the Bashilulungu, by dealing out a piece of salt to each of them.

At Kalamba he met up with a Belgian official from Luluabourg and shared with him one of those freaks which occur in the climate of Central Africa. They had

left the forests behind and had pitched camp on sandy ground. Suddenly the temperature started to drop until their heat-accustomed bodies were shivering with intense cold. Then, as suddenly, a sandstorm burst upon them. Fortunately the official had with him an escort of soldiers who fortified Norden's tent with bamboo poles. Otherwise it would have been blown away, but even so every article of his equipment was penetrated by the driving sand.

"It is witchcraft," the bearers shouted amid the thunder and lightning that followed the gale. "If we knew what enemy caused it, we would point the gun towards his house and he would die."

Little the worse for this experience, they broke camp next morning and reached a village where its chief announced the words, "Bidia, mai, lukunji."

After his experiences in recent weeks Norden was staggered to have food, wood and water offered him so spontaneously. More extraordinary still, his bearers refused to touch the offerings. In excited tones they talked to Barney.

"There is leprosy here," Barney explained to Norden. "And the bearers are afraid."

So the caravan went on its way, but about an hour's walk beyond the village came on a camp lying among trees and beside a beautiful stream. A nauseating stench had reached Norden even before he saw the little straw shacks that composd the camp, where he found no less than fifty inert bodies stretched on the ground. They were disease-eaten, loathsome, pathetic in their misery.

Two of them half rose from the ground and dragged themselves towards the caravan, their arms outstretched as though imploring for help that none could give. The faces of the bearers showed abject terror rather than pity and the whole caravan raced ahead to escape the death and horror that waylaid it.

No doubt it was fear that caused the illness of several members of the caravan immediately after this incident. Musesa and Pierre each developed a touch of fever. Pierre became so weak that Norden made him get into the *tjipoe*. The ride was wonderfully curative. For a little while he sat upright and, as always on the march, his left hand grasped some cooking utensils and his right held bows and arrows for which he had no more use than he would have had at home. Soon, restored to health, he resumed his place in the walking column.

At Kalamba Norden had already reached the Kasai River. Loukamba beyond the river was his last camp before Tshikapa, his final objective in this part of his trek. He was now in the heart of the Forminière district and was galloped by horse *tjipoe* over the gully-cut roads to the Kabalkese mines where he was to see diamonds sorted out of gravel black as coffee grounds. Five creeks away he and his companion, an engineer in the Forminière, came to the Longatshimo River, a tributary of the Kasai, where further diamond mines were being worked. They then descended the river by whale-boat and entered the Kasai itself to visit the Pogge falls. The river at that point was about four hundred yards wide and it made its downward plunge of about a hundred

yards around an archipelago of rocks and palm-covered islets. To Norden it was a beautiful, but not impressive sight. He was more interested in the vicinity for it was in a creek emptying into the river at a point near the falls where the explorer Shaler had discovered the first diamonds and so pioneered the start of the province's now famous diamond industry.

Loukamba had already been connected with Tshikapa by road and Norden was driven along its fifteen miles' length by one of the Forminière's officials. It was a strange experience to be sitting in a car again and it seemed to Norden that they covered the distance at positively break-neck speed. He had returned temporarily to civilisation. As they reached the outskirts of the town, which was the Congo headquarters of the Forminière, the road opened out into a tree-lined avenue and Norden found himself in surroundings that were a cosmopolitan blend of the United States and Europe. On Capitol Hill were the cottages and offices of the "common people" as the experts in all the crafts necessary to the work called them. Riverside Drive was bordered by the residences of the managers and the administrative offices of the company. All these were substantial buildings constructed in brick with gravel walks across green meadows leading from one house to another.

Cosmopolitan also, even as far back as 1923, was Tshikapa's European population. The *chef du poste* was an Irishman. The managers and senior officials consisted of six Americans, a Russian, a Norwegian, a Brazilian, a Peruvian and an Englishman. Twelve of the officials had

their wives with them so that there was quite a gay social life with dancing and bridge and bathing parties in an outdoor pool.

During his stay in this outpost of civilisation Norden sometimes almost forgot that he was in the heart of the Congo. But the native population, consisting of the Forminière's labourers, was considerable. From a tribal point of view it was also an interesting mixture, as a note made by Norden reveals:

"Several tribes are represented among the Forminière labourers. I saw Bakete; Benakosh, a sub-tribe of the Baluba, and Batshok. These last are from the Angola border, and have customs different from any I had yet observed. Instead of drum signals they send messages by means of pieces of cloth with a code system of foldings. A circular fold may mean, "Leave your village at once." A ball, "The collector is coming." The Batshok are good iron workers. Their little caps are made from the hair of slaves. The price of a wife ranges from a dish or a gallon of *malufa* to twenty-five pieces of cloth, and the more expensive wife is usually bought on the instalment plan. Slaves are cheap. Ten francs will buy either a girl or boy, and it is said that a Batshok mine foreman killed three of his slaves to get the medicine prescribed by a witch-doctor for his sick child.

"Most interesting of all these tribes were the Bampende, a group of whom came up from Kilembe in Angola during my stay. These men had travelled for two weeks, bringing gourds of palm oil to sell to the Forminière, who

buy it for their native labourers. The Bampende are an agricultural tribe; they will not work for Europeans. Wild looking, clad in skins, they brought dance masks of hide and shells. With the masks they transform themselves and evade whatever spirits of evil are on their trail.

"The *mussussume* is a fascinating institution of the Bampende tribe. She is a captive woman, a spoil of war and brought from a raided village. From among her captors she may choose her first consort, but any or all of the young warriors may become her lovers, and from each she receives many gifts. It is a system of polyandry without the usual ceremonies. Should she marry she must return the gifts. The *mussussume* is much honoured. On great occasions she is carried in state through the village."

It was early in September that Norden left Tshikapa. He had entered the Congo on June 1st. So his trek across it had already taken over three months. Most of it had been through little-known, uncivilised country. But he was beginning to near the end of hardship and loneliness on the way. And his departure from Tshikapa saw some significant changes in his entourage. With much sadness of heart he parted company with Punda and Bobby. Punda was sent back to one of the mission stations where Norden had been entertained *en route* and where she had made such an appeal to the missionary's children that he knew she would find a safe home. Bobby was given to one of the Forminière ladies who had taken him to her heart. The caravan was disbanded and Norden went onwards by car with Barney and Pierre following in a

motor truck that carried his equipment and collection of African trophies.

The road to Djoko Punda, a distance of sixty-five miles, lay through grassy stretches and forests of incomparable beauty bordering the Kasai River. Norden and his Norwegian driver lunched at Makumbi which was then the transit port for merchandise shipped from the West Coast. Below this point the river was unnavigable because of the Wissmann Falls and other rapids, but above it motor-boats plied up to Tshikapa.

At Djoko Punda or Charlesville, Norden had his last contacts with diamond mining and the Forminière. In 1923 it was already an industrial township of importance. Besides the Forminière machine shops there was a sawmill used for cutting the veterans of African forests into railroad sleepers and lumber for houses. A steamship landing had already been constructed and also a building which was to become a depôt for the railway line that was being built southwards near the river.

Norden's one disappointment at Charlesville was to miss a river boat which was to have taken him on the next stage of his journey. But this delay enabled him to see the Wissmann Falls and watch the natives setting their basket traps for fish between the rocks. The Kasai at this point was alive with a multitude of fish, many of which were then so little known to the Belgian settlers that specimens were being sent to Brussels for identification. Among those which were already more familiar was the elephant fish, which could be caught by rod—a strange-looking creature with a trunk as long as its body and as

big round as a man's middle finger. It was also called the *suçeur de vase* from its habit of sucking worms out of the mud. Another fish was black and yellow, spotted like a leopard and, because of its hooked beak, called parrot fish. Then there were the cat fish and silure, and Norden saw again the binga with its array of terrible teeth that made it the crocodile's only dangerous foe.

CHAPTER X

INTO THE LAND OF THE BAKUBA

No boats put in an appearance and eventually a friendly Belgian drove Norden by car to Luebo, sixty miles east of Charlesville and at the junction of the Luebo and Lulua Rivers. Even at that time Luebo was a place of considerable importance and the administrative headquarters of the Congo-Kasai.

Much of this journey lay through dense forest and Norden's first impression of Luebo was heightened by the fact that he and his companion suddenly emerged from comparative darkness and in brilliant daylight looked down from the crest of a ridge of hills on a town bestriding both sides of a river. Picturesque at first sight, Luebo became more interesting with acquaintance. Its European population was the largest that Norden had encountered since entering the Congo. Its African population was remarkably diverse since the tribes of a great district overlapped at this centre—Baluba, Lulua, Bakuba, Bakete and Zappo-Zap.

Norden enjoyed his week's stay in Luebo and, being a gourmet, was fascinated by the way in which his various European hosts had developed an appetite for African

food. He made a note on this which deserves a place here:

"Some of the strange viands reminded me in taste of more usual food. Kabulooku was like opossum, and the breast of pelican was not unlike a filet of steak. The snake bird would have seemed duck if one had never seen its long neck and snake-like head. The parrots tasted like quail. There was loin of otter, broiled in hippo fat, and other meats about which one wished one had not asked questions; silver monkey, about the size of a big rat, and the marine monkey, which looked, when skinned, too much like a small boy to be eaten with equanimity. As *entremets* we ate fried caterpillars, and ants fried in butter after the wings had been picked off. Best of all is *mwamba*—a west coast dish that is famed on the east coast. It is chicken cooked in palm oil with leaves of manioc, and hearts of palm and pepper. And to all this for extra deliciousness is sometimes added a stuffing of possay—worms which infest the palm trees."

Despite the flesh-pots of Luebo, Norden was impatient to be on his way. He was greatly relieved when the *Chef du poste* announced that he had collected sixty-two bearers for him together with a *messager*. On a morning in late September he was on trek again at the head of a caravan. Nothing delighted him more as a form of progress through Africa; it was steady and unfrustrating and it was by far the best way to see and study the country and its people. It was to be one of his longest treks—about

160 miles—and most exciting for it was to take him through the heart of the Bakuba Kingdom.

At first the track stretched northward through a dense forest of palm trees. Norden's objective that day was a place called Mueka and to reach it before sun-down meant a full day's march. For that reason he did not stop at Ibanshi, but strode rapidly ahead. Unfortunately, he failed in his haste to notice that at least half of his retinue had failed to keep up with him.

In the course of his journeying from Luluabourg he had described an enormous loop which had taken him back, though farther north, almost into the Zappo-Zap country again. Ibanshi was typical of this district and at that time was known as "the Paris of the Congo". It was given over to gambling and furthermore to *malufa, mukaji* and *musambo*—wine, women and song. It was indeed a happy hunting ground of every native when he had finished his turn at the near-by railway in the making or the diamond mines farther south. It was also the resort of discharged bearers, boys and menagères, the favour of whose masters had been lost.

No wonder, then, that a large part of the caravan had temporarily disappeared and did not fetch up at Mueka till late that evening, with Pierre bringing up the rear and sporting a newly-bought parasol of shamrock green.

At this time Mueka was a crowded railway camp carved out of the forest and jungle. Otherwise it was of no particular interest and Norden left next morning, bound for the heart of the Bakuba country. There were no more roads. A solitary path led over the Mueka Ridge into a fastness

of mountains and forests and into a part of the Congo which Norden was never to forget.

In 1923 the Lukengo, head of the Bakuba kingdom, and his subjects were still partly independent of Belgian control. They looked on every white man as an undesirable alien. They loved their soil and they called the section of their kingdom, through which Norden entered it, *Muongo wa Buloba* or Backbone of the Earth.

The Bakuba nation had first been visited by Europeans in 1884 when King Leopold sent the Wissmann Expedition to explore the Sankuru-Kasai basin. Since then the nation had attracted a great deal of attention on the part of European ethnologists. Their studies had revealed a people whose history, political organisation, arts and customs set them high above any other central Africans. It was supposed that their culture had stemmed from the ancient civilisation of Ethiopia. Certainly they could trace their monarchy back through a line of 124 rulers, among whom there had been six ruling queens.

Bushango was the true name of these people, but in some manner unknown the Baluba word *Bakuba*, which meant People of Lightning, had become applied to them and it was by that name that they were known in 1923 and, indeed, are still known to-day. The nation was and remains compounded of many tribes—the Bushango, Bangende, Tianga, Batele, Bashilele, Bashobwa, Bangongo and Bangombia. Of the Bushango—the tribe which founded the nation—only about 8,000 remained at the time of Norden's visit.

The *administrateur* at Luebo had notified the Lukengo

of Norden's approach. But Norden felt rather uncertain about his reception. For this reason he was pleasantly surprised by the warmth of welcome accorded him at the first village. Drums were beaten, whistles sounded. The people turned out in their hundreds, gathering around his *tjipoe* which in the general mêlée became overturned. Similar enthusiasm greeted him at the next village and he arrived at a Belgian mission farther along the track with nerves more than a little shaken.

He had not been long at the mission station before there arrived at the head of a splendid caravan the Crown Prince of the Bakuba, nephew of the Lukengo. He had come to meet Norden and accompany him the remaining twenty miles to Mushenge, the capital. As the Crown Prince only left the capital once or twice a year on important political errands, Norden was being treated as a highly honoured guest. What kind of message, he asked himself, had passed between Luebo and Mushenge?

At any rate the Crown Prince, whose name was Bopé, inspired in Norden an instant liking. Keen eyes shone out of a pleasant face. His features were clean cut. A certain ruddiness tinged the blackness of his skin. He was tall and robust. His skirt was of fine silk and, though very full, it lacked that overhanging ruffle at the top which, Norden noticed, adorned most Bakuba skirts. His ornaments were simple—a necklace of ivory and blue beads and heavy anklets of silver.

Next morning the two caravans set out for the capital. Their passage through the villages was a triumphal procession. The Crown Prince was obviously popular with

his people. But the honouring of a royal visitor was as expensive among the Bakuba as elsewhere in the world, for everywhere he received gifts—goats and pigs and chickens, *malufa* and *madiba*. In one village he received two thousand pieces of cloth. Wherever the caravan stopped, food was instantly supplied to the bearers and on one occasion the parties were served with antelope steaks and hearts of palm on green leaves.

As they neared Mushenge the path widened into a road, from which the Crown Prince and his retinue turned rightwards towards the capital. Norden's way lay straight ahead to the government post at the end of the road, where he was welcomed by a Belgian of distinguished appearance. This was the *administrateur* whose appointment was at that time unique in the Belgian Congo. He was something more than a resident of an occupying power and his position, carefully arranged by the Belgian government, was more akin to that of an ambassador to a semi-independent nation. Only within a few years of Norden's visit had the Lukengo been persuaded to accept even such an appointment. Its holder had been chosen with tact and shrewdness. Scholarly and grave, his manner was more suggestive of a professor than an official. Norden was to find that ethnology and the study of the native races held far more interest for him than colonial policies. His background was academic—the University of Louvain and the cloisters of Oxford.

Norden was accommodated by the *administrateur* in a home of European type with two rooms and a wide veranda. It was a peaceful place in which to read and

Wood carving of an ancestor of the King of the Bakuba.

A Bakuba forge.

think and study the interesting people about him. It was to be a base for expeditions into the neighbourhood. In these surroundings and in the companionship of the *administrateur*, with his intimate knowledge of the Bakuba, Norden followed his usual custom of compiling notes. The Bakuba have figured as conspicuously as any of the larger tribes in the turbulent history of the Congo since the granting of independence. And what Norden wrote about them in 1923 may still be worth more than a passing reference today.

CHAPTER XI

PEOPLE OF LIGHTNING

"THE political organisation of the Bakuba," wrote Norden, "is based on a hierarchy. The Lukengo is the king; but the Nyimi, who is supreme judge, is theoretically absolute monarch, and has divine descent. Formerly his name was Chembi Kunji, meaning God on Earth. And greater than Lukengo and Nyimi are Inana and Ma'na Nyimi, their respective mothers.

"Next in importance is Kimikambu, who is Prime Minister and associated justice. Always, when abroad, the hand of Kimikambu rests on the neck of a boy who walks before him. This human staff is the Prime Minister's insignia of office.

"Nyibita is chief commandant of the army, and judge of crime committed with weapons which are not edged. He wears an iron bell fastened to his left shoulder, and another at his girdle.

"The Chikala carries a hatchet round his neck, and another officer carries a double hatchet, and wears a wig of monkey skin.

"*Kolomo* is the comprehensive word for all officials. Besides the judiciary, military and other administrative dignitaries are *kolomo* of every guild—wood-carvers,

weavers, forgers, copper-workers, *lukete* makers, singers, dancers and musicians. And the boat-makers, fishers, hunters and all other groups of workers have special *kolomo*, representing the interests of their fellow craftsmen in the King's Council. This is fair and modern enough to recommend itself to a labour government. The reason for a special *kolomo* for the fathers of twins is less easy to grasp.

"The *kolomo* include several women. The Bahangi are sisters of the Lukengo. From among their sons the Crown Prince is chosen, for the King is succeeded by a nephew, not a son. The Katange and Bana, sisters and daughters of the Nyimi, have authority over women. They wear a special form of necklace, and a bell at the girdle. The Bimi is the female head of the harem. Disobedient women are punished by having red pepper put into their eyes, and the Yumi administers it. Gongo is chief of the women villagers; she alone has the right to wear her hair as men do.

"Among the courtiers are a poet laureate, and a snake-charmer, and the chief of slaves. But of more importance to an interested world than any in the organisation, from the Lukengo down, is the Moaridi. He is the conservator of legends. He knows, and tells, and passes on to his successor, the stories of the kings in that long line of rulers. These stories carry the history of the Bushongo far back into the past. Just how far it is impossible to know, but an approximation of period can be fixed by eclipses known to have occurred, for the darkening of the sun is an awe-inspiring incident to be told and told again

through generations. The period of Shamba Bolongongo is thus fixed at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Shamba was a great and wise king; he forbade unnecessary cruelty in war, and even war itself when it could be avoided. Time as remote as the fifth century is set for Lomamba, the first woman chief of the tribe. Her father, Loko Yima, was second in this long line of swarthy kings, and on his death she succeeded to the throne. And great is her legend. She taught her people how to build huts, with all that that means as a turning point in tribal history.

"Not always have the Lukengo won fair renown. The surname of one of the kings is "The Wicked". But the legends establish for the Bakuba nation a proud tradition. Not a warlike people, they have conquered chiefly by diplomacy, and have cleverly absorbed smaller tribes weakened by enmities and dissensions.

"In the arts they prove their greatness. Sculpture, carving, music, weaving and embroidery have flourished through the generations. The Bakuba do no hard labour, and no bearing of loads—that is the work of the Bakete. Conservative and indolent is the verdict of the European when considering the tribal characteristics, but when has an artist, or an artistic people, not been considered indolent by a practical world? Certainly the Bakuba of the present lives so far as may be in accordance with his tradition, and though the old arts are dying, they are not yet dead. Some work is produced which may stand beside the work of the past.

"Christianity wins few converts among the Bakuba; their own religion is not easily supplanted. They believe in

one God, Chembi, who made all things, and their story of creation starts in a manner that reminds one of Genesis: "In the beginning all was darkness, and there was nothing on the earth, only water." Chembi has the form of a man, but a great tail like an animal, and its colour is white. They believe in reincarnation. After the death of the body the soul flees to the womb of a woman, whence it is born again in a child. The child remembers some of the happenings of the soul's previous existence. The missionaries lament the orthodoxy of the Bakuba; royalty and commoners alike cling to the ancient faith. "Their belief in having so many chances at life makes our work hard and fruitless," a missionary told me.

"Witchcraft and demonology have their places in this religion. Death is often attributed to an evil spirit acting through some person. One suspected of being possessed by this demon must undergo the ordeal of poison administered by a special *kolomo*. If the suspect vomits he is innocent. If he dies he is guilty, and his heirs must pay indemnity to the heirs of the man whose death he caused.

"Long and formal is the initiation into young manhood. For two months the boys live naked in a forest; they wear nothing but a comb in their hair. They are subjected to frightful ordeals, one of which is being pushed into a cave known to be inhabited by leopards. During this period they are taught the commandments of their religion; a set of rules with wide range embracing modesty and ethics. The young man is commanded to respect the privacy of his parents. He is commanded to be just to his enemy. "Help your enemy if he is in danger of

drowning." Another command is, "Suffer not a lone man to be attacked by several men."

"Naturally, in a social organisation where women hold high position they are not subservient in marriage. Wives are not bought. There appears to be approximate equality between man and woman, with the scale dipping towards the woman, for when two names are used the second is always the name of the mother. There is no marriage out of the tribe, and sexual relations between master and slave are declared to be incestuous. Officials and missionaries who now work among these people say that marriage does not exist. Marriage is, of course, a word of many interpretations to quibble over, and their statement might only imply that there was no ceremony to mark the beginning of relations between a man and woman. But they also believe that there is among the commoners no family organisation in which a man has permanent part. Each adult girl lives in a hut by herself—there is a legend that gives the reason for the custom—and to her comes a man for a night, or a week, or a month, and then passes out of her life, and another follows him.

"Work is divided between the sexes. Men are the dressmakers and the weavers of the cloth made from raphia. Women embroider it in geometrical and other ornamental designs. The embroidery is cut, producing a nap, which accounts for the name given by Europeans to this fabric, velvet of the Kasai. Women are the barbers and the grinders of *bidia*. There is a tale that once when a chief fined the women of his village for some offence they went on strike, refusing to prepare food. Whether an actual happening, or a mere harking back to Aristophanes, the story is a revelation of conditions among the Bakuba."

These were the "People of Lightning", a name which did not appear particularly applicable to them, among whom Norden mingled whenever he left his house. Not far away was the market where trade was done in cassava roots and hides and tobacco. Near, too, was a Bakete village in which every hut had a fetish. Some of them were very old and beautifully carved. If for any reason a fetish had to be replaced, its spirit required to be transferred into the new one—a process accomplished through a ceremony in which a live owl was used.

Several days passed before an audience with the Lukengo could be arranged. But one morning Norden and the *administrateur* set out in two fast-driving *tjipoes* from the government settlement up a narrow path that climbed a hill to the capital of the Bakuba. Four thousand people lived on that hill, but Norden only saw a few of them working in the manioc fields during their mile ride.

This visit to the closely enclosed capital, his audience with the king, and the events that followed made an enormous impression on Norden. He had penetrated into the heart of this African kingdom as no traveller had done before him. In a letter to his family he described these experiences as one of the "high spots" in the whole of his expedition across the continent. His enthusiasm can best be conveyed in his own words:

"The opening in the high bamboo wall that surrounds

the town is narrow, but a bulky personage squeezed through, and Bopé again greeted me. He was attended in royal manner by courtiers. His costume was different from that worn at the mission station; now his full silk skirt was maroon, the colour worn by the royal family, and it had the overhanging ruffle bunched at the back, which I had come to know was the usual Bakuba wear. His *lukete* had a design in colour woven into its fabric.

"Bopé led us through narrow streets, and an open square where the council holds its meetings, but no council was then in session, and we passed on through a gate in the bamboo wall that surrounds the private grounds of the Lukengo. Within were many houses—the same unstable, Venetian-blind houses I had seen in Dumbi's village; the dwellings of the royal weaver, tobacconist, wood carver, and others who cater for the comfort of the King. Beyond was a house much more pretentious than these, and with an awning-covered yard in front. Under the awning, close to the house, on a canvas reclining chair, lay a huge figure. At last I was in the presence of Kwete Mabinga, reigning Lukengo of the Bakuba. He could not rise from the chair for he is paralysed.

"While we covered the short distance I noted the details of his appearance. Keen eyes, and a thin moustache and goatee; a black skin, unlike most of the Bakuba. A fur *lukete* topped his head; feathers stuck sidewise in both directions formed a stole under his chin, and below his white, blue-bordered gown extended huge black feet with heavy copper rings on the toes. And there was a ring on every finger. The chair was high from the ground, and

the reclining figure had much of majesty. Half a dozen slaves stood beside the chair, and waved palm leaves. At the Lukengo's right stood two of his sons. Thirty *kolomo* stood in the background.

"The *administrateur* spoke the words of introduction, and I gave the Lukengo the handshake I had learned at the mission; clapping my hands together, then against his; a greeting hard to achieve with one who is paralysed. I supposed that this was sufficient, but the *administrateur* advised that I finish with a European hand-clasp; and I added that though the King could not lift his arm. Bopé and some of the courtiers stood at the gate. Four chiefs stood on a mat apart; provisional governors, the *administrateur* explained.

"We sat in the chairs that had been placed for us on a mat at the left of the Lukengo, and the courtiers squatted on their haunches. The scene was impressive, and somehow incredible, when I remembered the year—1923. I remembered with a pang of apprehension that Bopé was said to have a typewriter in his house. A typewriter was a shocking anachronism. It is the conservatism of these people that has kept the strain of their culture pure.

"The *administrateur* interpreted my little speech to the Lukengo. It was straight and to the point. I was honoured. I admired his people, and hoped to obtain from him certain examples of their arts. Though I had come empty-handed to this audience I had not come empty-handed into his kingdom. At my house was a gift for the Lukengo. A rifle. And cartridges.

"Followed a long palaver between the Lukengo and the

administrateur, in which the latter named certain articles on which I had set my heart. Over and over in the King's talk I heard the word for mat, and the *administrateur* would shake his head and talk again. Obviously the Lukengo made offering of many mats and little else.

"Our audience over, we were conducted through a lane in the enclosure, and I was taken into houses which contain the royal treasure. One house held three hundred trunks, filled with cloth and dresses. I saw pillars with carvings that reminded one of those seen at Luxor. A box, not unlike a coffin in shape, but covered with skins, is the royal carriage. In this, on his coronation day, the Lukengo is carried through his capital on the heads of slaves, attended by royalty and *kolomo*."

A great deal of entertaining followed this audience and Norden frequently climbed the hill to the capital in a *tjipoe*. On each visit he found the Lukengo clad in a different garb though the upper part of his body was always bare. Sometimes chalked spots showed round and white on his black skin; Norden supposed this was some form of therapy, but he never discovered whether this was so or not.

Among the entertainments provided was a spectacular ceremonial dance. Norden and the *administrateur* were met outside the city wall by a committee which led them inside and through a wide entrance arch into the council square. Opposite the square was a dais to which the Lukengo was borne in his huge reclining chair. He was in festal array. His skirt was of champagne colour. His

lukete was thrice as high as that on any of his subjects and his person shone with ornaments—diadem, neckpiece, stomacher, anklets, and rings on every finger and toe.

The royal procession was led by the Nyimi, majestic with his almost seven feet of height. Court was established on the dais. The King's mother was there, in a blanket of royal maroon and a wide, swirling skirt, and his sisters squatted at the right of the King's chair.

All the dancers were resplendent. Feathers floated from their heads and in such numbers that their hair was completely hidden. Green leaves also ornamented heads, and waists and ankles. Some wore buffalo tails and drinking horns with little bells. Eagle feathers were proudly worn, for they were a sign of bravery, indicating that the wearer had killed an enemy or a leopard.

Most of the dancers were men. No woman might dance until the King's mother had given her consent; not even her sisters, and they knelt when asking permission. But the King's mother herself danced without the leave of anyone. Half a dozen times she went out into the open and danced. It was the usual muscle wriggling, but the effect was changed by the swirling skirt. She lifted her arms and moved her fingers, lengthened with bits of brass. The courtiers gave intense attention. Back against the bamboo walls stood commoners and slaves, who looked on with awe. Only two other women were permitted to dance, one of which was the Bimi, head of the harem.

In the centre sat musicians picking at harps and hammering at xylophones. Their leader stood and beat a drum.

Half a dozen of the dancers wore masks. Those big, hide faces ornamented with cowry shells and buttons—provocative to the imagination when seen in museum collections—were weird and impressive in their proper surroundings and worn for their significance. *Mashamboy* was the Bakuba word for mask; it was also the name of the evil spirit who caused sickness. The masks bore a resemblance to the fancied ills of this spirit, and he was kept away by wearing them.

Another event in his honour which greatly impressed Norden was the massed singing of Bakuba songs. It took place on a night when the moon was full. The King's court was again established at the far end of the council square. Norden's chair was placed close to the King's dais. He found himself facing a choir of four hundred women. The brilliant moonlight shone on their shaven heads and gleaming eyes as they squatted before them in a great half circle.

Absolute silence lay across this almost unearthly vision of black and silver. Then the Lukengo gave a command and the silence was broken by the rich and sweet voices of the women who had the divine gift of song that is the heritage of the black peoples. The first song was an epic poem which told of the deeds and prowess of the Bakuba's past kings. The story was started as a solo, then carried forward by a chorus, and again returned to the soloist. It was a remarkable performance requiring discipline and powers of memory to the fullest degree, and the many-syllabled Bakuba words were in themselves a melody that wound itself through the harmony.

The epic was followed by a wailing dirge. In turn the dirge was succeeded by a song of joy and gaiety sung by the three classes of the Lukengo's harem—his wives, the concubines who had been raised to the status of wives, and those women who remained concubines. As they sang they lifted their black arms in the moonlight. A feature of this performance was a girl who danced a *Hoochi Koochi* as she sang, bringing the whole ensemble to an end with a dramatic shout of jubilation.

All this delightful and superbly arranged hospitality was, as Norden shrewdly appreciated, a precursor to getting down to the business of bartering, and early one morning two *kolomo* arrived at Norden's house to announce that the Lukengo was on his way to visit him. Hasty arrangements were made to receive him and Barney placed the rifle and cartridges, mentioned at the first audience, on a table.

The Lukengo was attended by fifty ministers. His slaves brought packages and set them before Norden. At a word of command the packages were opened and revealed a remarkable array of articles. There were two masks like those which Norden had noticed during the dance in his honour. There were dozens of yards of ancient cloth of Kasai. There were pieces of cloth made by the Bashobwa, the finest weavers among the Bakuba. There were a dozen *luketes* of different embroidered designs, a woman's skirt, carpets and mats. There were broad-bladed copper knives, a short sword, pipes, a sphinx-like head carved out of wood, and bowls and cups delicately carved out of thin wood.

In return for a 375 B.S.A. rifle, bought second-hand on the East Coast of Africa for £15, Norden had received a museum collection of priceless articles made by skilled Bakuba craftsmen. Though he had a twinge of conscience about the gifts—"it seemed a sad commentary on the ways in which all tribes, both black and white, have fallen that these pieces of work should be exchanged for shooting irons"—Norden was delighted with his good fortune and proceeded to entertain his guests. The ministers smoked his cigars, while Norden plied the Lukengo himself with such plentiful quantities of Scotch whisky that he eventually fell into a drunken stupor.

CHAPTER XII

THE GREAT RIVERS

NORDEN left Mushenge in a mood of regret tinged with excitement. His trek to Ilebo, nearly two hundred miles away, would be his last in Africa. From Ilebo onwards the Kasai and, later, the mighty Congo itself would bear him to the Atlantic. Accompanied by Barney, Pierre and fifty bearers he travelled along a path through almost continuous forest. The atmosphere became hotter and more humid with every mile of their approach to the river. The dense foliage gave protection from the sun, but it also enclosed them in hot-house air. Altogether, Norden was thankful when he reached Ilebo after a week's journeying. He had completed his land march through Africa, even though the final part of the crossing from east to west coast had to be accomplished by water.

At Ilebo Norden paid off his bearers and went downstream on a stern-wheeler boat accompanied still by Barney and Pierre. They reached the confluence of the Kasai with the Sankuru at Basongo. Here Norden and Barney transferred to a tug, leaving Pierre on the stern-wheeler, which would take him to the vicinity of his home.

"The last I saw of that diverting character," Norden

subsequently recorded, "who had done so much for my comfort and my spirits, was when he stood at the side of the boat, waving good-bye, but with full hands. His right grasped the bows and arrows from which he refused to be separated, and in his left was a cooking-pot. I had given him the kitchen utensils; they had become his by long use, for my housekeeping days in Africa were over."

The tug boat took Norden and Barney to Brabanta on the left bank of the Kasai to await a river steamer. This was then a small industrial settlement manned by an English manager and doctor, and a Belgian book-keeper. After a day or two Norden began to feel an atmosphere of doom hanging over the place. The Englishmen and the Belgian went about their tasks heavy-footed and listless. The broiling sun accentuated the gloom and silence. Days went by and no boat came, and when one did eventually pass, it went on its way without stopping.

To a man of Norden's restlessness and love of action the place became a kind of prison and he also began to harbour suspicions about his strangely depressing companions. They never went beyond the confines of the settlement and strongly advised Norden not to do so. At last he could stand the tension no longer and one afternoon broke through the barbed-wire fence surrounding the settlement and walked to the nearest village—one belonging to the Bashilele tribe. It turned out to be dirty and filthy. The aspect of the villagers was evidence of the tribe's wildness. He was eyed with hostility and decided to beat a retreat.

Alongside the path to the village, however, he had discovered a small but well-kept graveyard with three tombstones carefully fenced round in the grass plot cut out of the forest jungle. This was a silent testimony to a tragedy about which his companions at the settlement were extremely reticent when he questioned them; and it was only at later stages of his journey down river that he gleaned the full story. A happy trio of men had run the settlement at Brabanta until a short time before Norden's arrival there. But one had died suddenly and the other, the manager, had been slashed to death by a native while sitting in his office. The assassin had escaped and there had been no peace of mind in the neighbourhood since then. Europeans in nearby settlements had been threatened more than once and three had suddenly died on the same day, apparently by poison. No wonder that life at Brabanta was so abnormal and the doctor slept with a revolver and morphine by his bedside!

At last an opportunity occurred for Norden to cross the river to another settlement on the opposite bank. There he stayed for a short time with a Belgian. His bungalow stood near the river bank. He slept at night in the veranda or at least tried to sleep despite the slithering noises made by crocodiles crawling around underneath and the grunting of curiosity-minded hippopotami.

After several adventures and exciting shooting of hippopotami on the Kasai Norden managed to work his way downstream to Lubue which he reached on a whale-boat about October 10th. Here he stayed in camp with officials of the Compagnie de Kasai, one of the oldest trading

businesses in the colony. He was in the heart of a wild district notorious at that time for its cannibalism and during his few days in the camp he was regaled by some gruesome tales of its existence.

"At Modgeka only a few months before," he wrote subsequently, "a European's *menagère* had been eaten by the Badinga, a tribe notoriously cannibalistic. The Bangoli are as uncontrollable in this regard. They, the year before my visit, killed and ate their chief, Mwabilu. This instance involved politics as well as hunger. The State, after much diplomatic effort, had won the friendship of Mwabilu, who then tried to make his people pay taxes to the *administrateur*. The sub-chiefs and their head-men had thought to settle that question by eating him. Mwabilu's head was kept as trophy by the men who had eaten the rest of the body, and for many days they combed the long hair that hung from the scalp. Whether they were thus engaged when the soldiers arrived, I was not told, but I do know that a military expedition was sent, and it wiped out most of those who had feasted on their chief.

"With an air of incredible matter-of-factness these instances are cited. The *menagère* of a trader I visited told him she was afraid to go into the next village lest she be eaten. Another woman fell exhausted on a station veranda. Her chest had been pierced by an arrow, and she told us of an attack as she came through the forest. The man who walked with her had been killed and would be eaten. She had managed to escape. In 1915 an entire caravan of porters carrying rubber in the Kasai district was captured by a cannibalistic tribe, and there is record

of two hundred porters, who were eaters of human flesh, arriving in Luebo in 1920.

"Because it was hard to believe that such conditions existed in the year 1923 I asked many questions both of the whites and of natives. A chief's son told me that human meat tasted better than any other. A *vieux* was with me, and acted as interpreter when I talked to one native. Suddenly the black said to the Belgian: "But you have been here long. Why do you ask me these things? You know that the flesh of a man tastes better than the flesh of a goat." He intimated that the European had himself eaten human meat, and my companion said it was not unlikely that the natives had served him with it, and he had not known."

Despite the unpleasant habits of these river tribes Norden enjoyed his few days at Lubue.

"Here was the Congo of boyhood dreams," he continued. "I dined on parrot soup, and binga fish and palm cabbage. I watched crocodiles sunning themselves on the sand-bank in the river, and I listened to the tales the traders brought from the back country and out of their own pasts. Tales of elephant hunting and of this man and that who had been swept away by black-water fever. Tales of a tribe near Lake Leopold that eats red clay, and of another that gives to each married woman one fourth of her time. The fourth day is hers, to do as she likes, and with whomsoever she likes. Her husband must absent himself from her hut on that day, and has no right to object if any enter in his place. Tales of the wooden arrows with poisoned points with which the Badinga

hunt monkeys and rats, and of the metal-pointed arrows aimed at humans; not poisoned because the tribe has not discovered a process. Tales of the medicine with which natives rub their gums in what, to European eyes, appears to be a successful grapple with pyorrhea."

From Lubue Norden was carried some further distance in a *tjipoe*. This was his last experience in the wilds of Africa. The trail plunged him into dense forest, it crossed over native bridges, ran through valleys covered by jungle and over numerous hills. It was, indeed, the wildest country he had seen throughout his crossing of the continent. And the songs of his bearers also had a wilder note than he had heard before. They belonged to a cannibalistic tribe, the Bangoli, and he wondered sometimes whether they were singing that he would be good to eat; that the flesh of a white chief would doubtless taste as good as the flesh of a black chief.

However, they delivered him intact at the riverside house of a Portuguese trader where fortune changed in his favour and he was picked up by a large and, what seemed to him after all his hardships, a most luxurious steamer.

At Kwamouth the Kasai flows into the Congo. Norden was standing beside the captain in the wheel-house when they entered its vast breadth.

"Now we are in the River," the captain said.

"It was an impressive moment," to use Norden's own words. "In the Belgian Congo, that country of innumerable rivers, there is only one River. From Tanganyika westward the streams are spoken of by their various names: Lualaba, which is the Upper Congo, Lomami,

Luebo, Lulua, Kasai, Sankuru, and all the lesser ones. Each has a personality, as running water must ever have to imaginative minds. But the name of the Congo is never spoken. The Congo is The River—too great to need other designation. And to me it was The River, because of my months in the colony to which it gave its name. But it was also the Congo, the river of mystery and dark romance that it is to all the world."

This is really the place at which to bring our description of Norden's pioneer trek across the Congo to a close because he had now reached civilisation. Through rapidly growing Leopoldville, destined to become the country's capital, he passed onwards to Matadi along what was then the newly constructed railway, and from Matadi he went on by river boat to Banana, where the Congo flows into the Atlantic. Here he boarded a Belgian boat bound for Europe after a sad farewell to Barney. It was November 3rd, 1923. He had entered the Congo on June 1st that year and in just over five months had journeyed, mostly on foot, through some two thousand miles of darkest Africa.