



It is generally easy to get over the wet places by the aid of a boy; DR. SHANTZ maneuvering a difficult spot on his 9,500-mile exploring trip through Africa.

GETTING around in Africa, even in its wildest and most uncivilized parts, is not nearly so difficult as one judging by tradition, if not what generally is written, might imagine, says Dr. H. L. Shantz, of the Bureau of Plant Industry, United States Department of Agriculture.

Dr. Shantz arrived in Washington about the first of the year from the Dark Continent where he spent twelve months' time roaming around in search of desirable plants that might be introduced into our agriculture. He traveled more than 9,500 miles on the African continent, making the full trip from the Cape of Good Hope to Cairo, Egypt, with extensive side and cross journeys in addition. With him on all his travels was H. C. Raven, a faunal naturalist, who collected animal specimens for the Smithsonian Institution. The party at its start included several others, representatives of a motion picture concern and a newspaperman. It met several mishaps as a party. Two of the movie men lost their lives; not from attacks by wild beasts or from strange diseases, but in a railroad accident. The two scientists, who did the most and the greatest extremes of traveling, came through without a scar or scratch.

"Traveling in Africa is safer than walking around the streets of the average American city," says Dr. Shantz. "If one goes beyond the outposts of civilization, one must be willing to rough it a little, but you can get around anywhere in Africa with a fair degree of comfort. Food was always plentiful and cheap. The continent is pierced by transportation lines of various sorts, but if you go far you must be prepared on occasion to hike. About the only disease you need worry much about is malaria and then only when you are in the tropics, where if you are careful you can easily avoid it. Sleeping sickness and the tsetse fly have been exaggerated, especially as a danger to the white man. The fly that carries the disease keeps away from the civilized settlements. Seventy per cent of natives attacked by sleeping sickness are now cured when treated with a famous remedy for another disease.

"As far as wild beasts are concerned I saw many in their native haunts and not one made any effort to attack me. The natives were docile, kindly and peaceful. In fact no one of us had occasion to fire a shot in self-defense."

Yet the two scientists explored much of the wild jungle area of the Upper Congo, and traveled for more than 300 miles beyond earmarks of civilization into the wild animal country of British East Africa.

You can now get into the "heart of Africa" about as easily as traveling from Chicago to San Francisco, that is, after you get to Africa. The scientists traveled over the vast region of South Africa, Cape Colony, Natal, the Transvaal and Rhodesia, mainly by train. It was at Bukoma on the border of the Belgian Congo where, if one struck the keynote of high adventure generally apparent in stories of African adventure, it would be said that the Americans plunged into the wilds. Bukoma is nearly 3,000 miles from the Cape of Good Hope; yet the distance can be covered entirely by train. And for all except the last 250 miles there are fast through trains with sleeping and dining cars as good as you will find anywhere. At the terminal, however, there is no hotel or other provision for tourists. Indeed, the American scientists were directed to a "European Hotel" which they found to be nothing but a bare lot where travelers usually camp. They were able to get a room in the home of a Portuguese trader, and lived comfortably while awaiting a boat that makes the Upper Congo.

There are good boats on the big rivers and lakes, and many that are not good. The "Louis Cousin" which the Americans patronized in getting into the Congo provides staterooms for first-class passengers, and the captain, if he wishes, may let you mess with him. Otherwise, you must take along your own commissary and let your "boy"—every foreign traveler in Africa has a man servant called "boy"—prepare your meals in transit. Other boats in that section don't provide staterooms or any sort of eating

Praise for the "Wilds" of Africa

By ROBERT KENTON

privileges. Those shortcomings are not very serious, for all boats stop when it becomes dark and permit the passengers to get off and do their cooking and sleeping, too, if desired, on the ground. Boats don't travel at night because the tortuous course of the river makes navigation dangerous when the pilot cannot keep tab on the current.

At Mabele the Americans found provision for travelers in the form of grass huts, without equipment, wherein they could rent living quarters at five francs a day each.

After exploring the vicinity of Mabele, they went on to Kongola, almost in the interior of the Congo, and from Kongola they were able to get to Kindu by train. There an official of the Belgian Government took them through the adjacent wilds in an American-made automobile.

Automobiles are not unknown even in the most remote regions of Africa, says Dr. Shantz, and most of those used are of American origin. They even found several native chiefs of tribes the proud owners of American cars.

The scientists, in fact, toured the big game country of British East Africa in cars that had been built for war service. They operated out of Nairobi, which, while on the equator, is one of the most pleasant spots to be found anywhere. It was often so cool that fires were desirable; so cool in fact that one shivering traveler remarked to the Americans that the next time he ventured into the African tropics he was going to take a stove along. Nairobi is quite an up-to-date and civilized community, being on a railroad that runs from the Indian Ocean to beautiful Lake Tanganyika. North of there is the prime big game area of Africa, the section wherein Roosevelt made his famous hunting trip. The only regular means of transportation provided for the section is an ox transport that moves at the rate of two miles an hour from Nairobi to the Abyssinian border. It was too slow for the Americans, who also wanted to get away from the beaten tracks. They were able to rent two automobiles. Then arose the question of gasoline. It was very scarce in Nairobi and non-existent in the country they wanted to explore. Though it was selling in the open market for as high as \$8 a gallon, they were able to get supplies at a fairly reasonable price—for Africa. Then they faced the problem of getting very far from the base of supply, for they could carry only so much fuel and had to take along living supplies and other things. They first took out as many cans of gasoline as they could carry and planted a large part of it about 75 miles from base, and returned to Nairobi for more. Then they made another planting in the bush farther on and again returned for more. In that way they were

able to maneuver as far as 300 miles from base, which was the longest distance anyone had ever gone into the big game country by motor.

"Are big animals still numerous over there?" I asked Dr. Shantz.

"From what we saw they are still quite numerous," he replied. "We saw one string of big game, made up chiefly of zebra, gazelle and onyx that stretched out for a distance of at least three miles. We saw many herds of elephants, quite a few rhinoceroses and several lions."

"Did any of them make trouble for you?"

"No, not in a serious sense. A lioness dropped out of the bush and stalked my car one day for a few minutes and she looked as if she meant business. But before I felt like shooting—you are not supposed to kill big game unless you have a license that costs about \$750—she walked back into the bush. A herd of elephants began to stamp around camp one night, and it made us pretty nervous. I am confident they just happened to be passing and were not looking for trouble. But we built fires around our tents for protection."

The wild animals, says Dr. Shantz, showed great interest in the automobiles. At night the lights seemed to have great fascination for them. They would come up to the road and seem afraid to go through the light rays in front of the cars, would run along beside the light for some time and finally try to jump over it as if they thought it were fire. This was true chiefly of

zebra. The lights also seemed to attract hyenas and jackals which are very numerous. The automobiles didn't startle the wild animals so much as they did some of the natives in remote districts. Often when a native would see a car coming there would be a pitiful and almost frantic display of fear.

But for the African native, Dr. Shantz has only kind words and grateful thoughts, and especially for those who are out of contact with white civilization.

"Those you find around the civilized settlements of white people are largely just common Negroes," said he. "When you get out into the bush and come in contact with the so-called savage still living his own life, you usually meet very interesting and in many ways fascinating people. They are friendly and hospitably inclined and very companionable."

"But not much for clothing?" I suggested.

"No. But I should say that those who don't wear clothing look better than those who do. Often the only garment worn is a piece of animal skin over the shoulder in the case of men and a belt with a dangling 'tail' behind in the case of women. But there is nothing immodest in their handsome nakedness. The members of some tribes are very handsome."

The native tribe that Dr. Shantz likes most to tell about is the Watusi in Urundi by Lake Tanganyika, an area added by the Peace Conference to Belgium's possessions. The people, he says, show many evidences of being of at least part Caucasian origin. Though dark of color they lack many features of the pure Ethiopian, are intelligent, high-spirited and superior. The Watusi are the native aristocrats, maintaining a sort of supremacy over the pure blacks. There is reason for believing, he says, that they are descendants of the ancient Egyptians.

Dr. Shantz brought or sent back more than 1,600 specimens of African plant life that seem to afford possibilities for American cultivation. These are now being tested with the view of adoption, and of course it will be many years before we will know which of them can be made successful in this country.

"There are many popular misconceptions about Africa," Dr. Shantz declares. "One of the falsest concerns the climate. Of course in the desert regions of North Africa it is fearfully hot. We found it rather warm along the Nile, as we came out. But in Central Africa, the equatorial region, the climate was usually delightful. Of course there is much rain in the wet seasons. But, even in the jungles of the Congo, I never saw the temperature go beyond 87. And in the semi-temperate zone of South Africa the climate is almost perfect."

"Traveling is by no means as difficult or dangerous as you might think, or as many have pictured. There are many rail and boat lines and ox and camel transports. We ran into white women traveling alone with perfect safety and fair comfort in those regions that were first explored a generation or two ago."

You can now, says he, almost make the trip from the Cape to Cairo by rail, water or transport line. But if you make it direct, it is necessary, at

one or two points, to hike over quite long distances. The longest he and Mr. Raven had to make afoot was from Numuli to Rejof, north of Uganda in the Lower Sudan, and just above the equator. The gap is 115 miles long. At Rejof they got a boat that connected with the line of Nile communications, which they followed, by boat and rail, to Cairo. The scientists were away from America for fourteen months and in Africa almost exactly one year.

"Africa is a wonderfully rich continent," Dr. Shantz declares, "and exceedingly varied. The white man is subduing it rapidly. No longer can you get very far away from white settlements and the aspects of modern civilization. But much of it is still gloriously wild and uncivilized. Those were the sections that interested me most. The immense native plant life is still but partially known. Great areas have not yet been explored for desirable plants. No doubt numerous and valuable additions to civilized agriculture are still to come from there."



DUM PALM IN EAST AFRICA