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Into
Africa



VAN DYKE

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1931

California Frontiers 1840

CIVILIZATION BEGINS TO FADE

and awe-inspiring semi-falls and semi-cataracts in the world. The entire waters of the Victoria Nile plunge into a gap of solid rock fifteen feet wide and drop two hundred feet to its second level.

The falls were admirably suited to my purposes. All I had to do was to convince the Governor of Uganda that it was perfectly safe for me to bring thirty-five whites and one hundred ninety-two blacks up to this spot which was considered the most dangerous sleeping-sickness area in Africa, and to assure the Governor that we would all get by without danger to ourselves or the surrounding community.

At this time I did not go up to the foot of the falls, as I was in a hurry to get back to Panyamur before dark. I had not the slightest intention of camping on a river as teeming with croc and hippo as this one.

We left Panyamur at dawn the next morning and pulled into Rhino Camp late the following evening. Rhino Camp obtained its name from the fact that it is the feeding ground of a rather large herd of white rhinos that are thoroughly protected from slaughter by the government.

The white rhino's name probably originated from the fact that it is anything but white. I was told that a man by the name of White had discovered the animal and named it after himself, although it is as black as the other rhino. The only difference between the white and the black rhino is the fact that the white rhinos apparently are not so vicious, have a squarer head, and a much longer, narrower set of horns.

HORNING INTO AFRICA

Wonder how many people know that the rhino horn is not of bone structure? It is formed of congealed hair, as hard as ivory, and is not attached to the bone of the skull in any way but grows out of the skin. It is worth more money than ivory and is used for the medicinal preparation of Spanish Fly.

Rhino Camp is a little place, only a steamboat landing from which one starts for the Belgian Congo, or as they call it, Congo Belge.

It was in Rhino Camp that I shot my first African game, a nice, big specimen of hartebeest. This animal was shot eleven times before it was brought to earth, and even then its head was up and it looked at us very calmly while we walked up and threw a bullet into its brain. It was also here that my good American rifle pattered out on me, kicking so hard it broke its own stock and mangled my shoulder.

Rhino Camp was admirably suited for the second river-town sequence in the picture, and plans were laid for the building of a more pretentious store here than the one at Panyamur. These details accomplished, we unloaded the seven cars that one of the larger river boats had brought up on a scow, and began high-tailing it for the Belgian Congo.

Nearly one hundred miles west is the last British town called Arua. There are six white men living in this district. These six men are never all in town at the same time, but they have the sweetest golf course I have played over—terraced greens, if you please, in the very heart of

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Africa on the border of the Belgian Congo. Wherever you find two Englishmen living together, you will find a golf course. It may consist of only two holes and they will play back and forth all day, but those two holes will be of a sporty nature and make good golf.

We stopped here long enough to have our passports vised. Sixteen miles farther on, we crossed the border and arrived at the Belgian town of Aru, where there is the most important office in the world and two of the most important officials! The custom house and the two custom officials. If custom officials of New York harbor were as strict and as important as the custom officials at the town of Aru, one couldn't get a canoe with a cargo consisting of a hand bag out of New York harbor in a month. Here our wireless outfit was sealed, and we were out of communication with the rest of my company. This gave rise later on to a wild tale in the newspapers that we were lost somewhere in the Belgian Congo, because they did not hear from us for several days.

For the next few days, we autoed and tramped all over the Congo, stopping about one hundred ninety miles west of Faraje at a farm where the Belgian government has for forty years been trying to train African elephants, and doing a pretty good job of it. They have some twenty-odd elephants and kill only about sixty-five natives annually now. In these forty years, they have actually trained two or three elephants to haul a twenty-pound log over some level ground, providing that forty natives walk along on either side of them, singing to them every minute!