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The Capital of the Congo

Leopold's "shop" has its front door at Banana. Its house flag is a golden star on a blue background. Banana is the port of entry to the Congo. You have, no doubt, seen many ports of Europe—Antwerp, Hamburg, Boulogne, Lisbon, Genoa, Marseilles. Banana is the port of entry to a country as large as Western Europe, and while the imports and exports of Europe trickle through all these cities, the commerce of the Congo enters and departs entirely at Banana. You can then picture the busy harbor, the jungle of masts, the white bridges and awnings of the steamers. By the fat funnels and the flags you can distinguish the English tramps, the German merchantmen, the French, Dutch, Italian, Portuguese traders, the smart "liners" from Liverpool, even the Arab dhows with bird-wing sails, even the steel, four-masted schooners out of Boston, U.S.A. You can imagine the toiling lighters, the slap-dash tenders, the launches with shrieking whistles.

Of course, you suspect it is not a bit like that. But were it for fourteen countries the "open door" to twenty millions of people, that is how it might look.

Instead, it is the private entrance to the preserves of a private individual. So what you really see is, on the one hand, islands of mangrove bushes, with their roots in the muddy water; on the other, Banana, a strip of sand and palm trees without a wharf, quay, landing stage, without a pier to which you could make fast anything larger than a rowboat.

In a canoe naked natives paddle alongside to sell fish; a peevish little man in a sun hat, who, in order to save Leopold three salaries, holds four port offices, is being rowed to the gangway; on shore the only other visible inhabitant of Banana, a man with no nerves, is disturbing the brooding, sweating silence by knocking the rust off the plates of a stranded mud-scow. Welcome to our city! Welcome to busy, bustling Banana, the port of entry of the Congo Free State.

In a canoe we were paddled to the back yard of the café of Madame Samuel, and from that bower of warm beer and sardine tins trudged through the sun up one side of Banana and down the other. In between the two paths were the bungalows and gardens of forty white men and two white women. Many of the gardens, as was most of Banana, were neglected, untidy, littered with condensed-milk tins. Others, more carefully tended, were laid out in rigid lines. With all tropical nature to draw upon, nothing had been imagined. The most ambitious efforts were designs in whitewashed shells and protruding beer bottles. We could not help remembering the gardens in Japan, of the poorest and the most ignorant coolies. Do I seem to find fault with Banana out of all proportion to its importance? It is because Banana, the Congo's most advanced post of civilization, is typical of all that lies beyond.

From what I had read of the Congo I expected a broad sweep of muddy, malaria-breeding water, lined by low-lying swamp lands, gloomy, monotonous, depressing.

But on the way to Boma and, later, when I travelled on the Upper Congo, I thought the river more beautiful than any great river I had ever seen. It was full of wonderful surprises.

Sometimes it ran between palm-covered banks of yellow sand as low as those of the Mississippi or the Nile; and again, in half an hour, the banks were rock and as heavily wooded as the mountains of Montana, or as white and bold as the cliffs of Dover, or we passed between great hills, covered with what looked like giant oaks, and with their peaks hidden in the clouds. I found it like no other river, because in some one particular it was like them all. Between Banana and Boma the banks first screened us in with the tangled jungle of the tropics, and then opened up great wind-swept plateaux, leading to hills that suggested—of all places—England, and, at that, cultivated England. The contour of the hills, the shape of the trees, the shade of their green contrasted with the green of the grass, were like only the cliffs above Plymouth. One did not look for native kraals and the wild antelope, but for the square, ivy-topped tower of the village church, the loaf-shaped hayricks, slow-moving masses of sheep. But this that looks like a pasture land is only coarse limestone covered with bitter, un-nutritious grass, which benefits neither beast nor man.

At sunset we anchored in the current three miles from Boma, and at daybreak we tied up to the iron wharf. As the capital of the government Boma contains the residence and gardens of the governor, who is the personal representative of Leopold, both as a shopkeeper and as a king by divine right. He is a figurehead. The real administrator is M. Vandamme, the Secrétaire-Général, the ubiquitous, the mysterious, whose name before you leave Southampton is in the air, of whom all men, whether they speak in French or English, speak well. It is from Boma that M. Vandamme sends collectors of rubber, politely labeled inspecteurs, directeurs, judges, capitaines, and sous-lieutenants to their posts, and distributes them over one million square miles.

Boma is the capital of a country which is as large as six nations of the European continent. For twenty-five years it has been the capital. Therefore, the reader already guesses that Boma has only one wharf, and at that wharf there is no custom-house, no warehouse, not even a canvas awning under which, during the six months of rainy season, one might seek shelter for himself and his baggage.

Our debarkation reminded me of a landing of filibusters. A wharf forty yards long led from the steamer to the bank. Down this marched the officers of the army, the clerks, the bookkeepers, and on the bank and in the street each dumped his boxes, his sword, his camp-bed, his full-dress helmet. It looked as though a huge eviction had taken place, as though a retreating army, having gained the river's edge, were waiting for a transport. It was not as though to the government the coming of these gentlemen was a complete surprise; regularly every three weeks at that exact spot a like number disembark. But in years the State has not found it worth while to erect for them even an open zinc shed. The cargo invoiced to the State is given equal consideration.

“Prisoners of the State,” each wearing round his neck a steel ring from which a chain stretches to the ring of another “prisoner,” carried the cargo to the open street, where lay the luggage of the officers, and there dropped it. Mingled with steamer chairs, tin bathtubs, gun-cases, were great crates of sheet iron, green boxes of gin, bags of Tenerife potatoes, boilers of an engine. Upon the scene the sun beat with vicious, cruel persistence. Those officers who had already served in the Congo dropped their belongings under the shadow of a solitary tree. Those who for the first time were seeing the capital of the country they had sworn to serve sank upon their boxes and, with dismay in their eyes, mopped their red and dripping brows.

Boma is built at the foot of a hill of red soil. It is a town of scattered buildings made of wood and sheet-iron plates, sent out in crates, and held together with screws. To Boma nature has been considerate. She has contributed many trees, two or three long avenues of palms, and in

the many gardens caused flowers to blossom and flourish. In the report of the "Commission of Enquiry" which Leopold was forced to send out in 1904 to investigate the atrocities, and each member of which, for his four months' work, received \$20,000, Boma is described as possessing "the daintiness and *chic* of a European watering-place."

Boma really is like a seaport of one of the Central American republics. It has a temporary sufficient-to-the-day-for-tomorrow-we-die air. It looks like a military post that at any moment might be abandoned. To remove this impression the State has certain exhibits which seem to point to a stable and good government. There is a well-conducted hospital and clean, well-built barracks; for the amusement of the black soldiers even a theatre, and for the higher officials attractive bungalows, a bandstand, where twice a week a negro band plays by ear, and plays exceedingly well. There is even a lawn-tennis court, where the infrequent visitor to the Congo is welcomed, and, by the courteous Mr. Vandamme, who plays tennis as well as he does every thing else, entertained. Boma is the shop window of Leopold's big store. The good features of Boma are like those attractive articles one sometimes sees in a shop window, but which in the shop one fails to find—at least, I did not find them in the shop. Outside of Boma I looked in vain for a school conducted by the State, like the one at Boma, such as those the United States government gave by the hundred to the Philippines. I found not one. And I looked for such a hospital as the one I saw at Boma, such as our government has placed for its employees along, and at both ends of, the Isthmus of Panama, and, except for the one at Leopoldville, I saw none.

In spite of the fact that Boma is a "European watering-place," all the servants of the State with whom I talked wanted to get away from it, especially those who already had served in the interior. To appreciate what Boma lacks one has only to visit the neighboring seaports on the same coast; the English towns of Sierra Leone and Calabar, the French town of Libreville in the French Congo, the German seaport Duala in the Cameroons, but especially Calabar in Southern Nigeria. In actual existence the new Calabar is eight years younger than Boma, and in its municipal government, its street-making, cleaning, and lighting, wharfs, barracks, prisons, hospitals, it is a hundred years in advance. Boma is not a capital; it is the distributing factory for a huge trading concern, and a particularly selfish one. There is, as I have said, only one wharf, and at that wharf, without paying the State, only State boats may discharge cargo, so the English, Dutch, and German boats are forced to "tie up" along the river front. There the grass is eight feet high and breeds mosquitoes and malaria, and conceals the wary crocodile. At night, from the deck of the steamer, all one can see of this capital is a fringe of this high grass in the light from the air ports, and on shore three gas-lamps. No cafés are open, no sailors carouse, no lighted window suggests that someone is giving a dinner, that someone is playing bridge. Darkness, gloom, silence mark this "European watering-place."

"You ask me," demanded a Belgian lieutenant one night as we stood together by the rail, "whether I like better the bush, where there is no white man in a hundred miles, or to be stationed at Boma?"

He threw out his hands at the gas-lamps, rapidly he pointed at each of them in turn.

"Voilà, Boma!" he said.

From Boma we steamed six hours farther up the river to Matadi. On the way we stopped at Noqui, the home of Portuguese traders on the Portuguese bank, which, as one goes upstream, lies to starboard. Here the current runs at from four to five miles an hour, and has so sharply cut away the bank that we are able to run as near to it with the stern of our big ship as though she were a canoe. To one used more to ocean than to Congo traffic it was somewhat bewildering to see the five-thousand-ton steamer make fast to a tree, a sand-bank looming up three fathoms off

her quarter, and the blades of her propeller, as though they were the knives of a lawn-mower, cutting the eel-grass.

At Matadi the Congo makes one of her lightning changes. Her banks, which have been low and woody, with, on the Portuguese side, glimpses of boundless plateaux, become towering hills of rock. At Matadi the cataracts and rapids begin, and for two hundred miles continue to Stanley Pool, which is the beginning of the Upper Congo. Leopoldville is situated on Stanley Pool, just to the right of where the rapids start their race to the south. With Leopoldville above and Boma below, still nearer the mouth of the river, Matadi makes a centre link in the chain of the three important towns of the Lower Congo.

When Henry M. Stanley was halted by the cataracts and forced to leave the river he disembarked his expedition on the bank opposite Matadi, and a mile farther up-stream. It was from this point he dragged and hauled his boats, until he again reached smooth water at Stanley Pool. The wagons on which he carried the boats still can be seen lying on the bank, broken and rusty. Like the sight of old gun carriages and dismantled cannon, they give one a distinct thrill. Now, on the bank opposite from where they lie, the railroad runs from Matadi to Leopoldville.

The Congo forces upon one a great admiration for Stanley. Unless civilization utterly alters it, it must always be a monument to his courage, and as you travel farther and see the difficulties placed in his way, your admiration increases. There are men here who make little of what Stanley accomplished; but they are men who seldom leave their own compound, and, who, when they do go up the river, travel at ease, not in a canoe, or on foot through the jungle, but in the smoking-room of the steamer and in a first-class railroad carriage. That they are able so to travel is due to the man they would belittle. The nickname given to Stanley by the natives is today the nickname of the government. Matadi means rock. When Stanley reached the town of Matadi, which is surrounded entirely by rock, he began with dynamite to blast roads for his caravan. The natives called him Bula Matadi, the Breaker of Rocks, and, as in those days he was the Government, the Law, and the Prophets, Bula Matadi, who then was the white man who governed, now signifies the white man's government. But it is a very different government, and a very different white man. With the natives the word is universal. They say "Bula Matadi wood post." "Not traders' chop, Bula Matadi's chop." "Him no missionary steamer, him Bula Matadi steamer."

The town of Matadi is of importance as the place where, owing to the rapids, passengers and cargoes are reshipped on the railroad to the *haut Congo*. It is a railroad terminus only, and it looks it. The railroad station and store-houses are close to the river bank, and, spread over several acres of cinders, are the railroad yard and machine shops. Above those buildings of hot corrugated zinc and the black soil rises a great rock. It is not so large as Gibraltar, or so high as the Flatiron Building, but it is a little more steep than either. Three narrow streets lead to its top. They are of flat stones, with cement gutters. The stones radiate the heat of stove lids. They are worn to a mirror-like smoothness, and from their surface the sun strikes between your eyes, at the pit of your stomach, and the soles of your mosquito boots. The three streets lead to a parade ground no larger than and as bare as a brickyard. It is surrounded by the buildings of Bula Matadi, the post-office, the custom-house, the barracks, and the Café Franco-Belge. It has a tableland fifty yards wide of yellow clay so beaten by thousands of naked feet, so baked by the heat, that it is as hard as a brass shield. Other tablelands may be higher, but this is the one nearest the sun. You cross it wearily, in short rushes, with your heart in your throat, and seeking shade, as a man crossing the zone of fire seeks cover from the bullets. When you reach the cool, dirty

custom-house, with walls two feet thick, you congratulate yourself on your escape; you look back into the blaze of the flaming plaza and wonder if you have the courage to return.

At the custom-house I paid duty on articles I could not possibly have bought anywhere in the Congo, as, for instance, a tent and a folding-bed, and for a license to carry arms. A young man with a hammer and tiny branding irons beat little stars and the number of my license to *porter d'armes* on the stock of each weapon. Without permission of Bula Matadi on leaving the Congo, one can not sell his guns, or give them away. This is a precaution to prevent weapons falling into the hands of the native. For some reason a native with a gun alarms Bula Matadi. Just on the other bank of the river the French, who do not seem to fear the black brother, sell him flintlock rifles, as many as his heart desires.

On the steamer there was a mild young missionary coming out, for the first time, to whom some unobserving friend had given a fox-terrier. The young man did not care for the dog. He had never owned a dog, and did not know what to do with this one. Her name was Fanny, and only by the efforts of all on board did she reach the Congo alive. There was no one, from the butcher to the captain, including the passengers, who had not shielded Fanny from the cold, and later from the sun, fed her, bathed her, forced medicine down her throat, and raced her up and down the spar deck. Consequently we all knew Fanny, and it was a great shock when from the custom-house I saw her running around the blazing parade ground, her eyes filled with fear and "lost dog" written all over her, from her drooping tongue to her drooping tail. Captain Burton and I called "Fanny," and, not seeking suicide for ourselves, sent half a dozen black boys to catch her. But Fanny never liked her black uncles; on the steamer the Kroo boys learned to give her the length of her chain, and so we were forced to plunge to her rescue into the valley of heat. Perhaps she thought we were again going to lock her up on the steamer, or perhaps that it was a friendly game, for she ran from us as fast as from the black boys. In Matadi no one ever had crossed the parade ground except at a funeral march, and the spectacle of two large white men playing tag with a small fox-terrier attracted an immense audience. The officials and clerks left work and peered between the iron-barred windows, the prisoners in chains ceased breaking rock and stared dumbly from the barracks, the black "sentries" shrieked and gesticulated, the naked bush boys, in from a long caravan journey, rose from the side of their burdens and commented upon our maneuvers in gloomy, guttural tones. I suspect they thought we wanted Fanny for "chop." Finally Fanny ran into the legs of a German trader, who grabbed her by the neck and held her up to us.

"You want him? Hey?" he shouted.

"Ay, man," gasped Burton, now quite purple, "did you think we were trying to amuse the dog?"

I made a leash of my belt, and the captain returned to the ship dragging his prisoner after him. An hour later I met the youthful missionary leading Fanny by a rope.

"I must tell you about Fanny," he cried. "After I took her to the Mission I forgot to tie her up—as I suppose I should have done—and she ran away. But, would you believe it, she found her way straight back to the ship. Was it not intelligent of her?"

I was too far gone with apoplexy, heat prostration, and sunstroke to make any answer, at least one that I could make to a missionary.

The next morning Fanny, the young missionary, and I left for Leopoldville on the railroad. It is a narrow-gauge railroad built near Matadi through the solid rock and later twisting and turning so often that at many places one can see the track on three different levels. It is not a State road, but was built and is owned by a Dutch company, and, except that it charges exorbitant

rates and does not keep its carriages clean, it is well run, and the road-bed is excellent. But it runs a passenger train only three times a week, and though the distance is so short, and though the train starts at 6:30 in the morning, it does not get you to Leopoldville the same day. Instead, you must rest over night at Thysville and start at seven the next morning. That afternoon at three you reach Leopoldville. For the two hundred and fifty miles the fare is two hundred francs, and one is limited to sixty pounds of luggage. That was the weight allowed by the Japanese to each war correspondent, and as they gave us six months in Tokyo in which to do nothing else but weigh our equipment, I left Matadi without a penalty. Had my luggage exceeded the limit, for each extra pound I would have had to pay the company ten cents. To the Belgian officers and agents who go for three years to serve the State in the bush the regulation is especially harsh, and in a company so rich, particularly mean. To many a poor officer, and on the pay they receive there are no rich ones, the tax is prohibitive. It forces them to leave behind medicines, clothing, photographic supplies, all ammunition, which means no chance of helping out with duck and pigeon the daily menu of goat and tinned sausages, and, what is the greatest hardship, all books. This regulation, which the State permitted to the concessionaires of the railroad, sends the agents of the State into the wilderness physically and mentally unequipped, and it is no wonder the weaker brothers go mad, and act accordingly.

My black boys travelled second-class, which means an open car with narrow seats very close together and a wooden roof. On these cars passengers are allowed twenty pounds of luggage and permitted to collect two hundred and fifty miles of heat and dust. To a black boy twenty pounds is little enough, for he travels with much more baggage than an average "blanc." I am not speaking of the Congo boy. All the possessions the State leaves him he could carry in his pockets, and he has no pockets. But wherever he goes the Kroo boy, Mendi boy, or Sierra Leone boy carries all his belongings with him in a tin trunk painted pink, green, or yellow. He is never separated from his "box," and the recognized uniform of a Kroo boy at work, is his breechcloth, and hanging from a ribbon around his knee, the key to his box. If a boy has no box he generally carries three keys.

In the first-class car were three French officers en route to Brazzaville, the capital of the French Congo, and a dog, a sad mongrel, very dirty, very hungry. On each side of the tiny toy car were six revolving-chairs, so the four men, not to speak of the dog, quite filled it. And to our own bulk each added hand-bags, cases of beer, helmets, gun-cases, cameras, water-bottles, and, as the road does not supply food of any kind, his chop-box. A chop-box is anything that holds food, and for food of every kind, for the hours of feeding, and the verb "to feed," on the West Coast, the only word, the "lazy" word, is "chop."

The absent-minded young missionary, with Fanny jammed between his ankles, and looking out miserably upon the world, and two other young missionaries, travelled second-class.

They were even more crowded together than were we, but not so much with luggage as with humanity. But as a protest against the high charges of the railroad the missionaries always travel in the open car. These three young men were for the first time out of England, and in any fashion were glad to start on their long journey up the Congo to Bolobo. To them whatever happened was a joke. It was a joke even when the colored "wife" of one of the French officers used the broad shoulders of one of them as a pillow and slept sweetly. She was a large, good-natured, good-looking mulatto, and at the frequent stations the French officer ran back to her with "white man's chop," a tin of sausages, a pineapple, a bottle of beer. She drank the beer from the bottle, and with religious tolerance offered it to the Baptists. They assured her without the least regret that they were teetotalers. To the other blacks in the open car the sight of a white man

waiting on one of their own people was a thrilling spectacle. They regarded the woman who could command such services with respect. It would be interesting to know what they thought of the white man. At each station the open car disgorged its occupants to fill with water the beer bottle each carried, and to buy from the natives kwango, the black man's bread, a flaky, sticky flour that tastes like boiled chestnuts; and pineapples at a franc for ten. And such pineapples! Not hard and rubber-like, as we know them at home, but delicious, juicy, melting in the mouth like hothouse grapes, and, also, after each mouthful, making a complete bath necessary. One of the French officers had a lump of ice which he broke into pieces and divided with the others. They saluted magnificently many times, and as each drowned the morsel in his tin cup of beer, one of them cried with perfect simplicity: "C'est Paris!" This reminded me that the ship's steward had placed much ice in my chop basket, and I carried some of it to another car in which were five of the White Sisters. For nineteen days I had been with them on the steamer, but they had spoken to no one, and I was doubtful how they would accept my offering. But the Mother Superior gave permission, and they took the ice through the car window, their white hoods bristling with the excitement of the adventure. They were on their way to a post still two months' journey up the river, nearly to Lake Tanganyika, and for three years or, possibly, until they died, that was the last ice they would see.

At Bongolo station the division superintendent came in the car and everybody offered him refreshment, and in return he told us, in the hope of interesting us, of a washout, and then casually mentioned that an hour before an elephant had blocked the track. It seemed so much too good to be true that I may have expressed some doubt, for he said: "Why, of course and certainly. Already this morning one was at Sariski Station and another at Sipeto." And instead of looking out of the window I had been reading an American magazine, filched from the smoking-room, which was one year old!

At Thysville the railroad may have opened a hotel, but when I was there to hunt for a night's shelter it turned you out bag and baggage. The French officers decided to risk a Portuguese trading store known as the "Ideal Hotel," and the missionaries very kindly gave me the freedom of their Rest House. It is kept open for those of the Mission who pass between the Upper and Lower Congo. At the station the young missionaries were met by two older missionaries—Mr. Weekes, who furnished the "Commission of Enquiry" with much evidence, which they would not, or were not allowed to, print, and Mr. Jennings. With them were twenty "boys" from the Mission and, with each of them carrying a piece of our baggage on his head, we climbed the hill, and I was given a clean, comfortable, completely appointed bedroom. Our combined chop we turned over to a black brother. He is the custodian of the Rest House and an excellent cook. While he was preparing it my boys spread out my folding rubber tub. Had I closed the door I should have smothered, so, in the presence of twenty interested black Baptists, I took an embarrassing but one of the most necessary baths I can remember.

There still was a piece of the ice remaining, and as the interest in the bathtub had begun to drag I handed it to one of my audience. He yelled as though I had thrust into his hand a drop of vitriol, and, leaping in the air, threw the ice on the floor and dared any one to touch it. From the "personal" boys who had travelled to Matadi the Mission boys had heard of ice. But none had ever seen it. They approached it as we would a rattlesnake. Each touched it and then sprang away. Finally one, his eyes starting from his head, cautiously stroked the inoffensive brick and then licked his fingers. The effect was instantaneous. He assured the others it was "good chop," and each of them sat hunched about it on his heels, stroking it, and licking his fingers, and then

with delighted thrills rubbing them over his naked body. The little block of ice that at Liverpool was only a "quart of water" had assumed the value of a diamond.

Dinner was enlivened by an incident. Mr. Weekes, with orders simply to "fry these," had given to the assistant of the cook two tins of sausages. The small *chef* presented them to us in the pan in which he had cooked them, but he had obeyed instructions to the letter and had fried the tins unopened.

After dinner we sat until late, while the older men told the young missionaries of atrocities of which, in the twenty years and within the last three years, they had been witnesses. Already in Mr. Morel's books I had read their testimony, but hearing from the men themselves the tales of outrage and cruelty gave them a fresh and more intimate value, and sent me to bed hot and sick with indignation. But, nevertheless, the night I slept at Thysville was the only cool one I knew in the Congo. It was as cool as is a night in autumn at home. Thysville, between the Upper and the Lower Congo, with its fresh mountain air, is an obvious site for a hospital for the servants of the State. To the Congo it should be what Simla is to the sick men of India; but the State is not running hospitals. It is in the rubber business.

All steamers for the Upper Congo and her great tributaries, whether they belong to the State or the Missions, start from Leopoldville. There they fit out for voyages, some of which last three and four months. So it is a place of importance, but, like Boma, it looks as though the people who yesterday built it meant tomorrow to move out. The river-front is one long dump-heap. It is a grave-yard for rusty boilers, deck-plates, chains, fire-bars. The interior of the principal storehouse for ships' supplies, directly in front of the office of the captain of the port, looks like a junk-shop for old iron and newspapers. I should have enjoyed taking the captain of the port by the neck and showing him the water-front and marine shops at Calabar; the wharfs and quays of stone, the open places spread with gravel, the whitewashed cement gutters, the spare parts of machinery, greased and labeled in their proper shelves, even the condemned scrap-iron in orderly piles; the whole yard as trim as a battleship.

On the river-front at Leopoldville a grossly fat man, collarless, coatless, purple-faced, perspiring, was rushing up and down. He was the captain of the port. Black women had assembled to greet returning black soldiers, and the captain was calling upon the black sentries to drive them away. The sentries, yelling, fell upon the women with their six-foot staves and beat them over the head and bare shoulders, and as they fled, screaming, the captain of the port danced in the sun shaking his fists after them and raging violently. Next morning I was told he had tried to calm his nerves with absinthe, which is not particularly good for nerves, and was exceedingly unwell. I was sorry for him. The picture of discipline afforded by the glazed-eyed official, reeling and cursing in the open street, had been illuminating.

Although at Leopoldville the State has failed to build wharfs, the esthetic features of the town have not been neglected, and there is a pretty plaza called Stanley Park. In the centre of this plaza is a pillar with, at its base, a bust of Leopold, and on the top of the pillar a plaster-of-Paris lady, nude, and, not unlike the Bacchante of MacMonnies. Not so much from the likeness as from history, I deduced that the lady must be Cléo de Mérode. But whether the monument is erected to her or to Leopold, or to both of them, I do not know.

I left Leopoldville in the *Deliverance*. Some of the State boats that make the long trip to Stanleyville are very large ships. They have plenty of deck room and many cabins. With their flat, raft-like hull, their paddle-wheel astern, and the covered sun deck, they resemble gigantic houseboats. Of one of these boats the *Deliverance* was only one-third the size, but I took passage

on her because she would give me a chance to see not only something of the Congo, but also one of its great tributaries, the less travelled Kasai.

The *Deliverance* was about sixty-five feet over all and drew three feet of water. She was built like a mud-scow, with a deck of iron plates. Amidships, on this deck, was a tiny cabin with berths for two passengers and standing room for one. The furnaces and boiler were forward, banked by piles of wood. All the river boats burn only wood. Her engines were in the stern. These engines and the driving-rod to the paddle-wheel were uncovered. This gives the *Deliverance* the look of a large automobile without a tonneau. You were constantly wondering what had gone wrong with the carburetor, and if it rained what would happen to her engines. Supported on iron posts was an upper deck, on which, forward, stood the captain's box of a cabin and directly in front of it the steering-wheel. The telegraph, which signaled to the openwork engine below, and a dining table as small as a chess-board, completely filled the "bridge." When we sat at table the captain's boy could only just squeeze himself between us and the rail. It was like dining in a private box. And certainly no theatre ever offered such scenery, nor did any menagerie ever present so many strange animals.

We were four white men: Captain Jensen, his engineer, and the other passenger, Captain Anfossi, a young Italian. Before he reached his post he had to travel one month on the *Deliverance* and for another month walk through the jungle. He was the most cheerful and amusing companion, and had he been returning after three years of exile to his home he could not have been more brimful of spirits. Captain Jensen was a Dane (almost every river captain is a Swede or a Dane) and talked a little English, a little French, and a little Bangala. The mechanic was a Finn and talked the native Bangala, and Anfossi spoke French. After chop, when we were all assembled on the upper deck, there would be the most extraordinary talks in four languages, or we would appoint one man to act as a clearing-house, and he would translate for the others.

On the lower deck we carried twenty "wood boys," whose duty was to cut wood for the furnace, and about thirty black passengers. They were chiefly soldiers, who had finished their period of service for the State, with their wives and children. They were crowded on the top of the hatches into a space fifteen by fifteen feet between our cabin door and the furnace. Around the combings of the hatches, and where the scuppers would have been had the *Deliverance* had scuppers, the river raced over the deck to a depth of four or five inches. When the passengers wanted to wash their few clothes or themselves they carried on their ablutions and laundry work where they happened to be sitting. But for Anfossi and myself to go from our cabin to the iron ladder of the bridge it was necessary to wade both in the water and to make stepping stones of the passengers. I do not mean that we merely stepped over an occasional arm or leg. I mean we walked on them. You have seen a football player, in a hurry to make a touchdown, hurdle without prejudice both friends and foes. Our progress was like this. But by practice we became so expert that without even awakening them we could spring lightly from the plump stomach of a black baby to its mother's shoulder, from there leap to the father's ribs, and rebound upon the rungs of the ladder.

The river marched to the sea at the rate of four to five miles an hour. The *Deliverance* could make about nine knots an hour, so we travelled at the average rate of five miles; but for the greater part of each day we were tied to a bank while the boys went ashore and cut enough wood to carry us farther. And we never travelled at night. Owing to the changing currents, before the sun set we ran into shore and made fast to a tree. I explained how in America the river boats used searchlights, and was told that on one boat the State had experimented with a searchlight, but that particular searchlight having got out of order the idea of night travelling was condemned.

Ours was a most lazy progress, but one with the most beautiful surroundings and filled with entertainment. From our private box we looked out upon the most wonderful of panoramas. Sometimes we were closely hemmed in by mountains of light-green grass, except where, in the hollows, streams tumbled in tiny waterfalls between gigantic trees hung with strange flowering vines and orchids. Or we would push into great lakes of swirling brown water, dotted with flat islands overgrown with reed grass higher than the head of a man. Again the water turned blue and the trees on the banks grew into forests with the look of cultivated, well-cared-for parks, but with no sign of man, not even a mud hut or a canoe; only the strangest of birds and the great river beasts. Sometimes the sky was overcast and gray, the warm rain shut us in like a fog, and the clouds hid the peaks of the hills, or there would come a swift black tornado and the rain beat into our private box, and each would sit crouched in his rain coat, while the engineer smothered his driving-rods in palm oil, and the great drops drummed down upon the awning and drowned the fire in our pipes. After these storms, as though it were being pushed up from below, the river seemed to rise in the centre, to become convex. By some optical illusion, it seemed to fall away on either hand to the depth of three or four feet.

But as a rule we had a brilliant, gorgeous sunshine that made the eddying waters flash and sparkle, and caused the banks of sand to glare like whitewashed walls, and turn the sharp, hard fronds of the palms into glittering sword-blades. The movement of the boat tempered the heat, and in lazy content we sat in our lookout box and smiled upon the world. Except for the throb of the engine and the slow splash, splash, splash of the wheel there was no sound. We might have been adrift in the heart of a great ocean. So complete was the silence, so few were the sounds of man's presence, that at times one almost thought that ours was the first boat to disturb the Congo.

Although we were travelling by boat, we spent as much time on land as on the water. Because the *Deliverance* burnt wood and, like an invading army, "lived on the country," she was always stopping to lay in a supply. That gave Anfossi and myself a chance to visit the native villages or to hunt in the forest.

To feed her steamers the State has established along the river-bank posts for wood, and in theory at these places there always is a sufficient supply of wood to carry a steamer to the next post. But our experience was either that another steamer had just taken all the wood or that the boys had decided to work no more and had hidden themselves in the bush. The State posts were "clearings," less than one hundred yards square, cut out of the jungle. Sometimes only black men were in charge, but as a rule the *chef de poste* was a lonely, fever-ridden white, whose only interest in our arrival was his hope that we might spare him quinine. I think we gave away as many grains of quinine as we received logs of wood. Empty-handed we would turn from the wood post and steam a mile or so farther up the river, where we would run into a bank, and a boy with a steel hawser would leap overboard and tie up the boat to the roots of a tree. Then all the boys would disappear into the jungle and attack the primeval forest. Each was supplied with a machete and was expected to furnish a *bras* of wood. A *bras* is a number of sticks about as long and as thick as your arm, placed in a pile about three feet high and about three feet wide. To fix this measure the head boy drove poles into the bank three feet apart, and from pole to pole at the same distance from the ground stretched a strip of bark. When each boy had filled one of these openings all the wood was carried on board, and we would unhitch the *Deliverance*, and she would proceed to burn up the fuel we had just collected. It took the twenty boys about four hours to cut the wood, and the *Deliverance* the same amount of time to burn it. It was distinctly a hand-to-mouth existence. As I have pointed out, when it is too dark to see the currents, the Congo

captains never attempt to travel. So each night at sunset Captain Jensen ran into the bank, and as soon as the plank was out all the black passengers and the crew passed down it and spent the night on shore. In five minutes the women would have the fires lighted and the men would be cutting grass for bedding and running up little shelters of palm boughs and hanging up linen strips that were both tents and mosquito nets.

In the moonlight the natives with their campfires and torches made most wonderful pictures. Sometimes for their sleeping place the captain would select a glade in the jungle, or where a stream had cut a little opening in the forest, or a sandy island, with tall rushes on either side and the hot African moon shining on the white sand and turning the palms to silver, or they would pitch camp in a buffalo wallow, where the grass and mud had been trampled into a clay floor by the hoofs of hundreds of wild animals. But the fact that they were to sleep where at sunrise and at sunset came buffaloes, elephants, and panthers, disturbed the women not at all, and as they bent, laughing, over the iron pots, the firelight shone on their bare shoulders and was reflected from their white teeth and rolling eyes and brazen bangles.

Until late in the night the goats would bleat, babies cry, and the "boys" and "mammies" talked, sang, quarrelled, beat tom-toms, and squeezed mournful groans out of the accordion of civilization. One would have thought we had anchored off a busy village rather than at a place where, before that night, the inhabitants had been only the beasts of the jungle and the river.