

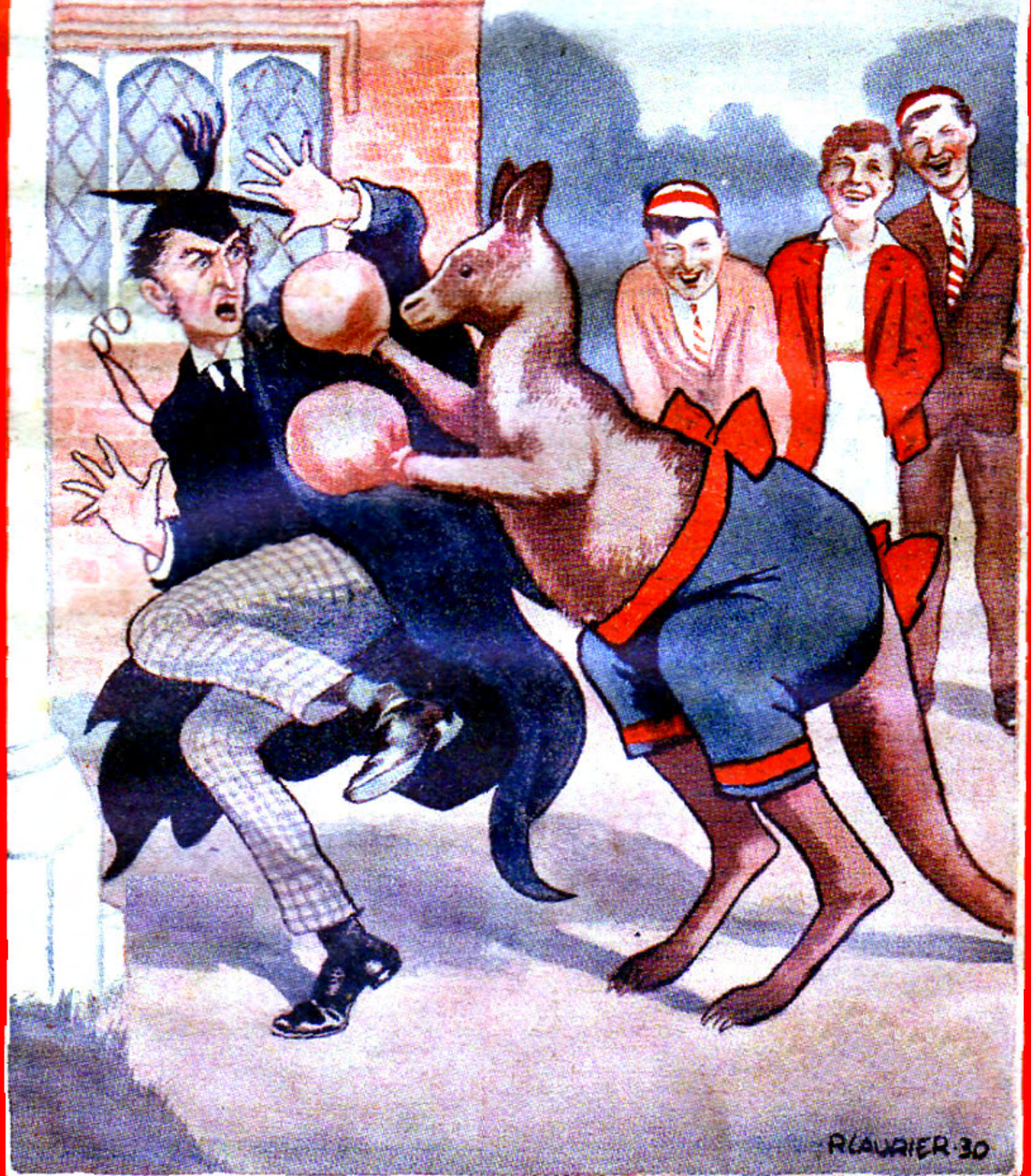
2 CRICKET BATS AUTOGRAPHED by the AUSTRALIAN TEAM
TO BE WON!

The POPULAR

EVERY
TUESDAY.

2^d

Week Ending
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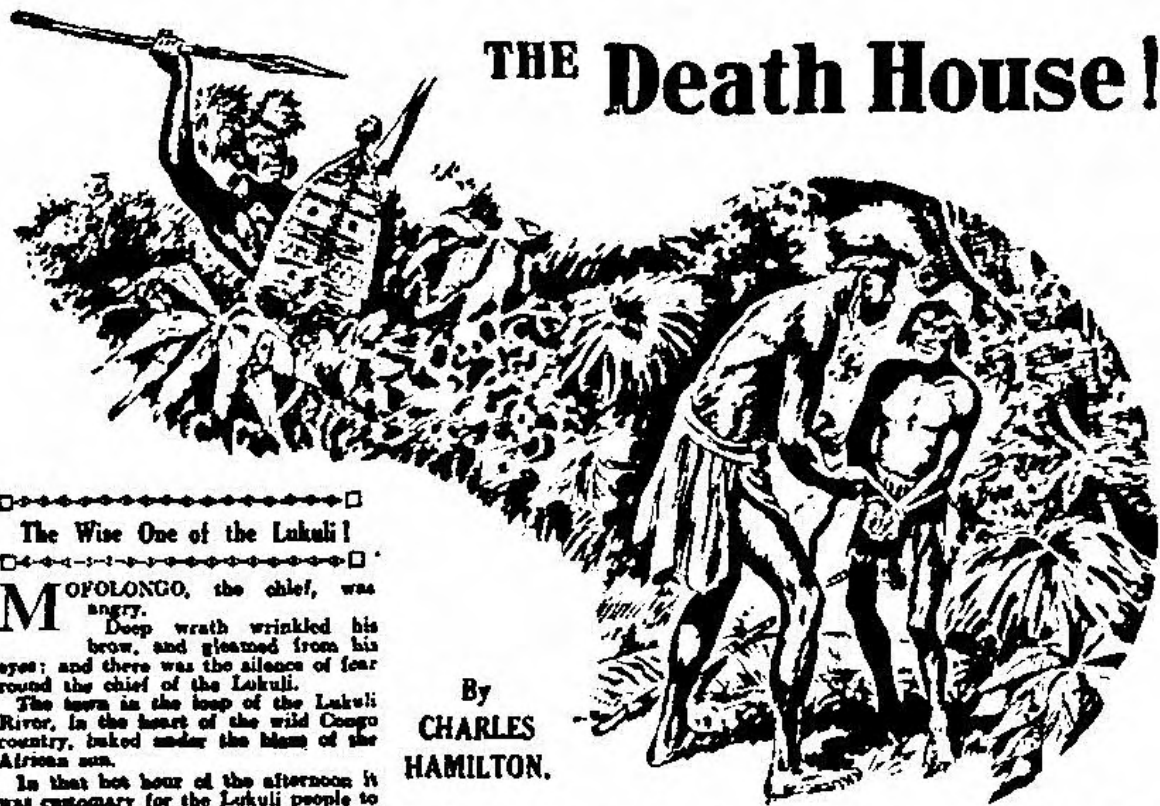


R. LAURIER '30

“THE K.O. KANGAROOS!”

Screamingly Funny School Yarn
Inside!

THE Death House!



By
**CHARLES
HAMILTON.**

this city a Small-One-of-the-Forest, with a tale of the ivory that lies in a valley of the Biribi country. Where is the Small One?"

Grant Strong started a little. He had wondered whether Mpoko, the bushman, had remained in the city, after conveying to him the message that his son was at hand with intent to rescue him.

He could guess now that the dwarf had fled secretly from the city when his task was done, and rejoined Lyn

"And are my soldiers' feet weighed with lead that they cannot pursue a Small One and bring him back to the city?"

"O Mighty One, the soldiers have sought for him, but the Small Ones of the forest are cunning, and it is their custom to pass from branch to branch in the manner of the monkeys, and thus leave no trace that a man's eyes may see," answered Chako.

Mofolongo set his thick lips. All the greed of his savage nature had been roused by Mpoko's tale of heaps of ivory, and he had given commands that the people of Lukuli should be kept back from the bushman's hut, that his tale might be told to no other ears.

But he had not commanded that the bushman should be a prisoner, not deeming that the dwarf had any motive for leaving the city, when he had come of his own accord with his tale of ivory.

Now the bushman was gone—he had stolen away in the darkness of the night; and Mofolongo was as puzzled as angry.

He stood silent for some moments—a silence that was fraught with terror to the soldiers waiting for him to speak.

He was capable of ordering the instant execution of the whole body of guards who had been on duty during the night—never fewer than fifty men. And the savage gleaming of his eyes told that death was in his thoughts.

But when he spoke it was not to call for the slayers of the torturers. Some sense of justice, perhaps, existed in the breast of the savage potentate of the Congo. And he had thought of another way.

"Send for Muki-Muki!" he commanded.

The Wise One of the Lukuli!

MOFOLONGO, the chief, was angry. Deep wrath wrinkled his brow, and gleamed from his eyes; and there was the silence of fear round the chief of the Lukuli.

The town in the loop of the Lukuli River, in the heart of the wild Congo country, basked under the blast of the African sun.

In that hot hour of the afternoon it was customary for the Lukuli people to lie in the shade; and even the women did not work in the fields of Indian corn while the sun hung like a ball of red copper over the town and the surrounding forests.

But for once the City of Lukuli was wakeful and active in that hot and drowsy hour, and the natives thronged in the wide streets that radiated from the central square.

Before the royal huts in the square stood Mofolongo, a magnificent figure in leopard-skins, with golden necklaces and anklets.

Round him stood his guards—brawny spearmen, with shield and fighting-spear—and Chako, the captain of the guards, stood before Mofolongo with bowed head and troubled face.

From one of the huts of the walled palace Grant Strong, the prisoner, looked out, carelessly wondering what was toward.

Little cared the hunter of Uganda for the wrath that caused a thrill of terror to pass through a city populated like a beehive.

For this was his last day, and on the morrow he was to die under the tortures of Muki-Muki, the witch-doctor, in his house in the jungle—for the morrow was the third day since the mark of sacrifice had been placed on his breast.

But Mofolongo's wrath was not directed towards the doomed hunter. He did not glance at the hut where Grant Strong stood.

His baleful glare was fixed on the trembling Chako.

Chako had often faced the leaping lion, the spears of the Biribi, the guns of the white Belgians, without fear. But the wrathful countenance of Mofolongo turned the blood to water in his veins.

"O soldier!" said Mofolongo, in his deep voice and the Lukuli tongue, "on the day that has passed there came to

Cannibal King Says—

"Kill the White Man!"

Popular Scout Says—

"NO, you don't!"

Strong and his comrades, who lay in cover in the encircling forest.

He smiled grimly.

Mpoko had deluded the great chief of the Lukuli with a tale of the "elephant's cemetery," where ivory lay as thick as fallen leaves; and he had been given a hut in the shadow of the royal palace. But the hut was empty now, and in the city they had searched in vain for the bushman.

If Mofolongo's wrath fell upon his guards, and death walked abroad in the city under the burning sun, little cared the hunter who was doomed to a death of torment.

Chako licked his dry lips.

"Speak, O fool!" said Mofolongo. "Am I to ask my questions twice, because your ears do not hear? Where is the Small One who told me the tale of ivory?"

"O Great and Terrible One, he is fled!" answered Chako, ending his voice at last.

And a swift runner started at once for the house of the witch-doctor, buried from sight in the patch of jungle half-way from the city to the surrounding forest.

And there was a chorus of relief from the men who had shivered in terror of death.

"Muki-Muki, the Wise One, will find the bushman; Muki-Muki, who talks with the ghosts and the devils, will ask them to give the Small One into the hands of Mofolongo! Muki-Muki is very wise, and knows all things."

Mofolongo made a gesture for silence. He sat down in the carved ebony chair of state before his huts, and slaves lifted over him the umbrella of palm leaves to shade him from the sun, and fanned him with fans of coloured feathers.

From the jungle in the distance came the tap of a drum, which was the signal that Muki-Muki was coming.

The witch-doctor came slowly up the scorching street, his neckless of human bones rattling round him as he walked—a wisdom, shrivelled old man, in whose black, cunning face the wickedness of all the ages seemed to be compressed.

He stopped at last before Mofolongo, and bent his head. But he did not fall on his face, as was the custom among the Lukuli. For Muki-Muki was a great man, almost as feared in the city as Mofolongo himself.

"O Mofolongo, my eyes see you," said Muki-Muki.

"Muki-Muki, I have sent for you because of your great wisdom, it being well known that all things are known to you," said Mofolongo. "Tell me, O talker with ghosts and devils, where is the Small One that has fled from my city?"

Muki-Muki stood silent for some moments. All eyes were fixed on him.

Of the Small One, of whither he had fled, the witch-doctor knew nothing. He had not even heard of his coming. Often was the Wise One put to such a test; but as often as the test was put the cunning of the pretender saved him from exposure.

He closed his eyes, and the look on the surrounding faces was full of awe—for when Muki-Muki closed his eyes he saw things in the dark that were invisible to all others—or so the Lukuli believed.

"O Mofolongo," said the Wise One, after that one moment's pause to collect his thoughts and his cunning. "my eyes see the Small One! He runs in the forest like a jackal, fearful of the anger of Mofolongo."

"And who shall find him, Muki-Muki?" asked the chief.

"Let Mofolongo send for his chief hunter, Tofobo, and command him to find the Small One!" said Muki-Muki. "Tofobo shall find him in the forest before the sun has gone down to the country of the Frenchmen. He shall not fail to find him, for I shall send a very powerful ghost to walk in his footsteps and guide him to the Small One."

Mofolongo's face cleared. "You speak well, O Wise One!" he said.

"And if Tofobo does not bring the Small One back into the city it will be because he is a traitor and has permitted him to escape," continued Muki-Muki. "And if that be so, then Tofobo must die under the hands of the skinners; for if the Small One escapes his hands, his will be the blame."

"O Muki-Muki," said Mofolongo, "my ears hear you! Tofobo shall seek the Small One; and if he fail to bring

him to my hands, Tofobo shall die under the hands of the skinners. It is well said."

And Muki-Muki backed out of the Royal presence; and Tofobo, the chief's principal hunter, was called. And Tofobo heard cheerfully the order to seek the Small One in the forest. For if a powerful ghost was to walk in his footsteps and guide him, how could he fail? And he knew that he was not a traitor, and would not permit the Small One to escape once he had found him. So he did not fear death at the hands of the skinners for failure. And Tofobo took his wicker shield and his fighting spears and walked out of the city and entered the forest.

And in his house in the jungle, where he dwelt amid bones and the smell of death, Muki-Muki chuckled at the simplicity of the Lukuli; for whether Tofobo succeeded or failed, his words were still the words of wisdom; for his words would be the credit of success, and Tofobo's the blame of failure.

Tracked Down!

LYN STRONG wiped the perspiration from his brow and looked up at the leafy screen over his head. Light glimmered through the green and told him that it was yet day; and yet it seemed to him that endless time had passed in the hiding-place in the forest close to the city of the Lukuli. Endless, endless seemed the weary hours of waiting.

It was a safe hiding-place—or so, at least, it seemed—that the cunning Bobobo had found for the Bwana and his comrades.

There was a deep rift in the earth among the trees, half-hidden by trailing roots and clambering creepers. It was, perhaps, six feet wide and ten or twelve feet long, six or seven feet deep. Over it Bobo, the Kikuyu, had drawn branches and lianas and great ropes of the fig vine, forming a thick, green roof that completely hid the cavity from sight.

Under that green roof, hidden from all eyes, the Popolaki Scouts lay in cover—Lyn and Fatty Page and Pip Parker—with Bobo, the Kikuyu, and Mpoke, the bushman.

For they were very near to the city, on the edge of the great forest of the Congo, and it was necessary to keep their presence secret from any wandering hunter or idler who might stray into the forest.

The burning heat of the Central African day was more terrible there than in the open air above. They lay and baked and sipped lukewarm water and waited for the long, long hours to pass.

For not until night could they dare to approach the house of Muki-Muki in the jungle close by the city, where Grant Strong was to be taken the next day for his death.

Long, long and weary were the hours of that burning day.

But not a word of complaint passed the lips of the Uganda Scouts, or of their native companions. So long as they were safe from discovery by the Lukuli they had a chance to succeed in their mission—to save Lyn's father from the knives of the torturers. And it was for that that the little safari had trekked from far Uganda.

Even Fatty Page did not grouse, though the fattest Scout of the Popolaki Patrol felt the heat more than his com-

rades. He lay and perspired, and did not even feel energetic enough to hurl a banana at Pip when that playful youth warned him that he was running into tallow.

The sun, at long last, was sloping down in the west towards the Lower Congo and the far Atlantic. But the sunlight still glimmered through the vast masses of foliage that shaded the forest and through the leafy screen of the hidden rift. Night was long in coming.

The endless day burned on. Few words were exchanged, and those in whispers; for if enemies passed, though eyes could not see, ears might hear.

Lyn, as he lay wearily on a bed of leaves, was thinking of his father—long a prisoner in the hands of the Lukuli, since his safari had been cut up on the banks of the Congo—of the perilous adventure of the coming night, of what was to follow on the morrow. Success was a possibility, since Mpoke had brought news from Mofolongo's city. But Lyn knew how heavily the chances were weighed against him, and how likely it was that he had come to the Lukuli country only to die with his father.

But there was hope at least, and it comforted him during the weary hours of that unending day.

And the glinting of sunlight through the leaves was dimmer now; the sun was below the tree-tops of the forest.

Soon it would be twilight—the brief twilight of Central Africa. And then the dark—and release and activity.

Dimmer and dimmer the faces were growing in the hidden lair. Very dimly now the Scouts saw one another; and Mpoke's black face was grown invisible, the brown face of the Kikuyu almost so.

And then suddenly, silently Bobobo started to his feet, his tall head almost touching the screen above.

His eyes gleamed in the deep dusk.

At the same moment little Mpoke leaped up as suddenly and silently, and his black paw clamped on the long Kikuyu knife that Bobo had given him in token of friendship.

The keen ears of the natives had detected a sound.

The three Scouts listened intently.

Deep silence lay on the forest.

A long minute passed—a tense minute.

Then Lyn whispered, barely audibly:

"What do your ears hear, Bobo?"

"O Bwana, my ears hear the soft tread of one-that-walks-like-the-lyona,"

breathed the Kikuyu.

"One that seeks us, Bobo!"

The Kikuyu made a sign of ascent and a sign of silence. The Scouts almost held their breath.

Now a soft sound came to their ears.

It was the velvet tread of a naked foot that trod with stealthy caution;

and they knew that it was the tread of a hunter who knew himself to be near his prey.

Lyn grasped his rifle, but released it again. A single shot would tell the whole city of the Lukuli that white men were at hand. He changed his grasp to his hunting knife.

For the stealthy tread of the hunter, though it hinted of discovery of the hiding-place, told him that the hunter came alone. It was not a war-party of the Lukuli; it was a single spy—and a single man might be dealt with safely and in silence with good fortune.

The stealthy tread stopped at the edge of the rift where the leafy roof covered the opening. And they knew that the unseen hunter was aware that the rift was there, and that it was intentionally covered from sight. For his footsteps stopped at the edge, when another step

would have brought him crashing through the leafy roof.

There was silence, followed by a low laugh; then came a voice speaking in the Lukuli tongue, which was sufficiently like Swahili for all the safari to understand what was said.

"O Small One," came the voice, "if you are hiding in the ground like a forest rat, know that Tofobo, Mofolongo's hunter, has found you!"

Eye met eye in the deep dusk of the hiding-place. In those tense moments thoughts moved swiftly, and they all understood.

Tofobo had been sent to track down the bushman who had fled from the city of Mofolongo, and the keen hunter had traced him with wonderful skill. For it was because of his great skill that Tofobo was the principal hunter of Mofolongo and the chief of all his hunters. And doubtless Tofobo knew of the existence of that rift in the earth, and when he found it covered from sight guessed that a fugitive was concealed there.

But it was clear also that Tofobo did not know that the bushman had companions. Mpoko had come alone to the city, and alone he had fled, and it was alone that Tofobo expected to find him.

The voice went on, in tones of triumph:

"O Small One, that burrows in the earth like a rat, come forth and let the eyes of Tofobo see you."

Mpoko did not speak or stir.

But his eyes met Bobolobo's, and a sign passed between the two natives, and they understood one another. And Lyn and Fatty and Pip lay silent, still, well knowing that this matter was better left in the hands of the bushman and the Kikuyu.

"If your ears hear me, O Small and Cunning One, let my eyes see you!" pursued Tofobo, "for it is the command of Mofolongo for you return to the city in my hands. And you cannot escape me, O Bushman, for Miki-Miki has sent a powerful ghost to walk in my footsteps and guide me to you, and even Ngai is not powerful enough to dispute the will of the Wise One who talks with ghosts and devils. Also, I have seen the traces of your feet where they have walked, O Small One, and the brown leaves where you have clung to the trees in the manner of the monkey. And I know this place from of old, O Cunning One, for it was dug by my orders many moons ago, to trap Simba, the lion, who ate the children of the Lukuli. And now, lo! It is covered with branches and leaves for a place of hiding."

The hunter paused.

"O hunter of Mofolongo," said Mpoko, speaking at last in the Swahili tongue, "it was written that you should find me, for a man may escape the eyes of a lion and the scent of a jackal, but the skill of Tofobo, the hunter, he cannot escape."

Tofobo chuckled.

"You speak well, O Bushman!" he said. "And now, with my great skill and cunning, I have found you, for I am a great and cunning hunter, also I am helped by the powerful ghost that

Miki-Miki has sent to walk in my footsteps. Let your eyes see you, O Small One that flees and hides, for you cannot escape me now."

Mpoko reached up and pulled aside a portion of the leafy screen over his head. The dimming light glimmered into the pit, and Tofobo the hunter looked down and saw the bushman with his eyes.

He grinned triumphantly.

"O Small One," he said, "take hold of my spear-shaft with your hand and I will draw you from your hole like a captured beast. But first throw down that long knife from your girdle, for well I know that the bushmen are treacherous and strike swiftly. And if you do not obey I will drive my spear through your arms, so that you cannot use your knife."



The witch-doctor stopped a few feet from the crouching Bobo and bent his head to listen.

Mpoko dropped the Kikuyu knife to the ground. His spear lay at his feet and he had no other weapon.

"Now I will help you to come to me, O Small One," said the hunter, and he stretched down the long shaft of his spear for Mpoko to take hold.

Mpoko grasped the spear-shaft, and with Tofobo's help from above he clambered out of the pit.

"It is well, O Bushman," said Tofobo, "for if you anger me my wrath is as terrible as my skill is great. Now I will bind your hands with a rope of grass, also I will lead you with a rope to the city, lest you escape me, like a monkey in the trees. For that you will flee I know well, knowing that you have angered Mofolongo, and that his wrath is death."

"In all things I obey you, O Tofobo," said the bushman, "for my fear of you is very great."

And he held out his hands for the cord.

And Tofobo, the hunter, as he wound the grass cord round the bushman's wrists, heard and saw nothing of Bobolobo, never dreaming that others were hidden in the covered rift. And Mpoko had cunningly moved, so that the hunter's back was to the pit.

And Bobolobo, silent as a creeping leopard, and as merciless, at that moment—for did not the life of the Busha hang on a thread?—crept along the sunken pit, spear in hand, closer and closer to the Kukuli hunter.

And as Tofobo, the hunter, knotted the grass cord on the bushman's wrists the sinewy arm of the Kikuyu was lifted and the spear whizzed through the air, as unerring as a bullet from a rifle.

"O Small One—" the Lukuli hunter was saying, in a voice of mockery, when the sharp spear struck him and

passed through his brawny body, and he fell without another word or sound, and died with his eyes staring wildly at the grinning face of the bushman.

The House of the Witch-Doctor!

Lyn shivered, as if he had felt a chill, in the midst of the baking African heat.

Fatty Fags and Pip looked at one another, but did not speak.

War in the Central African bush was merciless; life for one was death for another.

The lives of the whole safari had hung on the spear of Bobolobo; and Bobo had not failed them.

The three Scouts remained in the sunken pit, hearing the rustling sounds as Bobo dragged the slain hunter away into the thickets.

At a distance from the hiding-place Tofobo, the chief's hunter, was left, where, later, the jackals found him.

Bobo returned to the hiding-place. The brief twilight was deepening to darkness. In the gathering gloom the

Kikuyu and the bushman exchanged a grin.

"O Small One, with the cunning of many serpents, it is well done!" said the Kikuyu.

"O handsome Kikuyu, with the strong and mighty arm, the thrust of your spear is more terrible than the spring of Simba!" said Mpoko.

Lyn Strong clambered out of the hidden pit.

Fatty Page and Pip followed him. Now that darkness was closing in it was safe for the safari to leave their concealment.

"My hat!" said Fatty. "I'm glad to be out of that! Some oven!"

"You're melting away under our eyes, old fat bean," said Pip. "At this rate, you won't weigh more than a ton by the time we get back to Masumpwe."

Lyn glanced round.

Above for a dark, wet patch on the earth, there was no sign remaining of Tolobo, the hunter.

"Thank goodness for night!" said Lyn. "By gum, I'm glad to stretch my legs a little!"

"What-ho!" said Pip.

Darkness fell like a velvety black cloak on the dense forest. With the darkness came relief from the baking heat. There was a cool breath among the trees and thickets.

The safari moved away from the spot. They moved to the edge of the forest, on the side towards the city of Malolongo. Following them came the sound of the growling and snarling of jackals, dying away into silence at last.

Keeping in cover of the screening vines, Lyn Strong looked out of the forest, across the wide fields of Indian corn, towards the city.

Lights were gleaming here and there, and the stars glimmered on the broad bosom of the Lukuli river beyond.

The stars above, too, on the patch of untamed jungle half-way to the city, where, as they knew from Mpoko, was the dwelling of Mluki-Mluki, the witch-doctor.

It was an extensive patch, left wild and uncleared in the midst of the cultivated fields, and covering several acres, as wild and untamed as the forest in which the Scouts stood.

Lyn's eyes were fixed on it.

That jungle was the objective of the Popolaki Scouts as soon as the city of the Lukuli was buried in slumber.

There were still many hours to wait, but in the darkness and the coolness of night the waiting was not so weary.

From the city, floating on the night wind, came the sound of the beating of many drums, beating time to a native dance. The Lukuli were dancing in the great square before the chief's huts, and the tom-toms droned, the cymbals clashed incessantly for a long time. On the morrow they would be dancing at the great feast, when the prisoner would be eaten, if the Scouts had not saved him.

Slowly the shadowy hours passed; and the beating of drums ceased in the city, the glimmering lights died out, and all was silent, save the whispering of the trees and the murmur of the river.

But it was not till midnight that the safari stirred from the forest.

Silent as the city was, still as it looked, Lyn knew, from what Mpoko had reported, that the chief's guards watched through the night; and that the hut where Grant Strong lay was

surrounded by armed and wakeful men. And he knew that the recess of the prisoner, where he lay, was impossible, and that the attempt could only bring death to the rescuers. From that desperate and fatal attempt, he had been saved by the information the bushman had brought.

On the morrow, Grant Strong would be in the witch-doctor's house, out of sight of the city and its swarming hordes. Then, there would be a chance. For it was the will of Mluki-Mluki to dwell apart in solitude and mystery, and none of the Lukuli dared to approach his house in the jungle. Even when the witch-doctor received a message from the chief, the runner stood on the edge of the jungle and tapped a signal on his drum, and did not approach the hut that was hidden from all eyes. It was not permitted for common eyes to behold the witch-doctor's abode, and few would have dared, had it been permitted, for the Lukuli believed that it was haunted by ghosts and devils over whom only Mluki-Mluki exercised control. By such tricks and devices the cunning witch-doctor kept his power over the superstitious savages of the Congo.

So much had Mpoko learned while he spied among the Lukuli, and on his report, the plan of action had been laid.

"Get a move on!" said Lyn, at last.

And the Scouts trailed out of the forest, with Mpoko in the lead to guide, and Bobo watchful in the rear, spear in hand.

By a winding path among the fields of Indian corn, Mpoko led the way, a way he had already traversed.

The safari stepped after him, silently and swiftly.

Swiftly they traversed the star-lit fields, and reached the edge of the jungle where the witch-doctor's house lay.

Like a wall of green, trees, interlaced with thick winding creepers, barred the way, impenetrable to the eye.

But in one spot, a narrow bush-path opened, the way by which Mluki-Mluki was accustomed to reach his hidden house; a path so narrow that only one man could pass at a time, shut in between high walls of gigantic elephant grass, twelve feet high.

At the opening of the path, Mpoko stopped.

All was silent and still, there was no sound from the hidden house in the jungle. There was no need for Mluki-Mluki and his slave to watch; the terror of the witch-doctor was a more than sufficient guard against all black men, and in the Lukuli country there were no white men.

"Why do you stop, Mpoko?" whispered Lyn.

The little bushman looked up at him, and his face was strange. A struggle seemed to be going on within Mpoko.

"You do not fear, O Small One?" asked Lyn.

Mpoko licked his lips.

"This dirty bushman be plenty brave old Johnny," he said, in his curious English. "No fear filthy Lukuli."

"Then what—"

Mpoko shifted uneasily, staring into the narrow path.

"O Bwana," murmured Bobolobo. "The magic of the Wise One of the Lukuli is terribly strong, and it is the magic of Mluki-Mluki that the

Small One fears. I Bobo also fear very greatly."

Lyn smiled faintly.

He had forgotten that the two natives shared, to a large extent at least, the superstition of the Lukuli. To the Scouts, Mluki-Mluki was a blood-thirsty impostor, a cunning trickster, and nothing more, but to the bushman and the Kikuyu, he was the Wise One, the Terrible One, the Lord of ghosts and devils.

Material dangers they did not fear, but the ghosts and devils that haunted the jungle of the witch-doctor they dreaded with a great dread.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Pip. "Is that the trouble? Don't worry about the jolly old witch-doctor, Mpoko, we're going to put paid to him."

"This filthy bushman be no sabby, sar!" said Mpoko. And his eyes lingered in fear on the shadowy path.

"I mean to say, Mluki-Mluki is a jolly old spoofer, and I'm ready to eat all his ghosts and devils, without salt or pepper!" said Pip.

"O Small One," said Lyn, more seriously. "Mluki-Mluki is a great liar and deceiver, and there are no ghosts or devils in this jungle, this being a lie that the witch-doctor tells to the foolish Lukuli."

"O Bwana!" murmured Bobolobo. "It is well known that in the forests there are many devils and ghosts, both great and small, and over these Mluki-Mluki has great power."

"It is true, Lord!" said Mpoko in Swahili, "and it is well known in all the country of the Great River, that when Mluki-Mluki waves his hand, the storm ghosts rage in the forest, and tear up the tallest trees."

"Then if you fear the power of this lying witch-doctor, you shall go back to the forest and await me there, both you and Bobolobo," said Lyn.

The two natives looked at one another, and both shook their heads. They dreaded the supernatural powers of Mluki-Mluki, but their devotion to the Bwana was stronger than their fear.

"O Bwana," said Bobo. "My ears do not hear you."

"Let us go on, then," said Lyn, "and let your ears hear this; all things are in the hands of Ngai, who is more powerful than the wisest witch-doctor, and Ngai is on the side of all who do their duty. Let us go on."

"It is well said, Bwana!" said Bobo.

"For the eye of Ngai sees all things from the clouds. And it is well known that if a stone be cast on the bank of a river, in the name of Ngai, that river shall be safely crossed."

And Bobolobo looked round in the starlight, picked up a stone, and cast it at the entrance of the jungle path.

And Mpoko's clouded face cleared, and he led the way on without another pause.

The three scouts were careful not to smile as they followed. For in the belief of the simple natives the casting of the stone precipitated the favour of Ngai, who watched all things from the clouds on the summit of Mount Kenya; and the favour of Ngai was stronger than the magic of the most powerful witch-doctor.

The safari wound into the jungle by the narrow path.

(Continued on page 27.)

The Death House!

(Continued from page 26.)

The rough elephant-grass brushed them on either side; but they were careful not to make the slightest rustle that might have reached their ears.

So cunningly was the house of Mluki-Mluki concealed that the path wound in the jungle like a corkerow, and more than twice the necessary distance had to be covered before the safari reached the clearing in the heart of the jungle, where the house stood.

Surrounded by jungle and tall trees, there was an open space of about a quarter of an acre, where the house was built by a bubbling spring.

The house was low, of wattle walls and roof, extending over a good space, being a collection of many huts joined together by wattle passages.

It lay dark and silent before the eyes of the Scouts.

In front of the principal hut stood a great square mass of lava rock, the natural colour of which was strangely stained. They did not need telling that this was the stone of sacrifice, on which the victim lay bound, to suffer under the knife of Mluki-Mluki. Many and many a victim had perished there by the tortures of the witch-doctor.

Lyn breathed hard. "Keep in cover!" he muttered. "Everything depends now on the Lukuli knowing nothing of our presence. If that old bend gave the alarm we should have a thousand spearmen on us at the tap of a drum."

"O Bwans," whispered Bobolobo, "I hear the sound of one that stirs in his sleep."

"Cover!" breathed Fatty. Stealthily as creeping leopards they crept into the tall elephant-grass beside the bush-path, and lay silent.

From the direction of the house came a sound of padding footsteps and a clinking of bones.

Someone was stirring in the stillness of the night; and the rattle of dead men's bones told that it was the witch-doctor.

Lyn peered through the thick elephant-grass.

In the starlight that fell into the clearing before the huts he made out a winched face and a shrivelled form, decorated with hideous paint and strings of bones.

It was Mluki-Mluki, the Wise One. Perhaps some faint sound, some rattle of the elephant-grass, had reached him in the uneasy sleep of age. The starlight caught his eyes as he peered, and they gleamed like carbuncles. Suddenly, swiftly, he came towards the bush-path, across the clearing.

The rustling of his moccasins of

human bones rang in the ears of the Scouts as they crouched in darkness and silence, fearing that the witch-doctor would hear the beating of their hearts.

The witch-doctor stepped into the bush-path, and the rattle of bones ceased, as he stood still, with bent head, and listened. In all hearts the Wise One inspired fear; yet in his own heart must have been constant dread, for he knew that many hated him as much as they feared him.

Only a thin screen of tall stalks of elephant grass separated him from the crouching safari. And they made no sound, though the beating of their own hearts was in their own ears like the sound of drums.

And then the bones clicked again as the witch-doctor moved and his naked feet padded back to the huts.

Lyn peered from the grass.

He saw the old wretch peering and sniffing for some moments, and then he disappeared into the hut whence he had emerged.

Whatever he had feared or suspected his suspicions were set at rest. The magic of the Wise One had not warned him that fore were crouching close at hand—that death had been nearer to him than to the prisoner in the chief's hut.

THE END.

(Next week's tale of the Popotaki Patrol is entitled: "SAVED BY HIS SON!" It's a winner!)

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