

land, Madagascar against the Vichy French, and the Burma incident to its credit.

Now they are returned to local duties. No finer body of men of their type can be found anywhere. As recruits they are literally "taken off the trees" and come into Depot wearing full tribal regalia, spear in hand. It often takes weeks and much coaxing to exchange this weapon for a rifle. However, once they see what firearms can do, they grow exceedingly fond and proud of their new possession. I have never seen an askari go a single day without cleaning his rifle, and frequently he sits and dreams for hours over the fascinating, to him, parts of an automatic weapon.

These men are trained to be soldiers and nothing else. It is truly wonderful to see them often after only a few months, operating artillery pieces, signal units and other intricate features of military value, with the ease and skill of veterans.

In the summer of 1940, after being pushed out of British Somaliland by countless numbers of Italians, we found ourselves bumping across the N.F.D., bound for Lokitaung, a fortress situated on the rocky hills above the delta of the Omo River where it flows into Lake Rudolf.

Our task was threefold and strange. To preserve peace between the Turkana and Merille tribes who had commenced open warfare, arm the former with a view to using them in a military capacity at a later date, and stop Mussolini from walking over forbidden ground. The Italians had already taken advantage of the warlike qualities of the Merille by arming them with very efficient weapons. The poor old Turkana were at a distinct disadvantage. Possibly they had a few old muzzle loaders, but no more, to boost up their armament of spears and arrows.

We were about 700 all told, stationed through the area, confronted by about 100,000 Italians who idled the days away talking, and drinking vino, across the border. At that time had our artistic

friends wished, they could have walked straight through to South Africa with nothing to stop them but bad roads and flies. Why they never did, is still a mystery. The only explanation advanced to date, is that they overestimated our strength.

The work and life in and around Lokitaung was strange at first. Each of the four companies was spread out over an area of at least 50 square miles and each platoon, with its one European in charge, was also far from its brother platoons. There were times when patrols, using camels as transport, had to be made into the back of beyond. They lasted three or four weeks and often involved parleys with old chieftains and tribes who had never before set eyes on a white man.

One patrol in particular was noteworthy—to obtain the co-operation of a rather difficult old chieftain, supply him with arms and convey greetings from King George. The journey took approximately a week and a half through country which looked as if it had never been travelled before. For two days the patrol was accompanied by ugly-visaged baboons which grunted and yelled all day, and squatted around the fires at night like weird gnomes from another world. We shot one of them the first day, and the wailing and screeching that arose sounded almost human. The victim rubbed his hand in its own blood and showed it to us several times, as if in reproachful accusation.

Finally the old chief's *boma* was reached, and crowds of natives surrounded the party, each naked except for a thin strip of hide worn behind by the men, and by the women, in front. As is the case with most Turkana tribesmen, their heads were adorned all alike with red mud packs of fancy design, smeared with fresh camel dung. The men carried long spears, and many women had babies on their backs.

Apparently forewarned of our coming by bush telegraph (the drums) they no doubt expected great things of a great