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## Akeley Again Answers Call of Jungles

WOMAN EXPLORER, ACCOMPANIED ONLY BY A FEW NATIVES WILL PENETRATE WILD PARTS OF DARK CONTINENT.

(MIGNON RITTENHOUSE)

It is again calling her, and once Mrs. Akeley will penetrate the Congo Forest and Jubaland; live with the little known tribes in the east, travelling up the Congo River, out next year by way of the Congo. On this, her third trip, she will be accompanied only by a few natives and a few natives picked up during the course of her explorations. She is calling, but it is a different Africa which beckons to her in 1924.

She has been somewhat altered by her contact with civilization. To what extent have been altered even Mrs. Akeley will be unable to tell until her return. That she is anxious to make up for her years, she explains, "the old things, I believe will be wiped out. Civilization is sweeping over Africa, and even sections which I visited on my trip the missionaries and British agents were doing much to raise the standard of living among those over-looked by most of the explorers. They understand them, bring back material for lectures on the life of the women and children of Africa."

Incidentally, Mrs. Akeley will provide for the East African animals for the Brooklyn Museum, under whose auspices she is making this expedition. The long, airy reception room Mrs. Akeley welcomed me shortly before her departure for England. She was to live among those who had opportunity of studying this remarkable woman, whose achievements as explorer and hunter are internationally known. Others have described her breath-taking beauty, aristocratic bearing, exquisite grooming, and marveled that a lady so able to endure the rough and wearing life of an explorer.

As she seems ideally fitted for the life she has, yes, but because she has no uncertain strength of character, culture and refinement, but her quiet dignity of manner, not unlike that possessed by those pioneer foremothers of who migrated from homes of comfort and tradition to help their men

blaze new trails in a strange, far-distant land. The greatest strength is not physical, nor is masculinity an index of endurance power.

Her very femininity will be, and has been in the past, an asset. Among the more primitive tribes a man would find it hard indeed to enter. It is certain that he would not be permitted to associate with the native women as Mrs. Akeley intends to do. Her lack of aggressiveness will not be amiss, for the farther away from civilization one travels the more susceptible are the people to gentleness and kindness. Their instinct for self-preservation is still a very dominant part of their makeup.

Danger and risk there will most certainly be, but Mrs. Akeley is inclined to smile a little at our idea of an African surrounded on all sides by cannibals and vast barbaric hordes. "Even on my first trip there in 1905," she says, "it was possible to secure canned Del Monte peaches, pineapples and fancy chocolates in the little shops and huts scattered all through the more civilized regions. The traders are marvellous—they are everywhere with their foreign luxuries and delicacies."

Speaking of canned pineapples, Mrs. Akeley likes to tell a story about the laziness of the East Africans. A native and black Prime Minister of the capital of Uganda went into one of the little shops and bought a can of Hawaiian pineapples for the equivalent of one dollar in our money when on his own property, a few feet away, the finest pineapples in the world were rotting for want of picking.

"But Uganda is a very progressive protectorate notwithstanding," she defended. "Since Sir Stanley's expedition, a court as been established there with a Prime Minister and Parliament similar to that of England's." The tribes with whom Mrs. Akeley intends to confine herself, however, are the Africans made famous by imaginative fiction writers. The Kikuyu, Wakamba, Wajambam and Maasi, all of whom were superstitious and primitive when last seen by her in 1911, will furnish the data which she desires to obtain for her lectures.

Although each of these tribes at that time had its own customs and traditions, they were for the most part Mohammedans by religion and agriculturists, weavers and hunters by trade. Both Mohammedans and other sects worshipped spirits, particularly "Nahis" the spirit of the mountain, and had spirit houses at the entrance of their gardens, where water and food were placed. Polygamy was practiced universally; among the Mohammedans four wives were the custom, but the other natives married as many women as they could afford. One wealthy man of the Kikuyu tribe had fifty wives and one hundred and fifty-five children and was contemplating another adventure on the sea of matrimony when Mrs. Akeley was there in 1905.

It was during this first trip that she learned to make use of their superstitions to secure curios for the Field Museum in Chicago, under whose auspices she was then exploring.

ing. Her hair, which was prematurely white, attracted considerable attention among the Kikuyu, who could not understand how a woman with a young body could have an old head, as they expressed it in native tongue. They beat upon their drums, summoning men and women from miles around to come and view this strange young-old woman.

At that time, it was becoming increasingly difficult to get genuine curios, due to the fact that enterprising traders were importing imitations from England and selling them to the natives, who were, as has been mentioned, lazy to the extreme. The consequence was that very few native-made articles could be secured, especially by visitors. Knowing that among certain natives of this tribe there were still many native curios, Mrs. Akeley made it clear to them through an interpreter that in exchange for watching her perform the ceremony of combing her hair she wanted them to bring the real curios. In this way she secured a very fine collection of hand carved ornaments, spears and paddles, as well as valuable strings of pearls.

Among the Kikuyu, Maasi and Wakamba especially are some very beautiful women. "Their shoulders were the most perfect I had ever seen," she stated as she showed me some pictures of the natives. "Their wrists and ankles were slender, their skins as soft as velvet. Many of them coated their bodies with castor oil and red clay to protect themselves from the cold, for the African climate is as varied and at times penetrating as here in America. They shaved their heads, leaving a funny little tuft of hair in the center.

"If this custom is still prevalent, I shall introduce it to American shoppers when I return," she cleverly commented on the times in mock serious tone.

The seriousness became very real, and pathos was in her voice as she told me of the custom among many of the tribes of throwing the ill to the hyenas. "They were terribly afraid to let any one die in the huts. One morning an old man and his very young wife, about fourteen or fifteen, I should say, brought me their puny little baby, who had a bad case of pneumonia and asked me to give it some medicine. I did so willingly, and after helping them doctor it, they returned to the hut. Early that evening we heard the hyenas yelping frightfully in the direction of the hut, and sensed immediately what had happened.

"The next morning the old man came to me with tears in his eyes, and I could not help but pity him in his ignorance. He told me how he had paid a huge sum for the girl, and that she had been utterly useless as a 'beast of burden,' as all Kikuyu women are supposed to be. And how their baby had become ill, and had to be thrown away. 'Oh, such a waste!' he finished weeping profusely."

It is such people that Mrs. Akeley has dwelt among and will dwell among again unless civilization has reached its long arm to them during her absence. A people harassed by superstition and a profound ignorance. But a lovable people, and a people who are quick to pick up new ideas, languages and customs.

"I have longed for them more than once in my sojourns in England and on the Continent," says this woman who has wandered far from her birthplace at Beaver Dam, Wisconsin. "For I love them," she finished simply, earnestly.

And as she stood there, framed in the wide, white stone doorway to bid me goodby, the tall, exquisite woman looked out on a horologous, near-sighted world with the gray, sad and seeing eyes of a philosopher.

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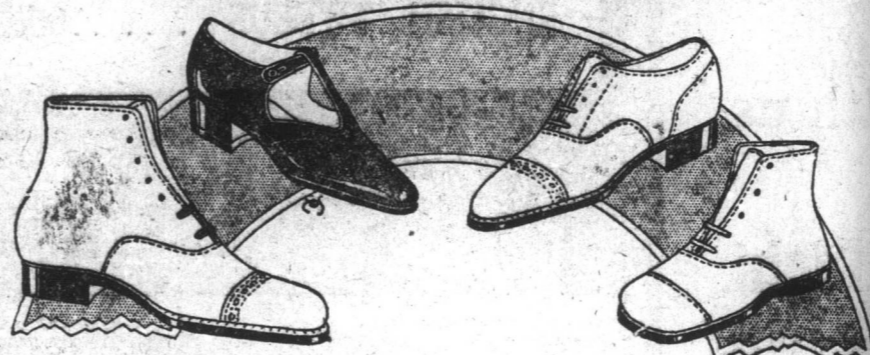
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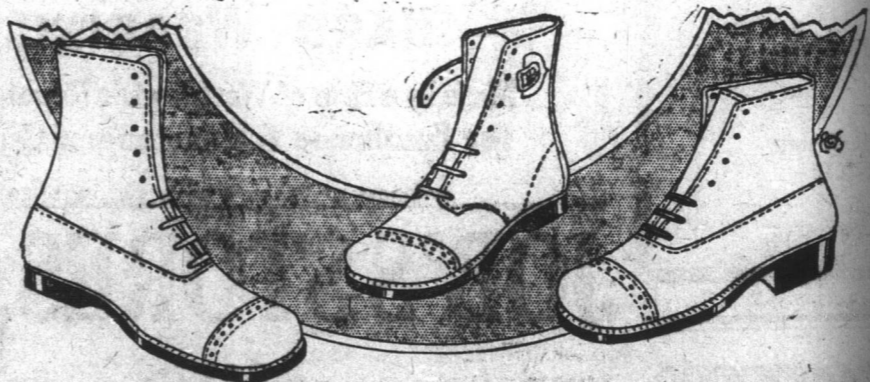
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