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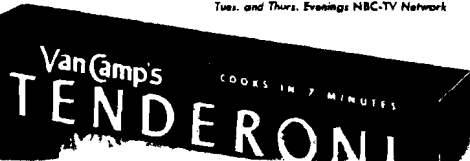


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MENU

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of bananas, or three or four chickens. A handful for a goat. Make it last until I come back. Your own health, maybe even your life, may depend on it."

The fourth morning after L'loni had left, I heard a gentle cough outside my door as I stretched and yawned preparatory to getting up. A moment later, there was another discreet cough and the door opened slowly to admit what had very evidently been Doctor Mary's tea tray. The tray was followed by a tall, handsome youth in a white *kanzu*.

"Good morning, *mama*," he greeted me in English with a broad Scottish accent. "I am Achmed. I will have your bath ready in five minutes."

While I stared, he placed the tray across my knees, picked up my garments of the day before and went out with them. On the tray were a little stack of freshly baked mealie cakes, fruit and a glass of milk. Five minutes later, Achmed appeared with two jars of hot water.

"This waters is for your face and hands and foots, *mama*," he explained. "And this waters is for your elsewhere."

He picked up the empty tray and almost backed out of my presence. I arose and bathed. When I stepped outside the hut, yesterday's garments already fluttered on a line Achmed had stretched between the trunks of two mango trees. Half of N'zem was lined up staring at them in admiring wonder.

I was as curious as the villagers. "Where did you come from?" I demanded. "And who in the world are you?"

The *kanzu*-clad stranger snapped to attention, folded his arms across his breast, and bowed from the waist. "I am Achmed, *mama*. I am your houseboy. I will be a good servant. *mama*, never fear. The Bwana L'loni sent me. He said you would pay me sixteen francs a month."

Achmed never told me much about himself. When I asked him where he came from, he would wave his hand and say, "Over there," vaguely indicating the east. It was not until L'loni came through again half a year later that I learned his story. He was from Kenya Colony, a Kavirondo with some Arab in his blood, who had been sent to a mission school in Kismu.

Achmed was with me the rest of that first term of service; and when I returned to the United States on my first furlough, he accompanied me to Léopoldville, where I found him a position in a French household.

N'ZEM remembered Doctor Mary with love and complete confidence in her powers of healing. And now that she was gone, they came to me, the Little White Witch Doctor, with such helpless appeal in their faces and trust in my abilities that I quite honestly believe I healed by faith alone. Doctor Mary, that wise old woman, had known all along that I would go to N'zem, and had left her medical books and journals there for me, all carefully wrapped in oiled cloth against the ravages of mold, and stored in a galvanized-iron trunk to protect them from the white ants. I read late into the night, every night, until I knew those few books almost by heart.

I worked seven days a week, ten, twelve, even sixteen hours a day. I never felt isolated or lonely. I was surrounded almost every waking hour by people who, although I could not converse with them for several months, communicated with me nevertheless and who needed me.

At least twice a week I took my gun and Jack, and, with perhaps a half-dozen men, we went out after game. We were successful at first, but as the season wore on, the game became scarce.

edge of the great swamp. The Pygmies had been Doctor Mary's friends, as all the other beings were.

Even on the days when I hunted, I often ministered to as many as a hundred sick people. In Tani I had kept an excellent file of my patients. At the end of the fortnight at N'zem, I burned what I had jotted down, and used the time and energy they would have consumed in visiting a ward of sorts in a hut next to the dispensary. I could have filled that hut ten times over the first day. And when a man or woman or child enters the "sick kraal" a white witch doctor, he does not come to his relatives bring him. They throw up shelters as near the "sick kraal" as the witch doctor will allow, and care for the physical needs of the patient.

Nevertheless, I knew immediately that I would need nurses, and one night I followed Achmed's advice concerning suitable women.

"In hospitals that I have known, the nurses were all men," he told me. "Why men?" I asked.

He was very patient. "Because, when a girl is big and strong enough to work you require, she is old enough to be a husband and a hoe and babies."

As I approached my work the next day, it seemed to me there were more people waiting outside my door than ever before. Each one of the miserable wretches wanted to talk to me and none of them could get in. The door began to ache before the day was over, and finally a thousand little fingers, each with a knife in its hand, perched themselves on my shoulder blades and began hacking away at the base of my brain.

At least that's the way it felt. It was my first attack of malaria.

Stupidly enough, I did not diagnose my own symptoms. I only knew I was coming down with something that came excruciatingly for me to wait while a

patient mouthed the nonsense syllables that seemed so necessary to his peace of mind before he moved on to make room for the next.

"No wonder Doctor Mary killed here," I muttered bitterly, forgetting that my predecessor had lived to a ripe old age.

The shadows were long when my last patient hobbled away. I turned back into the dispensary and sank into a chair, too tired to sterilize my instruments and put up my bandages and drugs, too exhausted to walk the fifty feet between the dispensary and my hut where I knew the ever-watchful Achmed was already preparing a hot bath for me.

If it had been Achmed coming to call on me, I would have heard his step; he was always careful that I should. But there was no sound whatsoever until someone behind me coughed. I didn't move, and the cough repeated.

"Go away and come back tomorrow," Achmed exclaimed petulantly.

There were a few seconds of silence again that cough. Then I remembered the only Achmed of all the souls in N'zem who understood my English; only Jackie, the Hausa. I felt thoroughly beaten. Perhaps I would have burst into womanly tears had not a vagrant breeze wafted into my nostrils such a stench as I hope never to have smelled again. I whirled about, full of temper and quite enough energy to deal with the new problem. Facing me stood the tallest, gauntest, most wrinkled old woman I have ever seen, stark-naked except for a goatskin slung over her back and knotted across her shoulder.

I looked her over from head to foot. She did not drop her eyes; instead, she stared at me until I, forgetting my own words, turned away.

Men are like wines, are souring the bad, and bettering the good. —CICERO.

Vertical text on the right margin, including "March", "MARRI", "Am", and other fragments.