

Major C.J. Ross D. S. O.

by
W. Robert Foran



I MUST confess that of all the picturesque figures it has been my happy lot to meet during the course of my 12 years of world-wandering, none stands so prominently in my recollections as Maj. C. J. Ross, member of the British army and companion of the Distinguished Service order, and now an assistant game warden in British East Africa.

I first saw the major in South Africa, and I got to know him, as few other men know him, while we were both serving the British East African government. This friendship between us is one, for my own part, which years can not lessen.

What a history the man has back of his forty-odd years! What a name he has won for himself on the field of battle and in police duties! It seems almost impossible to tell all he has seen, accomplished and endured. Perhaps one day some one will venture to record in book form the many deeds of daring this trail-looking Australian has to his credit. It would be a mighty task, but the result should be worthy of the effort, for I know of no man who has more material to draw upon, varied true-to-life happenings in a vivid career of excitement.

Ross was born in Australia way back in the seventies or may be the sixties. Emigrating to America when still a boy, he held first one post and then another, until finally he drifted to Canada and enlisted in the world famous Canadian mounted police.

Sometimes, if you can get him into a talkative mood, he will tell you of riding many miles to capture dangerous criminals single-handed. Ross tells with a smile that he was never known to fall on one of these hazardous undertakings. If you look at his face, you can understand why this is so. It is not easy to get him to talk, but fortunately his record is so well known that it is not a difficult matter to gather material on his life.

I remember one day when we went in camp together in East Africa—keeping law and order in a new diamond field rush, which turned out a fizzle—Ross began to talk after dinner of some of his adventures with the gun-men and illicit liquor men in the northwest of Canada.

He told us of one day capturing a band of four bandits, who were notorious for the number of men they had killed. Ross was sent out with a trooper to capture them alive if possible. Ye gods! think of it! Two men to capture the four worst men in Canada! The two men rode across the plains for several days until they finally came upon the camp of the bandits.

"We got 'em," ended Ross. Being pressed for further particulars, he reluctantly told us a few details of the capture.

"Our arrival was a surprise," he continued. "I walked into their camp accompanied by my trooper. Neither of us had drawn a gun. Bandits or no bandits, they all know they can't fool the N. W. M. Police. One darned fool drew a gun, but I'm mighty quick with my pea-shooter and winged him. The others submitted, and we brought 'em back to the chief. It was sure some soft snap, that. The poor fellow I had shot was buried where he fell by his comrades. They didn't like doing it, but a six-shooter covering you makes a man do what he's ordered. Leastwise, it always has in my experience."

It is only by looking into his eyes and catching the lines of his mouth, hidden partially by a heavy mustache, that one can read that behind this hardened exterior lurks a heart full of kindness for a comrade in distress. Strange to relate he is a power with women. All women like him, and he himself loves the society of the gentler sex. In the summer of 1916 Ross was happily married in London and has taken his wife back to East Africa with him. Many a fair lady's heart will be jealous of the woman who has become Mrs. Ross.

One day, when riding together across the Athi Plains, Ross told me that he had spent some years in Utah. I asked him if he was a Mormon.

"Sure thing, young feller. I'm a bishop in the church," he laughed, and the merry twinkle in his eye warned me that a little coaxing might bring out a good story. And presently he told me about his stay in Salt Lake City.

"I gotten run out of there. I misremember what for. The Mormon religion is sure some fine thing. All your wives save up all the yellow-legged chickens to try and coax you to favor them. I don't believe in no suffragette; Mormon ladies for mine. Say, I guess you better join that outfit. All you gotta do is to stand up one day in the Tabernacle and announce that you've had a revelation for Sister Jane, and she becomes a number five or whatever number is next vacant in your catalogue. I sure had some mighty fine revelations in Salt Lake City. Say, young feller,

I'll appoint you a deacon in the church."

But somehow I felt I was being "Josed," for the twinkle in Ross's eyes belied his words. But ever after he called me "Deacon." I often wonder whether he told his bride about his Mormon proclivities. I rather fancy he would, for he was not a man to hide a joke, nor to hide a truth.

After leaving the northwest mounted police, Ross came back to the States and enlisted, after naturalizing, for some Indian campaign. He also fought through the Red River war. His career was varied to a marked degree until the South African war broke out.

Ross joined the Canadian mounted rifles and went out to South Africa with them as a trooper. He saw considerable service with them, but eventually got into trouble through an excessive fondness for looting. He was dropped from the force and immediately went to Pretoria and joined another irregular corps as a lieutenant. His wonderful scouting and daring earned for him the notice of Lord Kitchener. As a result of an interview with the great British general, Ross was empowered to raise an irregular corps of cavalry. He called the Canadian Mounted Scouts. So was born a little corps which wrote its name big in the annals of the greatest war of modern times.

Ross gathered together a number of kindred spirits and soon had a regiment of scouts which would be hard to equal, let alone beat. They were all men who had traveled the world in search of adventure, men who faced death daily with unflinching eyes, and who knew no hardship too difficult to endure or overcome. With such material it is to be wondered at that the Canadian Mounted Scouts were soon heard of?

They fought in every part of the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, and Cape Colony. The Boers trembled at the mere mention of the name of Ross. It would take a book to write the history of their deeds of marvelous daring. They used no kid gloves in their warfare, either.

Perhaps the most famous episode in their adventurous exploits was the shooting of 15 Boer prisoners, whom they had captured when wearing the British uniform. This act was against all usages of modern warfare, and in defiance of the acts of The Hague and Geneva; the Boers were liable for their breach of law to be tried by drumhead court-martial, with death as the penalty if found guilty.

Ross is a man of quick action. He had caught the men in the act of crime and wearing the uniforms. That was enough. He dispensed with the drumhead court-martial and sentenced them to death by shooting. He selected three of his most trusted followers to assist him in the execution of the Boers. Then he sent in the remainder of his regiment, warning them to take no notice of any shooting they might hear in the course of the next few minutes. He waited until they were out of sight and then turned to the cowering Boers.

I wish that I could reproduce the story of the subsequent events with the vivid detail and quaint phraseology used by Ross when telling me the story. He speaks with a drawl and pronounced American accent.

"Say, you gold-darned dogs," Ross said to them, "I've caught you with the goods on you, and you got to ante up. I'll give you just five minutes to make your peace with your Creator, and then I'll pass you out. I guess the good God won't listen to such vermin as you, but I'm game to let you try your hand at it. Step lively now with them petitions to your good Maker!"

With a revolver in each hand and his three men covering the 15 prisoners with their guns, Ross counted out the minutes. The Boers had not yet realized that he was in earnest and stood watching him anxiously.

"One more minute and out you get!" Ross snapped at them as he finished counting off four minutes. He stepped toward the first man and held his revolver at the man's head. The Boer cowered back and began to beg for mercy.

"Cut out that woman business!" commanded Ross. "I guess the good God won't listen to you, and, if he won't you can't expect me to. Time up! Here's where you go to see your God, if he'll see you, which I doubt."

Bang! went the revolver, and the man sank dead at the major's feet. One after the other he sent them on their way into the "Great Unknown." The work completed, Ross and his men mounted their horses and rode at a gallop after their regiment.

The story leaked out, and Ross was sent for by Lord Kitchener at Pretoria. No record of this meeting is obtainable, and Ross will not speak of it. At least his offense did not interfere, later on, with Ross's being appointed a companion of the Distinguished Service order, which ranks next to the Victoria Cross.

Another story told about Major Ross, which I happen to know to be true in every detail, is that when riding into Pretoria one morning from an expedition after a Boer commando,

his little column was mistaken for a party of Boers by a British garrison artillery battery of 4.7 guns in one of the hills guarding the capital. The shells fell wide and this fact irritated Ross. He left the column in charge of his second in command and rode at a gallop toward the hill from which the battery was firing. Oblivious to shot and shell, Ross rode right to the summit of the hill, luckily arriving unscathed.

"Who's the gold-darned fool in command of this outfit?" he shouted to the astonished gunners.

A young artillery lieutenant came forward and saluted the major. The senior eyed the younger man sternly.

"That the best practice you and your fools can make?" he inquired with deep disgust. "I'll report you for bad shooting when I get into Pretoria. Maybe the general will let you hear from him. I guess you had better go back to school, young man, for your education has been sadly neglected."

Ross wheeled his horse and clattered down the hill again to rejoin his command. For many a long day the lieutenant will suffer from the gibes of his brother officers, and the men of the battery will probably never recover their self-respect.

Ross came out of the Boer war with a remarkable record behind him and with the undying admiration and friendship of Lord Kitchener and other generals. His is a name to conjure with. The Boers feared him to a marked degree, so much so that when large parties of them came up to East Africa to settle after the war and learned that Ross was an official, they told the governor that they were afraid to settle in the same country with Ross. But they have learned that the major in war and the major in peace are two entirely different people. The East African Boers have long lost all fear of him and now look upon him as their friend and brother.

I think I am correct in saying that Major Ross is the only naturalized American who is a retired major of the British army, a companion of the coveted Distinguished Service order, and an acting official of the British Colonial government service. This alone proves in what high esteem he is held by the British government.

After the Boer war was over, Ross fought for a time in the Somaliland war of 1902-1904 as an officer with the Boer contingent of mounted infantry. Then he came up to East Africa and went on a trading and elephant-hunting trip into German East Africa. His life there is somewhat shrouded in mystery. All I have ever been able to ascertain about it is that he shot a large number of elephants, secured a grant of land, and set up a trading store at one of the German stations, Baskoga, I believe, on the Victoria lake.

However, he managed to fall afoul of the German authorities, and he was expelled from the territory and his land confiscated. By all accounts, he was very harshly and undeservedly used. When his royal highness the duke of Connaught was visiting East Africa in 1906, Major Ross came to meet him at Klausum on the Victoria lake by the duke's special request. They had a long talk and the duke promised to take up his case against the German colony on his return to London.

Shortly afterward, as a result of this meeting, Major Ross was appointed assistant game warden of the East African Protectorate. No more fitting work could have been found for him, and he has earned a great name for his rigid enforcement of the game protection laws. Woe betide the man who is bold enough to break the game regulations, for he will have to answer to Major Ross and the courts of justice as sure as his name is what it is.

Day after day Ross rides the plains and game reserves in search of law-breakers. He thinks nothing of covering 50 miles a day. He carries his food and blankets on his saddle, and sleeps under a tree, in a native hut, or, if lucky, at a farmhouse. He cares nothing for the danger of attack from prowling beasts of the jungle or turbulent natives, or from the hardships of exposure. He spells duty with a very big capital D.

On one occasion, the story goes that he rode by moonlight from Fort Hall in the Kenka district to Nairobi—a distance of 64 miles! When about half way, he was held up on the plains by three lions. Ross says that he had much difficulty in keeping his pony's head on to the lions, but eventually the lions tired of stalking him and turned their attentions to some zebra which Ross could hear near by. It wasn't a very pleasant experience, but Ross laughs at it. He calls the three lions in question, "Gold-darned pesky curious critters."

At his house in Nairobi he kept for a long time a tame lion, much to the terror of itinerant natives. He says that it was the best "watch dog" he ever owned, and claims that when all the other bungalows in his vicinity were favored by burglars, his house escaped attention. Which is not at

all surprising under the circumstances.

I think that few men have had more interesting and exciting experiences with big game than Major Ross, yet he will not talk about them, for he is a very modest man, totally unaware of his own sterling qualities. His work carries him continually among the denizens of forest and plain, and few men know the habits and traits of the wild game in "Nature's Zoo" better than Ross.

I feel rather like telling tales out of school by narrating the following little story of Ross. It is so typical of the great, big, boyish heart of the man, that I can not refrain from telling it.

It so happened that Ross foregathered with three other Americans in Nairobi to celebrate Independence day. They had a very lively dinner, and afterward proceeded to loose off steam by firing off a number of crackers and rockets. Tiring of this tame pastime, they started in to turn Nairobi into a "Wild West" town by shooting out the street lamps from the veranda of the hotel. This sport soon palled, and they went for a walk down town with the object of seeking new fields of enjoyment. They happened to pass the bank and saw the window open, and a Parsee clerk working at a ledger under a light.

The temptation was too strong for Ross and his three American companions. They lit some crackers and threw them into the bank building through the open window. The clerk mistook them for bombs and rushed out, shouting "Murder!" The negro constable on the beat below blew his whistle for help, and the barracks closed at hand, soon had some 20 dusky policemen respond to the "alarm" call. In the general mix-up, and to avoid arrest for their prank, Ross and his companions roughly handled the policemen and put them to flight.

I happened to be in command of the police at Nairobi, and soon came upon the scene in answer to a telephone call. I arrested the four practical jokers for "disturbing the peace" and "resisting a police officer in the execution of his duty." They were all released on bail, and subsequently stood their trial before the sessions judge and a white jury.

The jury, in the face of the weight of evidence, brought in a verdict of not guilty, and all were acquitted. Ross made an ample apology to all concerned for his share in the escapade, and laughingly told me that he thought it pretty hard that a good American could not enjoy his national holiday without being arrested.

When Colonel Roosevelt visited East Africa he met Major Ross, and the two men found much in common. At the banquet given in Nairobi to the ex-president, Major Ross was selected to present a rhinoceros-foot box to the distinguished visitor as a token of regard from the Americans in the colony. In a short speech at the presentation, Major Ross, to every one's keen delight and particularly that of Colonel Roosevelt, repeatedly referred to the famous hunter as "Colonel Rosenfelt." In his reply the colonel referred to the many years Major Ross had spent in America and particularly in the west, saying that they were both "pretty good Rocky mountain men."

It is somewhat surprising to think how this man of many weird experiences and continuous adventure has settled down to his official life in East Africa. See him in his spotless white duck government uniform with his breast glittering with his four orders and medals, and you will hardly credit that this is the man whose reckless daring and quick-handed meting out of justice in the Boer war set all the British army talking.

See him as I have seen him, clad in evening dress at a government house function, smoking a short pipe, and you may laugh for a moment because he looks like a duck out of water. But you will not laugh long, for you will quickly recognize that here is a MAN. It is because he is pre-eminently a man that he is a leader among men.

The spirit of the rover of the plains and the seeker after adventure is strong within him, and it is plain to the naked eye. He is no social mimic of civilized customs. He is not polished, his hands are not manicured, his face is not massaged, his clothes are anything but fashionable, but he cares not, and after a few minutes' conversation with him you do not care either.

Again, see him playing with children, as I have seen him, laughing and happy, and you will begin to understand that though a man may be quick to snuff out a life when it is necessary, this does not imply that he is heartless or cruel. No man who can look at Ross when he is playing with his little children friends, can be cruel or heartless.

But Ross will tell you that it is sometimes imperative to carry a gun, and if you do so it is essential that you can shoot straight and be quicker on the trigger than the other man. As he once naively told me, "Shoot quick and straight. The last man in gets the full service and won't want no other."

One day the restless spirit within his gaunt, tall, weather-beaten frame will bid him pack up his traps and go forth again to fresh adventures. The life is too alluring to be left alone for long. When that spirit moves Ross again, things will happen. Things have a way of happening when he is around.

But for the moment he has settled down to a home life with a wife, and maybe with a son to rear up to follow in his footsteps. But I do not think that he will stay content for long in civilization.

WHO'S WHO AND WHY

NEW PRECEPTOR FOR THE TRUSTS



This was the first case in which the courts were called upon to work out a dissolution plan and it became incumbent upon the American Tobacco company, through its lawyers, to propose something that would be acceptable to the government and the court.

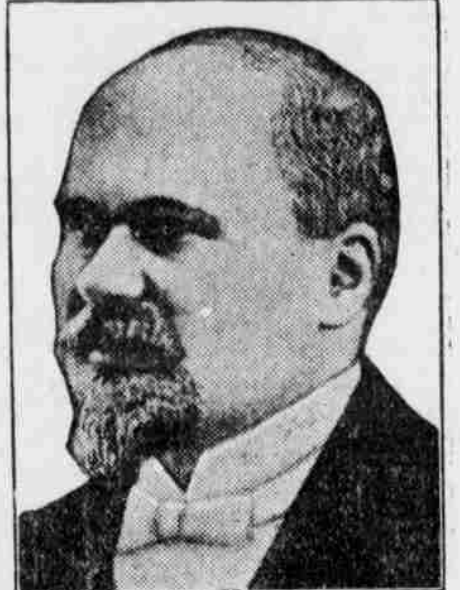
The plan presented to the court for discussion in open session was not what the trust's lawyers had started out to get, and even after that Mr. Wickensham, at the suggestion of the Independents, had some material alterations made, but the essential feature to which Mr. McReynolds had particularly objected—common ownership of the companies which were to take over the segregated assets—was still the central point.

PRESIDENT POINCARE A REMARKABLE MAN

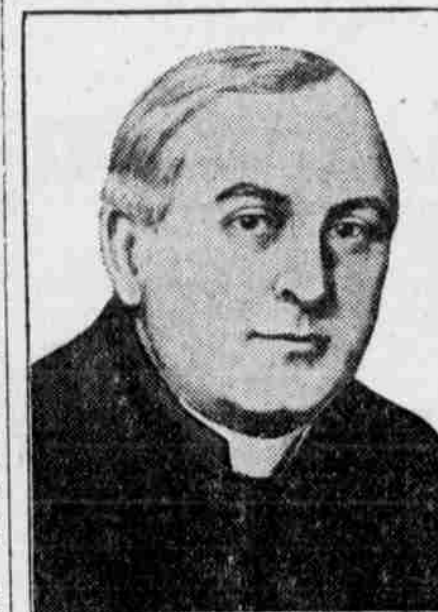
M. Poincare, France's new president, is a remarkable man. He has held cabinet office on four occasions. Besides this his efforts in behalf of international world peace have been recognized by all the powers. It is admitted that he is a statesman, because he abandoned a lucrative law practice to accept the position of a cabinet minister at a salary of \$10,000 a year. He is an eloquent speaker, is recognized as a man of sterling character, has a keen sense of humor, and all these qualities combine to make him the one man who could head the present cabinet of former prime ministers.

Every Parisian knows the story of the 25 centimes nickel piece, which is equivalent to the American 5 cent coin. It was extremely unpopular and no government had been able to support it. When Poincare went into office the story about this piece was brought before him and he said: "Just leave it to me."

This same nickel piece is now one of the most popular money pieces in France. Some one got out a story that "Rothschild" had been engraved in tiny letters on several of the coins and that the first one who presented one of the Rothschild bank would receive \$5,000. Of course there was no truth in the story. No one has ever accused M. Poincare of having circulated the story, but nevertheless this simple little circumstance made the premier extremely popular.



PREDICTS UNION OF ALL RELIGIONS



A worldwide propaganda that has for its aim and object the education of people in the need and advantage of a unified, amalgamated church—one that shall embrace all creeds and beliefs and nationalities—is in progress. It is being carried on in Chicago, is this propaganda, and Bishop Charles P. Anderson of the Protestant Episcopal church is one of the propagandists.

As the first step toward unification of the world's different religious beliefs it has been proposed to hold a conference at which all religions will be represented. The one great object of this conference will be to discuss the question in a calm, dispassionate manner and to see if some understanding cannot be arrived at.

"It is apparent to any one who gives the question serious thought," said Bishop Anderson, "that the old-time animosity between the different churches is dying out. The trend of events is toward a universal church. Christian religion should be organized."

"It has been proposed to hold this conference, at which representatives of all Christian bodies shall be present. The object of the conference will be to consider the difficulties in the way and to see if they cannot be related and reconciled."

GARRISON THINKS ARMY PLAN WRONG

"The present system of punishing desertion from the army is as bad as the old English laws fixing the death penalty for 160 offenses," said Secretary Garrison of the war department the other day, in discussing a proposal to make desertion in the army a misdemeanor and not a crime.

Secretary Garrison is in favor of a proposition which would abolish the purely statutory criminality of desertion in time of peace. For any obligation by the enlisted man, violation of which must be treated as a crime and punished accordingly, would be substituted a purely contractual obligation. Desertion in time of peace would be treated as a misdemeanor. Steps would be taken to surround the subsequent civil employment of a deserter with certain hazards designed to discourage desertion and to promote the fulfillment of his obligation to the United States, even after desertion. These penalties should be mild.

The practice of making a jail bird of a man who had committed no actual crime, of placing a price of \$50 on his head and of discouraging by the prospect of imprisonment as a felon, the voluntary return of a deserter, all would be discontinued.

The war secretary believes that reform in the present method of dealing with the deserters would not only obviate many instances of grave injustice, but would diminish the difficulties of recruiting.

