

HE WAS A CANNIBAL KING

Remarkable Adventures of the "Modern Robinson Crusoe."

THIRTY YEARS AMONG MAN-EATERS

Experiences of a Frenchman in the Wilds of Australia—Attempts to Escape—Repelled by the Whites.

(Editor's Note.—The sensation of the hour in Europe is M. de Rougemont, the "modern Robinson Crusoe," who returned to France a short time ago, more than thirty years after the time when he disappeared, and was supposed to have been lost. It appears that during this time M. de Rougemont ran the gamut of savage experiences, from that of the lonely castaway on a tiny island to the chief of a cannibal tribe in the interior of Australia. His story, the most remarkable of modern times, has deeply interested such men as Dr. Keltie and Mill, the eminent geographers, who have investigated it, and are satisfied of its perfect accuracy. M. de Rougemont attracts a great deal of attention wherever he appears, and has received many offers of invitations to address geographical and scientific societies. Last week he appeared before the Bristol Congress of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. His account of his experiences is being published serially in *Geographical Magazine*, beginning with last month. Altogether, M. de Rougemont may be called the man of the hour. The title of the modern Robinson Crusoe, which has been generally placed upon him, is in no way a misnomer, for his adventures and remarkable experiences which he has been through have never been equaled since Defoe wrote the story of his famous hero.

The following statement is the first account that M. de Rougemont has given of his experiences, and covers briefly the whole ground that will be gone over by the numerous installments of his magazine story. It is the same story that he related to the British scientists, the truth of which has been so carefully verified.

Beginning as a Pearl Fisher.

In the year 1863 I left home a mere youth and engaged in a pearl-fishing venture on board the Dutch schooner *Veleland*. Our pearling grounds lay between the Australian coast and Dutch New Guinea. After about ten months the vessel was wrecked on a small coral island, situated about thirteen degrees south and 126 degrees east, off the northwest coast of Australia. I was absolutely alone, save that I had the captain's dog with me. This island, or, rather, sand-spit, I lived for two years, and underwent much suffering. At the end of that time a party of blacks, who had been blown out to sea from the Australian main, were cast upon the island on a native raft, such as is used in fishing off the coast. After a further period of six months waiting for favorable winds we set out together in a boat built from the wreck of the schooner, and I landed with my companions on the coast of Australia in the year 1866—the exact locality was Cambridge Gulf, on the north-west coast. Of course I made many excursions in various directions, always with the hope of reaching civilization, either overland or by sea. Evidently, however, I drifted into the center of the continent, and only reached civilization in 1895, after an exile upwards of thirty years. When I first landed on the Australian main it may be necessary to bear in mind that I was absolutely destitute—without clothes, tools or instruments of any kind, except a harpoon, a knife and a steel tomahawk. I had no book except a New Testament, and the French and English language; all maps and charts had been swept away by the heavy seas that preceded the wreck. I had no writing materials whatever; it was therefore impossible for me, even if at that time I had had the necessary tools, to record my scientific observations, or to record my wanderings. For a time, however, I did make notes on the blank leaves and margins of the Testament, using blood for ink and a quill from a wild boar as a pen. This book was, unfortunately, lost on my return to civilization in the wreck of the steamer *Matura*, which was lost in the Strait of Magellan in the present year of 1898.

When I landed on the continent, I believe vast tracts of it were unexplored, and certainly my own knowledge of Australian geography was very small and vague. If I had known even the exact outline of Australia it would have saved me many terrible journeys and years of suffering.

Takes a Native Wife.

As I have already said, and as I can now remember, that is to say, Queen's channel, which was the home of my native companions, who found their way back with me from the little islet by steering by the stars. For some little time I remained in the camp of their tribe, where I was received in a most friendly way in consequence of the introduction and representations of my native wife. This woman was one of the family of blacks that had been cast upon my islet. When we landed, nearly all the members of the tribe and many individuals from other tribes were gathered to see the first white man they had ever beheld. They were not so much surprised, however, at my personal appearance as at the form of my footprints, which differed very greatly from theirs, and the few articles I possessed filled them with amusement, especially my boat. This boat which I built on the island from the wreck and in which I reached the mainland with the party of natives was unfortunately lost in an encounter with a whale, and with it disappeared my hopes of reaching Somerset at Cape York, a settlement of which I had often heard the natives speak. Thus I was obliged to make the attempt by land, and I started with my wife about October, 1867, intending to travel due east to the Queensland coast. After six or seven months' traveling, at first over a flat coast land diversified by isolated hills, and then through an elevated and very broken country, I reached a desolate and waterless region covered with spinifex, where we both suffered terribly from thirst, and but for the skill of my native wife in finding water and procuring food, I should probably never have come through.

Attempts to Reach Civilization.

We soon found that we had come considerably further south than we intended, and so we struck due north and eventually reached a flooded river flowing eastward, which presently led us to the sea. This river was probably the Roper, entering the Gulf of Carpentaria, but as I did not know of the existence of such a gulf, I believed we had reached the Queensland coast, and I at once inquired of the tribes we met for the nearest settlement of white men. These natives, by the way, were the most savage and hostile I ever encountered in all my wanderings. They attacked at night, but having been warned by my native wife, we retired from our ganyah or shelter of boughs, and slept in the bush without a fire. In the morning we would find our shelter riddled with spears. In reply to my inquiries for these people were apparently friendly in the daytime, they pointed to the southeast and to the northeast, indicating that settlements were to be found. Then, after staying a few weeks with the tribes living on the islands near the mouth of the Roper, probably the Pelieu islands, I set out in a frail dug-out, borrowed from these tribes to

ascend, I believe, the Albert river, but on account of the floods which at that season affect all the rivers on the coast, I changed my mind, and then decided to coast along to the northward, hoping to reach Somerset, and having not the slightest idea that the great Gulf of Carpentaria and Cape York peninsula separated me from the Pacific ocean. The smallness of the craft, which was quite unfit to go far beyond shelter, and the necessity for keeping a close lookout for a settlement, compelled us to follow every winding of the coast.

At length, after several months of coasting, we found the land trending to the west; and here, at Raffles Bay, probably, we found a Malay proa. The Malays themselves, who were Bechodman fishers, were willing to take us to Kolamp, but as my native wife had a great dislike and distrust of the Malays, and could not be prevailed upon to go, I felt I could not desert her so far from her own people, and I also considered she had already saved my life a great many times; thus the opportunity passed.

An Involuntary Return.

Here at Raffles Bay we met a native who spoke English and who had served on a British man-of-war. He told us of the settlement of Port Darwin, lying to the southwest, and he warned me to avoid Van Diemen's gulf, partly on account of the alligators and partly, also, on account of the numerous crocodiles. He had to have to ascend in search of the settlement, for it must always be borne in mind that none of my informants gave me exact and precise information, some of them simply indicating the direction. We landed on the northern coast of Melville island, and after we had again reached the coast of the mainland through Aspley strait we experienced a terrible storm, which must have driven us past Port Darwin. For whole nights my native wife and I would be immersed in the sea, clinging on to the gunwale of our frail craft. At last, about eighteen months after we had left my wife's home in the Cambridge gulf region, we one day recognized certain islands and also the coast, and afterwards we found ourselves, to my great surprise, at the very spot from which we had started. Of course I had to pretend that my return was anything but involuntary. The next attempt I made was to the southwest, starting after some months of rest, and coasting in the dug-out as far as King Sound. I landed upon and explored many of the islands dotted along that extensive stretch of coast, and in some of them I found

caves with rude drawings on the rocks. On what was probably Bigge's island, I found a calm of stones, which I readily saw must have been the handiwork of a white man. We returned to the old camp overland, crossing the King Leopold ranges, which were finely wooded, and appeared to be largely composed of granite. Beyond these ranges the country was a moderately elevated plateau, intersected by many very fine creeks and rivers, and covered with long grass from twelve to fifteen feet in height, so high as to make traveling difficult. After a day's march we cleared a track. There were also on this plateau a number of curious looking abrupt pinnacles of bare rock rising above the general level surface. We next struck an undulating country, covered with sharp broken conical hills. After a day's march we reached a creek. In this quartz I saw gold for the first time I had ever looked upon it in its native state.

We next struck what was probably the Orde river, which we followed down to Cambridge gulf, and returned along the coast to our own home. On returning from this journey I felt little inclination to make another attempt, and for three years I lived amongst the natives, becoming accustomed to the life, and finding it not disagreeable. I was interested in studying their customs and the customs and languages of their neighbors. For this I had a motive; in those early days it was always my object to make the acquaintance of tribes who could render me assistance in escaping overland. The natives, however, were not so friendly as I had hoped, and I found it necessary to be on my guard. I had only the very best of bows, arrows, and spears, and I was very much on my guard. On our way south we first crossed a range of granite mountains running east and west. After crossing this range we came to a low and slightly undulating country covered with dark chocolate colored soil of great depth. I found here a most extraordinary richness of vegetation and animal life, especially a kind of water rat. In the soil along the banks of the creeks in this fertile region I found creeks with very deep channels cut in the soil, rich loam, and I should think, about a deep crossing in this rich country, coming more or less south. The tribes were very numerous, and altogether it was very thickly populated. I never traveled due south, but found it expedient to go from tribe to tribe and from water-hole to water-hole. As far as possible, I kept on my own course, bidding the tribes adieu when our ways lay diametrically opposite directions. Besides having my native wife with me, I was armed with a certain mystic magic stick, and best of all, I had the power of amusing the tribes by means of acrobatic performances, my steel weapons, and the bark of my dog, who could also go through a little performance on his own account, and in the time of my need whistle. I emphasize these things because they saved my life over and over again; some how I always managed to ingratiate myself with even the most hostile tribes.

Traveling With Native Tribes.

When we had been three or four weeks out, we traveled in a country of low limestone ranges, abounding in caves, in contrast with the granite ranges further north, in which I had found no caves. In these caves I found bones, also the skull of a kangaroo, which was so large that at first I took it as a sort of horse; its skull was probably two feet in length, larger than the skull of the largest kangaroo I ever saw. It belonged probably to an extinct species. In traversing the desert tribes, which we crossed on our journey, we indeed at all times, we were in the company of the various tribes we met, consequently our course was often east and west instead of directly southward, according to the water-circumstances. Thus we wandered from place to place, sometimes accompanied by parties of the natives on their hunting and fighting expeditions, but always making for the south, whenever possible, crossing ranges and desert countries. In the desert countries, water is obtained from the roots of the Mallee tree, a species of eucalyptus; the roots, which lie near the surface, are dug out for a length of about twelve feet. They are about two inches in diameter, and in lengths of about two feet, and are sucked or allowed to drain into a vessel or skin water bag. These roots yield pure and refreshing water of a slightly earthy flavor.

Repelled by Whites.

When we had perhaps several months out we came suddenly upon four white men. At this time we were with a small party of blacks, who were on a punitive expedition. The party had already been attacked by these same white men and had retreated, and therefore were by no means disposed to be friendly. Naturally, in the excitement of the moment, I forgot that I was virtually a black man myself, and rushed upon them, but they promptly fired upon me and retreated. I now knew them to have been the whites, and I should point out that I was perfectly naked, like the savages, and was armed with the same protective covering of black, greasy clay, which is used by the natives to ward off cold and the attacks of

insects, but apart from this, the sun had long since tanned my skin out of all resemblance to a European. Repulsed in this way more than once, I despaired of ever making my real character known. Two or three weeks after the encounter my wife came upon the tracks of a man whom she described as a white man, and as a man no longer in his senses. She deduced this from the fact that the eccentric circles which the tracks followed. Following up these tracks, we did find a white man alone and dying from thirst. He was hopelessly imbecile. He lived with me for two years, a serious encumbrance, and never regained his intelligence until just before he died. He asked who I was, and where he was, and then he said his name was Gibson, and that he had been a member of the Giles expedition. The place where he was lost was, I now understand, called by the Giles expedition "Gibson's Desert," and it lies in the southeast of western Australia.

Becomes a King.

After Gibson's death I made up my mind to end my days in solitude, and the reason for this was partly that I seemed doomed to disappointment every time an opportunity offered itself to return to civilization, and partly, also, the urgent solicitations of my wife and the tribes with whom I lived. They pointed out to me that I had everything a man could want, and that I could be king. I move them. I was moreover quite evident to them that my fellow white men did not want me. Thus for something like twenty years I made my home with them in the mountainous region near the center of the continent, where I ultimately became king, or ruler, over a number of large tribes. From this mountain home I

made frequent long journeys, and traversed at one time or another a great part of the interior of the continent.

Once I followed on the camel track of a white party with the tribe for the purpose of picking up empty tins and for other things useful to us, and I came upon an Australian newspaper. I remember it was the *Sydney Town and Country Journal*, bearing date somewhere between 1871 and 1875. It was a surprise indeed to read it over and over, until I had learned it by heart, and I preserved it in an opossum skin cover until it was literally worn to pieces.

Puzzling Information.

Much of the information this newspaper contained puzzled me greatly, and I nearly ceased to read it. I was particularly puzzled by the "dupettes of Alsace and Lorraine had refused to vote in the German Parliament and had walked out." Turn it over how I might, I could not understand how the representatives of two lost provinces in my own country could possibly be in the German Parliament—knowing absolutely nothing, of course, of the war of 1870.

The Tribe over which I reigned was composed of beings who were counting low down on the human scale, but at the same time they have elaborate laws, which govern their daily life precisely as in the case of civilized people. Briefly described, they are savages, repulsive in appearance, who have not even begun to get rid of the power of cannibalism, and altogether of a very degraded type. But, nevertheless, I must say that they have many good qualities and that their code of honor would bear comparison with that of any civilized people.

Although no permanent houses were erected, the natives with whom I lived did build habitations, which they occupied during the two or three months of cold weather. These were made of sticks driven into the ground, around which branches, twigs, roots and brush were interwoven like a basket. The spaces in the walls were covered with mud or with the material used in the construction of the white ant's nest. In cold weather the huts were lined with eum and kangaroo skins, and they are much more comfortable than can probably be imagined from my description.

Frequently the number of these huts gathered together in one place forms a village, though at other times the communities split up into tribes of twenty or thirty families each. Each family, on the average, consists of one man, three women and five or six children, so that even a single tribe makes a very considerable gathering.

Clothing and Decorations.

While my natives did not, as a rule, paint the body, on great occasions, such as corroborees, initiation ceremonies and other festivities, they paint and decorate themselves elaborately, each tribe having its own design of decoration and even a common design for each ceremony. The pigments used in decoration are of many colors, but chiefly yellow, red, white and black. Ordinarily the only clothing known consists of a coating of greasy clay, mixed with charcoal. This serves many purposes. It keeps off the cold during winter and is also a protection against the attacks of insects. In summer a special kind of pigment is used to keep off insects, and this material is scented with a kind of pennyroyal. They occasionally stick on to this clay clothing the feather-down from swans, cockatoos, geese, ducks, turkeys and other birds. This serves as a further protection, and when they want to improve upon the touches of red, they use blood obtained from the arm of a man. Other ornaments are the wings and tail feathers from all the large birds, such as the emu or native companion, these being worn in the hair usually. They also make use of feather tufts on the breast and shoulders, while the bones and feathers of animals are made into jingling necklaces. From this brief description it will be evident that my subjects presented a most fantastic appearance on full dress occasions, and it must be added that they are cannibals.

Etiquette of Cannibalism.

Cannibalism prevails to a very great ex-

tent, but is governed by many rules. Usually it is the slain victims in battle that are eaten by the victorious side, and as the object seems to be to acquire the valor and virtues of the person eaten, I endeavored to wean the tribes from cannibalism by assuring them that if they made bracelets, anklets and necklaces out of the dead man's hair they would achieve their end equally well. When a family grows too large, and the mother—being the best of burdens—is unable to carry one of the children, the father orders it to be clubbed and eaten. This, however, is entirely actuated by love, as the natives have a horror of natural decay. Maimed and deformed children are also killed and eaten. Women and people who die a natural death are never eaten. When a man has to be eaten there is always a grand corroboree. All parts are consumed, the brain, heart and kidneys being considered special delicacies. Some of the bones, such as those from the ankle, are used as ornaments. Often they are strung together to form jingling necklaces, but they are chiefly made up into war-belts, which are used in connection with sorcery to bring about the death of enemies, and these are known as the death bones. The skulls are kept and hung in trees to commemorate the victory, but are never carried about. Any bones that are left are buried and are never given to the dogs. Human flesh is not prepared or cooked in the usual cooking places, but a special fire is made for the purpose in an oven dug in the sand. Thus it will be seen that human flesh does not form part of the regular food of the people. The natives are not ashamed to confess

satisfaction and reward of leading the first prospecting expedition to exploit them.

The Return to Europe.

My wild life came to an end at last. An epidemic of influenza swept over the country and carried off my wife, who had in the most literal sense been my guardian angel for so many years. My surviving children were also swept away. Thus left alone, without the old interests that had made life tolerable, I determined to make a last effort to reach my own people, and leaving my mountain home, I set out for the southwest. On this, however, as in all my journeys, I was never able to take a direct line, but had to go hither and thither with the tribes among whom I was sojourning. After a time I found a tree marked Forrest, the name of the explorer who had passed that way, and turning south I at length met a party of prospectors many days north of Mount Marga, the nearest coast.

Taught by bitter previous experience I knew that before I could appear among the whites I should have to get some of my natives to procure some clothes for me by any means known to them. When at length I presented myself before the white men I am afraid they did not at first look with favor on their guest. I answered their questions, and when they heard I was without money and had been journeying hither from the interior for nine or ten months, they were convinced I was a person of weak intellect. A question of my own, "What year is this?" convinced them altogether that they were right in their conjecture. However, in the end, I obtained help and work, and in 1895 I reached Melbourne, whence by slow stages and not without many difficulties I got back this year to Europe.

LOUIS DE ROUGEMONT.

DRUMMERS FOR DOCTORS.

Official Report on the Fleeing of Visitors at Hot Springs, Ark.

A special agent of the interior department has made a remarkable report to the government on the manner in which sick visitors are plucked at Hot Springs, Ark. He says in part:

"By far the most serious question in connection with Hot Springs affairs, and the one which touches the life and health of persons who go there seeking treatment, is the practice of drumming. There are drummers for three different businesses at Hot Springs, viz: drummers for bath houses, drummers for hotels and boarding houses, and drummers for the doctors.

"The most harmful thing, however, to Hot Springs, for the reason that it is the most dangerous thing for persons who go there for treatment, is the present system of doctor drumming. There are a great many doctors in Hot Springs who are notorious in the matter of having drummers for their business. The custom about this is that when a stranger or strangers arrive in the city or even long before they arrive in the city they are met on the trains and in towns more than 100 miles away from Hot Springs by drummers for the doctor. The drummers make the point, before taking the victim to the doctor, to ascertain, relatively, his financial standing, then to advise the doctor as to this matter, and the man is duly felled.

"One instance cited to me of a man who came there to be treated, was captured by a drummer, carried to a doctor and the drummer advised the doctor that he thought it would be well to charge the man about \$25. The doctor had made his examination and decided the man was not very ill, and very little the matter with him and charged him \$25. The patient pulled out an enormous roll of bills to pay him and as soon as the patient was away or out of hearing the doctor called the drummer and told him that he was a fool, that the man was not very ill, and that he should have charged him \$500 for the operation, which he paid.

"Numerous instances of this sort and the practices of these drummers and quack doctors were cited to me, and the reputable physicians of Hot Springs, for that matter, are very urgent in their recommendations that some steps, if it be possible, be taken by the department to suppress the villainy. I conferred with Dr. Perley, the superintendent of the army and navy hospital, with Dr. Garnett, with Dr. Keller, Dr. Holland, Dr. Jolks, and with Dr. Rector, who are recognized as of the leading physicians of Hot Springs, and they all concurred in the view that the state of Arkansas seems powerless to enact any law that would reach the case. At my suggestion Dr. Perley has submitted a plan which he thinks would result in destroying this practice, and the doctors above mentioned agree in this belief, and believe that his is the only feasible plan.

"I am not prepared to say that it is competent for the department to adopt this system, but I do feel, after a careful study and examination of the situation at Hot Springs, that some extreme step is necessary to be taken to protect the property and the health and the lives of people who go to Hot Springs in the hope of regaining their health. These drummers are the shrewdest people in the country, and I am advised that they are successful not only with the people unaccustomed to travel, or of being away from home, but that no less than two United States senators have fallen victims to their wiles. It occurs to me that the government, having reserved the superintendency, control and ownership of these waters for the benefit of mankind, would unquestionably have the power to enforce such regulations as would destroy this practice.

"I cannot find language sufficiently strong for the denunciation of these practices, and I most earnestly recommend that some step be taken in the direction of ending it."

The interior department is seeking for a way to put a stop to these abuses, but finds itself hampered by the fact that the reservation is under the judicial control of the state of Arkansas, and it is said that the state laws have so many loopholes through which these professional miscreants can escape that it appears almost impossible to punish the offenders.

In order to stop the drumming the department has under consideration the advisability of the adoption of a regulation providing that no bathhouse receiving hot water

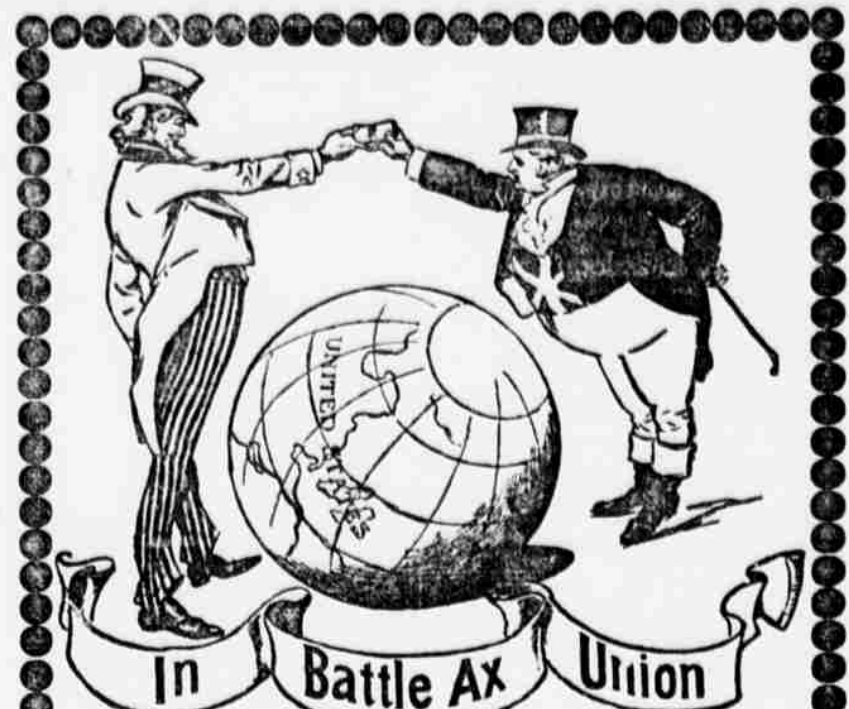
from the Hot Springs reservation shall permit any person to bathe therein who has not a certificate from a reputable physician, who does not resort to drumming, that he is a proper subject to receive baths. The superintendent of the reservation or a board of surgeons, to be appointed by the secretary of the interior, will be required to certify to the professional standing of physicians prescribing baths in the Hot Springs waters, and no doctor who is known to drum for custom will get a certificate which will

entitle his patients to bathe at the bath-houses.

Impossible.

Chicago Post: "Take my seat, madam," he said politely.

"Oh, I really couldn't," she protested. And she was right about it, too, for he was something over a 200-pound man, and she was something under a 50-pound woman, but that didn't prevent her from taking enough of the seat so that the rest of it was of no value to him.



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