

in landing — that is, for only a few minutes during a flight. The advantage that the aviator has over a person driving a motor-car where there is much traffic is that he is obliged to concentrate his attention upon his course for only those two brief periods, while the automobilist must have his eye on the road and on other cars every moment of the time.

Such danger as still attends flying comes almost entirely from the relatively high speed with which a person must take off and land. In thick weather, especially, an unanticipated ground-obstacle may easily cause a serious accident. This risk is almost eliminated, however, on regular aviation-fields. It occurs mainly in connection with emergency landings, where a half-concealed ditch or boundary-stone or fence may capsize a machine. But motors have become so reliable that such landings are rarely necessary.

We have not yet as much experience

in aviation construction as in automobile construction. Nevertheless, flying is about as safe to-day as traveling in a motor-car. It will be even safer when the engineering improvements that we can confidently predict in the near future have been perfected. By multiplying motors we can secure almost perfect reliability in the air and avoid emergency landings. The safety of landings, particularly in emergencies, can be increased by lessening the speed at which they are made. Already we are using several motors on our best planes, and we are making rapid progress toward reducing landing-speeds. When those two problems are satisfactorily solved the airplane will be the safest conveyance in which a person can travel, as it is already the quickest and the pleasantest. Popular distrust of flying will be as completely overcome as was the terror our grandparents felt over riding on a railway train, and our more recent timidity about using motor-cars.

## A CHRISTMAS DINNER IN THE NIGERIAN JUNGLE<sup>1</sup>

BY N. FR. CRONSTEDT

At the outlet of the Kaduna River into the Niger, approximately a hundred English miles north of the town of Lokoja, I was engaged one year, at the end of the 1890's, in the construction of a new station for the Niger Company. The river banks were here overgrown with a tropical jungle through which it was possible to make one's way only with the aid of an axe. It was therefore

hard work to clear away this mixture of big trees, vines, roots, and underbrush; but gradually it was done, and after a few weeks I had succeeded in getting the first structure built — a temporary little bungalow. It was made of logs we had cut in the forest, and contained two rooms, of which I used the larger as my office and dining-room and the smaller as a bedroom.

One of the greatest difficulties in this construction work was to get fresh food-

<sup>1</sup>From *Julstämning* (Swedish Christmas annual), 1924.

supplies both for myself and for my two hundred workmen. The nearest Negro village, Moraje, was some six or seven miles farther up the river, and though I had made arrangements with the chief to have sent down the river twice a week a certain number of canoes loaded with different kinds of provisions, such as maize, yams, fish, and meat, these convoys came somewhat irregularly, so that it sometimes happened that the food supply was rather meagre.

It was exactly on such an occasion — it was moreover on a Sunday — that two Englishmen arrived at my clearing. They were very young men, recently engaged in the company's service. They were on their way to Jebba, a station several days' travel farther up the river, and on account of the low water were having to travel in canoes. Such a journey is always tiresome, especially for one not accustomed to that mode of travel. To sit day after day in a cranky canoe without an opportunity to stretch one's legs becomes after a while quite trying.

As the two newcomers had been directed by the company's agent at Lokoja to call at my station in case they needed food or transportation at this point on their journey, they asked for permission to spend the night. I bade them welcome heartily, and when they informed me that it was Christmas Day, a fact I had wholly forgotten in my solitude, I invited them to dinner. We were to celebrate a real merry Christmas together. My invitation was accepted with gratitude, especially since they had been on short rations for several days, their supplies having been practically exhausted.

When they had returned to their canoes to arrange their baggage and have it carried into my bungalow, where they were to spend the night in the dining-room, I called my cook

Mosa. Of all the servants I had during my many years in Africa, Mosa was incomparably the best. He had learned the art of cooking at Rabba from French missionaries, masters in conjuring the most delicious dishes out of the simplest ingredients.

'To-day, Mosa,' I said when he appeared, 'you must prepare food for three. I have invited the two white men for dinner.'

'Massa, dey ain' no 'food,' replied Mosa with a worried look.

'What, there is nothing to eat?' I exclaimed.

'No, Massa, canoes from Moraje no come to-day. Yams, rice, we got, but no meat, no fish.'

This was an unpleasant surprise — and here I had invited two travelers to a Christmas dinner. I asked Mosa what in his resourceful mind he had intended to serve his boss for dinner, when he had neither meat nor fish. Well, he had a small can of lobster, but that was all.

'Don't you think the Moraje canoes might come before dinner?' I asked in desperation. 'It is only half-past three, and we still have three hours before dinner time.'

Mosa did not think they would. The canoes always came in the forenoon. To-morrow they surely would be there.

The situation was extremely disconcerting. Where in the world was I to get food? The can of lobster would hardly suffice for one person, to say nothing of three. While I sat there trying to solve this baffling problem, I suddenly had an inspiration. A few days before, while clearing the forest, one of my laborers had succeeded in catching two parrots, which I had bought from him. They were two very handsome birds of a species that is supposed to be able to learn to talk. They had been named Polly and Mary,

and now sat chained on a bar outside the kitchen. So far I had not heard them utter a single comprehensible word, but, on the other hand, they had several times spoiled my morning sleep with their infernal screechings when fighting each other.

'Mosa,' I said, 'take Mary and Polly and wring their necks. Then we'll have them cooked and served as chicken with curry and rice. That will be at least one course.'

Mosa nodded and promised to do his best. But my prospective guests were surely hungry, and since it was Christmas probably expected a fine dinner. When plucked, a parrot is after all no larger than a woodcock. I had to have one more course. I told Mosa, therefore, to take my shotgun and go out into the forest and try to shoot something edible. It did not have to be a parrot; he was given permission to shoot whatever he came across. The main thing was that we should get some more meat. In the meantime the scullion or kitchen boy could attend to Polly and Mary.

Mosa, who had learned to handle a gun, took the weapon with visible satisfaction and set out for the jungle.

A few minutes later the travelers returned with their luggage, and I had hardly had time to welcome them inside before I heard the report of a gun somewhere in the forest. I then felt considerably more at ease, for Mosa used to have good luck and was quite a good shot. A short while later, when my guests had had time to relax on my porch, I went over to the kitchen, which was a short distance behind the bungalow, to see what kind of game my cook had succeeded in obtaining.

In the kitchen door stood Mosa, with a carving knife in his hand, engaged in skinning something that hung from a hook in the ceiling.

'What did you get, Mosa?' I asked.

Mosa turned around and grinned from ear to ear.

'Lots of meat, Massa,' he said. 'Tiptop roast.'

The animal he was skinning turned out to be a big, red-furred bush-ape.

'How are you going to serve that, Mosa?'

'Make soup of some; but the haunches we roast. Better than leg of lamb.'

'Good work, Mosa. You have saved the day. At seven we dine.'

At the appointed hour we sat down at the covered table, set in my dining-room, to eat our Christmas dinner.

The soup, which was introduced as oxtail soup, was excellent, and no one had any objections to it. Next came the contents of the lobster can in the form of a prettily garnished lobster salad. From what trees or shrubs Mosa had picked the greens and vegetables, I cannot tell, but the dish looked fine, and tasted better.

When the roast leg of lamb was put on the table the mouths of my guests watered. It was done in the right way — crisp on the outside, and tender and juicy inside. It was highly praised.

At the next course Polly and Mary were to make their entry. I admit I was considerably worried over the outcome. So far everything had gone so well. And my anxiety proved groundless. Mosa had surpassed himself. Instead of being served as chicken with curry and rice, as I had proposed, Polly and Mary were served as 'African quail.' Thanks to a highly flavored sauce, in the preparation of which Mosa was a master, as a result of his French-missionary training, they tasted 'jolly good,' as my guests expressed it. Neither of them had ever eaten better-prepared 'game,' not even in the finest restaurant in London.

The desert was a banana tart, another of Mosa's specialties. And as

the courses were washed down with a few bottles of wine, the dinner became a festive banquet from beginning to end. The atmosphere finally reached a high pitch of hilarity. Many speeches were made for Christmas and for friends in the distant homeland, and finally one of the guests offered a toast to my cook, who in the wilderness had been able to concoct such a choice Christmas dinner that no one had missed

either the turkey or the plum pudding.

But to myself I thought how glad I should have been to exchange Mosa's delicacies for the soaked dried codfish and the Christmas ham at home, and how glorious it would have been to be transported from the oppressive heat of the African jungle to a snow-covered landscape with ice crystals twinkling in the sunshine.

## CHRISTMAS

BY H. L. HAYNES

[*Saturday Review*]

COME ghost, come gossip, stir the sluggard fire  
 And crown the solemn hour with discontent;  
 'Who leans on Love, or cares which way she went?'  
 'Heap bitter herbs to build her fun'ral pyre.'  
 'Who does with hope, and nods not to desire?'  
 'Life thrusts on life the final argument  
 No man is rich if all he have be lent.'  
 'A beggar's purse can pay the hangman's hire!'

But once and long ago, as it is told,  
 Love lay a nursling at a maiden breast,  
 And simple folk were patient of their God.  
 The world outruns the pilgrim feet of old;  
 Yet some dare stay the haggard haste, and rest  
 Where burgeoned once the Stem of Jesse's Rod.