

### III

#### STEWART EDWARD WHITE'S "THE REDISCOVERED COUNTRY"\*

There will be many readers for this volume besides those whose interest in geography, exploration or natural history makes attractive its title. Mr. White's literary activity, exercised in many fields, has won for him a reputation as an entertainer not less than that he enjoys by reason of his accurate observation of wild life. But in no other book of his, perhaps, are his qualifications as a writer for the non-scientific man put to a severer test than in the present one. For, in form, this is a diary, and by its purpose it is first of all a chronicle of fact in language sufficiently exact to satisfy the student. Despite this, there are few of its three hundred and fifty odd pages which will not engage the attention of any reader with a zest for lively and of-

\*The Rediscovered Country. By Stewart Edward White. New York: Doubleday, Page and Company.

tentimes hazardous adventure, or who enjoys vivid pictures of strange country and strange people. In part, this is due to Mr. White's sterling sincerity and in part to his gift for seeing clearly and for reproducing personal observations and experiences with almost photographic wealth and definiteness of detail.

*The Rediscovered Country* itself is a vast tract of land within the German protectorate in Africa, separated from British East Africa by a barrier of high mountain ranges, and known previously only through German military reconnaissances, which seem never to have been communicated beyond the government. It was before unexplored chiefly because of what at first appeared to Mr. White to be great natural difficulties. In his estimation, it represents the last untouched hunting field in the inhabited world, and it abounds in game, large and small, in the most extraordinary measure. Its surprising failure to be better known to sportsmen is attributed to the fact that the English big-game hunter, up to this time, has found in the other parts of the country, enough to keep him busy, while the people under whose rule it comes themselves have comparatively little appetite for pursuits of that sort, or inclination to encourage the visits of those of other nationalities who are keen for shooting. His own journey, demonstrated to Mr. White's satisfaction, that, given certain knowledge and experience and a willingness to forego the luxuries that some hunting expeditions into Africa would seem to require, this wonderful country is easily accessible, and in its varied topography, vegetation, and animal life, is a revelation even to the veteran explorer. Moreover, because of its slight rainfall, its lack of grazing facilities and the prevalence of the deadly tsetse fly, he believes that for many years, at least, it will continue to be the greatest of all game regions. That general statement about accessibility needs some explanation, however, as becomes apparent a little later on, when we read that, starting in with twenty donkeys equipped with pack saddles, twenty-five donkeys

rigged in the native fashion and picking up additional donkeys from time to time, he emerged from his trip with just four. Four of fifty-nine survived the journey. The others succumbed to fly bite and various diseases or mishaps. Two riding mules, which were gaily mounted at the onset, promptly died. For the rest of the seventeen hundred miles, White and his constant companion, the experienced hunter, Cunninghame, walked. Incidentally, there were hardships of rushing rivers to be forded across which the men passed clinging to a single rope, through which the beasts were pulled, half drowned, at the end of a line, of heat, insects, poisonous swamps and balking natives, whose services as porters were indispensable, and, finally, there were the encounters with the biggest and most ferocious of all wild animals.

It is from those many pages of description of meetings, particularly with lions and elephants, that the average reader will get his finest thrill. Of few other writers may it be said with equal truth that, in telling of exploits of this kind, never once is there a suggestion of boastfulness, of exaggeration of the danger of the situation or of the personal courage exhibited by the narrator. But, so far as that goes, long ago Mr. White established himself as a chronicler, perfectly acquainted with the hazards of any adventure and also entirely capable of drawing from memory a picture that made his adventure plain to the reader's vision, while quietly and modestly stating his own part therein. There, for instance, in the book before us, is the encounter with that quartette of lions. This occupies nine pages, and yet not a word is wasted. It begins with the stalking of a lioness, it develops into a single-handed facing of four of the beasts, while all of White's companions, the faithful gun-bearer, Memba Sasa, excepted, are perched in nearby trees. It ends, after eighteen shots from White's two guns, the first lion down with four bullets in him, the smaller lion with two, the lioness with two, and the giant lion with seven, the last named dropping dead

only eight paces from where the hunter still stands—surely excitement enough for any one. But if Mr. White confesses to nothing resembling panic in these trying circumstances, he frankly owns up to having no stomach for elephants—that is, in excessive quantity, and under certain other conditions. That was when he and Cunninghame, working through a heavy forest, grown twenty feet high with vines and undergrowth, found themselves almost in the midst of a herd of those animals, and when, within forty yards of the nearest, as they thought, abruptly were confronted with what White refers to as “the bow of the Mauretania,” in other words, the head of an enormous tusker, thrust out of the foliage to take an observation. “We doubled and ran,” he remarks. “I was glad.”

For the man who cares to satisfy himself of the bearings of this rediscovered country, and of how it looks in geographical form, the volume is furnished with a map, showing also the practicable routes through it, so far as known. Also, there are nearly fifty pages given over to specialised information upon how to get in, outfitting, and zoölogical notes with particular reference to the theory of concealing colouration. Finally, there are a great number of excellent and interesting reproductions from photographs taken by the author.

*Churchill Williams.*