

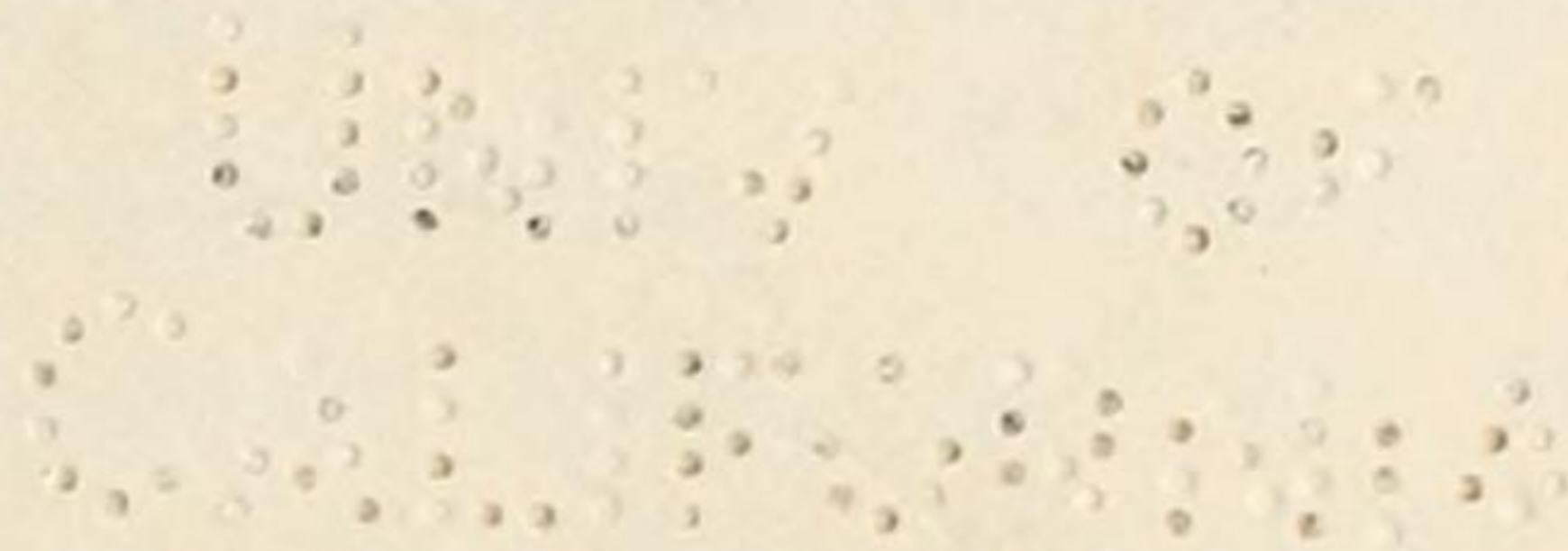
Chiefs and Cities of Central Africa

Across Lake Chad

By Way of British, French, and
German Territories

BY

OLIVE MACLEOD



William Blackwood and Sons
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goats, and even their dogs. They had suffered, too, a yet more terrible scourge, for wild beasts ravaged the neighbourhood, and from the village where we then stood seven women and ten children had been carried off.

We pitched our camp in the bush, and through the hum of insect life, borne on the fitful gusts of the night wind, we heard the dull boom of falling water that told us we were nearing the object of our hopes.

Next morning a two hours' march brought us to our base. As we approached it our excitement rose, for the path led across water-courses, mostly dry at this season, except for deep pools connected by a mere trickle, and in their beds were the tracks of all sorts of beasts,—monkeys, bush-cow, leopard, lion, rhinoceros, elephant, hippopotamus, and giraffe,—and as we crossed, baboon grunted from either side. The thick grass, however, reduced the chance of sport to a mere hazard.

We were carried over those larger streams that still contained a good deal of water on a black man's shoulder, which we tried to sit with a simulation of ease. This the bearer seldom permitted us to maintain, for he jerked us steadily backwards till it became a question of knee-grip and endurance. M. Bertaut saw and took pity, and lent me an enormous *Sénégalais* sergeant,¹ whose gentleness and strength robbed the passage of its horrors. His comrades say of him that when a bull causes him annoyance he has merely to remove it by the leg, and the animal recognises the power behind and says nothing. M.

¹ Two months later this man was killed in an insurrection of Senussi of Ndelle against the French.

Occasionally we came upon an oasis, where from afar the size of the trees and the brightness of the foliage and grass showed there was water at no great depth. There are two lakes or depressions where it lingers longer than elsewhere. They lie in deserted bush-country, and are frequented by innumerable varieties of birds and beasts, for it is one of the best hunting-grounds in the world. Crowned cranes, egrets, and sacred ibis are always there, and night and morning herds of game come to drink. We often saw the long necks and archaic forms of giraffe. They are timid beasts, and are amongst the most difficult of all wild creatures to approach; but here we were at close quarters with them. Once as many as ten together, and at another time seven, drank within hail of Mrs Talbot. Bush-buck, gazelle, hartebeeste, and kob were there in numbers, and they were followed by scores of carnivori. To judge by their spoor, rhinoceros were plentiful, and ostrich were also to be found. Sometimes a wild dog would spring across the path, or a tiger-cat stop to gaze a second at our cavalcade before it bounded away—and Mrs Talbot and I both saw a dark-grey animal of the height of a zebra with a black mane.

Our tents were pitched each night in a circle of fire, and the boys heaped up walls of leaping flame that might well have encircled Brünnhilde. The precaution was a wise one, for leopards and lions roamed round our camp, and once I saw the powerful head of a lion half-concealed in a clump of grass, with its glittering eyes fixed on us, as we filed by at the distance of a few yards.

On one long waterless march I was tired and con-