

## AMONG THE WILD ANIMALS OF EAST AFRICA

*True Stories Related by a Young Traveler*

### X. BABY LIONS IN THE JUNGLE



MY FRIEND AND I were sitting on the porch of the little resthouse at Kamande in the Belgian Congo. We had just finished our breakfast and were talking with

the proprietor. He had spent most of his life in the interior of Africa, and was very familiar with the jungle, and he understood very well, indeed, the life and habits of the wild animals of the jungle. You had only to mention the kind of animal you wished to see, and he could lead you to it.

During the previous evening we had been talking about the various kinds of animals we had seen, and had remarked that we had never seen a lioness with her family of small cubs. The proprietor told us that we had come at just the right time to see a family of baby lions with their mother, for just a few days before he had come upon a female lion with her five cubs. Naturally we were extremely interested to hear this, and we asked if it would be safe for us to go to see this family of baby lions.

We were told that it would not be safe for us to go without a guide, because we did not know the country. Many a hunter had been attacked and killed without warning by a lioness when the hunter had come too close to the cubs. However, if we wished to see this lioness and her cubs, the proprietor of the resthouse said he would go with us. So we looked forward

to this adventure with keen interest.

Accordingly, next morning arrangements were made for the trip. "*Jango nakuenta safari; leta Wataia, Kambe itu*" our friend called out in the native dialect, which meant that he was going on a short *safari* and wanted his two native boys, Wataia and Kambe, to go with him.

"*Nido, bwana*" (Yes, sir), answered the boys, and in a few moments the two boys with their shields and spears were waiting at the entrance of the porch.

In the meantime my friend and I dressed in clothing suitable for the *safari*. We put on long, heavy leather boots to protect our legs from snake bites. On our heads we wore sun-helmets, for although it was still early in the morning, the tropical sun was extremely hot.

Wataia, the head boy, led the way along a path to the jungle. Following him was our friend, the proprietor, armed with a heavy rifle. My companion and I followed, and Kambe brought up the rear.

The narrow path led through a swamp. On each side of the path, great bunches of green moss hung from the branches of the trees. The path was through heavy swamp grass, which, combined with the large roots from the trees, made walking most difficult.

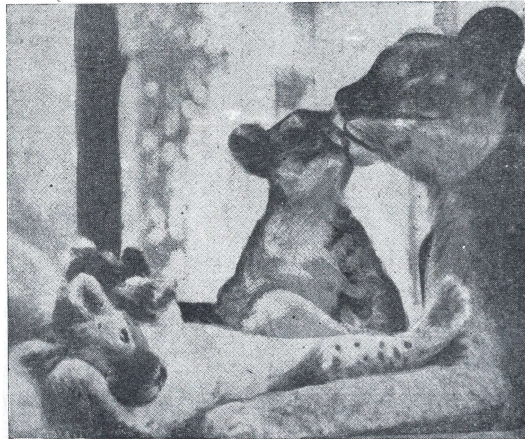
The swamp was the habitat of numerous snakes, lizards, and small reptiles. Every few minutes Wataia would strike at one with his long spear. Usually the reptile would quickly disappear in the underbrush. Most of the snakes in Afri-

ca are poisonous, but they seldom attack unless compelled to do so. Frequently they are found asleep, coiled up in the sun. The coloring of these snakes is so much like the grass that it is very hard to see them, and many times the hunter steps on one. When thus disturbed, the snake will always bite at once. The African natives are seldom bitten by a snake, for they have an unusual sense of smell, and can smell a snake when it is several

antelopes, wilde-beasts (species of deer), giraffes, and numerous smaller animals all peacefully grazing on that vast grassy land.

Our friend who was guiding us now took the lead. He told us that in the region nearby were many lions, for they usually live close to the grazing plains of their prey.

Once we came within fifty feet of a herd of giraffes. They were feeding on



*Lioness and Cubs*

yards away.

We walked for some distance along the path through the swamp. Finally our path lead out into an open space. At one side was beautiful Lake Albert, and on the other side was the great African plain. It is here, on this great open plain, that the grass-eating African animals are found in great herds. As we stood there on the edge of the plain we could see through our field glasses many zebras,

the leaves in the high branches of a thorn tree. A small baby giraffe was suckling its mother. Suddenly the baby giraffe looked toward us, for apparently it had gotten our scent. The little animal made a dash to the other side of its mother. This seemed to be a warning to the rest, and they all turned and looked at us. Then they began to run away from us at a great speed. It is said that a giraffe can run as fast as forty miles an hour, and it

looked as if these giraffes were running that fast as we watched them disappear. (See the picture on this page.)

Our guide led us around a small curve and then down over a steep hill. Then he stopped and waited until we all came near. "Don't speak," he said. "Be very quiet and walk carefully."

Slowly we moved up through the high grass until we reached the top of the other hill. Our guide motioned for us to come near, at the same time pointing straight ahead of him. Sure enough, just ahead of us, not more than fifty feet away, lay an old lioness, stretched out in the tall grass, with five little lion cubs playing about her. We stood there motionless and did not even dare to take a picture for fear the click of the camera might arouse her, and we knew that if she were aroused by our presence she would attack us.

The cubs seemed to be very hungry. They were constantly trying to push their mother into a position so that they could suckle milk from her. Presently she lay on one side, and the cubs plunged at her ravenously, pawing with all four feet as they suckled the milk from their mother. In a few moments their small stomachs bulged out like small balloons. One by one they walked a few feet from their

mother to lie down on each other to sleep. They must have been only a few weeks old.

It was a beautiful picture to see the female of the king of the jungle with her family of five cubs lying there peacefully in the shade, resting in the security of her mighty strength.

Quietly we went down to the foot of the hill. Wataia, our native boy, with

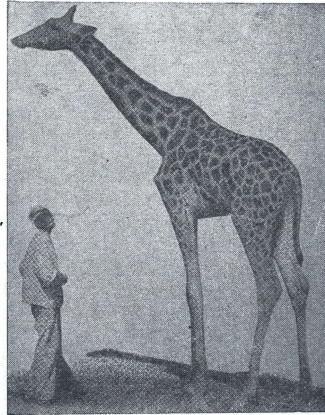
a smile all over his face, looked at us and said, "*Simba kidogi mingi sana, bwana.*" (The lions are very small, sir.) "Yes; now bring us some food," replied our guide.

So we all sat down in the shade of a large thorn tree and drank tea which had been kept hot in a thermos jug, and ate sandwiches which our boys had brought. Our guide told us that he had found these baby lions in the jungle only a few days be-

fore. This was the first time he had ever brought any one with him to see them. And so we returned to the resthouse at Kamande, knowing that we had seen a sight which very few travelers get to see.

#### REVIEW

1. Can you find Belgian Congo on a map of Africa?
2. Can you name ten different wild animals of East Africa?



Compare the height of a man and a giraffe.