

IN DARKEST AFRICA - Part Two

A GUIDE TO WARGAMING CENTRAL AFRICA IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY
THE TABLE TOP RULES.

by CHRIS PEERS.



THE RIPON FALLS, UGANDA.

From a Sketch by Captain Grant.

The original rules were designed as a conventional skirmish game, and so figures are assumed to be individually based and are treated as individuals rather than units, but there is no reason why you should not replace rank-and-file figures with an element of several figures on a base. This would give a better impression of the numbers involved in most real-life battles, and would not noticeably affect the game mechanics. The exact figure scale is somewhat imprecise anyway: I dare say that a Livingstone or Stanley model really does represent Livingstone or Stanley, for example, but one non-officer figure can be assumed to stand for an indeterminate number of men. In either

case, the exact base sizes are not critical. There is not much point worrying about the time and ground scales, either. *Heresy? It's only a game of toy soldiers, after all!*

Sequence of Play.

Moves are alternate, with one side completing all its movement and actions before the other begins. Where one side is designated the attacker, either by the campaign system or as part of a scenario, it moves first, entering the table along one edge. The defender may deploy his figures anywhere in the opposite half of the table before the start of the game. The attacker does not need to choose his exact point or points of entry until he has seen the defender's deployment. In other situations, dice for first move.

Within each move, the sequence is as follows:

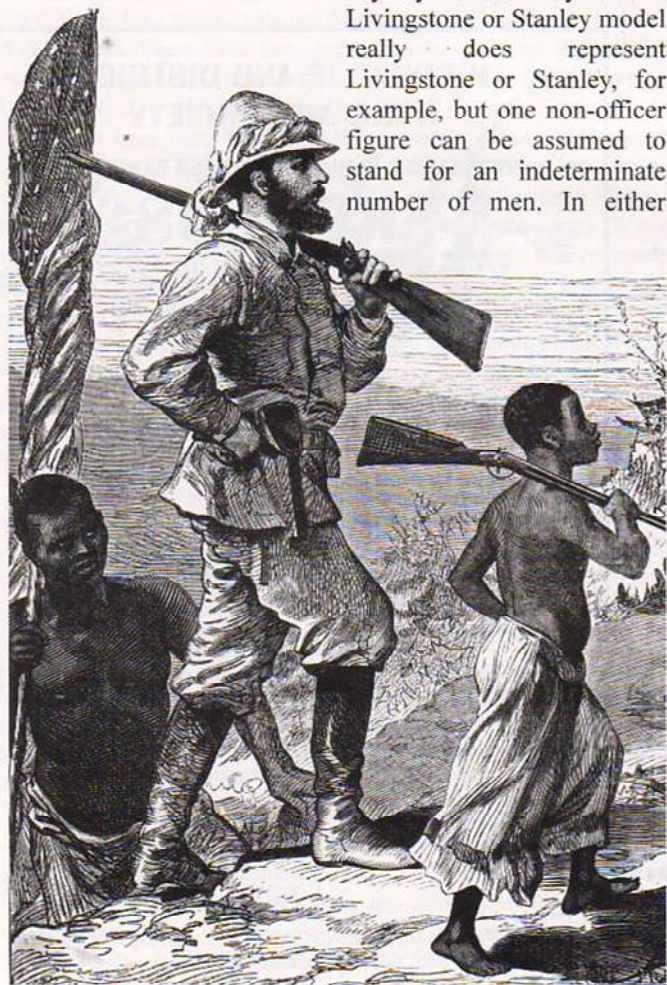
- Dice for command points.
- Encouraged troops move and fire as required, in any order.
- Unencouraged troops take any permitted actions.
- Any hand-to-hand combat between figures in contact is resolved.
- Enemy takes panic tests as a result of firing or other actions, and then moves any fleeing figures.

Command and Control.

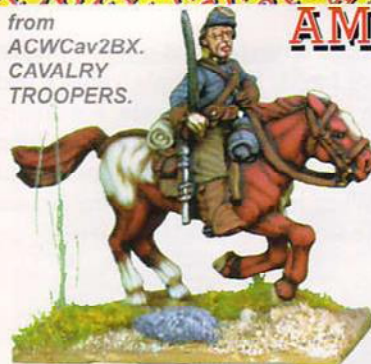
Each officer not fighting hand-to-hand this move throws 1 D6 per move. If he intends to fire this move, he deducts 2 from the score. The result is the number of other figures he can encourage this move: a figure more than 6" away counts as 2, and more than 12" away, or wishing to rally from rout, counts as 3. Officers always count as self-encouraged.

An encouraged figure may do anything he is ordered to do, subject to panic test results. An unencouraged figure may only do one of the following:

- Halt and take no action.
- Start the game advancing in the same direction as the nearest officer, or continue to advance if he did so last move, and does not go within 3" of visible enemy.
- Move to nearest cover, if within 3" and not nearer to any



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visible enemy.

- Attempt to reload a weapon.
- Take an unaimed shot at an enemy within 45 degrees of the direction the firer is facing.
- Retire at full speed away from all visible enemy, unless European, Elite Askari or Warrior Spearman.

A figure must be encouraged in order to take an aimed shot or advance into hand-to-hand combat, but if already in hand-to-hand combat, he may continue to fight without encouragement.

Movement.



Normal terrain Forest etc.

Europeans, Askaris	3"	2"
Agile Spearman	5"	3"
Pygmies	4"	4"
Other Natives	4"	3"

Visibility.



Unless special rules apply as part of a scenario, assume that visibility is limited only by line of sight. Lines of sight

Score To Hit:	COMBAT CHART				To Reload	Close Combat
	4"	8"	16"	32"		
Range up to:	4"	8"	16"	32"	2	
Europeans	2	3	3	4	2	+2
Elite Askaris	3	3	4	6	3	+1
Baluchis	3	3	5		5	+2
Other Askaris	3	3	5		4	+1
Native Musketeers	4	5	6		4	0
Pygmies	2	5				-2
Other Archers	3	5				0
Agile Spearman						+2
Warrior Spearman						+3
Other Spearman						+1

extend up to 1" within foliage cover, so that a figure within 1" of the edge of a patch of forest, for example, can see and shoot out, and can also be seen by those outside, but counts as a target in cover. However, a figure stationary within cover at the start of the game cannot be seen or shot at until he first shoots or moves. When he does so, all enemy figures within 6" must take a panic test (see below) for ambush.

Shooting.



Spears and revolvers used only at close range are dealt with as part of hand-to-hand combat. Other missile weapons, apart from bows, must be reloaded after firing (requiring the dice scores given in the following table), but if reloaded successfully may be fired in the same move. They are assumed to start the game loaded. (When a figure has fired, place a puff of white cotton wool in front of him until he has reloaded.) Shooting or reloading may not be combined with movement or hand-to-hand combat.

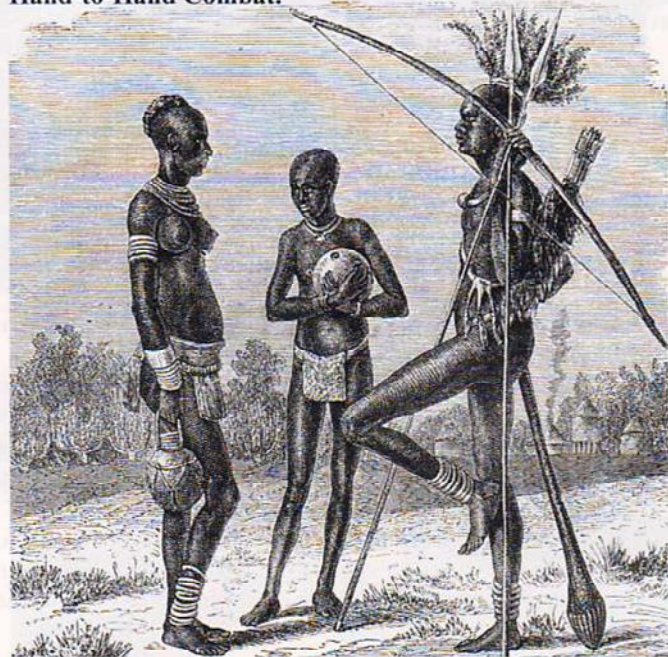
Modifiers to Shooting Dice Score:

- Target ended in cover last move -1
- Target is pygmy in cover (cumulative with above) -2
- Unaimed shot -2

All hits with firearms knock out the target permanently.

For arrows, throw a D6: 5 or 6 - Fatal wound. Target figure is removed.
 1 to 4 - Slight wound. Target carries on as normal, but must dice again at the end of his side's next move to see if the arrow was poisoned.
 On a 5 or 6, the poison takes effect at that point, and he dies.

Hand-to-Hand Combat.

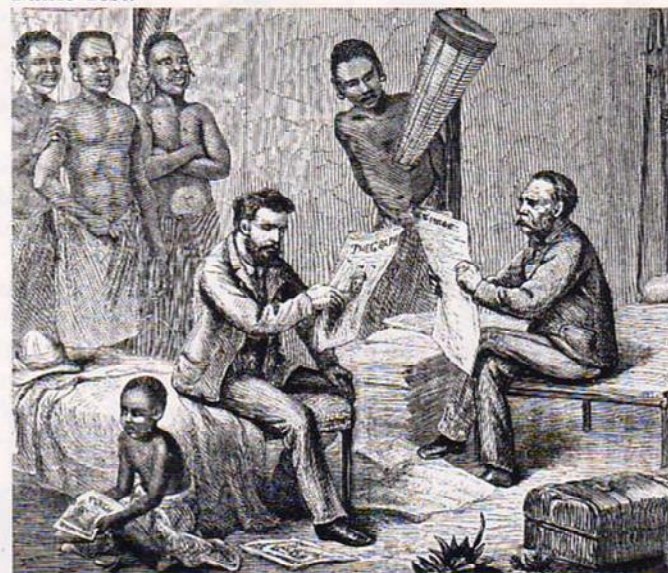


Occurs when bases touch, halting an attacker's move. If two figures fight one, the outnumbered figure fights the opponent of his choice, giving the other a free hit. No more than two opponents may fight a figure in the same move.

Each fighting figure rolls a D6, adding or subtracting the hand-to-hand modifiers given in the end column of the shooting table. The higher scorer gets a hit.

- A hit is converted to a kill on a score of 4 or better.
- Unarmed figures such as bearers are automatically killed if contacted by an enemy.

Panic Test.



Taken when:

- Seeing a friend killed within 6" (for each friend this move).
- Surprised by ambush within 6".
- Own force reduced to half strength this move.

Throw 1 D6:

1 - Rout away from nearest enemy until rallied by leader. A figure leaving the table is lost permanently.

2 to 3 - Hesitate - no shooting or movement towards visible enemy for one turn.

4 to 6 - Carry on unaffected.

Modifiers to Dice Score:

- Own force is currently below half strength -2
- Non-Europeans testing for ambush by Pygmies -2
- Tester is European, Elite Askari, or Agile or Warrior Spearman +2

THE CAMPAIGN SYSTEM.



The accompanying campaign map depicts an imaginary stretch of country extending inland from the coast of East Africa. It will be apparent that the game is not intended to be taken too seriously, but it does try to represent the sort of perils which real-life expeditions might have encountered. The system is designed to cater for 4 to 6 players. The first 4 are the strategically active ones, each representing an expedition of some kind. They start at the bottom of the map, and throw a D6 in turn for the maximum number of stages they can move along their respective colour-coded routes. They do not have to move the full number of stages if they do not wish to. The first expedition to reach the very last stage of its route, at the top of the map, is the winner of the campaign.

Some stages are marked with the colours of two factions, where the routes cross or touch each other. If one of these points is currently occupied by one of the factions, the other cannot pass through it without the permission of the occupier, unless it successfully attacks him. In this case, a game is played out on the table. If the attacker wins, the defender must retreat one stage, and the attacker moves on as far as his last movement throw allows. If the defender wins, he stays where he is until his own next turn, and the attacker retreats one stage. If these shared stages are unoccupied, they may be moved onto or passed through without penalty.

Other stages are half in the colour of the appropriate faction, and half either light or dark green. Light green means that this stage is occupied by a tribe of native hunters, who must be dealt with before the expedition can pass. Note that occasionally a player may have to fight more than one native village in order to use his full movement score. Those hunting tribes in the Sorcerer's Forest are Pygmies, the others are non-Pygmy hunters. Dark green similarly denotes a farming tribe, which must be dealt with in the same way. However, if a player is in charge of either type of tribe (see below) he may grant passage in return for a negotiated payment.

The remaining 2 roles in the campaign are of course the native hunters and farmers. One player controls all the

villages of a particular type, although in reality they probably not be united politically. These factions do not move across the map, but can win the game simply by



accumulating a total of 50 points, after which they are assumed to have gained so much in prestige and wealth that they can form a united nation under a paramount chief. They gain points in two ways. In return for an unopposed passage, an expedition may agree to give them, as points, the score of its next movement dice. This means that the faction concerned throws its dice as normal in its next turn, but does not move. Instead, the natives add the score to their cumulative points total. This represents the paying of tolls or tribute. (Note that if all the expeditions make a habit of doing this, at least one native faction is statistically likely to win the campaign before any of them can complete their journey.) If a faction does not wish to pay, or the natives will not accept payment or are not being controlled by a player, the expedition must attack. If they win, they pass through unaffected. However, if they lose, they must halt one stage short of the native village, and pay their next 6 movement points to the victors before they can pass. Thus if their next throw is less than 6, they will have to wait for another turn or more until they have accumulated a score of 6.

Other sectors on each route are distinguished by either skulls or hands. The hands are good news; those marked with a skull are bad. Neither type can be passed over: if your movement score takes you past one you must halt when you reach it. The rest of the score is wasted. The specific features of each route are explained below:

The White Men (Blue Route).



Lubungu Falls: You come across a previously undiscovered waterfall, which you propose to name after some particularly chinless member of the aristocracy back home. This will look good in the newspapers, and the morale of your expedition receives a much-needed lift. Throw 2 movement dice next turn, and choose which of the scores you wish to use.

Fever: Several unacclimatised members of your party fall sick in this pestilential region, and you are forced to wait until they have recovered their strength. Remain here until you throw a 1 or 2 on your movement dice.

"Doctor Coppelstone, I Presume?": In a remote village you are amazed to encounter a famous missionary, who had not been heard from for years, and who was presumed to have been eaten by his flock. He is able to give you valuable



information about the route ahead. Take another turn immediately.

The Man-eaters of Mongo: The natives hereabouts are being terrorised by a pride of man-eating lions. You cannot just leave them to their fate, and besides, a stuffed lion or two would look great on the wall of your country house. Remain here until you throw a 1 on your movement dice.

The Mountains of the Moon: Jolly good show, chaps! You have achieved your goal, helped to spread civilisation among the benighted savages, and upheld the prestige of the Empire!

Victory is yours.

The Zanzibaris (Red Route).

Flash Flood: Having carelessly pitched camp in a wadi, you lose most of your supplies when it floods after a sudden storm, and you have to send a party back to the coast for more. Remain here until you throw a 1 or 2 on your movement dice.

King Solomon's Mines: At least - according to legend - that is what this heap of ruins in the wilderness used to be. There are still enough nuggets of gold to be picked up in the area to give your men's flagging morale a boost. Take another turn immediately.

The Mosque of Omar: Amazingly, other Muslims have been here before you and built a small mosque in the midst of the infidels. Your prayers seem likely to be answered. Throw 2 movement dice next turn, and choose which of the scores to use.

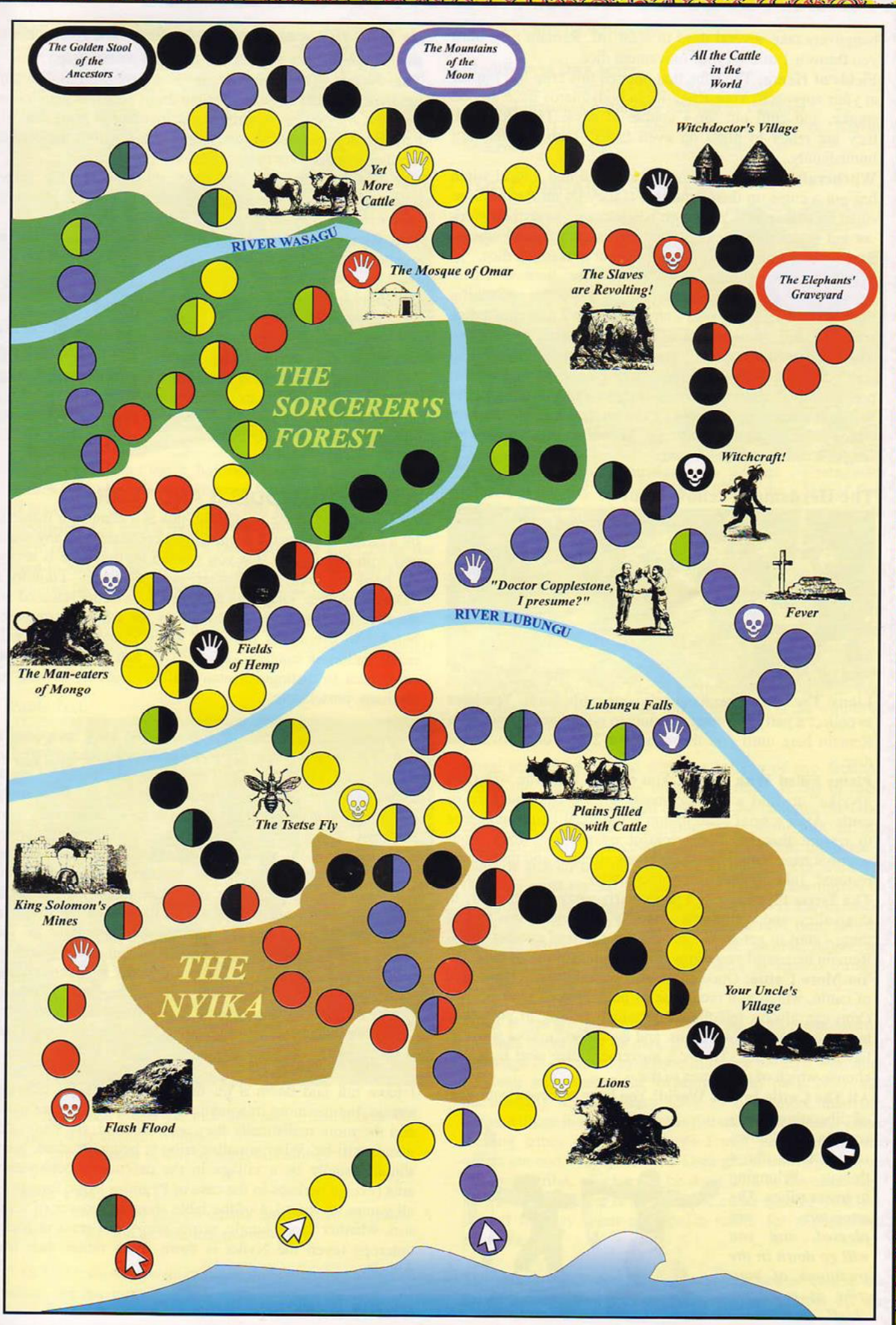
The Slaves are Revolting! A group of slave bearers break their chains and run off into the bush, leaving you to find alternative porters for their loads. Remain here until you throw a 1 on your movement dice.

The Elephants' Graveyard: This is where all the elephants are said to go to die. Or perhaps it is just the scene of an ancient hunt, where natives trapped and slaughtered a herd for meat and left the ivory behind. Either way, there is enough ivory here to make your fortune. *Praise be to Allah!*

The Native Warlord (Black Route).



Your Uncle's Village: You get a friendly reception here - a bit too friendly. Your relatives have just brewed an enormous quantity of beer, and your men are generous enough to offer to stop and help them drink it. The resulting



hangovers take several days to wear off. Remain here until you throw a 1 or 2 on your movement dice.

Fields of Hemp: The tribe that planted this crop has run off at your approach. Your Ruga-Ruga bodyguards have a good smoke, and chill out for a couple of days. Thus fortified, they are ready to press on even faster. Take another turn immediately.

Witchcraft! Your men become convinced that a local witch has put a curse on them, and that if they go on they will be eaten by evil spirits. Your own witchdoctors have their work cut out to counter the curse and find suitable good omens. Remain here until you throw a 1 on your movement dice.

Witchdoctor's Village: The witchdoctor here is easily "persuaded" to cast a useful spell for a change, smoothing the road for the rest of your journey. Throw 2 movement dice next turn, and choose which of the scores to use.

The Golden Stool of the Ancestors: You have come a long way, defeated many enemies, and gained immensely in prestige. *Your ancestors are so delighted that they reveal to you in a dream the location of the ancient golden stool on which your royal forefathers sat. Seated on this, you are no longer a chief - you are a king!*

The Herdsmen (Yellow Route).



PAINTING BY STEVE DEAN

Lions: The hungry beasts attack your cattle herds. You have to collect a party of young warriors to go out and spear them. Remain here until you throw a 1 or 2 on your movement dice.

Plains Filled With Cattle: You emerge from the waterless "Nyika" to find a vast savannah, grazed by thousands of cattle. After a brief "discussion", the local herdsmen agree to restore them to their rightful owners (ie. you). Your warriors have a great feast, and their strength and morale are restored. Take another turn immediately.

The Tsetse Fly: There is a particularly nasty variety of fly in this valley, and your cattle - usually immune to this sort of thing - start to get sick. You will have to find another route. Remain here until you throw a 1 on your movement dice.

Yet More Cattle: Once again you come across a huge herd of cattle, which you recognise as belonging to your people. (You can always tell the cattle which belong to you: they have four legs and two horns, and go "Moo"). Your warriors have another feast. Throw 2 movement dice next turn, and choose which of the scores to use.

All The Cattle In The World! You have achieved your goal of liberating every cow in the known world from those thieves belonging to lesser tribes. *The ancestors are pleased, and you will go down in the traditions of your tribe as a mighty chief!*



As if all this wasn't enough, there are four other major obstacles which all parties must cross:

The Nyika: The "Nyika" is a waterless, uninhabited wilderness which stretches for hundreds of miles parallel to the East African coast. Crossing it involved a great deal of hardship for early explorers. Every stage within the Nyika requires 2 movement points to cross.

The River Lubungu: All parties must halt at the stage before the river. To cross requires a dice score of 1; all other scores result in no movement.

The River Wasagu: As for the Lubungu, but being a smaller river this close to its source, it can be crossed on a score of 1 or 2.

The Sorcerer's Forest: A dense rainforest with a sinister reputation among the natives. Guides are afraid to go there, so there is a risk of getting lost. If a 5 or 6 is thrown for movement while in the forest, that move must be made the full number of stages backwards, towards the coast. The villages in the forest are inhabited by Pygmies. Tabletop games played in the forest must have at least 2/3 of the table covered with dense jungle.

A NOTE ON MODELS AND TERRAIN.

As I confessed at the beginning, this is a campaign inspired by a range of figures. I suppose you could do it in any scale and with any figures that you wanted to, but there is really no need to look any further than Guernsey Foundry's "Darkest Africa" range. As new packs are being released all the time I will not attempt to survey the whole range here, but it will eventually have just about everything you will need, including enough variations in native headgear and equipment to distinguish many different tribes, as well as civilians, porters, etc.

Well, everything human, that is. Having been raised on a diet of too many Tarzan films, I like to populate my African terrain with various sorts of wild animals. Some of these might have a role in a game, but others are purely decorative. (Of course, East Africa in this period really was full of wild game. Being charged by rhinos, having porters eaten by lions, etc. were quite common experiences for the early explorers). For some reason those wargames manufacturers who produce the occasional wild animal in "25mm" always make them too small, though the Irregular tiger will do for a leopard, and the Foundry tiger (in the Indian tiger-hunt set) is about right for a lioness. A search of toyshops, however, will often yield items in indeterminate scales which are approximately right. The Early Learning Centre "baby African elephant", for instance, looks quite grown-up beside 25mm figures (although he does need some tusks).

I have not laid down a lot of specific rules for tabletop terrain, but the more imaginatively terrain features are used, and the more realistically they are modelled, the better the games will be. When a native tribe is being attacked, there should usually be a village in the defender's deployment area (except perhaps in the case of Pygmies in the forest). In all games, at least 1/4 of the table should be covered of some sort, whether dense jungle, scrub, crops, tall grass or rocky outcrops (even the Nyika is thorn scrub rather than true desert).

CHRIS PEERS.