

MARGARETE TRAPPE

Africa's greatest huntress - "Jeyo"... Mother of the Masai



Margarete Trappe

If, as children, we were thrilled by Buffalo Bill we should have been still more spellbound by Mrs. Trappe's adventures, the adventures of the fearless woman with her two legendary horses, Comet and Diamond, and her two inseparable Alsatians. Like a phantom she would suddenly appear, like a phantom she would vanish; as intimate with wild beasts as though they were tame, she was venerated and feared by the Negroes like a supernatural being. The dark spirit of Africa with its spells and witchcraft, its magic, symbolism and ritual furnish a background against which such a figure almost assumes a mystic significance.



Mrs. Trappe's tales would fill an entire volume and this is not the place in which to tell them. All the same I cannot resist mentioning one episode, the one which marks the end of her wartime activities; it is such a charming story.



At that time the German defence forces had been compelled to withdraw into the interior. Under cover of darkness and forest, Mrs. Trappe had slipped through the British lines and delivered two large transports of cattle and provisions to General von Lettow. But a large convoy of horses led by tired German farmers had been surrounded by the British; there was scarcely a hope of getting it through. Then Mrs. Trappe with her Negroes had taken over the whole operation. With the help of an alleged deserter she had misled the British as to the direction she had taken, had driven the horses through forests and over mountains where no one had dreamed it possible to find a way, and, without losing a single one, had brought them through the British lines. Now she could do no more and was anxious to return to her farm where her three small children awaited her impatiently.

She rode straight into the middle of the nearest British headquarters and gave herself up. A British Captain questioned her. A British General busy with his papers at a nearby table glanced across her now and again. The hearing dragged on. There was not much she would say. "You know, Mrs. Trappe, that you will have to be interned," said the Captain finally. "Mrs. Trappe will remain at liberty," the General stated, looking up from his papers. The hearing continued. "You will have to leave your horses here," said the Captain. Mrs. Trappe declared that she had promised General von Lettow to shoot the horses sooner than to surrender them to the British. "Mrs. Trappe will keep her horses," said the General.

Then they came to the arms. Here, certainly, there was nothing to be done. Mrs. Trappe was obliged to leave them and to undertake to bring along any ammunition in her possession. She brought the ammunition on the following day. When the British officer opened the chest in which the cartridges were packed he found also a little box of silver rupees which Mrs. Trappe had forgotten to take out. The British officer picked up the coins; all of them had a hole through the centre. "What is the meaning of this?" he enquired curiously. "I shot those in a pistol-shooting contest," Mrs. Trappe replied. "You must show us how you could do that," said the General once again joining in.



Three coins were placed upright on a board. They were hardly visible. Mrs. Trappe raised her pistol, took a swift aim and fired quickly once, twice, thrice. All three coins had been hit dead centre.

The General plunged his hand into the box of rupees. "Send these coins home to your wives," he said to the group of officers who were watching, "and tell them your experiences here with a German woman." Then, turning to Mrs. Trappe: "You are a good sport and a brave woman." He shook hands. "You may keep your weapons." He smiled and took his leave. Mrs. Trappe kept her weapons and her horses. She rode home and settled down to look after her children and her huge farm.

From "MOMELLA an African game paradise" by Maximilian von Rogister

