

## **The Diaries of James Chapin: Book 5**

### **Book 5: (July 21, 1912 to November 28, 1912 {Jan. 1914})**

DATE: July 21, 1912

LOCALITY: Garamba

At the beginning of the rainy season, at Garamba, in the fields where sorghum was grown last year, there sprang up a new growth of the same plant. According to natives this is of no value, as the grain will not ripen in the middle of the rainy season, and so they cut it down to make place for their earlier crops, maize, squashes (maboki), small gourds (of which the seeds are eaten). Near our camp a large patch of sorghum had nevertheless been left, and by the middle of July much of it had attained a height of 10 to 14 feet, and many stalks bore heads of green seeds, which attracted some finches (*Carpodacus*), weavers (*Pyromelaena*) and occasionally parakeets (*Agapornis*). Other birds fed on the ground in this cover, but mostly small forms. On July 21, a woman at work in the plantations saw a leopard entering this patch of worthless grain, and spread the alarm. All the men and youths of the village, numbering about 25 assembled on the spot with their spears and some also with bows and arrows. The spears were of two sorts, short elephant spears with heavy club-like handles and long narrow blades (1 1/2 - 2 ft long), and the common long slender shafted lances

with shorter head. (See Illustration)



They entered the sorghum without hesitation, spreading out, and walking back and forth until they came upon the leopards, which proved to be two in number. One, slightly wounded by a spear, sprang up with loud growls of rage, scattering his pursuers, and then ran off to another place of concealment. The hunt was now interrupted for a quarter of an hour, while nets were procured, and set up along a path bisecting the field of sorghum. 6 or 8 natives stood behind these nets, with spears in readiness, while the others again beat the cover as before. The natives of these parts have no shields, but two of the hunters had provided themselves with doors from their huts, heavy rectangular lattices, which when provided with handles of bark, served the same purpose. I now waited near the net, hoping to get a shot, but ere long a loud yelling and stamping told us that the beaters had come upon a leopard, and before we could reach the spot it had been riddled with spears. Kalifa, a Baka, who usually served as guide and tracker for Mr. Lang, and who boasts of having killed, with the lance, 17 elephants, besides divers lions and leopards, was the first to pierce it with his spear. Seeing this, the whole party rushed in, each anxious to give a final thrust. Later on the carcass was carried to the village, and formed the center of a short savage dance. Kalifa was found to be wearing the tip of its tail on a cord about his neck. The hunt was resumed, for one leopard still remained, but he got thru the beaters, and escaped on the other side, crossing a freshly cleared field and disappearing for good in the brush, where the tracks were very difficult to follow, and where there was no chance of seeing him again. The dead leopard was an old female, but of remarkably small size.

DATE: SEPT. 3, 1912

Late this afternoon I listened to the singing of a white-crowned Cossypha, in the small swampy patch of brush and trees at the spring where our drinking water is drawn. It sang continually, but kept well hidden in the bushes, withdrawing when approached, but never guarding silence for long. Besides recognizable imitations of other birds, it gave many notes which I could not construe as such; either they were its own compositions, or they were imitations I could not appreciate. One of the birds it liked best to mimic was the oriole (the common yellow-crowned species of this neighborhood), while the calls of the small yellow and green shrike (with gray crown, orange breast), the streak-breasted kingfisher, the fruit pigeon, common rufous-breasted cuckoo, and *Asturina* were also reproduced with success. Three imitations new to me were those of the black barbet with red face ("hic-cup, hic-cup..") *Haliaeetus vocifer*, and a bee-eater (*Merops nubicus* or another member of the genus), the last mentioned in 2 different keys,

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perhaps indicating different species. One of these thrushes sings nearly everyday at the post, keeping among some lemon trees, or in neglected patches of rubber and banana trees. The voice is sometimes low as tho far distant, or may be raised, as 9often toward dusk.

DATE: Sept. 4, 1912

The little black weaver, apparently related to *Vidua*, tho with only a short tail, was observed today, its first appearance this season. 3 males and a female, in the post. Last year one was seen a few days earlier. Along in October and November they became common, but disappeared about the first

of the year -probably breeding during their stay here. In 1910 they were seen near Rungu and Niangara in October and November, but before January had disappeared.

DATE: Sept. 5, 1912

The ring-necked turtle dove was heard calling today, I heard it first on Aug. 17th, and again on Aug. 31st and Sept. 1st. For the last couple of weeks it has rained comparatively little. Last September, I remember, there was a similar lull in the rains, during which some grass was even burned, tho October seemed to make up the time lost. When the wet weather is in full swing, it rains here every other day, sometimes every day, afternoon being the most common time for storms, tho in this there is no firm rule. For two days past, bee-eaters (of the genus *Merops*) have occasionally been heard high overhead, from their notes and from the color of once seen at a great height, they seem to be of the common large green species. The "Tribune Congolaise" of June 1, 1912, quoting from "Anvers Bourse" gives the flow of water at the mouth of the Congo 120,000 cu. meters per second, of the Kasai at its mouth 11,000, of the Ubangi 7,000, of the Aruwimi 4,000 cubic meters per second.

DATE: Sept. 6, 1912

Saw today about 8 of the little black weavers (and their brown mates), mentioned under date of Sept. 4, 1912.

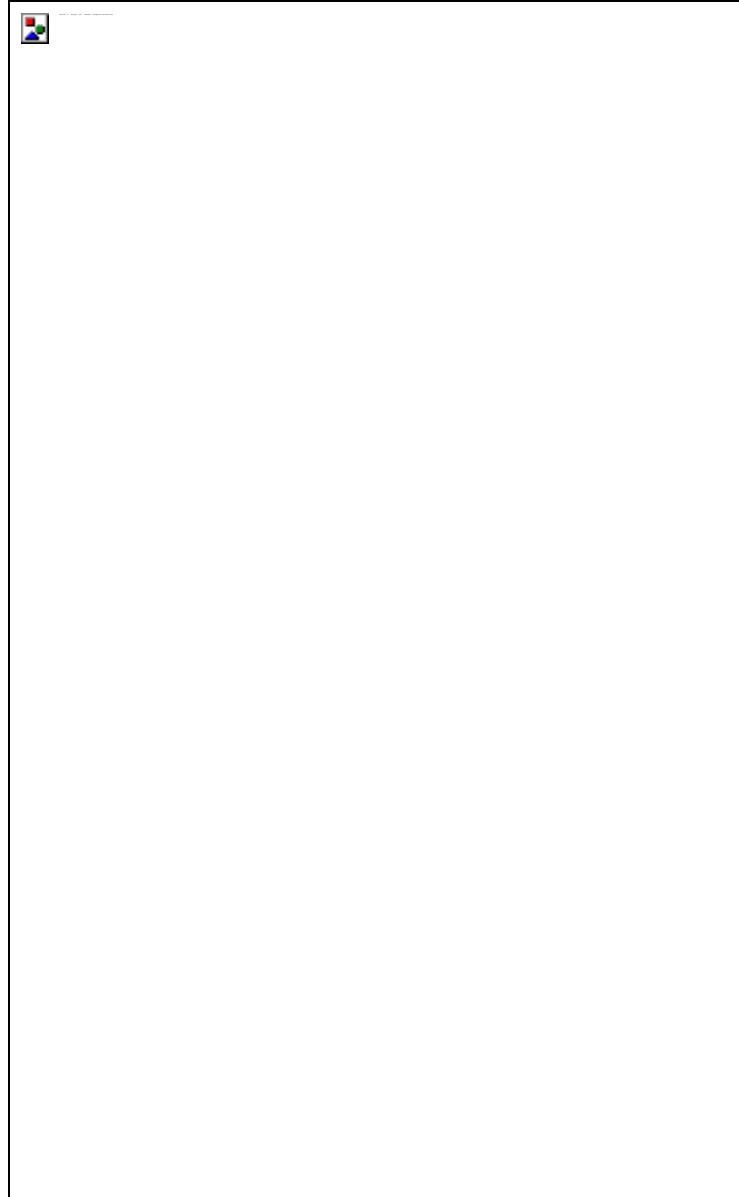
DATE: Sept. 6, 1912

The long-legged, broad-winged *Polyboroides* is a hawk of rather peculiar habits, proceeding with a slow sailing or leisurely flapping flight, hopping about the branches of leafy trees, or clinging to the side of a rotten stub, apparently in search of insects. Its small head sometimes gives it a vulturine appearance, and the feathers of the nape form a sort of ruff. It is a restless bird, and even when not pursued, often travels continually from one tree to another in a definite direction, tho on the other hand, I have seen them return, after being molested, to the same group of trees along the Dungu above the post. Two are the most I have noticed together, usually they go singly; nor have I ever heard the voice. (1 specimen seen at Faradje today, 1 on Sept. 3rd, two at Gangura's in April last). The tall cane-like grass, known in Bangala as "Baka" (Kingwana "matete"), so characteristic of the borders of the forest region, seems to reach the limit of its distribution between Faradje and Garamba. At the latter locality I never saw it, tho there are other high grasses near water. The largest stalks of baka measure 2cm in diameter near the ground

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(2.5cm at nodes), and the tallest plants attain a height of at least 15 feet, terminating (late in the rainy season) in a long fuzzy catkin. Baka is used by natives, both here and at Medje, as a light building material, for supporting the thatch, etc, and when dry has the appearance, tho not the strength, of bamboo. A few old dry stalks of "matete", at Medje, often serve as a torch, and give a good flame; but in the Uele a bunch of dry "suli" (the grass used for roofs), or any other dry grass at hand, is more often used for illumination. This latter grass ("suli" in Bangala, "nyazi" in Kingwana) is found at Medje and everywhere we have visited in the Uele. Its blades are long, and fairly broad,

so that even tho it has no conspicuous stalks it often reaches up to one's chest. It is especially characteristic of old village sites, often forming open fields of grass, agreeable to the eye by reason of its uniform height, and not difficult to walk thru. For the roofs of the houses of posts this grass is usually tied on in small bundles, after the earth has been cleaned off; but natives usually fashion a long but simple mat, found with two cords, and then wind this spirally upon their conical roofs. (See Illustration)



Bamboo is rare in the parts of the Congo where we have worked most. Since we left Stanleyville, in fact, the only place I have seen any was near Vankerckhovenville, where, some 2 1/2 hours south of the post, not far off the road to Arebi, there was a small patch, standing on high ground, but close to a forested gorge cut by a small stream. This bamboo had a peculiar desiccated appearance (it is true some had been cut by workmen from the post), growing in rather open clumps, the stalks rising to a height of 30 feet, with only few and small branches. Its outer surface was not glossy, nor were the hollow chambers within very large. I visited it in company with Mr. Goffinet (Aug. 1911), and we agreed that it seemed a very different bamboo from that along the Congo. Bamboo was later

brought to the post at Faradje from the neighborhood of Matafa's. It should be noted that the stalks of *Raphia* palms, extensively used in building are often called bamboo by Europeans in the Congo. Along the banks and islands of the River Dungu at Faradje, these are patches of a tall grass, sometimes a little taller than baka, and with hollow stems much thicker, tho it has not at all the solidity of bamboo.

DATE: Sept. 17, 1912

LOCALITY: Lemvo

Went to Lemvo to fetch Mr. Pickering, threatened with black-water fever. Saw a light gray cuckoo (first of the season), and what was probably a widow bird such as I shot last November (*Steganura*). On the road one passes a curious open swamp, where a dense low growth of vines seems to keep out all other vegetation. From its resemblance to a field of sweet potatoes, the workmen from the post call it "maliba na bangbe". One of the pleasant mellow calls of a common shrike they interpret "pete-pete ku-le".

DATE: Nov. 28, 1912

Colors of the flower of the "tulipier". The central mass of flowers is creamy white. The bracts forming an outer ring like the ray-flowers of a sun-flower are also creamy white above, tinged about their edges with red, while below they are deep carmine. The rest of the bracts forming the base of the flower are brownish green, shading to dark umber at their distal edges, and sometimes, especially the larger ones, tinged with red. Unopened flower-buds, being covered entirely by these bracts, are colored like the bases of flowers, deep carmine at their tips, shading to brownish green at the base, each bract being edged with darkbrown. (See Illustration)



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DATE: Jan. 4, 1914

LOCALITY: Between Mongalula and Avakubi Succursale

This morning about 8 o'clock, as we were coming up the river by canoe, between Mongalulas and Avakubi Succursale, a slight commotion was noticed in the water ahead of us, close to the shore. Something dark would come to the surface from time to time; at first we thought it might be a hippo's nose, so I stepped ashore with the rifle; then its small size suggested a crocodile, and finally a glance thru the field glass disclosed a monkey's head. It came to the surface very often, meanwhile drifting considerably downstream, and making quite a little progress out away from the shore. As for holding its breath it seemed to possess less ability than a man, and instead of raising its whole head above the water while breathing, it would sit more or less vertically in the water, and

expose only the face, with blinking eyes staring stupidly upward. Then it would plunge with a forward movement, much as a man would, but at one might expect did not swim with any great rapidity under water. All this we saw as we made after it in the canoe. Fearing it would sink if shot dead, I hesitated to fire, and finally wounded it slightly with no. 8. Still we had considerable difficulty in catching it, and the boatmen were afraid of being bitten, but finally it was pulled into the boat by the tail, opening wide its mouth, ready to use its sharp teeth. It was a rather small example of the white-bearded *Cercopithecus (brazzae)*, with brown forehead, a female. Judge Smets, I believe, first told us of the aquatic feats of this monkey. He had heard something drop into a stream (near Poko) and was told it was this monkey. Later other native told us the same story about the "makako na may".

[NOTE]:

*Cercopithecus (brazzae?)* Barn's tame monkey -said to be *C. "ignitus"*-was caught by a native who shot its mother while "bathing in the river", near Bafwasende. The description of the old monkey reads very like *C. brazzae*. -T.A. Barns, 1923, "Across the Great Croterland to the Congo", p. 100.