

The setting for the second story was an island on Lake Victoria where Doctor Trant had been carrying out a medical survey. The island was chosen for the survey because the people living on it were virtually isolated from the mainland way of life and provided good case history material.

From her years of working in the forests and bush of Central and East Africa Doctor Trant knew that a bit of medical attention and dispensing — even if it was only aspirin and cough mixture — went a long way in winning friends and their vital confidences. She put this into practice.

Then an order came from headquarters that the free dispensing had to stop and the survey carried out without perks. An American doctor was sent to help with the work.

Said Doctor Trant: 'We were in trouble as soon as he arrived. He had his method of working — strictly to the ruling of headquarters. I had my way. The only way for us to work was to divide the island in two. He took one section and did things his way, I took the other and carried on giving out what medicines I had available and compiling my reports.'

The result was an attitude of non-cooperation from the residents in the area where information without medicine was sought and a growing animosity between Doctor Trant and her professional colleague.

The colleague was given the title of 'bad man' by the local inhabitants. Delegations visited Doctor Trant and complained about his methods. She tried to explain that it was his way of working; that he was not necessarily a 'bad man'. But the islanders were unmoved.

One night — with the wind howling as it always apparently does when doom is around — an islander came to Doctor Trant's house with a message from his chief that 'a European

her about the death. She said the doctor had died of a heart attack.

Said the Chief: 'It was done by the power of the islanders. We wished him dead.'

What does Doctor Trant think today? 'Well, he was old enough to have a straightforward coronary — but I couldn't argue with a chief about it.'

Doctor Trant has found herself a victim of superstition. One particular instance arose when a survey team she was leading began collecting blood samples using pipettes. The story spread that vampires in human form were travelling in the villages. Word got to the District Commissioner who arrived to investigate, found the medical team and, afraid of trouble, ordered them from his territory.

Such were the hazards and frustrations faced by doctors and medical staffs in the not so distant past as they brought medical knowledge to the hinterlands of Africa. But it was a life chosen by Doctor Trant — and one she certainly does not regret.

Born in County Tipperary, Ireland, Hope Trant, the daughter of a retired army officer turned farmer, spent her first ten years at home and was then sent to boarding school in England.

That period, around the turn of the century, was a time when young ladies from good class homes were prepared for marriage by schooling, grooming, finishing and travel. But in the Trant family there were several women who should have been given allowances to save them the necessity of getting a job — 'something considered not genteel for women then.' And sufficient funds were just not available.

'My father called us together and explained the situation. He said that we would have to look after ourselves. I was of a nature that made any adjustment in the circumstances quite



has died on the other side of the island.'

Doctor Trant, clutching a hurricane lamp, crossed the island. The American doctor's wife told her that her husband had felt ill that afternoon, lay down for a while, got up, went outside, suddenly returned, moaned, collapsed into a chair and died. The islanders watched as the body was taken to the harbour next morning for transportation to a mainland town where he was cremated.

After the cremation the wife asked Doctor Trant to collect the ashes, so that she could take them back to the United States. Recalled Doctor Trant: 'I borrowed a pestle and mortar from the local hospital, collected the charred bones and sat under a tree grinding them to powder. It was one of the most gruesome tasks I have ever performed. But as I was doing it I could not help myself thinking about the clash between us and the fact that here I was powdering his bones'.

Back on the island the chief called on Doctor Trant and asked

easy and decided to go on the stage,' said Doctor Trant.

She joined one of Benson's Shakspearean companies and went on tour. In 1911 the company went to Africa. For Hope Trant this first introduction to Africa was to make an indelible impression and lead her back later in life.

Said Doctor Trant: 'When the touring company was in South Africa there were many times when our path crossed that of the Imperial Forces. We had a good time. The girls in the company used to go horse-riding with officers of whatever regiment was around. We were very welcome.'

'I don't want you to think that we were the good-time girls. We were gay, but in a quiet way. Not like some of the younger people today. Sometimes I think their behaviour is riotous.' Back in the United Kingdom a call was made for women to join up and help their country in the First World War. Hope Trant was one of the first to get into uniform. She went over to France.



The Red Cross had organized fleets of ambulances shuttling the wounded from the front line to casualty stations and hospitals. Drivers were needed. Hope Trant got behind the steering wheel of an ambulance.

Throughout the war she was in France and at the end of hostilities qualified for a grant which could be used to train in medicine or nursing. It was the perfect opportunity to become a doctor. She studied in Dublin and qualified in 1925.

One of her sisters had left Britain to settle in South Africa with her artillery officer husband who had been gassed during the war. Her mother wanted to visit this sister and Hope Trant decided to accompany her. For Hope that visit has lasted 43 years.

Doctor Trant worked as an assistant lecturer in Johannesburg, turned to private practice, went to Swaziland for two years to a mission hospital and then became medical superintendent at a maternity hospital in Johannesburg.

Following the death of her mother the lure of the African interior brought Doctor Trant to the Nkana mine hospital — but only for 18 months.

'I found the atmosphere rather restricted for women doctors at that time. We were not allowed to do very much.

Out-patients and clinics was about the limit. I wanted a job with more opportunity.'

A vacancy for a locum at a Church of Scotland mission hospital in Mwenzo near the Zambia-Tanzania border offered the opportunity. For three different periods of two years Doctor Trant worked at that mission hospital.

At Mwenzo she was allowed to work as hard as she liked. She enjoyed travelling deep into the bush, learning local dialects and making friends in countless villages.

and 'cheering up the officer in charge, giving him a good meal and the news from outside.

'Each round trip took two weeks. Sometimes it was pretty hard going, slipping and slithering around in the mud. But it was one way of earning money and I always thought that if the Red Locust people wanted to pay me for using my feet instead of my head it was all right with me,' said Doctor Trant. An offer from the East African High Commission took Doctor Trant to Tanganyika for six years carrying out nutrition surveys. Then, at the age of 65, she was told she would have to be officially retired.

But that ruling did not deter her. She was soon back in hospital work at Isoka — 'a quiet place. You'll be able to take it easy there,' said the provincial medical officer. A few months later the Lenshina riots broke out and the short-lived 'war' between the Northern Rhodesian authorities and the rebel religious group was in full swing. Doctor Trant was busy again.

For the last ten years Doctor Trant has been doing temporary part-time hospital work in the Northern Province of Zambia.

At one stage in her life, she recalls, she kept several monkeys. One of them, Audrey, lived for 23 years, had full scale operations in hospital operating theatres, was a diabetic and had daily insulin injections. This monkey was considered a unique member of the animal world and a paper on her history was written by veterinary officer Alec Gregor when he was at Abercorn.

But Doctor Trant keeps no monkeys today. 'You can only keep up with these lively animals when you are young. I'm afraid I'm getting old,' she said with a twinkle in her eye.



So sure was Doctor Trant that she had found a place in the world where she could be happy that she planned for her eventual retirement by building a small hotel alongside the Great North Road on the Tanzanian side of the border at Tunduma.

With the start of World War II she decided to go back into uniform and joined the East African Army Medical Corps working in hospitals at Nairobi, Mombasa and Mount Kenya. Later, following another spell at the Mwenzo mission, she joined the International Red Locust Control Service at Abercorn as a medical officer.

For three months of the year — during the rains — a 2,000-strong army of labourers was put into action, spraying young locusts. The teams were distributed at many different camps under a locust control officer.

Doctor Trant had to plod around camps with her cook and six porters on dispensary operations, giving medical treatment

Her hotel retirement plan was abandoned last year when she sold the hotel. Border post regulations, virtually non-existent between the Rhodesias and Nyasaland before independence, says Doctor Trant, brought a reduction in travellers with money to spend — and a glut of hitch-hikers looking for free board and lodgings.

Between her part-time hospital duties at Abercorn Doctor Trant travels. She recently completed a journey around South Africa and later this year plans to visit relatives in Canada. One object of her travelling is to find a place to settle down and write her memoirs.

'I would like to find an old folks' home where there are retired professional people. And this is proving a difficult task indeed. I have seen several homes but they are not for me. I'm afraid knitting or watching television could not take the place of a good conversation,' said the doctor with the wanderlust who has not yet shaken the dust from her feet. □